$750,838 – a bargain by Tahoma standards

By Francesca Levy, Forbes

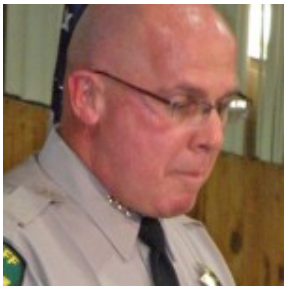
In most areas, $750,838 – the median list price in Tahoma – would seem like a lot of money to spend on a home. Not for discount luxury vacation home seekers. Tahoma, a high-altitude resort town on the shores of Lake Tahoe, is priced on the very low end of Forbes' 500 most expensive ZIP codes. Only 19 markets have lower prices.

Read the whole story

Kollar sworn in as sheriff

Fred Kollar was sworn in as sheriff of El Dorado County on Dec. 28. El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury did the honors.

Kollar, who has been undersheriff for the past seven years, is filling out the remainder of Jeff Neves term which expires in a year.



Fred Kollar

The primary election for sheriff will be in June. If no one wins outright, a runoff will be conducted in November. Kollar is not running and expects to retire when a new sheriff comes on board.

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113 Jackson Rancheria workers to ring in 2010 without a job

By David Bienick, KCRA-TV

JACKSON – Jackson Rancheria Casino and Hotel was issuing layoff notices Monday and Tuesday to 113 of its employees.

Jackson CEO Rich Hoffman told KCRA 3 Monday that the notices would be effective immediately and would impact primarily middle management positions.

Read the whole story

Vonn injured, Mancuso out after first GS run

Lindsey Vonn of the United States had to be taken to the hospital Monday after crashing on the opening run of the World Cup giant slalom in Lienz, Austria.

Tests showed she has swelling on the bone, but it’s not broken. Vonn may be able to compete on Tuesday.

Kathrin Hoelzl of Germany won the race.

Squaw Valley's Julia Mancuso, the Olympic giant slalom champion who finished second at Lienz two years ago, did not qualify for the second run. She hit a gate and nearly stopped before ending the run 5 seconds behind Hoelzl.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 28



Expect a mix of clouds and sun today as Mother Nature tries to figure out what she is doing. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Kirkwood women's clinic weekend

Expedition Kirkwood's Women's Weekend is scheduled for March 20-21.

Filled with fun activities and expert coaching, this weekend is a must-do for ladies looking to make dramatic improvement in a short amount of time. Marmot athlete Heather Paul will join the camp this year to coach ladies looking to improve tele skiing ability.

For more information about any of the programs hosted by

Expedition:Kirkwood, visit www.kirkwood.com or call (209) 258.7360.

Sierra – a breeding ground for top level athletes

By John Rice

We are keeping our fingers crossed that our athletes earn a chance to compete for their country in the Olympics. Our program to groom athletes at Sierra is newsworthy I think, as it is not accidental that our athletes fare so well against the competition.

I started my career at Squaw Valley, which had a long tradition of producing world-class athletes and attracting those who were looking for a big name mountain to train. In the summers I worked for the U.S. Olympic Committee at Squaw in operations. I did everything from fix the athlete residences to drive them to their training sites. From that experience I learned a few simple lessons:

1. The best of the best share certain characteristics; they are conditioned, focused on goals, generally have good nutrition habits, are confident, have a support system, and are free of distractions. They werenâ€™t always the biggest, the fastest, the flamboyant, or those who come from money.



John Rice

2. The support system behind the most confident athletes extended from their family and friends to their home resort. Even if they were training out of Squaw, they were loyal to their home.

3. They had good coaches, who worked on the whole being, not just the athletic side.

We try to provide all those things to our athletes, which may be part of why we have so much success. When I started at Sierra in 1993, I was approached by two young boys named Travis Ramos and Travis Cabral, then 9 and 11. They told me they had dreams of representing their country and being on the winnerâ€™s podium. I asked what they needed, to which they replied â€œa season pass, a locker, and a shovel to build their courseâ€.

As the young boys honed their skills, and their fathersâ€™ found coaches to take them to the next level, the two remained committed to their goals. Result, both were crowned U.S. Freestyle Champion at nationals in different years, and Cabral won the overall World Cup, the youngest to ever accomplish that feat.

Cabral also competed in the Torino Winter Games.

The two boys came from modest homes, had great support from their parents, coaches and from Sierra. They had a strict diet and workout regimen, and both were focused on their goals. Sierra gave support in the way of reimbursements for gas and groceries, event fees and an occasional plane ticket to help

get them to the events.

The return on investment was huge, and it forged the way for other athletes to believe they could come from a mid-sized mountain and go against the best in the world some day.

Travis Cabral was concerned he was missing out on educational opportunities because of his world travel schedule as a teenager, so Sierra joined some of the local season passholders in starting an educational fund for him at the local Bank of America. That kind of support allowed him to finish his studies and find his way after his competitive run.

We found the best support to be tailored to the individual, what are their needs, their goals, their challenges, and how can Sierra help. It starts when the kids are little.

Sierra is a supporter of youth recreation and education, and as such Sierra banners can be found at every soccer, baseball, swim meet, football or other facility in the region. By supporting the feeder system, young talented kids can get to know Sierra and stay in shape. Through support of education, Sierra is able to attract many talented kids, as many students over the years have earned free season passes and become part of Sierraâ€™s race teams.

The feeder system brings quality to the resort, and the various step functions along the way provide a path for focused athletes to excel through the programs and reach their peak performance. Itâ€™s no secret that athletes remain loyal to the resort they learn at.

When winter comes around, the Buddy Werner ski program offers local kids from Tahoe and the West Slope the chance to hone their skills and compete with each other at a young age. Coaching is voluntary, and from the Buddy Werner ranks come some of the high school teamâ€™s best athletes. It is common to see the top skiers in high school racing with roots in the Buddy Werner Program.

Sierra hosts five high school teams, which allows the athlete/students to compete against each other and train with the best. There are junior ski programs in place like Rippers, and the competitive teams in skiing and snowboarding.

Finally, Sierra hosts a number of competitions that allow the athletes to test their skills. On the ski side, Sierra has training facilities and ski trails that are wired for timing, combined with top talent in the area that produces high quality events like Far West races and high profile freestyle events. Some of the more talented athletes move on to USSA racing and travel, and some have gone to college on scholarships in winter sports.

The best of the best, however, go from local events to national and then world-class events. Sierra has been fortunate to be a proving ground for winter sports athletes over the years. From training programs to hosting world-class events – even national championships – Sierra has provided opportunities to kids to realize their dreams of competing on the world stage.

A great example of athletes moving through the programs is the current successes shared by the Anderson sisters. Both grew up at Sierra, were part of the development teams, won their events locally and then went on to win gold medals at the Winter X Games. Jamie is currently ranked the No. 1 female snowboarder in the world, was honored by *Transworld Snowboarding* and *Snowboarder* magazines last year with that title.

The two sisters received the same kind of support the two Travises shared in their young career, from reimbursements to scholarships on the race teams. While either one could easily sign a contract with another resort for the money, both are loyal to Sierra because of the support they have received over the years.

Jamie is vying for a spot on the U.S. Team for the Vancouver Olympics, while Joanie is aiming for the X Games next month. If they qualify, great, if they donâ€™t, they are still both world champions. We have no expectations of them other than to have fun and do their best.

Beyond the hype of the Olympic Games, in winter sports the contest is one more in a series of season long events. There is no denying that it is high profile and a gold medal can lead to lifelong endorsements for the athletes, but we try to keep it in perspective.

So, why would a gold medal winner from the Torino Games, Hannah Teter, call Sierra her home mountain? Call it luck or destiny, the Teter family found a home in Tahoe, and looked around at the various resorts to find a place to train and call home. Elijah and Abe Teter both came to Sierra for a day in the powder and asked if they could ride for the day. Finding it to their liking, the brothers approached us to see if we would support them as athletes. They werenâ€™t asking for much, passes and a halfpipe.

