Broc’s Puppies, sister store in Carson City out of business

By Kathryn Reed

Broc’s Puppies and Lil’ Pups are closed. Where the dogs are is unknown. A family member who at one time claimed to be an owner is in a Nevada prison on charges relating to violating probation regarding an earlier drug charge.

The phone numbers for the South Lake Tahoe and Carson City stores that were owned and operated by members of the Franks clan are both disconnected. Websites for both stores are still up.



Broc's Puppies has a padlock on the front door. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The van that so often was parked outside of the South Lake Tahoe store has not been seen for a few days. A padlock is on the front door. Signs are gone that had been in the window.

Peering inside it is obvious most items have been cleared out. There is no evidence any dogs are inside.

A filing cabinet with a couple missing drawers is in the back by the dumpster. Inside the dumpster is a television and the stench of animal urine.

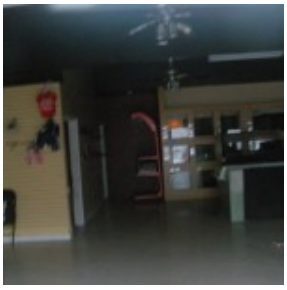
At the Carson City store the sign is still up, but the windows are covered with paper to prevent anyone from looking in.

Where the owners are is not known. Nor is it known exactly how long each store has been closed.

Sources close to the issue told *Lake Tahoe News* the Tahoe store was shuttered because the owners were evicted for not paying rent and not having the proper permits because they had begun to groom and board animals without authorization.

A South Lake Tahoe police sergeant said his department was not involved in getting the owners to leave.

Both stores were the first in the respective cities to sell puppies. After the Carson store opened in November 2006, people complained of sick dogs much like they did when the Tahoe store later opened. Animal advocates alleged puppy mills were the suppliers. Owners denied these allegations.



Not much is left inside Broc's.

A year ago, the South Lake Tahoe City Council enacted an ordinance prohibiting the sale of live dogs and cats. Broc’s was to be grandfathered in for two years.

Albert Franks at one time was the manager in Carson City and

Danny Franks had owned the store. Albert Franks is the patriarch of the family and has also managed the Tahoe store.

Albert Franks told this reporter in fall 2008 that his grandson owns the Tahoe store. David Franks is the one now in a Nevada penitentiary. He was arrested at Broc's in January.

Dennis Franks, brother of Danny, is David Franks' father. Dennis Franks was listed as the owner when El Dorado County Animal Control officers raided the store in June 2009. The District Attorney's Office had not determined if charges would be filed.

Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus concert

Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus concert "Welcome Spring" is May 1 at 7 pm at the Resort at Squaw Creek in Squaw Valley.

This spring the chorus has prepared a program to please most any taste in music, including Gilbert and Sullivan comedy sketches, a jazz and show tune section, and some classic and contemporary literature.

The Diablo Valley Philharmonic Orchestra and Chamber Singers from the Bay Area are also on the program.

Make a night of it with dinner (20 percent discount with your ticket at either Six Peaks Grille or Sandy's Pub) and concert, all at the resort.

For information or to purchase tickets, click here.

Taking precautions against West Nile virus

To the community,

Spring has El Dorado County residents thinking about gardens, hiking and the great outdoors. It is also time to think about preventing West Nile virus infection. As the weather warms, the El Dorado County Environmental Management and Health Services departments would like to remind residents to take precautions to prevent West Nile Virus.

“Prevention strategies include draining all sources of standing water and reporting dead birds and tree squirrels to the State West Nile virus hot line,” said Virginia Huber, division manager said.

April 26-30 is West Nile Virus and Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week.

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. As of April 13, there have been no reported cases of human infection with West Nile virus in California this year.

However, throughout the state, five birds have tested positive for West Nile virus, including one bird in Sacramento County. Since March of this year, four birds and one tree squirrel from El Dorado County have been sent in for testing for West Nile virus.

Health officials recommend horse owners contact their veterinarians about vaccinations for their horses, as horses are very susceptible to West Nile virus.

