# Yosemite area project would challenge Tahoe for visitors

**By John Holland, Modesto Bee**

BIG OAK FLAT – This tiny town on the way to Yosemite National Park could get two large hotels, an indoor water park, an IMAX theater and other attractions.

The project, planned for a long-barren site on Highway 120 that local residents refer to as “the scar,” would be the biggest commercial development in southern Tuolumne County.

The plans have been discussed for several years and reached a milestone this month with the launch of an environmental study.

Developer Morgan Burkett said the highway, one of three major routes into the park, is ripe for the $60 million project.

**Read the whole story**

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# 4th-grader’s salsa a hot topic

**By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee**

Diego Bartolome just wanted to start a salsa business to help his mom after she lost her job. What the El Dorado County fourth-grader didn’t expect was a crash course in red tape.

The 10-year-old co-founded a hot little salsa company, grossing $1,000 from his Diego’s Awesome Salsa by December and

landing accounts at grocery stores. The salsa boy also got a taste of the media spotlight, with a profile in The Bee and an appearance on Channel 31's "Good Day Sacramento."

**Read the whole story**

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# NDOT touts 511 road information

**To the community,**

The Nevada Department of Transportation's (NDOT) 511 Nevada Travel Info system has served more than 2 million calls for instant, free road weather and construction conditions.

Motorists can dial 511 toll-free, 24 hours a day for automated Nevada state road conditions, construction updates, weather forecasts, chain controls and scheduled event road closures. Newly-enhanced, hands-free voice recognition allows voice commands without pushing number selections. Out-of-state callers can dial 1-877-NV-ROADS to receive the same information. The road listings are also available on-line at www.nvroads.com. Online and by phone, users select their chosen road by state route number.

The service was activated for testing in August 2006 and officially introduced to the public in November of that year. In December 2009 alone, the system received 154,315 calls. The peak call month of January 2008 saw 223,160 calls for road information.

511 is an invaluable tool for the most up-to-date state road conditions, and we've been able to serve 2 million calls for information, NDOT Director Susan Martinovich explained. With the spring and summer construction season arriving soon, the service is ready to provide important road construction information to even more drivers.

The systems ongoing maintenance and long-distance charges are funded by NDOT's roadside logo sign program at no taxpayer expense. The 511 system was developed by transportation and meteorological technology company, Meridian Environmental Technology.

For safety, motorists are encouraged to dial or log on before driving.

**Nevada Department of Transportation**

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# Virginia City cemetery sleuths don't rest

**By Ashley Power, Los Angeles Times**

You'd expect some weird things in Candace Wheeler's work space, since she helps manage burial grounds near the former Comstock Lode, and the 120-pound sleeping cherub on her filing cabinet certainly fit the bill.

Someone had swiped it from a Virginia City cemetery decades ago. A woman rediscovered it while cleaning her grandfather's garage and brought it to the Comstock History Center.

"It doesn't even faze you, not up here," Wheeler said of the curious donation. Stuff plundered from the Comstock cemeteries

has a way of boomeranging back.

**Read the whole story**

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# KTHO – Ask the TRPA

Call in to KTHO FM 96.1/AM-590 (530.544.8255) Thursday morning starting at 10:15 when *Lake Tahoe News* Publisher Kathryn Reed moderates the Ask the TRPA radio show. Or listen online at www.kthoradio.com. Email a question to info@LakeTahoeNews.net before 9:30am Thursday to have it asked and answered on the air.

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# Lake Tahoe ski report, March 24



Expect the sun to be shining all day. A small storm may roll in tonight. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

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# Talent contest applicants sought

The 5th annual STARS of Tomorrow Talent Competition is April 22 at the South Tahoe Middle School Theater from 6-9pm.

The competition is open to students in grades 9-12 on the South Shore, California and Nevada.

Applicants will be judged on technique, difficulty, staging, and presentation. The competition will be open to soloists, duets, trios, and quartets in vocal or instrumental music, dance, drama, and other performing arts.

Applications and copies of the contest rules will be available from performing arts instructors and at the school administrative offices.

For more information, call Dick Van Buskirk at (530) 541.6487 or Margie Maxhimer at (530) 318.7717.

Applications must be submitted to the Kiwanis Club by 5pm April 12.

Students planning to compete must be available for dress rehearsal on April 21at the South Tahoe Middle School Theater from 6-9pm.

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# Whittell principal calling it

# quits

**By Kathryn Reed**

Sue Shannon will in essence be graduating with the class she welcomed as freshmen to Whittell High School.

The principal is retiring at the end of the school after being at the helm for four years and in education for 39 years.

The Zephyr Cove 7-12 school is a much different place compared to when she started. For starters, it was a 9-12 school. Classes were taught five days instead of the current four. The disconnect between the school and community was enormous.

One thing the next principal will have in common with Shannon is starting the school year with a new superintendent prowling the offices in Minden. The board now has two major vacancies to fill.