It led to much more than that, including a movie spot and training support. When Hannah was in town she asked if Sierra would be interested in supporting her as well. Sierra supported her by donating to her charity through the sale of Hannahâ€™s Gold Syrup, and she gave back in numerous ways including advertisements like the famous Burton â€œlove affairâ€ ad where she talked about why she loves Sierra.

The relationship has blossomed to where the level of trust between the Teter family and the resort is at a high level. Sierra is fortunate to have them as loyal athletes. The deal clincher for Hannah was when Sierra proposed a personalized parking space next to the administration building. The Hollywood Walk of Fame style star that marks her spot was the least we could do the seal the deal.

Perhaps the biggest win for Sierra is having such talent to encourage younger athletes to follow their dreams. When a young 8 year old sits next to Hannah or Jamie, they realize they are real people, and that someday they can achieve the same success as these two world-class athletes.

Sierra supports four levels of athletes. Starting with amateur skiers and riders, those who podium at USASA or USSA nationals are given a free pass, some stickers, a team shirt, and attend events to represent their resort.

As they get more experience and begin to excel, they can move up to the Professional team. This level is comprised of skiers and riders who are competing in large scale events, such as the Dew Tour, Winter X Games, or other regional series. Some of the Pro team contract with photographers and filmmakers, and many have outside sponsors to help with their expenses.

Next comes the Elite team, which is comprised of the top echelon of talent like the Teters and the Andersons.

A new category was added last season, called the Legends division, to which Sierraâ€™s â€œretired from competitionâ€ athletes belong. The Travis duo and two-time world record holder Mark Bennett belong to this group.

Any of these athletes could find another mountain to sponsor them, even provide a lucrative package to claim that resort as their home. Sierraâ€™s philosophy has never been to â€œbuyâ€ our athletes, but rather to clear the path for them to excel. That may differ from athlete to athlete, some need financial support, others need training and coaching. They all ultimately want a resort to call home, one that appreciates who they are and will do what it takes to help them realize their goals.

As they move to the next level, maybe even the Olympics, Sierra will be rooting for them back home. Win or lose, they are champions.

John A. Rice is general manager of Sierra-at-Tahoe.

CalStar receives award

Estill Medical Technologies Inc., a family-owned Texas company that produces the Thermal Angel Blood and IV Fluid Infusion Warmer, a patented medical device being utilized by U.S. hospitals, military and emergency responders to lessen the effects of fluid-induced hypothermia, named the CalStar 6 Unit of South Lake Tahoe as the first recipient of its “Thermal Angel Lifesaver of the Year Award.”

Gaines: Worst California bills in 2009

By Ted Gaines

Here are the â€œworst 9 bills of the 2009 legislative session,â€ which include some of the most extreme and costly measures that show just how out-of-touch the Legislature is with mainstream Californians.

Assembly Bill 3 3X: Tax Increases

Signed into law by the governor in February, this bill increased the state sales tax by 1 percent, the personal income tax by 0.25 percent and the Vehicle License Fee by 1.15 percent. It also reduced



Ted Gaines

the dependent tax credit level to $99.

To increase taxes at the most financially devastating time for California families is absolutely the worst thing to do. Sacramento got itself into this mess and we need to enact the tough decisions it will take us to get out of it, not pass the burden on to Californians. For too long, Sacramento has irresponsibly spent too much of the peopleâ€™s hard-earned dollars and itâ€™s time we stop spending money on programs we canâ€™t sustain. You can continue to count on me to fight tax increases.

Senate Bill 572: Harvey Milk Day

This bill, signed into law by the governor, declared May 22 as Harvey Milk Day and encourages schools to conduct commemorative exercises remembering the life of Harvey Milk.

It is not the role of the state government to declare a special holiday for people based on their sexual orientation. Never in the history of state law has the Legislature taken such action and it is reckless to recommend and encourage this type of commemoration into our schools.

Senate Bill 670: Ban on Suction Dredge Mining

This bill imposes a temporary ban on new suction dredge mining permits. The bill, signed into law by the Governor, aims to protect the salmon population, though no scientific information points to suction dredging as the cause of reduced salmon population.

