Story of Li’l Smokey at Explore Tahoe

Explore Tahoe lecture Jan. 14 at 6pm in South Lake Tahoe.

What: “Saving Lil’ Smokey” Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care Executive Director Cheryl Milham tells the heartwarming story of an orphaned cub, severely injured in a forest fire that was rescued, rehabilitated and released back into the wild. The book written by the firefighter who rescued Li’l Smokey will be available for purchase along with a photo CD. 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. Please consider public transportation – visit www.bluego.org for routes and times.

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

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Dynamite brings down precarious boulder on Hwy. 50

By Carlos AlcalÃi, Sacramento Bee

California Department of Transportation crews used dynamite to dislodge a huge chunk of granite from a hillside above Highway 50 near Bridal Veil Falls this morning.

The boulder was not in imminent danger of falling on the roadway, but officials decided to bring it down before it

posed a hazard.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 23



It started to snow again about 7:30 this morning on the South Shore, just after 4 inches of white stuff got cleared from the driveway. This means it’s a powder day on the slopes. Roads are apt to be slippery around the basin because it was raining a bit before the snow came. Here is the ski report brought to you buy Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Reno working on breaking up gridlock

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

It doesn’t take much to make a little mess a much bigger one.

And that might be no truer than when it comes to traffic. As anyone knows, a minor fender-bender can easily turn an already busy road into a frustrating sea of stationary brake lights.

Local and state transportation officials are now considering a high-tech answer to the problem mirrored on a system already

in place in Las Vegas and many other cities.

Read the whole story

Budget gifts: Lake Tahoe News



A subscription to *Lake Tahoe News* is the ultimate money-saving gift – it's free, but the value is priceless. Remember, it's the thought, not the amount you spend on a gift.

Are your family and friends getting an email each morning letting them know what's going on in Lake Tahoe? If not, then sign them up via the Home page. Go to the bottom right side of the page and enter their email address. Then send them an email telling them about your gift.

Lake Tahoe News is the only daily – that's seven days a week – source for news about Lake Tahoe. It's the place to get a daily ski report about downhill and cross country resorts in and around the basin. The Events page has listings well into 2010. It's timely news. It's features. It's the place for Olympic news about Tahoe athletes.

It's your source for news, it should be their source for news. Give the gift of news – *Lake Tahoe News*.

If you need other budget gift ideas, click on the Lifestyle button to find out what other businesses in Lake Tahoe have to offer. Just look for the money ornament logo.

LTCC students move out; money and culprit still missing



By Kathryn Reed

The Alder Inn and Lake Tahoe Community College's ties are no more. All of the students who had called the hotel home moved out when fall quarter ended last week.

The trouble came earlier in the school year when Joseph Balius, who claimed to own the Ski Run Boulevard complex, left town. He is whom the students paid their rent to.

The real owner of the property is June Stefani. She never saw the students' rent money.

Balius had a lease option to buy the property from her, but he was delinquent on his payments to Stefani. That agreement expired earlier this fall and that's when everything came to light.

But some of the transactions remain murky.

A document dated Sept. 29, 2004, lists former South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Ted Long as the one on the lease to buy agreement with Stefani. No other document of record could be found showing he sold the lease to Balius for $1 as he told *Lake Tahoe News* in October.

Stefani and her attorney also say Long has not been involved in the property for years, but evidence of that fact has not been found at the El Dorado County Recorders Office.

Trudy Hancock was best friends with Kira Balius for five years, watched their kids and lived at the Alder Inn – and still does. She, too, believed the couple owned the hotel. She also said Joseph Balius and Long were best friends.

Long did not return a phone call.

“I would have bet my bottom dollar they would not have done this,” Hancock said of the Baliuses. “I thought I was a pretty savvy lady. We all got ripped off.”

Hancock is staying on to keep an eye on the property as a contract employee. She said Stefani plans to turn it back into a hotel during peak periods like this week and not operate it as an apartment complex like what Balius had done.

Donna Hall, a parent of one of the students, had only good things to say about the college’s role in the matter. LTCC had long boasted about the Alder Inn as being a great place for students, even promoting it on the website.

