Recycling organic material about to be a whole lot easier

By Kathryn Reed

Pine fills the senses. A chill is in the air. The building seems massive with only a few pieces of equipment inside. A pile of wood fills one corner; wood chips are at the other end of a large red chipper that looks like it could spit out an entire pine tree.

This is the scene at the Resource Recovery Center – South Tahoe Refuse company's organic materials recycling center.

"Once you get a loader and a couple cars on the scales it won't be too big," said John Marchini, who runs STR.



Jeanne Lear and John Marchini in STR's Resource Recovery Center. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Construction milled wood, slash, wood pallets and few Christmas trees have come through the facility. It will

officially open in April to contractors.

The purpose of the 33,700-square-foot facility on Ruth Avenue in South Lake Tahoe is to process about 30 tons of organic material a day.

Lawn clippings, pine needles and recyclable construction waste currently cross the assembly line of the Materials Recovery Facility next door.

“The new Resource Recovery Facility will increase efficiency by directing organic material to a single, dedicated operation with existing markets and end-uses for these resources,” according to STR officials.

Bentley and Full Circle Compost, both in the Carson Valley area, are interested in this material for their operations.

Contractors will have a card to swipe that has all of their information stored on it. A scale weighs their load. They dump their goods. Then they go out a different door, get weighed again, swipe the card one more time and then receive a quarterly bill in the mail.

Before this center came along, contractors paid by the yard instead of weight.

This system should speed up the process for contractors to get in and out. Plus, it is designed to make recycling of this material more efficient.



The chipper is operated

remotely.

South Tahoe Refuse is still working out with the joint powers authority, which is made up of the city and both counties, to see how best to have residents sort out green waste. It may be a green bag or special tie to signify yard waste is inside.

Wood chips and pine needles will be available for contractors to use for erosion control on construction sites. For now, the processed material will not be doled out to residents.

Bunkers will store the various processed materials.

The center will be open Monday-Friday. It’s possible Saturdays will be devoted to grinding.

In 2000, the garbage company realized it was not going to accomplish the state mandated recycling diversion goals with the facility it had. California is incrementally increasing the amount of trash jurisdictions much divert from landfills.

The state says it should be 50 percent, while South Lake Tahoe has set a goal of 55 percent. Jeanne Lear of STR says the new center will get STR over the 50 percent threshold.

Between 62 and 70 percent of the waste coming to STR is from South Lake Tahoe, with the remainder from El Dorado and Douglas counties.

The building at times has been controversial because some believe the garbage company should be in the industrial area.

“The cost to move would have been cost prohibitive. We’ve been here since 1962,” said Marchini, whose grandparents started STR.

Marchini said the city approached him about moving. Twelve locations were looked at, with three making the short list. None penciled out financially. Besides the cost involved in moving the operation, neighbors of the sites that were looked

at were not thrilled with the prospect of a garbage company moving in.

STR responded to a request for proposal from El Dorado County and won the bid to be the operator of the mixed waste facility. Construction began in May 2008.

STR owns the land and facility. The company took out a loan for the project. Ratepayers are paying part of the expense of the building.

The cost to separate out trash is expensive. Lear said because consumers have said sustainability is important, lawmakers listened and trash companies are doing their part per mandates from the jurisdictions they serve. The consumer in turn has to pay for living greener.

Marchini said it would be a whole lot cheaper to take everything to the landfill.

For more information about South Tahoe Refuse, click here.

Publisher's note: ***On Monday, read about how the economy is affecting South Tahoe Refuse.***

4-day telemark, freeride fest at Alpine

The Second Annual Telemark Ski and Freeride Festival at Alpine Meadows Ski Resort, presented by Tough Guy Productions, is Feb. 18-22.

This four-day event will showcase snow safety courses, parties and big mountain ski competitions.