But beyond the obvious changes to an outsider, Shannon altered the culture of the school. She took over from Janie Gray, who was not well received by staff, parents or students. In fact, teachers walked out in protest while she was there.

Shannon, though, won't take full credit for the changes.

"A lot of it was modeling, being clear about what I expected," Shannon said. "And it was identifying student leaders to make those changes."

She credits the staff, parents and community for being part of the change as well.

When declining enrollment forced Kingsbury Middle School to close and Whittell to add two grade levels, Shannon formed a consolidation committee made up of students. She renamed it the Student Issues Committee when the transition was completed. This was to allow a free flow of ideas between her

and students.

“I believe there is a very solid foundation,” Shannon said of Whittell.

Coming from Los Angeles, Shannon anticipated the smallness of the school and the good and bad that might come with that.

“I didn’t anticipate the phenomenal community and parent support,” Shannon said.

She says the job of an educator is never done. Even though academic achievement is high at Whittell, she said a goal would be to rise to the next level.

“I’m always wanting more students to take ownership of the functioning of the school. I would like to increase the percentage of students in that matter,” she said.

In terms of education as a whole, after nearly four decades in the business, Shannon says the system is better and worse off than when she started.

“No Child Left Behind did raise the expectations of every child, not just the strong students. Conversely, I hope at some point No Child Left Behind will go to a growth model instead of just criteria because it doesn’t reward and recognize schools which maybe haven’t met the bar, but made tremendous growth,” Shannon said.

Shannon can’t imagine not working, but what she might do for part-time work after retirement remains to be seen. Traveling and exploring Tahoe are definitely on the 61-year-old’s to-do list.

“For one thing, I want to try cross country skiing and snowshoeing,”Shannon said. “I live in beautiful Lake Tahoe and there is so much I want to experience.”

Starting her day by being on campus before 7am, attending

several night events each week and busy weekends have not allowed the Stateline resident to see much of Lake Tahoe.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed working at this school. This is a fabulous way to end my career,” Shannon said.

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# El Dorado County charter issues may be on November ballot

**By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee**

El Dorado County voters may be asked to decide three county charter-related issues in November, including whether to repeal the charter.

Following a special meeting last week to discuss recommendations of the charter review committee, the county supervisors directed staff members to further investigate issues and prepare language for three potential ballot measures, said Mike Applegarth, a spokesman for the county chief administrator’s office.

The first, in keeping with recommendations of the charter review committee and the 2008-09 grand jury, would allow voters to decide whether to repeal the charter.

**Read the whole story**

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# Tahoe Tallac Association fires executive director




**By Kathryn Reed**

When the 2010 season opens for the Tahoe Tallac Association in five weeks, it will be under the direction of new leadership.

Steve Farnsley, who had been executive director for a little more than two years, was let go earlier this month. In his place on an interim basis is Lori Cramer. Cramer gave up her role as a board member, which she has had on and off for about five years, in order to take the helm.

The association runs festivals and theater performances at the Tallac Site near Camp Richardson off Highway 89 on the South Shore from spring through fall.

The entire Tallac Historic Site is 74 acres. The Valhalla Grand Hall, Boathouse Theatre, and twin cabins that house the gift shop and artists in residence are leased by the association from the U.S. Forest Service. The agreement calls for 20 percent of the association's gross going toward restoration of the site.

At times the association and Forest Service have been at odds. Cramer said she met this week with the federal agency.

"It's a brand new day," she said of the relationship. "We all agreed to act as a team."

Cramer has been spending the last few days making sure

everything is in order – which so far it is. She's familiarizing herself with the contracts and festival list. This will be the 31st year of the Valhalla Arts and Music Festival.

"I already know everybody so I don't have to learn the ins and outs of a new community. Hopefully, that will help," Cramer said. "I don't know if you will notice big changes except my goal is to get more community exposure."

One thing she wants to do is have the Valhalla building open when events aren't going on. She would like tours led by volunteers.

The other thing the new director wants to do is secure more members. She wants so create a sense of ownership for locals of this site and the events.

For the past 15 years Cramer has run Sierra Weddings. She will continue to that for now.

"I'm always trolling for new opportunities out there. I don't see this as a complete change. I see it as an expansion of events," Cramer said.

Cramer is the fifth executive director in the association's history. Carol Spain and a handful of others are credited with making the Tahoe Tallac Association a reality. Spain left for the Bay Area in 2002.

"There's definitely been a hole since Carol Spain. She was a tremendous woman. To be sitting in her shoes is a huge honor for me," Cramer said.

Board President Eric Taxer said the board would take a close look this summer at what it wants from an executive director, restructure job duties, look at the salary and seek to hire someone permanently when the season is over in the fall.

Taxer would not elaborate on what led the board to sever

relations with Farnsley.

For the Tahoe Tallac Association’s 2010 list of events, click here.