NDOT road safety reminder

To the community,

As summer road construction begins, the Nevada Department of Transportation is reminding motorists to drive safely in road work zones during National Work Zone Awareness Week April 19-23 and throughout the year.

“Each driver truly needs to give their undivided attention while driving, particularly through road work zones. That means always driving slowly and safely,” NDOT Director Susan Martinovich said.

Throughout the year, NDOT works to keep drivers and road workers safe, using protective barriers, warning signs, lane closures and flaggers in certain work zones. Speed limits are lowered through work zones and potential detour routes, when necessary, are established and noted with signs. All possible construction work is also scheduled during nighttime and off-peak hours.

There were 700 work zone fatalities nationwide in 2009. The last NDOT highway employee to lose his life while working in a work zone was Frank Fuentes, who was killed in 1995 by a drunken driver in Las Vegas. An NDOT employee was also seriously injured in 2008 while removing debris on Interstate 215 in Las Vegas.

Work zone driving tips, from minimizing distractions to slowing to work zone speed limits, are available on-line at www.nevadadot.com/safety. Information on current state road construction is also available at www.nevadadot.com, or by calling 511 from within Nevada.

National Work Zone Awareness Week is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration.

Clean energy innovation talk at SNC

Green pioneer Ben Solomon moderates a discussion on clean energy innovation with Jim Croce, the president and CEO of the Nevada Institute for Renewable Energy Commercialization, on April 29 at 7pm at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139.

They will explore how clean energy can contribute to economic growth and diversification. Croce will discuss the interrelation of education, sustainable technology development and deployment, and Nevada's future prosperity. He will also provide insight into NIREC's role in accelerating the commercialization of clean-energy technologies.

This ongoing series is a concept that grew out of the Seniors Conversation Café and represents a partnership between Sierra Nevada College and the IVGID Senior Programs.

Prior to the talk, staffers from the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center will be offering a tour at 6:30pm that will highlight the sustainable features of the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, the first LEED Platinum-certified building in Nevada.

A representative from Sierra Nevada College will also share news about the campus's application for Sustainable Campus Initiative funding spanning teaching, research, and certification related to renewable energy that will make SNC the only sustainable green campus in Nevada.

For more information, contact Debi Noonan at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7420 or dnoonan@sierranevada.edu.

Snow removal protection for Tahoe-Truckee gains traction

Legislation by Assemblyman Ted Gaines, R–Roseville, that would protect vital snow removal funding in Sierra Nevada, passed the Assembly Transportation Committee with bipartisan support on Monday.

“Snow removal is critical to help keep our mountain communities like South Lake Tahoe and Truckee safe and prosperous during the winter months,” Gaines said in a statement. “Not only do our roads need to remain passable at all times, but any cut to road funding in these areas would threaten public safety, the local economy and the ability for our kids to get to school in the winter months.”



Ted Gaines

Assembly Bill 2704 would ensure snow removal funding will be preserved if any allocation to local governments for road maintenance is suspended or rejected.

Last year, the Legislature narrowly escaped passing a

redirection of Highway User Tax Account funds, which would have threatened money intended for local street and road maintenance.

Control burn scheduled for Meeks Bay



U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews expect to conduct prescribed fire operations in Meeks Canyon on Lake Tahoe’s West Shore beginning April 20. The project would continue throughout the week if favorable weather conditions persist, with the goal of completing 60 acres.

State and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

Residents and travelers can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

Power on after vehicle takes out pole on Kingsbury Grade

By Kathryn Reed

A vehicle accident on Kingsbury Grade just after midnight Monday knocked out power to 2,300 customers.

All customers but the one located closest to the intersection of Kingsbury Grade and Terrace View Drive had power back on by 7:30am.

Businesses and residents on Lower Kingsbury Grade in Stateline are on a different transformer and therefore were not inconvenienced by the outage.

Fay Anderson with NV Energy said the impact broke the power pole.

The suspect fled the scene, but it’s not known in what direction. The Nevada Highway Patrol, which is investigating the accident, said it was a black four-door Lexus with California plates. A sergeant said there’s a good possibility alcohol was involved in the 12:30am accident.

Anyone with information is asked to call the NHP at (775) 688.2500.

Cost of Bay Area-run

campground in Tahoe going up

By Jeanine Benca, Contra Costa Times

LIVERMORE – If you want to stay at Camp Shelly this summer, be prepared to pay s'more.

For wholesome family fun at dirt cheap prices, local residents always have been able to count on the campground – a no-frills site near the south shore of Lake Tahoe operated by the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District. Until recently, the cost to stay at Camp Shelly was $25 per night for Livermore residents and $30 per night for nonresidents.

But the price of campfire songs and ghost stories is going up.

Read the whole story

Property tax scam warning in El Dorado County

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County residents are being advised to beware of mailers offering to reduce property taxes for a fee.

County Assessor Tim Holcomb said property owners can obtain the same tax relief without a fee by contacting the Assessor's Office.

The latest mailer, from Property Tax Assessor Records Corp., offers to help homeowners obtain a homeowner's exemption or value review, according to an Assessor's Office news release.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, April 19



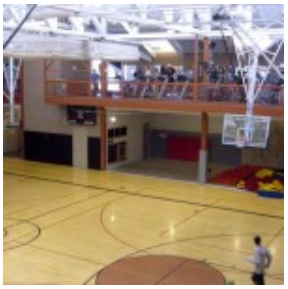
Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Douglas County Parks and Rec tries to do more with less

By Kathryn Reed

Even though nearly $1 million has been cut from the Douglas County Parks and Recreation budget in three years, expansion and improvements are always being considered.

Kahle Community Center in Stateline would like to develop its open attic space that is sitting unused. This would add about 2,000 square feet to the 22,000-square-foot gym.



Kahle Community Center is busy most hours of the day. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Different ideas have been talked about through the years, including a dance or boxing studio. More recently, having a commercial grade Wii fitness area has been bouncing around.

“We’d like to convert it to a specialized fitness facility,” said Scott Morgan, director of the parks department. “It would be a significant enhancement.”

Like most things, funding is the issue.

Morgan believes the clientele exists on the South Shore for such a facility that might appeal more to teens and young adults.

Even though part of the multi-level facility is 15 years old, and another section is 10, it looks in good condition. In the middle of the day people are playing basketball, running on the indoor track and pumping iron.

A few years ago Ray Sidney with Big George Ventures paid to have a lid put on the 800-square-foot gymnastics area.

Morgan said the number of users at Kahle has not changed much as the area has been hit by a sagging economy. In fact, he said, “Business is booming.”

Still, the parks department is taking a $350,00 hit for the next fiscal year. The department lost $300,000 for the current year and the same amount for the previous year.

“Mainly you see a reduction in service levels in our park facilities,” Morgan said. “No longer is there a nighttime ranger in all of our facilities.”

That person was responsible for making sure lights came on when they were supposed to and sprinklers weren’t soaking a field where people expected to play.

Hours have been cut, including at Kahle.

Eighteen people are expected to lose their jobs in the next fiscal year, with 3.3 full-time positions cut. In the 2009-10 budget Morgan had to cut 5.4 full-time jobs and 7.4 in 2008-09.

Tennis courts are not getting their regular maintenance. However, a $10,000 donation from the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club will allow for a crack and color coat on those courts once the snow is melted.

At Lake Tahoe, the parks department runs Kahle, Zephyr Cove Park, the park at the top of Kingsbury Grade, and the Round Hill bike path. There are 14 facilities in the Carson Valley.

Douglas County has until May 17 to finalize its 2010-11 budget that begins July 1. Commissioners last week could not decide how to trim more than $2 million.

Warming up at all-inclusive desert guest ranch



By Lisa Huard

WICKENBURG, Ariz. – About 150 years ago it was gold, the fertile soil and ranch land that drew people to this Phoenix-area town. Toiling the land is no longer necessary. The guest ranch is more about pampering than ranching.

Wickenburg is located in Arizona's Maricopa County and is approximately 12 miles square. The more than 5,000 residents live in an area full of history, things to do, and places to see. Streets are out of the Old West, and filled with shops and places to eat.

This is the gateway to a wonderful vacation destination such as a guest ranch. If you're looking for an all inclusive cruise on land, if you'd like the enjoyment of being pampered without the fear that your kids or significant other might fall over board, if you enjoy the unique beauty of the desert, if you need a break from shoveling snow, then Arizona is the place to head.

