Community rallies to raise funds for Relay for Life

Taste of Tahoe features one local restaurant each week for the weeks leading up to South Lake Tahoe Relay for Life on Aug. 7.

The focus is to raise money for the fight against cancer while having great food, drinks, entertainment and fun with friends, family, co-workers and neighbors at South Shore restaurants.

Nearly 30 local businesses are sponsoring Taste of Tahoe and strengthening our community's contribution to Relay for Life and Taste of Tahoe in addition to the sponsoring restaurants.

About Relay for Life



Sushi Pier is the featured restaurant this week for Taste of Tahoe. Photos/Austin Fay

Relay for Life is a fun-filled overnight event designed to celebrate survivorship and raise money for research and programs of your American Cancer Society. During the event, teams of people gather at schools, fairgrounds, or parks and take turns walking or running laps throughout the night. Each

team tries to keep at least one team member on the track at all times. The South Lake Tahoe Relay for Life event will be Aug. 7-8 at Kahle Park. www.sltrelay.com

About American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a nationwide, community-based, voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service. www.cancer.org

South Shore sponsors:

Businesses	Media	Restaurants

• Anytime Fitness • Bleu Wave Cruises • Coldwell Banker Select Real Estate • Corporate Nevada • Dog.Dog.Cat • Erik Watada State Farm Agency • Glass Doctor of the Sierras • H2O Sports • Hair and Nail Studio • Harrah’s Lake Tahoe • Harvey’s Lake Tahoe • Hot Spring Spa • Jon & Deb • Lake Tahoe Master Framing • Mann, Urrutia, Nelson CPAs & Associates, LLP • Marcus Ashley Gallery • Overland Meat & Seafood Company • Round Hill Jewelers • Round Hill Pines Beach • Servpro • Shoreline of Tahoe • Sidestreet Boutique • Tahoe Detailing • Tahoe Douglas Rotary • Tahoe Sports LTD • US Bank	• Charter Media • Getaway Media • KRLT and KOWL Radio • KTHO Radio • Lake Tahoe Entertainer • LakeTahoeNews.net • Tahoe Daily Tribune	• Blue Angel Cafe • Bistro Danielle • Cilantro Mexican Cantina • Chevys Fresh Mex • Edgewood Brooks Bar & Deck • Fox and Hound • Mott Canyon • Murphys Irish Pub and Rockwater Restaurant • Sushi Pier • Thai One On

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County to close parking lot used by Stateline businesses

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Douglas County officials on Thursday let businesses in the Nugget Building at Stateline know the 57 parking spaces on the west side of the building will be off-limits to their patrons.

Today, property owner Chuck Bluth plans to deliver a letter to each county commissioner expressing his side of the story and asking to be put on a future agenda so the matter can be worked out.



The parking lot angling to the left of the Nugget Building in Stateline will be off-limits as of June 1.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

When Bluth bought the property earlier this year from Mike Laub he knew nothing about the parking lot deal that had been in place. In July 2009 a 15-year lease between the county and Laub expired. The county has not received a dime since then even though it has tried to collect from Bluth and Laub.

The odd-shaped lot is partly off Kahle Drive, borders Kahle Community Park, has an entrance off Highway 50 and goes to the edge of the building that is anchored by Sushi Pier. It's still referred to as the Nugget Building because a casino by that name was once there.

Justina Caviglia, deputy district attorney for Douglas County, said before the 1994 deal was inked the county was getting $5,000 a month for the parcel. A lump sum of $99,500 was paid for the lot's use 15 years ago, with the money going to the neighboring park.

Prior to the sale of the Nugget Building the county had been working with Laub to work out a month-to-month lease. That never came to fruition.

The other side of the building has parking, with a couple spots in the back.

What it will mean to the businesses in the complex if the county parking spaces are removed remains to be seen. The entire building is not occupied. But with three restaurants, the need for parking is evident.

Laub sold the Nugget Building early this year and then bought the former Bill's Casino parcel, which he had intended to turn into a strip club. (Commissioners' thwarted those plans with a vote after Laub bought the property from Harrah's Entertainment.)

It was Laub's responsibility, according to the county, to maintain the lot, which included plowing it. But the county plowed it this winter.

Bluth said he knew nothing about the parking lot issue until the county contacted him.

Clearly the lot has not been kept up by anyone. Some potholes are filled with muddy water. Others are 3-feet in diameter. Curbs are decaying. Landscaping appears to be non-existent, though an argument could be made it's native vegetation.

What is it worth?

In April the county secured two appraisals on the lot. Johnson Perkins & Associates Inc. say it's valued at $5,000/month and Anthony J. Wren, MAI put a $7,732/month price tag on the parcel. A 2007 state law requires the county to charge the higher price.

Bluth said he isn't about to pay more than $90,000 a year for a parking lot.

"That would be 76 percent of my gross rental revenue on that property," Bluth told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Bluth contends the parcel was appraised based on it being developed in the future and not its current use, which is all he would use it for.

Differing opinions

Caviglia and Steve Mokrohisky, assistant county manager, met with *Lake Tahoe News* in Stateline on May 20 to talk about the issue. They said Bluth doesn't return phone calls.