Join in the action at the Keyhole Classic Feb. 19, when some of the best competitors will rip down Keyhole Slope (one of Alpineâ€™s signature advanced descents) for a chance to qualify for the final. Skiers will be judged on line choice, control, fluidity, technique and aggressiveness. The top 10 finalists will go on to compete in the Big Mountain Final on Feb. 20, with only one chance to fight for the title of â€œFreeride Champion.â€

An awards ceremony and party will follow, complete with a slide show, music and prizes. Awards will be given for the top telemark skiers, top junior skiers, and the â€œBig Sack awardâ€ will be given to the competitor who showed the most guts.

Aside from intensity and speed, safety will be a big theme at the festival. Guests will have the chance to attend a free snow safety course on Feb. 19, taught by Alpine Meadows Ski Patrol. Skiers and riders can put those mountain safety skills to the test in the Uphill/Downhill Avy Savvy Race on Feb. 21. Two transceivers will be buried in a simulated avalanche zone, and the first male and female to race down and recover a buried transceiver will win.

The Estelle Bowl Challenge is the final competition, on Feb. 21. This top-to-bottom big mountain race is open to snowboarders, alpine and telemark skiers. Three sets of wide-spread gates will be placed on the mountain, and competitors will be scored on style and time. The festival will finish with an awards ceremony to name the winners of the Uphill/Downhill race as well as the Estelle Bowl Challenge.

For additional event information or to register, click here.

Multi-disciplined adventure challenge coming to Northstar

North Lake Tahoe Visitors Bureaus and Chamber of Commerce recently secured the Sunchaser Challenge, a multi-discipline adventure challenge set for May 22 at Northstar-at-Tahoe in Truckee.

“Having 1,000 competitors descend on North Lake Tahoe for three days translates into a potential $2 million in economic impact for the area,” Tourism Director Andy Chapman of the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association said in a press release. â€œThat is absolutely great news, especially given the time of the year that this event is scheduled to be held.”

The Sunchaser Challenge is a sporting event from sunrise to sunset that features orienteering, running, mountain biking, road biking and kayaking.

It will be in four time zones across the United States May 22, including Lake Saranac in New York, Lake Geneva in Wisconsin and Lake Havasu in Arizona, in addition to the North Shore of Lake Tahoe, as part of Endangered Species Day.

According to race officials, approximately 1,000 competitors are expected to participate at each of the four venues.

In partnership with the Endangered Species Coalition, Wild Ones is launching these unique adventure challenges across the country to encourage people to get closer to nature by exploring the parks and countryside in their backyards, as well as aim to put the plight of some of the worldâ€™s rarest animals in the minds of thousands of people across the United States.

Caregivers support group meeting

Caregiving is a difficult and often challenging role that one can undertake, and taking the opportunity to share information and feel connected to others who are providing care is a vital step to perform this task to the best of your ability.

Take the opportunity on March 11 from 5:30-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center, 3050 Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe, to become connected and rejuvenated at your local support group.

Refreshments will be served. Free respite care is available to qualified caregivers. Pre-authorization is required for respite services.

Questions? Contact Penny with the Alzheimerâ€™s Association at (530) 541.2304 or the Family Caregiver Support Program at (530) 621.6251 or (530) 621.6151.

Tahoe City’s Bahrke bags bronze in moguls

By Vancouver Sun

The U.S.’s Hannah Kearney won the gold medal in women’s moguls in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, edging 2006 Olympic champion Jennifer Heil of Canada.

Kearney, the last to compete on the course Saturday night. American Shannon Bahrke won the bronze medal with a total of 25.43.



Shannon Bahrke of Tahoe City takes home a bronze Feb. 13 in moguls. Photo/USOC

It was an incredible rally from four years ago when Kearney didn't make it out of the qualifying round.

Kearney, who was in top spot after qualifying earlier, scored 26.63 points, with Heil scoring 25.69.

Shannon Bahrke of Tahoe City won the bronze with 25.43 points.

Read the whole story

Ski Run area trying to be more prominent

Ski Run Business Improvement District will meet Feb. 17 from 3-5pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe to gather input about what events the public would like to see, what services might

enhance the area and talk about expanding the mix of businesses.