A ban on suction dredge mining permits will only hurt rural small businesses by driving away both miners and tourists. This is another example of a one-size-fits-all regulation that will punish those who rely on suction dredge mining as a way of life.

Senate Bill 2 7X: $11 Billion Water Package

Signed into law by the governor, this measure will now go before the voters next year. If passed, Californians will pay more than $11 billion for various water storage and infrastructure projects.

This plan does nothing to help our state by creating more unaccountable bureaucracies that donâ€™t answer to those they serve. The plan could take water rights out of the hands of Northern Californians at a time when we should be eliminating boards and commissions and bloated bureaucracies.

Assembly Bill 390: Legalization of Marijuana

This bill would legalize marijuana use and allow those over the age of 21 to grow and sell the gateway drug. The state would be able to tax all sales of marijuana while maintaining no authority to regulate or control it. This bill is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Public Safety Committee next month.

Sacrificing public safety to increase revenue is a new low for California. This drug is illegal for a reason and putting families at risk to make money is another example of how backwards our state approaches its revenue problems. Drugs like marijuana serve as a gateway to more dangerous, hard-core drugs and will do nothing short of increasing criminal activity and putting our citizens at risk.

Assembly Bill 962: Handgun Ammunition

Signed into law by the governor, this bill makes California

the first state to require instant background checks on anyone wishing to purchase handgun ammunition. The bill also requires all handgun ammunition vendors to be licensed with the state Department of Justice and ammunition to be stored behind the counter. The bill also bans Internet sales of ammunition in California.

While we should make every effort to track down and bring to justice those who would commit crimes with a gun, this misguided measure makes it harder for law-abiding citizens to exercise their Second Amendment right and purchase a legal firearm in California. The measure could devastate the ability of gun stores across the state to keep their doors open, while doing nothing to stop the flow of illegal ammunition to criminals who seek to harm our families.

Assembly Bill 1452: Cement Restrictions

This bill, which failed to pass in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, would require the state Air Resources Board to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from the production of cement, regardless of where the cement originated. The bill would even regulate the emissions from transporting the cement.

Cement is essential to paving and repairing roads across California and improving our traffic infrastructure. Bills like this show how out-of-touch Sacramento is by choosing to impose new regulations during a time when infrastructure and job creation should be our top priorities.

Senate Bill 14: Renewable Energy Resources

Vetoed by the governor, this bill would require all retail sellers of electricity and all publicly owned utilities to acquire at least 33 percent of electricity from renewable resources by 2020.

Californians already pay more for electricity than anywhere

else in the country. Yet, some in the Legislature would choose to increase that amount even more. Placing more government mandates on companies would only drive up costs for customers, at a time when they are paying for enough of Sacramentoâ€™s mistakes.

Senate Bill 18XXX: Early Prisoner Release

This bill, signed into law by the governor, allows thousands of dangerous criminals to be released from prison before serving their terms. The bill also loosens parole provisions allowing easier access to a criminalâ€™s early release.

We donâ€™t need to compromise public safety to save money. Allowing convicted criminals to get a break on their prison terms because the Legislature cannot spend responsibly is beyond unacceptable. These dangerous felons are in jail for a reason, and they should only be set free when they have completed their sentences and have been properly rehabilitated to return to society.

Ted Gaines represents the 4th Assembly District in the California Legislature, which includes portions of Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Alpine counties.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



Daron Rahlves

Januaryâ€™s *Skiing* magazine says to watch out for Sugar Bowlâ€™s Daron Rahlves in skiercross at the Olympics in February.

Turning 10 this year is *Tahoe Quarterly* magazine.

Gregory Jellinek opened Tahoe Plastic Surgery in Truckee. Jellinek has been a nonresident specialist at Tahoe Forest Hospital since 1982.

Mothers Offering Mothers Support hits the 20-year mark. Families from Truckee, Kings Beach and Incline Village are part of the group. (www.laketahoemoms.com)

Royal Gorge is featured in the January issue of *Sunset* magazine.