Graffiti clean-up day in South Tahoe

South Shore residents are invited to participate in a Community Graffiti Clean Up Day by Leadership Lake Tahoe.

Members are working in conjunction with the Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club.

Meet at the Boys & Girls Club (old Al Tahoe Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe) on May 1 at 10am. Volunteers will paint over graffiti in various locations around town under the guidance of the Community Service Officers of the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

The vision of this project is to foster a sense of community by bringing citizens together to collectively make a difference in the appearance of our town, as well as discourage criminal behavior in our community.

Foothill wineries working hard to keep frost from vines

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – As winter lingers at Lake Tahoe, grape growers at lower elevations in El Dorado and Amador counties are hoping spring weather becomes the norm.

Most of the vineyards are still dormant, with the Chardonnay grapes just beginning to bud. It’s that bud break combined with freezing temperatures that can destroy a harvest.

Thin-skinned grapes like Pinot Noir are more vulnerable to inclement weather, too. Cabernet grapes tend to survive nasty weather because they bud late.



No frost damage on these El Dorado County vines. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Madrona Vineyards owner-winemaker Paul Bush has been posting regularly this month to Facebook about the cold temperatures. An April 12 post says, “On the drive home, I did happen to see a wild dogwood tree blooming. Technically, it did snow on the dogwood today. And if you believe the old wives’ tale that once it snows on the dogwood it won’t freeze again in the spring, then we should be in the clear. I must say I am not superstitious, but I’ve never seen this wives’ tale to fail.”

Bush has a weather station in his Placerville vineyards. He keeps a close eye on air and leaf temperatures, and wind speed.

Raymond McKay at Chateau Rodin said buds were not coming out 3.5 weeks ago when he pruned. The Chardonnay is now beginning to push – which means the green is coming out.

The earlier vines are pruned, the earlier budding occurs.

“One advantage to being on a slope is you have constant air

drainage. Frost only does damage when it’s still,” McKay said. He has 17.5 acres in Placerville.

That’s why vineyards in low lying areas or in valleys often use wind machines to stir the air so frost can’t settle on the vines. Frost can cause damage at about 31 degrees after about 30 minutes. It’s the hours of 3-5am that are most worrisome as the mercury falls to its lowest point.

Amador County has the low Shenandoah Valley. Wind machines are more apt to be whirring there than in El Dorado County. With so much Zinfandel planted in both counties, those hearty vines are doing fine. No reports of severe damage have come in.



Boeger's grounds are in full bloom.

Greg Boeger said he and his colleagues in the wine business wouldn’t begin to breath easy until the second week of May when the threat of a freeze should be long gone.

“It’s been really exciting,” Boeger said of the spring weather. He owns Boeger Winery in Placerville. “For the most part to date we have dodged a bullet.”

He’s been running sprinklers on the higher elevation vineyards to protect against frost. Sprinkler systems raise the temperature in the vineyard.

Charlie Jones, vineyard manager at Lava Cap Winery, said, “During a hard frost late in the spring, a winery could lose

half of its fruit or more.”

Rain isn’t a concern; it’s the temperatures.

Richard Stading, owner-winemaker at Auriga Wine Cellars in Camino, is hoping all the moisture will mean a bountiful harvest like what occurred in 2005, 2007 and 2009.



Richard Stading

“A lot of white wines will probably come in early. The reds will probably be good if we wait,” Stading said.

Youths’ forest fire detection plan becomes documentary

Join Graham Kent, Heidi Buck and the Forest Guard Students. This documentary presents a whirlwind year in the life of six home-schooled children the foothills of Northern California who have developed an ingenious invention for the early detection of forest fires. What starts as a local environmental solution evolves into an idea that could have a major global impact after they win top prize at the Global Children’s Climate Competition and with it, the chance to have their dream become reality.

Their invention is a network of cameras located around forests that send real-time pictures to hundreds and thousands of desktops, turning people all over the world into Forest Guards. Their Forest Guard concept catches the eye of a top R&D specialist at Sony who invites the kids to work with some of the best engineers and designers in the business to help the Forest Guards develop their concept into a workable prototype. Real-world experience at the forefront of technological design is contrasted with the everyday lives of the kids at home in Meadow Vista, a picture-perfect foothills community of rolling hills, farms, forests, and lakes. But during the worst summer in California history for fires, a major blaze rages dangerously close to their homes – many of them are forced to evacuate. With no sign that things will get any better in summers to come, it couldn't be a better time to raise awareness of forest fires and what we can do to prevent them.

As the first prototypes are tested near Tahoe National Forest, the Forest Guards are invited to the UN's Global Environmental Conference in Copenhagen to present their idea to global environmental and world leaders – and they become ambassadors for the innovations of young people in the ongoing dialogue about the future of our planet.

Learn about this project

Date: May 4

Time: 6pm (No-Host bar 5:30-6pm)

Location: Assembly Rooms 139 & 141, Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College)

Jon Knox Springmeyer 1950-2010

A celebration of life is scheduled for 2pm April 24 in Gardnerville for fourth-generation Nevada native and Douglas High School graduate Jon Knox Springmeyer, 59, who died April 10, 2010, at his home in Carson City. He was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 2005.

Born April 25, 1950, on Carson City to Melvin “Buzz” and Marjorie Johnson Springmeyer, both of whom were early Carson Valley settlers.

While growing up on the family’s J Lazy J Ranch, he helped his father run cattle up to South Lake Tahoe. It was during this time that his love of the outdoors and his appreciation of Native American culture emerged.



Jon Knox Springmeyer

A 1968 graduate of Douglas High School, Mr. Springmeyer went on to earn a business degree at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1972. It was at UNR that his cowboy charisma attracted the attention of Bonnie Connolly. After meeting on a blind date, the two quickly became inseparable and were married in 1971 following a two-year courtship.

After graduating from the McGeorge School of Law in 1980, he established a private practice in Carson City, where he

quickly developed a reputation for treating his clients as close friends. Later Mr. Springmeyer joined his long time friend and mentor, John Reiser, at Reiser & Associates Insurance. He cared deeply about helping others, both in his professional and personal life and was always available to offer advice and guidance.

“Jon was a man every person should strive to be more like and we are all better people for having had him in our lives,” said friend Steve Sperry. “He will be missed more than can be imagined.”

Mr. Springmeyer’s hobbies included camping, archery, muzzle loading and attending Burning Man. He loved entertaining his friends with anecdotes and practical jokes.

“Jon would focus his attention on those around him, and always welcomed visitors,” said son Erin. “He loved life and fought for every moment he had with his friends and family.”

In addition to his wife of 38 years, he is survived by his mother Marjorie; sons Erin (Diane) and Ryan (Rachel); and daughter Sara.

The celebration of life is at the home of Kelly Connolly, 2276 Pinenut Road, Gardnerville, NV 89410. Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society in Mr. Springmeyer’s name. For more information, visit www.cancer.org.

Bear Valley construction plans take shape

By Michael Kay, Union Democrat

Bear Valley could break ground as early as next summer on a three-decades-in-the-making plan to build a gondola from base camp to one of the peaks at the ski resort.

Regulations and requirements from both Alpine County and the U.S. Forest Service have stalled the improvements in the five years since the current owners took over the resort in 2005.

But if the process rolls smoothly along, construction could begin on the estimated $7 million lift by next summer, Rosie Sundell, the resort's senior marketing director, told attendees at the Angels Camp Business Association meeting Monday night.

Read the whole story

Lahontan, Forest Service plans for Angora burn area

Click on letter to find out more about Lahontan Water Quality Control Board's plans regarding work in the stream environmental zone in the Angora burn area.

Chamber mixer in South Tahoe

The Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce will host an Earth Day Business After Hours Mixer at Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe on April 22 from 5:30–7:30pm.

Join Chamber members to celebrate the Earth and learn about green business practices in our community. The Tahoe Chamber Green Business Cooperative will share videos and information on products and practices that can be easily implemented to make your business more earth friendly. Geotourism representatives from the Sierra Business Council will display the new Geotourism website and show how you can nominate a favorite Tahoe attraction. Nature artwork by local artists will also be featured.

In honor of Earth Day, local and organic food and wine will be offered.

Admission is $10 for chamber members and $20 for non-members.

For more information, visit www.tahoechamber.org or call (775) 588.1728.

Heavenly, Diamond Peak eager to begin construction

Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The summer construction season doesn't look very promising in the Truckee Meadows, but two Lake Tahoe-area ski resorts will build facilities this summer.

Construction of a new lodge at the top of Heavenly Mountain Resort's gondola is expected to begin by mid June, and Diamond Peak Ski Resort will start construction of a new skier services building on May 1.

The 14,720-square-foot lodge at Heavenly will be a year-round facility housing food and beverage services and restrooms,

says Casey Blann, vice president of mountain operations. Currently there is no indoor seating at the



Artist's rendering of the lodge to be built at the top of Heavenly's gondola.

top of the gondola, far and away the main people mover at the 4,800-acre resort.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, April 16



Go ski. Several resorts are calling it quits for the season after this weekend. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

South Tahoe council reaches its lowest level to date

By Kathryn Reed

Bruce Grego. That was the topic for more than two hours as the South Lake Tahoe City Council conducted a special meeting Thursday about whether the city councilman should have been reimbursed with taxpayer dollars for his use of outside counsel.

Tension filled the room. Hostilities – verbal and body language – were everywhere.

In the end, nothing was resolved.



Councilman Bruce Grego, standing, defends his actions as colleagues Jerry Birdwell and Hal Cole listen. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The council did agree things could have been handled better regarding the issue. But how they should be handled in the future was neither discussed nor asked to be put on a future agenda.

One thing the city could do is have warrants come before the council before they are paid – all but staff paychecks. This would eliminate situations like the Grego brouhaha. This is common practice in other cities.

The city has changed the policy when it comes to hiring outside legal counsel. It now all goes through the city attorney's office. Grego, with everyone else, voted on this last summer. Still, he did not bring to his colleagues' attention that he had personally sought outside legal counsel with the city manager's permission and that he had billed the city for it. The other council members were not aware of this until the warrants were in their packet for the April 6 meeting or *Lake Tahoe News* called them. (Here is the original story.)

Grego never said Thursday he would have done anything differently. He was adamant it was his right to collect $937.50 in taxpayer money for having hired Dennis Crabb work on his behalf with the Fair Political Practices Commission regarding a potential conflict of interest he has as the attorney for Lakeside water district when it comes to voting on redevelopment matters near Stateline.

It has not been explained why the money is coming out of the Redevelopment Area 2 fund when the council hasn't even created such an area.

Grego was a member of the public for the hearing because legally he couldn't vote on the matter because it involves him and more than $500.

Most members of the public in situations like this are given five minutes to defend themselves or make their case. Grego

was allowed to talk as long as he wanted.

Mayor Kathay Lovell looked a bit despondent through much of the proceeding. Lovell was inconsistent with the use of her gavel as about a half dozen members of the public spoke, and the councilmen kept interrupting each other and the public.

Lovell and Councilman Bill Crawford kept squabbling like children.

All the meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport seemed to accomplish was to further divide the council and make it apparent that it is going to be a long four months until City Manager Dave Jinkens retires, and even longer until a potential new council is seated in December.

What did come to light is:

• Jinkens admitted he’s talked to the grand jury about various issues in the city.

• City Councilman Jerry Birdwell has spoken to the district attorney and taken the Grego issue to the Justice Department via the FBI. His issue is the use of public funds for private matters. (He called for the meeting and was visibly upset through the proceedings.)

• Crawford believes Grego and Jinkens are in collusion and that corruption has occurred. He considers his most important responsibility to be fiduciary.

• Grego called the comments against him slanderous and welcomes any investigation.

• Jinkens said comments spoken Thursday were atrocious and possibly violated state law.

• Cole and Lovell said no criminal behavior has occurred.

• Former City Attorney Cathy DiCamillo signed the letter to

the FPPC that Crabb wrote. Grego, when asked by Crawford if he had an ethical issue with that transaction, said “no.” After the meeting, City Attorney Patrick Enright said that behavior is not normal in legal circles. (DiCamillo no longer lives in South Lake Tahoe.)

• Grego and Birdwell remember having breakfast in April 2009 to discuss the reimbursement issue. Grego said Birdwell’s advice was to submit the bill to get a check from the city. Birdwell said his advice was to take it before the City Council.

• A memo from now former City Attorney Jacqueline Mittelstadt dated Aug. 20, 2009, said she vetted the reimbursement issue with the finance committee of Hal Cole and Birdwell. Cole has zero recollection of any such meeting. Grego said he has no memory of it either. Birdwell has a copy of the document. (Most items are emailed between staff and council members, however Grego has documents faxed to him or hand delivered because he doesn’t use email.) Grego said perhaps Birdwell’s friendship with Mittelstadt is why he has the document and others don’t; implying that the memo may never been disseminated to the people who were supposed to get it.

• The sequence of Grego asking for permission from Jinkens to seek outside counsel, subsequent emails, memos, other conversations-documentation, requisition for payment – the time line of it all was convoluted and never linked together in a manner to prove everything was on the up and up or not. (Grego has never explained why he didn’t immediately seek clarification about the potential conflict when first elected since he knew all along there could be one. He was on the City Council in the last 1980s and is not a newcomer to how things work in city government. Plus, he has worked for the water district for 10 years and the hole was there when he was elected.)

• The timing of Cole, Grego and Lovell seeking the dismissal

of Mittelstadt was linked to the timing of memos involving the Grego issue. Nothing was proved.

• Kenny Curtzwiler, a vocal member of the community who lives in the county, said he thought this matter should have been heard in closed session. He said until this meeting he thought the seated council was the best he’s seen South Lake Tahoe elect and called Jinkens the best city manager.

• Peggy Cocores took issue with Curtzwiler’s statement.