CHP holiday warning

From the California Highway Patrol:

The California Highway Patrol has a few suggestions for motorists looking to stay safe this year: never drink and drive, watch your speed and always buckle up before heading out.

In an effort to keep Californiaâ€™s roads safe this holiday season, enhanced CHP presence will occur during the upcoming Christmas enforcement period which begins Dec. 24 at 6pm and continues through midnight Dec. 27.

â€œThe holidays are about family, friends and celebration,â€ said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow in a press release. â€œUnfortunately itâ€™s also a time of year when we see too many alcohol-related fatalities.â€

According to the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System there were more than 4,000 collisions that occurred during last year’s Christmas enforcement period in California.

During that same time period, 37 people died on Californiaâ€™s roadways and among those killed, 23 lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes.

Along with the increased enforcement effort, the CHP is asking motorists to help keep the stateâ€™s roadways safe by calling 911 to report a suspected drunken driver.

The CHP will conduct a similar holiday enforcement effort over the long New Yearâ€™s weekend which begins Dec. 31 at 6pm and continues through midnight Jan. 3.

Wines enhance nuances of PlumpJack's cuisine

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VILLAGE – Don't try this at home – having a different wine with each course. Do try it at PlumpJack at Squaw Valley, especially if you just have to walk down the hall to your room.

With the winter winemaker series about to get under way, the North Shore restaurant previewed the six wineries that will start arriving in January. Diners ordered off the regular menu, which will not be the case when the Napa Valley winemakers show up.



Grimaud Farms Duckling at PlumpJack. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Special meals will be prepared to complement the wines being showcased in the series. A representative from the winery will be at the Thursday events to dispense information about the wine – almost acting like a sommelier.

This way diners are not having to listen to a sermon from the winemaker or having to sit with strangers. Guests can sit with friends who aren't taking part in the winemaker event, but

instead choose to order off the regular menu.

Executive Chef Rick Edge has been overseeing the kitchen since March. His desire is to make sure the food offerings reflect the season, with more hearty comfort foods to choose from this time of year.

A mix of regulars and tourists frequent the bar and restaurant. Olympian Jonny Moseley is a regular patron. The Crockett's Breeze (Grey Goose, lime, cranberry, Odwalla lemonade – $10) is named after local Syd Crockett.

This particular night the first bottle to be uncorked is Champagne from Morlet Family. The sparkling wine has a sweet finish, but with little fizz at the end.

Next was the 2007 Viognier from Whetsone Wine Cellars.

Sue thought this was a perfect complement to her Caramelized Day Boat Scallops ($16).

"Oh my gosh, this is outrageous," she said, barely putting her fork down in between bites.

My Roasted Winter Squash Soup ($9) was a bit on the sweet side – almost like it had been artificially sweetened because it didn't have a naturally sweet taste.

We both enjoyed the white wine.

Sue's glass was then filled with a 2005 Pinot Noir from Nicholson Ranch while I had a 2003 Cabernet from Venge Vineyards. We each liked our own choice for the main course better than the other person – which meant we didn't have to share.

Sue had the Grimaud Farms Duckling ($33) with wild rice, dried strawberries and bittersweet orange sauce.

"It's too yummy for words," Sue said, trying to use her hands

to help her describe her meal.

My Risotto Di Tre Formaggio ($21) was incredibly rich and decadent. This mushroom ragout was buttery. The Cabernet was an excellent choice to pair with it.

Dessert was PlumpJack's version of s'mores – which is worth saving room for. The same goes for the dessert wines.

For information about the winemaker dinners, call (530) 583.1578 or go to www.plumpjackcafe.com.

PlumpJack Winemaker Series:

Jan. 14 Venge Vineyards, Kirk Venge

Jan. 28 Whetstone Wine Cellars, Jamey Whetstone

Feb. 11 Dogwood Cellars, Doug Hackett

Feb. 25 Far Niente/Nickel & Nickel, Craig Norris

March 11 Morlet Family, Luc Morlet

March 25 Nicholson Ranch, Ramona Nicholson

Squaw offers the complete winter experience

By Susan Wood

OLYMPIC VILLAGE – With avalanche-control dynamite blasts rippling across the valley on a recent Sunday, comfort isn't the first word that comes to mind to describe skiing at Squaw Valley.