Local health and environmental officials continue to monitor West Nile virus activity and conduct surveillance and control activities throughout the county. Physicians routinely test for West Nile virus infection in persons with meningitis or encephalitis. The El Dorado County Environmental Management Department operates a mosquito abatement program that includes: treating standing water sources to kill mosquito larvae, mosquito trapping, canvassing communities and providing door-to-door education.

Huber recommends the following tips to prevent West Nile virus:

* Drain. Empty all sources of standing water around property to reduce mosquito breeding. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas; and keep them empty or covered when not in use.

* DEET. Use an insect repellent containing DEET, Picardin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or other approved substance on exposed skin when outdoors.

* Dusk and Dawn. Take extra precautions during these times of day, as mosquitoes are most active.

* Dress. When outdoors during peak mosquito hours or in areas where mosquitoes are active, wear long sleeves and long pants.

* Report dead birds and tree squirrels to the State hotline at 877.968.2473.

* Report green or abandoned swimming pools to Environmental Management at (530) 573.3450 in Tahoe or (530) 621.5300 in Placerville.

For more information about WNV, visit: www.edcgov.us/emd or www.westnile.ca.gov. Information is also available on the El Dorado County West Nile Virus hot lines – (530) 573.3405 or (530) 642.4968.

DA rules in favor of Grego

By Kathryn Reed

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office has reviewed material supplied to it and has determined "there does not appear to be any criminal violation of law relating to Council Member [Bruce] Grego's reimbursement for legal fees."

Grego was the subject of a divisive South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting on April 15 that will go down as the oddest meeting these five elected officials have been part of. Nothing was resolved at the end of the meeting.



Bruce Grego

Councilman Jerry Birdwell had requested the council meeting and sought the opinion of the county's highest legal authority. His belief is Grego's reimbursement with taxpayer money for the use of outside legal counsel to determine if he had a conflict of interest regarding the convention center project, was not justified.

Deputy District Attorney James Clinchard in his letter dated April 20 says to Birdwell that he can ask the grand jury to look into the matter.

Birdwell told *Lake Tahoe News* he has no intention of doing so.

Clinchard's letter said, "Whether or not such conduct violated South Lake Tahoe city guidelines for reimbursement is an issue best left to city government and the SLT City Council."

Grego was not available for comment Tuesday night.

'Celebrity' Safeway baggers to raise money for nonprofits

Safeway shoppers can join Councilman Hal Cole, KRLT-FM disc jockey Howie Nave and other locals beginning at 10am April 24 at the South Lake Tahoe Safeway store as they compete in a "celebrity bagger" contest to support Safeway's annual campaign to raise millions of dollars for people with disabilities.

Safeway is celebrating "People with Disabilities Awareness Month" and "Autism Awareness Month" and – as it has for 25 years – is raising funds for Easter Seals, Special Olympics and other organizations that help children and adults with autism and other special needs. Safeway invites all shoppers to meet the celebrities at the store where they can also make a donation which will be used exclusively for services to help people with disabilities.

SLT council proves it can play nice when the agenda is light

By Kathryn Reed

The biggest news to come out of the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting Tuesday is they all got along. With the meeting lasting less than an hour and most items being deferred to a future meeting, the biggest question was: Why was there even a meeting?

At an earlier meeting City Attorney Patrick Enright had said he was going to keep the agenda for April 20 light because he was going to be out of town. The council made it even lighter by doing almost nothing.

The issue of raising the master fee schedule received the most discussion. A full vetting of the issue was delayed until the April 27 10am special meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport. The mid-year budget will be discussed then.

Also moved to next week was discussion of creating a formal policy regarding employee meeting and travel expenditures.

Voting on the transfer of land use commodities was put off until next month.

Rich memories linger after 165 miles of Tahoe Rim Trail

By Jim Mrazek

Lake Tahoe is a jewel sitting in Northern California, rich in views from lakeside to mountaintop, and over 1600 feet at its deepest. This depth produces the stunning blue waters that can be seen from afar. That and the clarity of the lake are something that all visitors come to see and remember.