Wickenburg is a special place.

In 1862, the discovery of gold in Arizona brought many pioneers who were eager to strike it rich. One such individual was Henry Wickenburg. Here he realized his dream and established the lucrative Vulture Mine. The fertile soils of the Hassayampa drew farmers and ranchers who joined with Wickenburg along with settlers from Sonora, Mexico, and

founded the town of Wickenburg.

The young town faced many challenges – Indian wars, mine closures and a disastrous flood in 1890 – but prosperity came to the area in 1895 with the arrival of the railroad.

Since the 1920s Wickenburg has been a destination guest ranch area for tourists looking to get out of the cold and into the warmer winter climate of the desert. In fact, the population of Wickenburg doubled from 1920 to 1940.

Two successful businessmen, Charles Maguire and Belford Howard, spent many years in the area admiring the landscape. They decided it would be an excellent location for a lucrative investment – a guest ranch.

The prime area of their interest hugged the Hassayampa River valley and had a highway that connected Wickenburg with Phoenix and California. The two men, albeit both successful in business, knew they lacked the knowledge and experience of running a guest ranch. They invited Dallas C. Gant to join them in their business venture. Gant began working in the guest ranch business as a youth. With his hospitality experience, the Rancho de los Caballeros (loosely translated as the Gentlemen's Ranch) was destined for success.

The three gentlemen turned to John Gem Meem for his architectural expertise in the Pueblo Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. His vision for this oasis in the desert would include materials from Arizona. Striking flagstone was used for flooring and peeled aspen limbs used for the ceilings added to the southwest charm and appeal.

The main building, which hosts the lobby's check-in, says, "welcome" with its décor and incredible guest service personnel. The masonry construction reflects the colors of the desert and the "portales", porch covers, keep visitors cool and comfortable from the hot desert sun. The many common areas offer comfortable and handsome places to put up your boots,

rest a spell, read a good book, have a conversation, or gaze out the window.

Their hard work and dream came to fruition Thanksgiving 1948. Rancho de los Caballeros opened the ranch for a few days so Wickenburg residents and dignitaries could get a good look a place. The Wickenburg Sun reported that then California Rep. Richard M. Nixon visited the ranch and was quite taken by it. Word spread and in mid-December the ranch received its first guests.

With the success of Rancho de los Caballeros, the number of guest ranches in the region grew to eight. Wickenburg became the “Dude Ranch Capital of the World” for those that wanted to have an authentic Western experience.

Rancho de los Caballeros has continued to develop along with the idea of the perfect vacation. If you’re looking for a relaxing and beautiful place to take the family or for a getaway, make this site one that you check out. There’s something to please everyone.

Rancho de los Caballeros offers amenities galore: 18 holes of golf, swimming, birding, trap and skeet shooting, nature trails, conference meeting rooms, tennis, horseback riding, and spa. And for those of you who can’t leave the office at home, there’s WiFi.

Their “Full American Plan” provides all your meals by a crack culinary team that can be enjoyed in the several community spaces or poolside. The ranch also has a great children’s program to keep the young ranch hands engaged while the parental units breathe in the beauty of their surroundings.

Rancho de los Caballeros continues to attract guests from all over the world. Their tradition of hospitality remains strong and is something you’ll appreciate even as soon as you arrive on the property. The ranch is among the more than 200 quality hotels on the National Trust Historic Hotels of America

program, which is a part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Recognition only goes to those hotels that have faithfully maintained their historic architecture and ambience.

The ranch is just a short jaunt from downtown Wickenburg, which is filled with history, shops and a fabulous museum. I visited the Desert Caballeros Western Museum. On display until May 2 is the Cowgirl Up exhibition – it is fantastic. The art includes paintings, sculptures, and the most amazing charcoal work I've seen. Harriet "Rox" Corbett does such incredible work that it looks like a photograph. The entire museum is something to see.

Wickenburg is one hour from the Phoenix area. Transportation from Sky Harbor Airport is one of the easiest and most organized airports I've seen. One could easily holiday here for an extended period of time.

Let me help to get you started. Click here for tourism information for the Wickenburg area; Rancho de los Caballeros and here is the museum's website.