It takes skill to navigate the steeps, powder stashes and rock formations at Lake Tahoe’s premier ski resort. First, the KT-22 Express chairlift provides access to a run named after Jonny Moseley, the Olympian who made death-defying maneuvers on skis an art form. Second, that same lift provides access to Julia’s Gold, named after the resort’s other Olympian – Julia Mancuso. Third, the Headwall Face requires even the advanced intermediate to pay attention. Fourth, the rocks on top of Granite Chief remind most people of the humility necessary to take on this massive mountain.



Squaw Valley Inn is steps from the slopes. Photos/Kathryn Reed

And, that’s all on a good day.

No matter what the slopes bring, true luxury and comfort are steps away when skiers and boarders come in from the cold to eat, drink, be merry, soak in hot water and sleep at PlumpJack’s Squaw Valley Inn.

Across from the Squaw Village, guests are invited to plop down and take a load off from the day at the PlumpJack Cafe bar, where comfort-food appetizers, refreshing drinks and an open pit fire await. Seating there is prime real estate unless snuggling on a sofa off the main bar area is the goal.

For hotel guests, the bar is transformed into a full

complimentary breakfast buffet. It’s open to others for a fee.



Snow continued to fall at Squaw Valley on Dec. 13.

Those with a penchant for more a substantive nighttime meal can enjoy a full menu of fine dining and wine tasting that will satisfy a variety of foodies and wannabes. Even dessert is an experience. (Click here to read about dining at PlumpJack.)

Just outside on the patio, two hot tubs set at the ideal 102-degrees attract angry and tight muscles. In the winter, the patio becomes a surreal scene with Mother Nature’s abundant snow on the patio tables forming what looks like marshmallow snow lollipops.

After a major Sierra snowfall, the serenity of going outside to the tubs can only be upstaged by the beauty of the mix of Aspen and pine trees blanketed with snow.

It’s hard to imagine the scene completely changes in summer as the inn hosts patio parties with disc jockeys to entertain guests.



Rooms at Squaw Valley Inn are modern and comfortable.

The Squaw Valley Inn, (not to be confused with the Squaw Valley Lodge timeshare complex at slopeside) is a PlumpJack property. This hospitality company with wineries, wines, resorts and retail was founded by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom.

The inn was built in 1959 as a home for the delegation of the 1960 Winter Olympic Games.

In 1995, PlumpJack completely renovated the place, offering 60 luxury guestrooms, 34 king and 21 queen rooms and a host of suites. The hotel is more than pet friendly. Canines will feel like royalty as they find their own bowls, treats and pillows to make their stay memorable as well.

“This is important to us,” said Inn General Manager Kristina Jetton , herself a dog lover.

For human comforts, rooms feature down comforters, cozy, hooded terry-cloth robes, slippers, televisions with DVD players and wireless Internet service. Views are good from most rooms and even better for groups in the 3,000-square-foot banquet facility on the second floor.

As companies have cut back on their business trips, resorts like Squaw Valley Inn are forced to be more creative with honing the market they want to attract.

“We do a lot of weddings here,” said Rob McCormick, director of sales.

The rooms provide subtle touches that enhance the comfort level. The headboards appear to be ergonomically designed for reading in bed. Tile at the entryway allows snow enthusiasts to kick off and put away their gear with no guilt of trampling on the carpet in the living space. Sample shampoos, conditioners and lotions make cleaning up in the full-size shower an inviting experience with scents like Lemon Grass, Sage and Mountain Breeze.

The decor is one that commands a second look. The lights in the bathroom look like something off a street lamp, providing a feel that complements a metal entertainment center, textured walls, recessed lighting, unique artwork and even a clip-on book light on the nightstand.

Rooms start at $195 a night and work their way up to $750 for a penthouse suite.

Squaw Valley is pulling out all the stops on its celebratory season that recognizes 50 years since hosting the 1960 Winter Games and six decades of being in business. An entire slate of events is scheduled for Olympic Heritage Week starting Jan. 8, including a special torch run that honors its own contribution to the history of the Olympics and the Games’ return to the West Coast when Vancouver, British Columbia, kicks off its opening ceremonies the following month.

Whistler Blackcomb has already touted record snowfall, and Squaw has much to be proud of in this early season as well. With winter officially beginning this week, Squaw lauds 35 to 60 inches. Coming off a full week of storms on Dec. 13, “Let It Snow” blasted over the speakers at the entrance to the Funitel.

The trees looked like an absolute wonderland. And, as one avid skier from Reno pointed out on the Squaw Creek chairlift, she

had every intent of taking advantage of a seemingly end of the three-year drought with her now affordable season pass. To mark its big year, Squaw slashed its pass price by at least 60 percent because, as spokeswoman Savannah Cowley put it, “It was the time to do it.”

The inn maybe reached by clicking here or calling (530) 583.1576.

Holiday cheer through lights

The South Shore is a little brighter this holiday season, thanks to Leadership Lake Tahoe and the enthusiasm of the local business community. More than 40 local businesses are participating in the inaugural Light Up Lake Tahoe.

After receiving donations from local organizations, strands of white LED lights were distributed to participating businesses. Now, the businesses have installed their lights, and are asked to keep them on throughout the holiday/winter season. Lights will be collected in March, to be stored and used toward next year’s program.

Proceeds from Light Up Lake Tahoe benefit Tahoe Turning Point, a private, nonprofit agency that provides group care and residential treatment for young men ages 12 to 18.

Additional lights are currently unavailable for this season, but all South Shore businesses with lighting displays are eligible to compete for the title of Best Lights on the Lake. Email lightuplaketahoe@gmail.com to have your business included in the program.

Lighting displays will be judged the week of Jan. 4 and the

winner announced mid-January.

Current Participating Businesses:

Alpine Market

Barton Home Health

Barton PR

Bear Beach Cafe

Big Pines Motel

Black Bear Inn

Blue Lake Inn

Coldwell Banker

Cosmic Creations Tattoo & Art Gallery

El Dorado Savings Bank

Enchanted Florist

Fox Gasoline

Heidi’s Restaurant

Hope’s Closet

Hot Gossip Lounge

Inn by the Lake

Kahle Community Center

Lakeland Village

Lakeside Inn & Casino

LTVA Visitor Center – South Lake Tahoe and Stateline locations

Mad About Music

Meeks Hardware

Mountain Mike’s Skis

Nikki’s Chaat Cafe

Park Tahoe Inn

Rasa Sayang

Riva Grill

RSN

Sessions Salon

Ski Run Liquor

Snowshoe Thompson

Swiss Chalet

Tahoe Art League

Tahoe Mountain Sports

Tahoe Rental Connection

Tahoe Turning Point

Tahoe Wellness Collective & Community Center

Tahoe Youth & Family Services

The Keys Cafe

The Sportsman

Top It!

Worth Naccarato Chiropractic

Sugar Bowl’s new lift opens Dec. 23

Sugar Bowl Resort, with the 4 feet of snow it got in early December and the 10 additional inches from the current storm, is opening the Summit Chair today.

Skiers and riders can access the new chairlift by riding the Mt. Judah Express lift, then skiing a short distance to the new liftâ€™s bottom terminal. The lift provides access to the expert-only runs of the Judah Bowl, improves lift service to Sugar Bowlâ€™s sidecountry terrain, with the new Backcountry Adventure Center taking skiers and riders on professionally-guided powder tours, teaching the skills needed for safe backcountry travel.

The resort plans an official celebration for the new Summit Chair on Jan. 30, part of Sugar Bowlâ€™s 70th anniversary festivities.

‘Snowball’s Chance’ author to speak

What: “Snowball’s Chance” author David Antonucci presents a complete account of the preparations, pageantry, ceremonies, competitions and epilogues of the historic VIII Olympic Winter Games. Books will be available for purchase following the presentation.

This program is free and refreshments will be provided.

Where: Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead, 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd. in the Heavenly Village next to Cecil’s Plaza.

When: Jan. 28, 6pm

For more information, contact Lauren Thomaselli at (530) 542.4637 or lthomaselli@cityofslt.us.

U.S. skiercross racers far from the top

Lindsey Sine, USSA

INNICHEN, Italy – Switzerland’s Michael Schmid and Sweden’s Anna Holmlund went two for two as they won their second skiercross World Cup in as many days on Tuesday in Italy. Casey Puckett (Aspen, CO) led the U.S., finishing 18th.