Plane lands on Hwy. 50 near El Dorado Hills

By NEWS-10

A small plane made an emergency landing on Latrobe Road just off of Highway 50 Saturday morning, according to officials.

California Highway Patrol spokesman Michael Bradley said the single-occupant plane landed just after 11 a.m. The plane clipped a car on the way down, but no one inside was injured. The pilot walked away without a scratch.

Read the whole story

Garrido charmed parole agents, files show

By Sam Stanton and Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

Phillip Garrido apparently had a way with people.

Repeatedly over the years he managed to charm the prison officials and parole agents supervising him to the point that they lauded him in letters.

Even when they detected him acting “real weird” or “strange” during visits to his Antioch home, they made no effort to conduct thorough searches of the property, admitting in writing they made only



Phillip Garrido

“cursory” checks of the premises.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, Feb. 13



It’s going to be one of those glorious day on the slopes of Lake Tahoe. With bad weather for the Olympics, you won’t miss much of the televised action by skiing here today. Check out the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

STHS construction zone to become learning center in April

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe High School's class of 2010 will graduate knowing what it's like to learn in a new building with state-of-the-art equipment.

The building in what was the parking lot at the front of the school will open the day after spring break in April.



South Tahoe High Principal Ivone Larson talks about the auto shop that will open in April. Photos/Kathryn Reed

At Tuesday's school board meeting the funds to buy equipment and furniture for the two-story building were approved.

SMC Construction of Reno broke ground on the project in May. Many of the guys working there this week live on the South Shore. That was one of the goals – put locals to work.

Called the career technical education building, it houses the auto shop on the lower level. A glass garage door lets natural light in. It’s spacious, clean and looks almost ready to overhaul several Toyotas at once.

Ten bays will allow students to work on vehicles – and not just ones powered by gasoline.

The lifts are still in boxes, having arrived last week. Overheard are air nozzles and other necessities for the trade.

Two members of the Lake Tahoe Education Foundation are getting a tour from LTUSD Facilities Director Steve Morales. They are surveying the area in anticipation of having the annual Excellence in Education celebration in the building in May.

Both levels have areas for recycling.

Upstairs is where graphic arts, architectural drawing and construction classes will be taught.

Windows are everywhere it seems. Views, once the construction mess is done, will be stunning for those who teach and learn here.

The other building now under way will be ready for the 2010-11 school year. Most of the portables in the back of the school have been removed, and those that haven’t will be this summer.

This two-story building that overlooks the football field is designed to address the overcrowding at the school that resulted in the use of portables long after their designated 15-year lifespan.

Classrooms for math will be housed here, as well as environmental science (including a green house), the dental program complete with chair and X-rays, The Company – where students can do web design, business finance and the like.

Walls can be removed to allow for a speaker to talk to more

than one class at a time or for teachers to collaborate.

Both buildings have areas for student displays in the hallways. Internal stairs and elevators are in both, thus eliminating the need to go into the snow.

Some teachers have needed to be trained to teach in the new facilities. One just went to a biodiesel course. Others have the required training, but aren't using it because the courses or facilities are not yet in place.

"We are hoping (these programs) will draw families from outside the area to this level of education," STHS Principal Ivone Larson said.

Bids are being sought on the theater modernization project and the digital arts building that will be erected in front of the auto shop. Construction is expected to start this spring.

Larson said monthly meetings are going on with staff at Lake Tahoe Community College to ensure what students will be able to do in digital arts will tie directly into the college's curriculum.

The high school also wants to integrate its programs on site. Larson used the example of a digital arts student designing a set that construction students would build for the theater department.

"We are setting it up by department a lot like you would see on a college campus," Larson said.

The inner workings

Four years later and still the white board with its blue writing is attached to a wall in a room that is affectionately called the Think Tank.

Written on it are the dreams of district staff and officials. It starts at kindergarten and has paths that could lead

students to Ivy League schools.

The buildings and then the programs associated with them are the result of the vision and tenacity of several people.

Blueprints line the other walls, showing which dreams are about to be realized.

With grants coming in on a regular basis, it’s possible a second white board of dreams will need to be created.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder