Spike in Calif. students seeking financial aid

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

After years of rising tuition and pressure on household budgets, a record number of students across California are applying for college financial aid.

Over the last six school years, the number of California residents filing the federal financial aid application jumped nearly 74 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Some local colleges saw even higher increases, such as an 81 percent rise among California State University, Sacramento, applicants.

It’s the latest sign that college families have grown akin to mall shoppers when it comes to price: fewer and fewer expect to pay sticker price.

Read the whole story

Talk to focus on breast cancer

Understanding Your Risk of Breast Cancer is the topic of Kim Evans’ lecture on March 12.

Evans is a doctor with Barton General Surgery.

Learn about breast cancer screening, prevention and detection. BRCA 1 and 2 gene mutations will be discussed as well as

surgical treatment options.

The 6-7pm talk is free. It will be in the board room at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

Ligety takes gold in GS; Jitloff 15th

The United States added another gold medal at to its collection at the Sochi Games when Ted Ligety flew down the giant slalom course on Wednesday.

In doing so, Ligety became the first U.S. man to win two Olympic gold medals in Alpine skiing.

He won with a time of 2:45.29.

Tim Jitloff of Reno had the next best time for the U.S. men at 2:47.13. He finished 15th.

Steve Missillier of France took silver with a time of 2:45.77, while the bronze went to Alexis Pinturault with a time of 2:45.93.

Jared Goldberg from the U.S. finished 19th, followed by Bode Miller at 20.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

SLT parking to include reduced fines, locals pass

By Kathryn Reed

Paid parking is going to remain in South Lake Tahoe – for now. But it's going to look different than it did last summer.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council on Feb. 18 had a two-part session – morning and evening – so the public could hear where the program is, learn about proposed changes, and give their input.



Venice Drive in South Lake Tahoe will not have paid parking, and the future of boat trailers will be decided later. Photo/LTN file

Changes include:

• A $35 fine for violations at kiosks. It has been $55. (There are now times when warnings are issued.)

• The city will have no paid parking on Venice Drive. The issue of boat/trailer parking will be addressed at a future meeting.

• Annual passes for locals will be $40. A local is defined as anyone living full time on the South Shore in ZIP codes including South Lake Tahoe, Meyers, Stateline and Zephyr Cove. The passes will be valid Monday-Friday.

• The hours of enforcement will be from 8am to 8pm. It had been until 10pm.

Exactly when these changes take place has yet to be decided.

Because the council on Tuesday morning opted to put a question before the voters in June asking if they want the paid parking program to remain, improvements that require money will not take place this summer. The thinking is that it would not be fiscally prudent to make improvements that may turn out to be temporary. (If voters say no, it will not change Bellamy Court, Transit Way or the Heavenly Village parking garage.)

This means the dirt at Lakeside used for parking would not be paved in May as was the original plan. The street was going to be realigned, along with the possibility of creating an employee parking area.

Striping, lighting and signage improvements are also on hold anywhere there are kiosks.

If the entire program were to be scrapped today it would cost about $620,000. This includes $191,000 to pay off the kiosks and losing projected revenues that have already been allocated.

The manufacturer of the kiosks has told the city it would not buy them back. They city could on its own try to sell them.

That $620,000 includes getting rid of Transit Way and Bellamy Court. Revenue there is about $85,000 a year. And if the city were to get rid of those kiosks, it would have a ripple effect involving the Heavenly Village parking garage. This is because people who purchased the bonds were told there would not be

competing free parking nearby.

“Termination of the program is based on what is budgeted,” City Manager Nancy Kerry said. “These are estimates.”

She added that estimates are on track. For the first three months of the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 $28,000 has been collected from parking.

Some of the new kiosks were installed in June, others in July. This means the city has not had a full year to know if its projected revenues are accurate. There have been about 63,000 transactions since the inception.

“If parking stays, it’s a real opportunity to see what kind of revenue is generated over the long run and where those funds could be spent,” Kerry said.

Besides using the parking revenue for operations and maintenance in the areas where the kiosks are located, other ideas for spending that cash include a bike path from Lakeview Commons to Ski Run Boulevard and improvements at Lakeside Beach area. But those ideas will not be fully explored until after the June election.

