Independence fun at Zephyr Cove library

The Douglas County Public Library in Zephyr Cove presents Fourth of July Stories and Crafts on July 2 at 1:30pm. Miss Carol will read stories celebrating Independence Day. Children will make a red, white, and blue holiday craft. For ages 3 and up; young children should be accompanied by an adult. Sign up by July 1.

The Douglas County Public Library is located at 233 Warrior Way in Zephyr Cove. For more information, call (775) 588.6411 or visit douglas.lib.nv.us.

Historic rail engine chugging back into action in foothills

By John Holland, Modesto Bee

JAMESTOWN – Steam locomotive No. 3, a Sierra Railroad workhorse that found fame in movies and television, will return to the limelight next month.

After a 14-year absence, the engine is set to debut July 3 at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park. It will pull passenger trains that day and July 4, then enter limited service on the excursion schedule.

“A lot of engines came and went, but someone had a soft spot for this one,” said George Sapp, restoration lead worker at the park.

Railtown employees and volunteers have worked for three years to overhaul the 119-year-old locomotive, which was pulled from service in 1996 because of wear and tear.

Read the whole story

Home tour proves life is thriving in Angora burn area

Publisher's note: ***See the Voices section to read about reporter Susan Wood's experience three years ago covering the Angora Fire.***

By Kathryn Reed

Windows to a world that changed their lives are everywhere.

This is one of the common themes of the seven houses on the AAUW's biennial home tour – openness in design, with natural light filtering in from all corners, and sometimes the ceiling. "From the Ashes" was the appropriate name of Saturday's event, as all houses and the demonstration garden have been rebuilt because the 2007 Angora Fire reduced the original structures to ash.

These houses represent the 86 that have been completely rebuilt. Fourteen are ready for their final inspection. Another 86 are in some stage of the application or rebuilding process, while 68 of the 254 homeowners who lost their houses are letting their lot sit idle for now.



Driveway paving stones survived the Angora Fire to be used as a patio. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Though each of the homes is clearly distinct and reflects the individual owners, a few similarities can be found. Granite is used extensively in many of the homes – from kitchens, to bathrooms, to fireplaces.

Wood floors are everywhere. Plenty of carpet exists, but so do a lot of throw rugs and tile flooring. Some have heated floors.

Islands in the kitchen are almost a given. Some have a utility sink, the gas range, and many have stools to belly up to the counter in what is so often the main congregating area.

Decks and outdoor stairs are made of non-flammable products. Depending on when building permits were filed, wood decking was not permitted based on fire code changes that took effect Jan. 1, 2008.

Wide staircases that would make it easy to haul furniture without marring the walls are the norm.

Master bedrooms mostly come with walk-in closets – some the size of a small bedroom. Master bathrooms accommodate three at once, with the shower, bathtub and toilet (often in a

cubbyhole) as separate entities.

Behind the home tour

The American Association of University Women's South Lake Tahoe chapter has been putting on a home tour for decades. Every two years they try to pick a different area of the South Shore to feature. This year's tour came three years, and two days after the Angora Fire wiped out a large swath of homes lived in mostly by full-time middle class residents, burning more than 3,100 acres and bringing "defensible space" into the vocabulary of many, and the realization insurance policies should be reviewed annually.

"The focus is on the care, thought and love all the people in the neighborhood put in. Some houses are small, but all contain interesting features," Kay Henderson, one of the organizers, said.

More of the $25 tickets were sold this year than for some of the more recent tours.

Proceeds from the tour stay in the community to help locals. Scholarships are given to two female graduates of Lake Tahoe Community College to continue their education, with $1,500 being given to each in recent years. The money also pays for two or three middle school girls to go to California's Tech Trek each summer, which is designed to encourage them to consider careers in science and math.

The homes

Some of the homeowners stayed to greet people. Names of local contractors and businesses that were used were available. Most who rebuilt tried to spend their money locally or regionally.

The Granite Mountain Circle house was a 1974 A-frame the family had lived in since 1991. The design is much more modern and larger by about 500 square feet.

A dumbwaiter carries items from the garage to the kitchen.

Some of the pictures on the walls were saved when the two teenage daughters grabbed what they could in the 15 minutes they had to evacuate.

Designed to be the family gathering spot, the couple never thought twice about rebuilding. It’s where their children and grandchildren can call home. A wrap-around deck gives views of everything but the rawest part of the devastation leading to Angora ridge.

A couple on Mule Deer Circle built their dream home twice. Days before they were to move into the home, it burned to the ground in the Angora Fire. The good thing was their belongings were not inside.

The rebuild allowed them to do some things differently. The master suite is upstairs instead of down, and the spiral staircase – which is a focal point of the main room – is smaller.

A European feel is throughout. Clearly the owners like to cook based on the attention to detail in the kitchen, the appliances and unique hood with its glass and stainless steel design.

High ceilings and large windows offer views of the blackened forest, with trees that are a combo of white and black – signifying just how hot the fire burned in this area.

Norma and Warren Sprague were some of the first people to move back to the burn area – doing so a week before the one-year anniversary of the fire, and months before celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

Views from their Lake Tahoe Boulevard house are designed to direct the eye above the burn area.

“I looked at this and it was not the worst thing that could

happen to me," Norma Sprague said of losing everything.

With a smile and laugh, she can talk about her 40-year-old house that needed a lot of work.

Capturing her ancestry, certificates from her Italian parents and grandparents coming to the United States via Ellis Island are in one room.

The single-story home on Pyramid Circle is the most modest of the ones on the tour. A glass display case in the entry has the bottom two shelves filled with items that were retrieved from the rubble. Pottery, a hose sprayer, candleholder and teapot are some of the memorabilia.

Tube or tunnel lights have been installed on the roof to provide sunlight into various rooms. One bedroom looks like a light is on, when in fact it is natural light filtering in from this type of skylight.

Hopefully, the next owners like dogs because a paw print has been designed into the front entry's rock pattern.

Despite the back yard being the destroyed forest, the owner has chosen an open fence that allows that area to seem larger than it is – though it is already a nice size lot.

Driving up to the house on Snow Mountain Drive the windows are most prominent, then the deck area above the entrance that is like a mini garden this time of year. It's easy to stop before the front door because a small, covered deck beckons one to sit and enjoy summer in Tahoe.

Angles of the roofline are eye-catching. The nooks of the interior create an architectural design not often found in Tahoe.

A major difference in this home is the kitchen is distinctly separate from the great room.

The master bedroom, bath and office are on the first floor. Upstairs is what could be a mother-in-law unit with efficiency kitchen, bath and bedroom.

On the other end of the second floor is a sewing room that any seamstress, in this case embroiderer, could find inspiration from working in.

With 45 minutes to evacuate, all the pictures in the Mount Olympia Circle home were saved.

As the fire passed by it cooled a bit, with flowers on one side able to be saved. Creating a garden was their first priority – having brought water in to begin the rebirth process.

Looking out the upstairs bedroom windows that front the street a row of green, healthy looking pine trees is in the foreground. Farther up is another row – on the ridge – where the fire stopped.

The family started working on plans to rebuild two weeks after the fire, and moved in in October 2008.

The wood burning fireplace is one of the few in the new homes – most people went with gas. This one can heat the whole house.

Around the corner on this street is a demonstration garden. The lot belonged to Owen Evans. His daughter, Leona Allen, also lost her house in the fire. To honor her father, who has since died, and her mother, Esther, Allen donated this parcel to be a resource for the neighborhood and community at-large.

Jennifer Cressy with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District was giving tours of the lot on Saturday, explaining vegetation that is good for wet soil, infiltration basins, native wildflowers, erosion control techniques and other nuances to landscaping in the mountains.

The garden is still a work in progress, with the hopes of developing a community vegetable and herb garden and other aspects. Volunteers are always needed to help – call (530) 543.1501, ext. 118 for information.

The last house on the tour belongs to Solange Schwalbe, one of the more vocal residents during the community meetings three years ago. On this day she is welcoming everyone to her home, talking about what it was like then compared to today.

A boulder in the back yard was part of the foundation for the old deck. The Willy Jeep survived the fire, while the newer one essentially melted into the heap of debris.

Upstairs is all new, while downstairs is where she spends most of her time. Furniture she picked up from the community center that was set up for Angora survivors fills this living area.

One day she might rent that section out. Upstairs most of the walls are yellow –- inspiration from Miami, with an accent wall in black. It works. The gold Emmy she earned for her sound work on “Black Hawk Down” sits on the mantle above the gas fireplace – a striking contrast to the black wall.

She looks around and tells the visitors, “Nothing here is mine.”

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LTCC Fire Academy cadets ready to find a job

Twenty-six cadets graduated from the Fire Academy at Lake Tahoe Community College on June 26.

The academy is a partnership between the college and South Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley and Tahoe-Douglas fire departments.



Cadets graduate June 26 from the LTCC Fire Academy. Photo/Kathay Lovell

Many graduates go on to work for local fire agencies.

For more information on the academy, contact Leona Allen at allenl@ltcc.edu or (530) 541.4660, ext. 554.

Arson suspect behind bars

A 22-year-old transient was arrested Saturday at about 7:15am on arson charges.

Police officers and firefighters responded to the meadow behind the residential subdivision of Pioneer Village, east of Al Tahoe Boulevard, in South Lake Tahoe after a resident reported a suspicious fire.



Luke Dons

Emergency personnel found an uncontrolled fire approximately 10-feet-square, with 1-foot-high flames. The fire was burning in a wooded and brushy area, only 100 feet from the houses adjacent to the meadow.

Luke Dons, sleeping on the ground about 20 feet away, confessed to starting the fire, without explaining any reason why, according to Officer Matt Morrison.

The fire caused no damage to private property.

Dons was booked into the El Dorado County Jail on $40,000 bail.

California welfare recipients withdrawing money at casinos

By Jack Dolan, Los Angeles Times

California welfare recipients using state-issued debit cards withdrew more than $1.8 million in taxpayer cash on casino floors between October 2009 and last month, state officials said Thursday.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger issued an executive order requiring welfare recipients to promise they will use cash benefits only

to “meet the basic subsistence needs” of their families. The order also gave the state Department of Social Services seven days to produce a plan to reduce other types of “waste, fraud and abuse” in the welfare program.

The moves came after the *Times* reported Wednesday that officials at the department failed to notice for years that welfare recipients could use the state-issued cards to withdraw taxpayer cash at more than half of the tribal casinos and state-licensed poker rooms in California. The state initiated the debit card program in 2002.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe City Council to meet Sunday

The South Lake Tahoe City Council is having a special closed session meeting on Sunday at 11:15am at Lake Tahoe Airport.

The subject is the city manager.

As of Friday night, it was not known if anyone new would be there to interview, if one of the two interviewed last weekend would be hired, or if the whole process might start from scratch.

The council has expressed interest in interviewing two more people so there would be a bigger pool to choose from. It has not been confirmed they will be in South Lake on Sunday.

Perhaps a question to any city manager candidate should be: How would you react/respond to the grand jury report that was released this week?

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Lake in The Sky Air Show was not selected to be included in the 2011 Centennial of Naval Aviation Tier 1 events. They did, however, pledge to provide aircraft to support the show. This year's show at Lake Tahoe Airport is Aug. 28.

• A 7,000-square-foot classic Lake Tahoe lodge in Glenbrook will be sold to the highest bidder, regardless of price, through Absolute Auctions on July 15. To register, call (916) 826.7310, place a $25,000 refundable deposit with any Lake Tahoe broker and be ready to close the bid 30 days after the July 15 live auction.

• Northstar-at-Tahoe is offering a bike academy this summer for mountain bikers.

• Tahoe Truckee Unified School District was recently awarded with a credit rating upgrade on its outstanding voter approved general obligation bonds and non-voter approved certificates of participation by Standard & Poor's Credit Rating Agency. This makes Tahoe Truckee the highest rated school district by S&P in Placer County. The credit rating on the general obligation bonds was upgraded to AA from A+. The credit rating on the certificates of participation was upgraded to AA- from A.

• Timber House restaurant at Lakeside Inn Casino has rolled out a new menu.

• Each year, *Newsweek* magazine picks the best high schools in the country based on how hard school staffs work to challenge students with advanced placement college level courses and

tests. Just more than 1,600 schools, which is 6 percent of all the public schools in the United States, made the list. South Tahoe High School came in at No. 1,097 on the list of 1600 schools. For more information, click here.

• Chuck Sharer is taking the helm of Edgewood Companies. Brad Nelson resigned this month as president and CEO.

Ranching threatened in El Dorado County

Publisher's note: ***Click here to read about the resource map the Board of Supervisors approved.***

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Ed Borba's hat, mustache, oversized belt buckle and boots suggest a rancher. The bumper sticker on his truck completes the picture. It reads, "Eat Beef: The West Wasn't Won on Salad."

The cattleman's West, though, hasn't been won definitively.

Borba and others in El Dorado County are fighting to preserve the ranching way of life and its contribution to the local economy. The struggle is against development pressures, and they've found allies among the environmentalists who have often been the enemies of ranchers.

Read the whole story

TRTA backpacking class

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is offering a Backpacking 101 class.

It is led by seasoned guides and Snowcamping 101 instructors Wayne McClelland and Jordan Summers. This class will go over all the basics of backpacking from how to pack to choosing a campsite and cooking your meals.

The two will guide participants to Gray Lake on a 5-mile hike with 2,000 feet of elevation gain. You must be able to hike 5-plus miles per day at elevation with a 20-30 pound backpack. Participants must provide their gear, food and clothing.

Backpacking 101 is designed to equip people with the confidence to plan a safe backpacking trip. This course will start in the classroom, but then the skills you just learned are tested in an overnight experience. Specifically, your guides/instructors will cover: trip planning; packing; basic orientation skills; bear awareness; campsite selection and set-up; cooking hints and demonstrations; principals of Leave No Trace.

Course time: 10am July 10-2pm July 11

Cost: Suggested $60 donation

For more information, and for prerequisites for this course, call (775) 298.0012 or email programs@tahoerimtrail.org.