“It didn’t start out as good as yesterday. We only had average qualifying results,” U.S. Ski Cross Head Coach Tyler Shepherd said. “Casey made a mistake in the upper part of the course in qualifying and didn’t get first lane choice. Getting first lane choice here is pretty critical.”

Schmid was followed in second by Norway’s Andun Groenvold and Switzerland’s Conradign Netzer in third. Daron Rahlves (Sugarbowl, CA) followed Puckett for the U.S., finishing 21st. Neither Rahlves or Puckett made it past the first heat.

“Both Casey and Daron had second choice and both got pinched out at the start,” Shepherd said. “Both their starts were good, too, so it’s a little frustrating.”

In the women’s race Holmlund was again followed by France’s Ophelie David in second. Sanna Luedi of Switzerland was third. Caitlin Ciccone (Littleton, NH) led the way for U.S. women in 27th.

It was Ciccone’s second World Cup to gain points in the standings as she slowly emerges as the top woman in ski cross in the U.S.

World Cup skiercross racing now breaks for the holidays, but will be back in action Jan. 5 in Austria.

Innichen/San Candido, Italy, Dec. 22, Skiercross

Men

1. Michael Schmid, Switzerland

2. Audun Groenvold, Norway

3. Conradign Netzer, Switzerland

4. Richard Spalinger, Switzerland

5. Xavier Kuhn, France

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18. Casey Puckett, Aspen, CO

21. Daron Rahlves, Sugar Bowl, CA

47. Justin Johnson, Park City, UT

56. Jean Christophe Rudigoz, Sun Valley, ID

60. Patrick Duran, Fayston, VT

73. John Teller, Mammoth Lakes, CA

88. Scott Horn, Truckee, CA

Women

1. Anna Holmlund, Sweden

2. Ophelie David, France

3. Sanna Luedi, Switzerland

4. Julia Murray, Canada

5. Ashleigh McIvor, Canada

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27. Caitlin Ciccone, Littleton, NH

48. Langely McNeal, Ketchum, ID

SLT issues warning about icy roads

Publisher's note: ***The following is from the South Lake Tahoe Public Works Department.***

Over the past 24 hours, the city has received a mixture of wintry weather; rainfall followed by snow. Combine this with below freezing temperatures and this can result in icy and slippery roadways. This weather is expected to continue with extreme cold in the evening hours.

City staff is encouraging all motorists to slow down and allow extra room between vehicles. Additionally, please be aware that pedestrians may be sharing the roadway with vehicles.

City crews are responding to icy conditions and to downed signs. In addition, Caltrans is replacing a traffic signal standard at Highway 50 and Tahoe Keys Boulevard. That work

should be completed this afternoon or early evening. You can expect delays in the area.

Parking on city streets during snow removal operations is not permitted. This delays the street clearing operation.

Drive safely.

Olivo appointed SLT city treasurer

By Kathryn Reed

Only one person applied to be South Lake Tahoe's city treasurer – and he got the job this morning.

At a special City Council meeting Tuesday, it was a 5-0 vote to have David Olivo fill out the remainder of Steve Wysong's term. Wysong died earlier this month. The term expires in a year.

Olivo has strong ties to the council. He was Mayor Kathay Lovell's treasurer for her second campaign. Unbeknown to her colleagues Lovell asked the city attorney before the meeting if she should recuse herself from the vote. Patrick Enright said that wasn't necessary.

"He is very well qualified," Lovell said of Olivo.

Olivo has been a certified public accountant with Olivo, Zicko, Klover & Co. since 1978.

Flashing red near Y in SLT slowing traffic

Publisher's note: ***The traffic light is working again. Updated as of 5:25pm Dec. 22.***

Caltrans workers are at the corner of Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe this afternoon replacing a light pole that was taken out by a driver early Tuesday morning.

South Lake Tahoe police officers got the call about the downed pole at 2:55am but no report was taken. Lt. David Stevenson said a truck could have taken the corner and not known the pole was hit or it could have been a deliberate hit and run.



Cars are backed up on Highway 50 and Tahoe Keys Boulvard. Photo/Kathryn Reed

For now the flashing red light is making travel slow at the Y end of town.

The pole that was on the Bear’s Den side of the highway was not salvageable so Caltrans is replacing the entire standard.

Caltrans crews expect the signal to return to normal operation late this afternoon.