If parking stays, there is talk of having the neighborhoods with kiosks form groups to have input on how revenues are spent.

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In other news:

• There will be a special council meeting Feb. 24 at 5:30pm to iron out the ballot arguments for the parking question.

• Tahoe Prosperity Center’s board is meeting Friday with the goal of hiring an executive director.

• In April the council will hear from the fire chief about how

prepared the city is when it comes to dealing with a dry summer.

• Lakeview Commons is officially closed because when there has been snow people were riding the rails and sledding. The city would be liable if anyone got injured.

Opinion: Olympians prove Tahoe is recreation oasis

By Joanne Marchetta

The roster of U.S. Olympic athletes competing in Sochi this year is testament to the Tahoe region's reputation as an outdoor Mecca for mountain athletes. More than a dozen of our nation's competitors at the Games hail from the Tahoe area and our communities couldn't be more proud of these young athletes.

Lake Tahoe's natural attributes make it an incredible place to live, work and play and we are hearing more and more that communities want recreation and the outdoor lifestyle to play a larger role here.



Joanne Marchetta

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Olympics are connected historically. Following the 1960 Winter Games at Squaw Valley an uncontrolled development boom ensued that spurred TRPA's creation in 1969. Over the last 45 years, TRPA has evolved and since the update of the Regional Plan in 2012, the agency is embracing its leadership role in sustaining Tahoe as an outdoor legend.

Our updated priorities include raising TRPA's focus back to the regional level that was originally envisioned when California and Nevada created the bi-state agency. The area plan framework of the Regional Plan encourages local governments to take on more responsibility for planning, environmental improvement, and project permitting, which streamlines the permit process for property owners while enabling TRPA to focus on issues that affect the entire Basin and build the partnerships to address them.

As conditions change in the Tahoe basin such as prolonged drought or less snowfall over time, how we connect people to recreation opportunities has regional importance to our $5 billion regional economy as well as our quality of life. Many of our Olympians could testify to both. They and their families had to support themselves while reaching for their Olympic dreams. The reality is that many families struggle to stay here and with a regional economy that is based on tourism, recreation improvements can bolster our economy while making Lake Tahoe an even better place to earn a living and raise a family.

Topping the regional list for needed recreation improvements is completion of a bikeway around the lake. Many key segments of this trail have been in use for years and TRPA has prioritized completing connections and seeing this project through. We share this goal with many partner agencies and the collaborative efforts are bringing forward new sections through Homewood, between Incline Village and Sand Harbor, and from Van Sickle Bi-State Park in Stateline to Roundhill Pines

Beach in Nevada. Bike trails deliver air and water quality improvements while resulting in millions of dollars of economic activity to our local economy.

The southern anchor of the Stateline-to-Stateline Bikeway near Nevada Beach is already proving to be an amazing sample of the basin's transition from gaming to outdoor recreation. People now can bike through the forest to one of several marquee beaches, or hike to the Tahoe Rim Trail right from the largest hotel base on South Shore without once getting in a car. Continuing to plan for and implement these types of improvements will help reduce driving and congestion, enhance our quality of life, and make Tahoe more competitive among mountain resorts.

Other than improving connections between people and recreation, in the coming year TRPA is focusing on basinwide sustainability initiatives, transportation improvements in key corridors, finding a stable source of funding for the Environmental Improvement Program, and supporting forest fuel reduction and defensible space efforts in one of the driest years on record. Also, regional partnerships are critically important this year for the lake. Already we are preparing for the possibility of drought conditions in the shorezone, making strides in aquatic invasive species protection, working with scientists on near shore-shoreline clarity and algae growth, and helping improve systems to monitor environmental quality as well as social and economic issues.

As a region and as individual communities mapping out their unique destinies, Lake Tahoe is on a path of positive progress. As we welcome home the many Tahoe Olympians who represented the U.S. in this Winter Games, let's remember that we owe it to future Olympians to continue protecting our mountain lifestyle, improving our fragile environment, and preparing for a changing landscape.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional

Planning Agency.

Skiers die at Sugar Bowl, Northstar

By Gus Thomson, Auburn Journal

A Sugar Bowl resort employee from Brazil and a 43-year-old Belmont man skiing at Lake Tahoe have died after crashing into trees while skiing.

On Thursday, the body of 18-year-old Santos Constantine Martins Bezerra of Sao Bernardo, Brazil, was found by a snowshoer at the Sugar Bowl resort. His body was found in the late morning in an area off the resort's trail system, said John Monson, Sugar Bowl spokesman.

On Friday, Belmont resident Lindsay Allen Van Why died after hitting a tree while skiing at Northstar.

Read the whole story

Curling a hot sport in South Lake Tahoe

By Larry Sidney

Some quick Olympic trivia: What is the most talked about sport in the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games in terms of social media?

Curling.



South Lake Tahoe curling founder Larry Sidney, center, with members of U.S. Women's curling team members in Sochi. Photo/Provided

By now you've probably seen those 42 pound granite stones sliding down the ice, as two players sweep their way down the ice in front of it. It's quite addicting, really, and right now the world is abuzz talking about curling.

South Lake Tahoe is the home of Lake Tahoe Epic Curling (LTEC), and they have also noticed the spike in interest.

We have quite a few people signed up for this week's learn-to-curl. In fact, the club has had more curling requests in the last week than they do in a typical month, including requests for private ice sessions.

I'm in Sochi where there are thousands of people at every curling session. People are talking about it all over the Olympic Park. All of the excitement here is showing up at our club back in Tahoe.

Lest you think you've missed your chance to check out the local curling scene, fear not. In conjunction with the finish of the Olympics, LTEC is sponsoring an open house Feb. 23 from 6-8pm at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena on Rufus Allen

Boulevard. The event is free to attend, and you can watch LTEC’s experienced curlers match up in league play.

For the more adventurous, try it yourself from either 6-6:45m or 7-7:45pm. Reservations are required for this, so you will need to email Info@tahoecurling.com to sign up. There is a small fee for participating, and you can find more information on the club’s website.

Larry Sidney is co-founder of Lake Tahoe Epic Curling.

Report card: Nev. housing market earns a C

By Michelle Bliss, NPR

Nevada’s housing market earned a C grade from the state department of business and industry for its performance in the final quarter of last year.

The grade is part of the Nevada Housing Stability Index report, which looks at a dozen different factors affecting the market like foreclosure volumes and underwater loan percentages.

Research analysts say a C represents average quality and is an improvement from the D+ Nevada earned at the end of 2012.

Read the whole story

Manufacturers make push to with gluten free food

By Stephanie Strom, New York Times

The Girl Scouts recently introduced a gluten-free chocolate chip shortbread cookie to their annually anticipated line of sweet treats. Vodka companies vie over which one of them was the “first” to introduce a gluten-free version of their products. And Trader Joe’s recently joked in an advertising flier promoting gluten-free foods that it was selling “Gluten Free Greeting Cards 99 Cents Each! Every Day!” – even though it then went on to say the cards were not edible.

Makers of products that have always been gluten-free, including popcorn, potato chips, nuts and rice crackers, are busy hawking that quality in ads and on their packaging.

And consumers are responding with gusto. The portion of households reporting purchases of gluten-free food products to Nielsen hit 11 percent last year, rising from 5 percent in 2010.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe voters to decide on paid parking

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe voters will get to decide whether there are parking meters in town.

The City Council unanimously decided Tuesday to put the question before voters June 3. If the majority says no to paid parking, then the program ends Aug. 31. If voters say yes, then it stays.

No matter what happens, the kiosks on Bellamy Court and Transit Way will remain and the parking garage at Heavenly Village is not affected.

Tahoe 4 Tahoe, a group of concerned citizens, had brought an initiative forward in hopes of asking voters to do away with paid parking. But during the process it came to light that this was not the legal way to change the parking policy. Plus, the initiative reached beyond the original intent and would have far-reaching consequences involving other ordinances.

The Tahoe 4 Tahoe group, represented by attorney Bruce Grego, formally withdrew its initiative Feb. 18 with the caveat the council put its own question before voters.

The council then immediately voted to rescind the fiscal impact study that it had approved at an earlier meeting to study the impacts of Tahoe 4 Tahoe’s ballot question. That study was going to cost no more than $25,000.

A June election will cost the city approximately $10,000.