"Mr. Bluth has never responded to my offers," Caviglia said.

Bluth shared with *Lake Tahoe News* his written communications with the county. A letter from Caviglia to Bluth dated April

14 talks about the appraisals, mentions a draft lease and a desire to meet and discuss the issue.

The assistant district attorney sent a letter April 19 to Bluth telling him not to contact the appraisers.

“Any attempt to influence or attempt to influence either appraiser to change its appraisal is a criminal act …,” the letter says.

Bluth told *Lake Tahoe News* that as a developer for the last 40 years he is well aware of the role of an appraiser. He also believes the county didn’t tell the appraisers the parcel is only for parking.

Caviglia said a corner of the property has gone through the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with approval to be developed, but that she does not know where that stands or what might go there.

On April 26 Bluth wrote a letter to county Commissioner Nancy McDermid because she represents the lake, even though she lives in the valley. She is also on the TRPA board.

“It is my belief that approaching this in a positive manner is the best way to resolve what I inherited when I purchased the building, because I was not informed of the parking situation that has been ongoing for many years with previous owners,” the letter says. He then offered seven dates in May, all of which have since passed, as possible meeting dates.

A letter dated April 29 from Caviglia to Bluth gave him a deadline of May 5 to respond to her. “Douglas County will take appropriate action to protect its ownership rights of the property, which may include closing the parking lot,” the letter states.

On May 5, McDermid responds via email to Bluth saying county counsel has advised against a meeting.

On May 11, Bluth emails McDermid his disappoint with her response and further said, “I attempted to set up a meeting with the District Attorney’s office and one of the appraisers, but I was turned down and threatened, which simply amazes me.”

Digging in their heels

Bluth is not one to shy away from a fight. Bluth and the TRPA have gone back and forth in court and out of it regarding his house near Glenbrook. He is the former owner of the Cal Neva casino in Crystal Bay. He sold it in 2005.

“When I owned the Cal Neva I dealt with 12 agencies and none with this kind of behavior,” he said.

He is to the point where he doesn’t see it making economic sense to rent the parcel at the price quoted.

The county plans to block access the Tuesday after Memorial Day weekend.

“We are in a tough spot. We tried to go through the process,” Mokrohisky, the assistant county manager, said. “Our belief is business owners didn’t do anything to cause this.”

He and Caviglia had a letter to hand the business owners, which include attorney William Cole, Cilantros Mexican Grill, UPS, Sushi Pier and Thai Delight.

“If they close off the lots so no one can get to my space, what are they going to prove, they are the big dog in town? We all know that. They have the authority to do what they want. Usually they don’t abuse power,” Bluth said of Douglas County officials.

Bijou postal branch’s final delivery in June



By Kathryn Reed

June 18 will be the last day people can retrieve mail from the Bijou branch of the South Lake Tahoe post office.

After months of speculation, the U.S. Postal Service decided May 20 to close the small facility in the middle of South Lake Tahoe. In February the Incline Village branch was closed. Talk is the Stateline branch is next to go.

All of this is an attempt to save money, though the official word from the USPS is it has to do with service, too.

“We don’t close facilities just to save money, but we have to be smart with our resources,” USPS spokesman David Rupert said.

Shuttering Bijou is estimated to save the agency $2 million over 10 years.

With only 40 percent of the boxes rented, the office is hardly bustling. Other branches can absorb the boxholders or people can choose to have home delivery.

No date has been given when a decision on the Stateline branch will be made. The difference across the state line is no home delivery exists in this area of the South Shore.

Boxholders and employees will be told of Bijou’s future today. The landlord was notified Thursday. One person is employed at

Bijou. She will be relocated to another facility in South Lake Tahoe.

CalPERS controversy involving Stateline man heats up

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Controversial pension fund placement agent Alfred Villalobos launched a broad defense today against a state lawsuit accusing him of plying CalPERS officials with favors. He also demanded that his assets be unfrozen.

The former CalPERS board member denied several of the allegations contained in a lawsuit filed two weeks ago by Attorney General Jerry Brown, among them that he gave a Lake Tahoe condominium to former CalPERS Chief Executive Fred Buenrostro. In reality, Villalobos said in a court filing, Buenrostro paid him $600,000 for the property.

Brown sued Villalobos, Buenrostro and Villalobos' firm Arvco Capital of Stateline, Nev., alleging that Villalobos showered Buenrostro and two other CalPERS officials with gifts to influence investment decisions. As a placement agent, Villalobos was working on behalf of private equity firms seeking investment dollars from the pension fund.

Read the whole story

Rocks & Rhones Festival

Wine country events certainly aren't a new thing, but the four wineries of Pleasant Valley offer something unique. They celebrate one genre of wines at a festival showcasing the flavors, talent and diversity of Pleasant Valley and El Dorado County.

Festival attendees will visit each winery and taste gourmet foods prepared from local farms expertly paired with their wines. In addition, local artists are on display throughout the festival showcasing their talents.

A "Mountain of Wine" will be raffled off with all proceeds benefiting El Dorado County's Ag in the Classroom.

It's called the 7th annual Rocks & Rhones Festival.

It is May 29-30, 11am-4pm each day.

Tickets are $30 advance, $35 at the door.

Contact Josh Bendick at (530) 344.0227 or go to www.pleasantvalleywineries.com for more information.

STPUD passes sewer-water rate increases on split vote

By Kathryn Reed

It took five motions Thursday afternoon before the board voted 3-2 to increase sewer rates 2 percent and water rates 2.5 percent.

South Tahoe Public Utility District customers can expect to see higher bills beginning July 1. Based on the quarterly billing system the South Shore district uses, the average residence will see an increase of $2.94 on each water bill and $1.71 for the sewer bill. This amounts to an $18.60 increase per year for sewer and water combined.



STPUD board member Mary Lou Mosbacher is against raising fees. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Board member Mary Lou Mosbacher had her finger on the “no” button most of the day. She was against all of the ideas except the one brought forward which was to have no increase at all.

Also in the no category on the final vote was Jim Jones. He favored a 4 percent increase on sewer and water.

Although the proposed rate increase has generated a lot of chatter, in the end only 87 of the 17,000 ratepayers protested the increase in writing. About 10 people were in the audience on May 20 – with half being staff. No one from the public spoke.

Much of Thursday’s dialog among the board centered on whether the public in this economy could handle another increase of any sort and the infrastructure needs of the district.

At the May 6 budget review-rate hike meeting, it was agreed the 4 percent across the board rate hike proposed by staff would be brought back at 2 percent.

The vote of a 2 percent hike on sewer and water failed 3-2, with members Dale Rise and Chris Cefalu the two in favor of it.

Board member Eric Schafer said he would revise his vote and resubmit the motion. However, for legal reasons that is not allowed. That's how the half percent came about. It appeared to be the only way a majority would agree.

"I respect the process used today," Schafer said after all of the votes. "When you are elected, you are elected to vote and not abstain for some ridiculous reason."

Garrido hearing postponed by judge

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

A judge today postponed a hearing for Phillip and Nancy Garrido until next month, with officials saying a psychiatrist who treated him in the 1990s was delivering her medical records to court as ordered.

The records had not been sent in time for a hearing last month, which sparked today's court session.

Both Garridos were in court briefly today and Nancy Garrido attorney Stephen Tapson said later that the two had taken advantage of a five-minute phone call the court had allowed in May. Tapson said he assumed they spoke about God because

“that’s what they’re into.”

Read the whole story

El Dorado County emergency medical workers recognized

Paramedics, emergency medical technicians, firefighters and base hospital medical staff in El Dorado County are being recognized this week as part of National Emergency Medical Services Week, May 16–22.

Each year in El Dorado County more than 14,000 calls for emergency medical assistance are received through the 911 system. The local EMS system is highly collaborative and includes: the 911 system, dispatch centers, first responders, paramedic ambulances, air ambulances, acute care hospitals, trauma centers and medical oversight by the local EMS Agency.

The EMS Agency is providing special recognition this year to the emergency medical staff from the two base station hospitals in El Dorado County, Barton Memorial Hospital and Marshall Medical Center. Individuals to be recognized include Medical Director Dr. Lars Ensign and EMS Coordinator Karla Peterson of Barton Memorial Hospital, and Medical Director Dr. Juliet La Mers, past Medical Director Dr. Ben Housel and EMS Coordinator Michele Williams of Marshall Medical Center.

For more information about the EMS Agency or the EMS System in El Dorado County click here.

Safe driving class for licensed teen drivers

Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Dan Gordon will present a three-hour safe driving seminar for teenagers May 22 from 9am to noon.

The class will be at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office Minden Station.

The class is free. Students need not reside in Douglas County.

No pre-registration or sign-up necessary, interested teens can just show up.

It is suggested students arrive a few minutes early to accommodate the class starting right at 9am.

Refreshments will be served.

This is an educational seminar for current teen drivers; it is not a driving school for pre-licensed teens.

Environmental educators get lesson about Angora Fire

By Kathryn Reed

Tromping through the forest with hard hats on, the group listened intently to scientists talk about the affects of fire

on the landscape.

The 150 people with Project Learning Tree were divided into groups Wednesday as they scoured the Tahoe Mountain area that was burned in the 2007 Angora Fire.

Today they head home – which is all over the country. The headquarters for the group is in Washington. They have been on the South Shore since Monday for a convention.



Project Learning Tree members get an education in forests and fires. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Wednesday was their field trip. Ecology and fire were the topics, according to Sarah Lobner, with the U.S. Forest Service. They started the afternoon at Taylor Creek Visitor Center.

The group of men and women are the teachers for Project Learning Tree.

“We learn how other coordinators use different activities with different audiences,” said Lori Brant, who traveled to Lake Tahoe from Connecticut for the conference. “We teach the teachers.”

Their curriculum is for K-12.

Part of the experience on the South Shore included speaking with South Tahoe High School students about how they have worked with younger students to educate them about the environment.

“We checked on the health of the trees they planted last year,” Brant said of the student project.

For more information about Project Learning Tree, click here.