South Shore students map course to state Geography Bees

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – If you need to know where in the world something is, Hilton Atherton and Goody Walowit are the ones to ask.

Atherton, a Zephyr Cove Elementary School sixth-grader, is headed for the Nevada state Geography Bee in Las Vegas next month. Walowit, a seventh-grader at South Tahoe Middle School, is headed to Sacramento for the California bee.

“The best way to study states is with a blank map and fill it out,” Atherton said. “The most important thing is you get an atlas.”



Hilton Atherton

Atlases are used for learning where rivers, mountain ranges and islands are. Some geography books have questions in them that he uses to test himself. He spends 15 to 30 minutes a day preparing for the state competition.

“I’ve been giving him resources to study,” Principal Nancy Cauley said. “He is a very bright boy.”

Atherton said he’s not nervous. He said he thinks it will be

fun. Plus, this will be the first time he's been to Las Vegas.

"It's fun to know where places are; where famous landmarks are," Atherton said.

He reached the state level by winning the school competition. Atherton had to know things like how many countries the Himalayas cross. Then in February he had to take a written test. His success on that was his ticket into the Vegas competition.

Walowit also had to take a written test after winning his school competition. This is his second time to make it to the state level, where he will compete against 99 other students in grades four through eighth.

"His family is helping him prepare. He has some books and materials," teacher Kathy Brown said.

Members of the school PTA helped prep the STMS students through games and other enrichment programs before the local geography bee.

Whoever wins each state competition in the first week of April will qualify for May's national Geography Bee in Washington.

DUI checkpoint keeps drivers on a straight path

By Kathryn Reed

Balancing on one foot with the other off the ground, but parallel to it, the South Lake Tahoe man counted to 30. He walked a straight line while counting. He did everything the

officer asked him to do.

Even though the pupils of his eyes bounced around enough for him to be pulled out of the line of cars during the St. Patrickâ€™s night DUI checkpoint, this local was let go. He and his female passenger, who was wearing a festive green and white hat, were allowed to drive home. At least thatâ€™s where they said they were headed after being at McPâ€™s.



SLT police Officer Berry Rider at Wednesday's DUI checkpoint. Photo/Kathryn Reed

People under the influence usually cannot track well with their eyes. The same goes for someone with a head injury.

Wednesday night was the second of five DUI checkpoints the South Lake Tahoe Police Department will conduct in a yearâ€™s time, with funding through a grant.

Another grant that multiple agencies in El Dorado County were just awarded means another three to four more checkpoints will be added to the calendar. The AVOID grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

â€œThe overall goal of the awareness campaign is to let drivers know about the countywide increased enforcement

periods and warn drivers that the only way to AVOID the county’s law enforcement officers is to drive sober,â€ the state website says.

Netting drunken drivers isnâ€™t the main goal of checkpoints â€“ itâ€™s awareness.

â€œItâ€™s more of a deterrence,â€ said South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Laney as he stood on the edge of Highway 50 near Heidiâ€™s restaurant.

A steady stream of cars passed through the checkpoint near Fairway Avenue between 9pm and 1am. The backup determined whether it was every third or fifth car that was stopped. Driverâ€™s licenses were checked. Citations were issued for those without one.

One young woman said she had a permit from Arizona but couldnâ€™t produce it.

With it being such a small town, officers recognized a parolee in one passenger seat.

Cabbies seemed to be doing well on this night known for massive beer drinking. All of their vehicles were full. Even though they were the designated driver, so to speak, it didnâ€™t mean they automatically got to pass through the checkpoint without being questioned.

Caltrans workers, semis, beat-up Tahoe vehicles, BMWs â€“ no one was immune from being stopped. One officer asked for to see the driver’s license. The cop on the passenger side shined a flashlight to see what might be inside â€“ open container, weapons, drugs, children not in a car seat.

During the December checkpoint three male juveniles from out town, and all wearing red, were drunk. They also had a Samurai sword in the trunk. They were detained.

Everyone the cops spoke with was handed a little information

flyer about what to do if they suspect a person is drunk behind the wheel. Call 911.

Plenty of warning goes into the checkpoints. Besides having the information broadcast by the media, a sign before the stop alerts drivers about the checkpoint. Legally, officers must allow drivers an opportunity to drive around the checkpoint.

Even with the warning, people still make it to the front of the line.

Laney said itâ€™s often people who are too drunk to know any better or someone who had a couple drinks and has no idea they are past the 0.08 limit for blood alcohol.

USFS Angora Fire environmental document up for review

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is seeking public comment on the environmental assessment for its proposed action to restore the Angora Fire area, including fuels reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, aquatic habitat and watershed restoration, road and trail system improvements and invasive weed control.