The Tahoe Rim Trail goes around the entire lake up and down through the surrounding mountain ranges and was started in 1984 and finished in 2001. Every year the Tahoe Rim Trail Association takes two groups around the 165 miles of their trail. I had heard about this trip in 2008, and it sounded like what I was looking for because of the resupply system that I could not do on my own and guides, who knew the trail and environment, so I signed up.



Julie Page, TRTA volunteer guide, and Jim Mrazek. Photo/Provided

In addition, my experience in overnight hiking in this area was limited to the Desolation Wilderness on the southwest side of the lake. I wanted to see the whole lake from different viewpoints, and this read like the trip to do that. And it

did.

So, out-of-state, in-state, adventurers and wannabes, pay attention. This could be the trip for you.

TRTA sends you lots of pre-trip information, and you weed through it to see what your needs are and how you would like to setup your own backpack and resupply bag. They supply breakfast and dinners for you to pick up at the resupply points, however, you provide your own lunches and have to plan accordingly. Emails with any questions are answered promptly.

But let's cut through to the trail and our three experienced guides: Tim, quiet, knowledgeable, and in the lead most of the time, always willing to share his extensive knowledge on places, trees and plants. His pace at first is seemingly too fast, but it readily becomes apparent that his purpose is to get you moving and yet show you everything; Ellen, experienced also and with a ready smile and pleasing manner that would make you a million dollars easy if you could bottle it, always enthusiastic and supportive; and Brett, a strong, supportive younger guy, who also has a great sense of humor coupled with a dry wit. He can carry a heavy pack and jump from stone to stone, uphill on the trail, no small feat.

Our group was the first of two. We departed on Saturday; the next one left on Sunday. We were in ages from 29 to 70. From an accountant to schoolteacher to former military, we were a variety, yet bonded pretty well after only a couple of days.

At the start of the trip on the northeast side of Lake Tahoe near Incline Village, the guides were looking over their equipment and willing to answer questions about ours. I had used walking poles once but did not have much regard for them. I asked Tim what he thought. Never long on words, he said, "I use them." I decided to take mine, and his wise counsel proved itself on the trail. Particularly after two of our group, several days into the hike, showed me the best way to use

them.

After you get about one-third of the way around the lake, you can easily look back and see the mountain ranges you have been through. It’s amazing to see our progress, but hard to believe that we have done all that. Tim points this out at regular intervals, and it’s a great motivator for me.

The tranquility and beauty of the lake and its surroundings are apparent at so many places: Star Lake, where we take a welcome swim and enjoy the sunset fading into the mountainside; Showers Lake, again we take a swim and enjoy a meal brought in by horseback, one of the pleasant surprises the TRTA arranges; a boat ride across Upper and Lower Echo Lakes, a wonderful break in our hiking with cooling winds; the campsite at Aloha Lake, set starkly against the backdrop of Mount Price; seeing some of the runs and lifts of Heavenly and Squaw Valley and other ski resorts in a summertime perspective; and the early morning mist rising off Gray Lake. These scenes are Lake Tahoe at its finest.

All of us were in pretty good shape physically. You have to be to start and you will be when you are done, at least for hiking. This is not a trip for the faint of heart. And yes, one of our group did make the decision and quit about four days out, and the other group had losses as well. If you fall behind because of blisters or exhaustion, you will get all the support you could ever want from the guides.

The one thing you have to supply for yourself is the determination and will. At one point about three days into the hike, I was running out of these, exhausted to the point that my pack became a lead weight. I was well behind the main group because Brett and I had just rebinded the two blisters on my heels. We came up on the group at a spring, where they had stopped to soak hats and bandanas in the cool water. Everyone told me to soak my hat in the cool water, but I knew if I bent over with my pack I would have great trouble standing up again

and so did not. One of the younger women in our group looked at me, asked for my hat, soaked it entirely, and handed it back. It was a revival of my spirits and will, feeling the ice cold water. I will forever be in debt to her for that simple act.

But when you stumble into camp, feet blistered or sore, shoulders aching, back crying out, there's a quick handshake from Brett with congrats on making it today. And you'll get a quick smile and positive comment from Ellen. Tim, surveying his brood, will nod his approval. That will carry you through the next day and more.

The scenery starts off exciting and with every step gets better. There are so many spectacular views that it becomes hard to pick the best. I found myself continually awed by the beauty at different viewpoints. Lake Tahoe is a jewel with many facets that can be seen from the Tahoe Rim Trail only. Vertical ascent and descent add up to about 27,000 feet. So you see different terrain from sheer rocks to lush vegetation to deep forests. And critters, from marmots to frogs to little squirrels. Deer and bear also, although we didn't see any bear. But we did carry bear canisters so we didn't have to fight them over food.

But don't think this hike is all work and no play. At one camping spot near a hotel resort, about 11 days into the hike, Ellen and Tim returned with bath towels. In hushed tones we heard the words "permission to use the showers and pool!" You can only have been there to know what that did for our tired bodies and blistered feet!

And one in our group usually had "pain medication" of the liquid variety. So although we might be tired, sore, cold, or hot, we shared common miseries and made fun of them, and laughter was usually heard throughout the group on the trail and in campsites.

The weather was cooperative for the most part. But don't be fooled by Mother Nature, particularly in this part of the world. Although warm for most of the days and nights, the last two nights were a sudden cold snap, and down came fluffy little white stuff mixed with rain. We were pretty cold, and gloves and beanie caps came out quickly.

There were great times of much laughter and joking at each other. And on the trail, after many days, it was funny to pass day hikers. They certainly could smell us, and we advised them to talk to us from the upwind side. But on the other hand, you could smell them and the soap from their shower that morning.

At the end of our 15 days we were finishing the last miles from Relay Peak (10,338 feet) when other day hikers and overnighters passed us. They invariably asked how far we had come. Some understood and cheered us on. Others simply stared or did not believe. And some shook hands and congratulated us. At times, for me, it was emotional.

At the end, the TRTA put out a yellow finish line ribbon for us to pass through. Rather than the first of our party going through, we all waited, joined arms, and went through at the same time.

On the entirety of the Tahoe Rim Trail, they have three-sided emblems marking the path. They are blue-edged with an outline of the Lake in the center. I had looked at them for 165 miles. When afterward we arrived in the TRTA offices to say our final farewells, where they have a small souvenir shop, I bought a hat which has that emblem on the front and "165 Mile Club" on the back. I will wear it proudly. I own a piece of that trail now.

If you have any questions or comments, send them to me at bananano te@aol.com. I will try to answer them or respond to comments. Or contact the TRTA at their website, www.tahoerimtrail.org.

Jim Mrazek is a former Air Force pilot. He has published several articles in his career and is co-author of a book on ultralights. He resides in El Dorado Hills.

Tahoe tourism mildly affected by Iceland's volcano

By Kathryn Reed

While the airline industry racks of billions of dollars in loses, it's hard to gauge the economic impact the volcanic eruption in Iceland will have on Lake Tahoe.

Tourism officials on the South and North shores are not reporting any inconveniences by businesses. However, that doesn't mean it isn't happening.



The volcanic eruption in Iceland has far-reaching economic consequences. Photo/Lucas Jackson/Reuters

The Black Bear Inn had a call from people in Paris unable to get out because of the flight ban. Fortunately, the South Lake Tahoe bed and breakfast was able to rebook the people for a week later, but for a shorter time.

Jerry Bindel, who is on the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association board, said with spring break and the height of ski season in the past, the impact of international travelers trying to get to Tahoe is greatly diminished compared to if this had happened a month or two ago.

“It’s a good thing it didn’t hit in the middle of winter,” Bindel said of the April 14 volcano.

European officials on Monday created three levels for allowing aircraft to fly: a “no-fly zone” directly above the cloud of ash; a “caution zone” where planes will have the engine checked for possible damage; and a “no restriction zone”.

The flight restrictions are because the plume of ash causes visibility issues, as well as possible engine seizure.

Reno-Tahoe International Airport does not have any nonstop commercial flights out of the country. (It used to into and out of Mexico and Canada.)

Heidi Jared, spokeswoman with the airport, said people with connecting flight coming to and leaving the area who could be impacted by the international incident. But she did not know how many people might have been affected when air travel abruptly halted abroad.

While travel experts resume flights, all eyes are on another volcano in Iceland that is rumbling.

STHS ushers in new era with opening of CAT building

By Kathryn Reed

Walking into the Construction, Arts and Transportation Academy students could be heard saying, “Wow!” – “It smells good.” – “It smells weird.”

It was all of the above and then some Monday on the first day of instruction in the new building on the campus of South Tahoe High School.

With only one class – small engines – being taught first period, it was rather quiet. But a certain amount of excitement was evident from this group of freshmen.



Nathan Wieburg is the first student in the new building at South Tahoe High on Monday. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Nathan Wieburg was the first person through the door.

“It’s lots better. The shop was dirty, bolts were everywhere

and the desks were falling apart," Wieburg said as he descended the stairs to the auto shop.

With all the teachers who will call the CAT building their home bringing classes in for a tour prior to last week's spring break, the students knew where to go. The guys flew down the stairs – the first staircase in the district.

Security guard Troy Gregory was holding the door for each student.

The 17 students fill the stools before the four rows of tables. Some huddled by teacher Mike Patterson's desk to get a locker.

"They built this for you," he tells the students. "You need to help take care of it."

A little glitch is the wrong lockers arrived. For now students will share. When the correct ones arrive they'll each have one to store notebooks, safety glasses and coveralls.

Something new for Patterson is having a desk.



Teacher Mike Patterson, left, talks with students.

Adjacent to the classroom is the lab area for the small engine class. Behind the classroom is the mega-auto shop with mostly new devices. What could be saved from the old shop was. But next week Patterson is looking forward to being trained on the

state-of-the-art alignment rack.

It’s not just engines the group of guys handles. (This is the first year in a while no girls have signed up for the class.) Patterson is having them put in the shelf for their workbenches by figuring out which drawer to remove, the need for a No. 3 Phillips screwdriver and an 11mm wrench.

“I think it’s pretty cool. It’ s a lot newer and nicer. We’ll be able to do more,” said Kyle Rossi as he and Jason Elder worked on putting in the shelf.

Their tools fill the top two drawers. The bottom two and the cabinet are for engines and engine parts.



Kyle Rossi assesses what to do on his work station.

Patterson told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I think this sends a really important message that taking career technical education classes is important to the district. I think they sent the opposite message before.”

Despite the significance of this being the first building to open with the $64.5 million voter approved bond money, no district office personnel or school board members were there to witness the occasion.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District Director of Facilities Steve Morales had been at the school since 5:15am – but that

isn’t unusual.

“We still have some loose ends,” Morales said. But the smile on his face was similar to that of a new parent. Video distribution should be installed in the next few days and white boards will arrive in a few weeks.

With this building open three months ahead of schedule, it means the little theater is being demolished now. A sign warning about asbestos is on one door. The clanging of SMC Contracting workers can be heard on the other side of the chain link fence.

Lots of metal fencing will remain at the school. Those getting to the CAT building must go through the C Wing. In an emergency, all doors would be available to students in the CAT building.

Because ground will be broken in May on the media arts center, the school will remain a construction zone for quite a while. That structure will go directly in front of the CAT.

Barton orthopedic center names director

Michael Lewis has been hired by Barton Health to be the director of its Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

Lewis has been the senior vice president and chief medical officer of Priority Healthcare, and most recently was the medical director of Active Implants Corporation in Southern California.



Michael Lewis

Barton is working with Accelero Health Partners, a consulting firm specializing in the development of orthopedic centers, to finalize the local center.

Working with the local orthopedic surgeons, several who have worked with the U.S. Ski and Snowboard teams, the center will incorporate surgery, medical imaging and rehabilitation teams. The multi-faceted team plans to introduce a leading-edge approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries.

The center will also be home to the Lake Tahoe Orthopedic Sports Medicine Fellowship —- an intensive training program for orthopedic surgeons from around the world that has been in existence for more than 20 years.