The EA marks the third round of public comment on post-fire restoration. During the last round of public input, concerns centered around providing sufficient wildlife habitat and the loss of a neighborhood recreational opportunity at Seneca

Pond. Because of the benefits to water quality and wildlife habitat, the Forest Service is proposing to proceed with restoration of Seneca Pond, phased in over three years.

“We understand that some in the neighborhood will not agree with this proposal, even though recreational access to the area would remain the same,” Terri Marceron, forest supervisor, said in a press release. “During our analysis for this project, we learned that Seneca Pond is having a negative effect on water quality. Restoring it to a wetland will benefit Angora Creek, which drains to Lake Tahoe.”

The Angora restoration proposal calls for removing standing dead and downed wood on up to 1,398 acres, thinning of unhealthy live trees to improve the health of remaining overstory trees and construction of new roads and landings to facilitate fuel removal and forest management.

The Forest Service would use mechanical equipment on up to 951 acres on slopes less than 30 percent and aerial logging on up to 447 acres. Hand treatment could occur within any of these areas as a primary or follow-up treatment. The agency would reforest with a mix of native seedlings on a total of 1,100 acres and is currently seeking comment on a proposal that would allow expedited planting of seedlings scheduled for delivery this spring which is separate from this project.

Public comment emphasized the importance of burned forest as wildlife habitat, and the Forest Service would leave about 42 percent of the area (1,300 acres) untreated to fulfill this need. The agency also has incorporated areas with higher amounts of snags and downed wood into the untreated areas and adjusted fuels reduction prescriptions to maintain these components in areas where tree removal would occur. Aspen restoration and reforestation would also help to restore wildlife habitat.

In addition to restoring the wetland around Seneca Pond, the

Forest Service would reconstruct 1,200 feet of Angora Creek channel through the meadow above Lake Tahoe Boulevard, and strategically place large woody debris within a two-mile segment of the creek and its tributaries to improve aquatic habitat.

The agency would also remove live conifers that are encroaching on Gardner Mountain meadow, fill in the incised channel and install structures to maintain the new channel elevation and plant riparian shrubs and sod to stabilize exposed soil.

The proposal also includes construction of new roads and trails, decommissioning and restoration of roads and trails, and improved access and wayfinding, as well as upgrades to stream crossings and other erosion control measures. The roads and trails work would provide for continued high-quality recreational access, as well as forest management access, while bringing roads and trails up to standards that would reduce erosion and improve water quality.

The Forest Service encourage the public to review the EA and provide comment. The agency is particularly interested on comment on how well the proposed action meets the purpose and need for the project, whether there are other restoration activities not included in the proposal which the agency has not analyzed, whether there are issues regarding project operations not addressed in the EA and which areas the Forest Service should prioritize for fuels treatment if full funding for the project is not available.

For a copy of the EA, click here or call (530) 543.2694. Comments will be accepted until April 12.

Summer eradication of invasive clams in Lake Tahoe

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A coalition of agencies will begin July 5 to eradicate populations of Asian clams invading Lake Tahoe's bottom, mainly in the southeast corner but also in other areas, including Emerald Bay.

After tests last year that used plastic bottom barriers to kill clams by robbing them of food and oxygen, a larger effort will start in the summer.



Clam shells are being made into earrings. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"We're moving forward with the bottom barrier approach. It's effective enough," said Jeff Cowen, community liaison for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. "We're going to lay down enough to cover a whole acre."

Read the whole story

Cohee signs deal for Sierra Summit resort

Tim Cohee inked a deal Tuesday to become part owner of Sierra Summit ski resort outside of Fresno.

The Kirkwood Mountain Resort executive may retain his duties at the Tahoe area resort even after escrow closes April 30.

Snow Summit Ski Corp. will receive nearly $4 million for the ski area.

When the deal closes, the original name will be used – China Peak.

First LEED home in Incline open for tours during construction



The builder of Incline Village â€™s first LEED registered home construction project, located at 1085 Mill Creek Road below Highway 28, will host an informative tour March 20 from noon-4pm.

Refreshments will be provided at this free event which showcases green technologies being implemented in the house.

Professionals will be available to talk with interested attendees about the home’s products.

Representing the following green vendors:

- Andersen A Series Energy Star rated windows—this is the first house in Western Nev. to have these windows installed.
- Optimum Framing Techniques
- On-demand hot water heaters
- Energy Star Rated Solaris roofing system
- LED lighting
- Green sheetrock and low/no VOC paints and stains
- Owens Corning Energy Complete Insulation System (This is the first house in Nevada or California to have this insulation system installed.)
- High Efficiency furnaces/heat exchangers
- Jeff Miller, president of Advance Design and Construction Inc. and building contractor for the LEED registered home.

The house has just completed the rough framing stage. It is scheduled to be finished mid-summer.

For more information, call (775) 833.1337.

Truckee Unified career day for juniors

With the goal of helping local high school juniors maximize their chance of success beyond high school, Truckee Rotary has revamped this yearâ€™s Rotary Resource & Career Day to create an event that is bigger and better than before.

All 300 juniors in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District are invited to attend the Resource & Career Day at the North

Tahoe Event Center in Kings beach on March 19 starting at 7:45am. The new format features 10 topics essential to juniors and their families, as they transition into their senior year and begin focusing on life after high school.

Topics such as â€œWhatâ€™s Hotâ€ (in the job market), â€œShow Me the Moneyâ€ (college funding and scholarships), â€œOther Options with a Purposeâ€ (Peace Corps, Job Corps), vocational programs, and dual credit enrollment and personal development programs will be featured.

Sierra College and Sierra Nevada College representatives will be present to answer questions about career training and educational degree options.

For more information, visit www.truckeerotary.com.

Easter at the Hyatt in Incline

Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe in Incline Village is having an Easter brunch with the Easter Bunny.

When: April 4 â€“ open reservations from 10am-3pm

Easter Egg Hunts at 11:30am and 1:30pm

Where: Lone Eagle Grille at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa & Casino, 111 Country Club Drive, Incline Village

Cost: The price of the buffet is $65 for adults; $33 for children under 12, not including tax or gratuity. Children under 4 dine free.

For more information about Easter events or for reservations, contact Lone Eagle Grille at (775) 886.6899.

Ski Run Beautification Committee meeting

The Ski Run Beautification Committee has organized a Street Walk to gather ideas and solutions for ways to improve and enhance the aesthetics and functionality of the district.

* Meet at the Alder Inn on Ski Run Boulevard, South Tahoe

* March 23 before 10am

The group will leave the Alder Inn at 10am and walk toward Pioneer Trail, looping back down toward the marina and back to the inn.

Experts lecture about economics of energy efficiency

By Kathryn Reed

Lights. That was the one thing the three panelists keep repeating – how paying attention to lighting can translate into thousands of dollars. Change the bulbs, turn them off,

and start saving money.

David Mattocks, president of Green Pro Systems in Truckee, told the group gathered at Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday, to find out what they pay a year to energy companies, then multiply that by 0.3 and that is the savings, on average, that can come from tweaking energy consumption.



David Mattocks talks Tuesday about energy efficiency. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Much of the discussion was targeted to business owners. But it was pointed out the second largest bill for a homeowner is often utilities, so the message was for individuals as well.

Peter Millar, energy project leader in the Business Environmental Program at UNR; and Scott Terrell, with the Truckee Donner Public Utility District, joined Mattocks on the panel sponsored by the South Shore Green Business Cooperative.

One of the points was that even if someone does not buy into the environmental reasons to reduce energy consumption and carbon output, economics speak to nearly everyone.

Millar said every building has opportunities for cost-savings.

“You need to step back and evaluate the system and how you use the building. We look at each opportunity as a little business

plan," Millar said. "Look at the energy bills. It's like taking the pulse of a patient."

Because lighting can account for 40 percent of an energy bill the speakers spoke to this area being the first to tackle for any business.

Millar referenced a middle school in Carson City that put in sky lights and is using natural light when possible, and therefore can flip switches off.

He said the main post office in Reno put in new lights and productivity increased 13 percent. Studies have shown different types of lights affect how workers perform.

Half of a small retail outlet's electric bill can be lighting. That is why putting in energy efficient bulbs makes a difference, as does reducing their use, using natural light or having sensors in bathrooms.

Terrell said it's important to start with education and awareness before moving into the implementation stage. He recommends using professionals to assess a building's energy efficiency because they'll be looking at things the average person wouldn't consider.

Mattocks showed a series of slides from infrared audits that highlighted blasts of cold air seeping in under doors and electronics using juice when no one is working. The latter is phantom energy use – leaving something plugged into an outlet can use energy even when the machine isn't on. Fifteen percent of a home's energy use is phantom energy.

Energy Star appliances were also talked about. The three urged businesses that lease equipment to make sure the supplier provides Energy Star rated products.

Another thing Mattocks urged was getting employees on board to understand the importance of being efficient with energy use.

“The return on investment on solar and wind is decades. Don’t go solar. Spend the money on an audit,” Mattocks said. “Energy efficiency will get us so much more, so much faster.”