“They went beyond their legal liability. They have agreed to split the damages with us,” Hall said. “The college is just being wonderful.”

A spokesperson with the college did not return a call asking how much LTCC has paid out.

The students who are continuing on with their studies at LTCC have found other living arrangements.

Hall has no intention of going after Balius in civil court, but she does hope law enforcement tracks him down.

“Everyone took their lumps. The owner and students are victims of this man,” said Bob Henderson, Stefani’s attorney.

Henderson said his client also does not intend to pursue civil action against Balius.

Stefani was not available for comment.

Henderson added, “I think he should be pursued by law enforcement. The total amount of damage looks like between $20,000 and $30,000. That is substantial.”

Officer Rick Martinez with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department is investigating the case. He doesn’t return phone calls. All his superior Lt. David Stevenson could say is that nothing has been forwarded to the District Attorneys Office.

Those close to the case speculate Balius and his wife, Kira, and their children are in the Las Vegas area.

Snowbomb card makes Tahoe affordable

Jeffrey Weidel, Roseville Press-Tribune

The original idea emerged from a simple, very basic need: How could a college student on a modest budget afford ski lift tickets?

The goal of obtaining discounts was accomplished for this University of Colorado student and that pursuit eventually led to the rudiments of a business plan that took shape in Lake Tahoe a dozen years ago.

When Jim McAlpine established Snowbomb in 1997 he describes it as â€œone man and his relentless pursuit of a better (and cheaper) way to get on the hill.â€ His first client was Sugar Bowl and payment was a mere six free lift tickets, which at the time seemed pretty â€œcoolâ€ to McAlpine.

Read the whole story

Science conference in Incline

The 5th biennial conference to learn about the progress made in understanding the Lake Tahoe Basin environment is March 16-17 in Incline Village.

The purpose of this two-day conference is to provide an open forum in which individuals involved in the science and management of the basin can learn about and discuss the latest relevant science and information.

For updates, check the Tahoe Science Consortium website at www.tahoescience.org and the Nevada Water Resource Association Web site at www.nvwra.org.

The event is Sierra Nevada College, 291 Country Club Drive Incline Village.

Rahlves 13th in Italy skiercross

By Tom Kelly, USSA

INNICHEN/SAN CANDIDO, Italy – Casey Puckett (Aspen, CO) kicked off the ski cross World Cup season in a big way Monday, taking third to mark the fourth skiercross podium of his career in northern Italy. Daron Rahlves (Sugar Bowl, CA) was 13th and

newcomer Caitlin Ciccone (Littleton, NH) 28th in her finals debut.

Overall, it was a sensational day for Puckett and showed how much his hard work over the summer – both in conditioning and working on starts – could pay off this season. After qualifying third despite several mistakes, he battled his way to win his first three heats to make it to finals.

“Any time you’re on the podium you have to be happy,” said Puckett. “But I’m hungry for my first World Cup win.”

“Every time Casey qualifies fast he’s confident,” said U.S. Head Ski Cross Coach Tyler Shepherd. “And he has a lot of confidence coming through now.”

In his first heat (round of 32), Puckett won the start and had a clean course ahead of him. He made just one mistake – going long off a jump – but was able to hang on for the win.

“The course here is easy without a lot of terrain or passing points,” said Shepherd. “So the start is critical and skiing a mistake-free run.”

In the quarter-finals (round of 16), he again won the start but the field was packed tighter. Puckett won the holeshot and stayed ahead for another win, boosting him into the semis.

Puckett’s teammate Rahlves looked to have the semi-finals made with a strategic mid-course pass, but was passed back going into the finish and didn’t move on. Rahlves finished 13th.

“There’s no reason he shouldn’t have been in the semis,” said Shepherd. “What would have been great is he would have then skied the heat with Casey and they could have worked together to make the finals. But watch for Daron tomorrow. He’s cleaned up a few things with his line and I would expect him to qualify higher and be a factor.”

While Schmid rode a clean course to the win, Puckett battled

French skier Xavier Kuhn all the way. Puckett nearly got by the Frenchman on the second turn, but had to adjust his line so they didn't cross tips.

"There's really no passing possibilities on this course," said Shepherd, "so Casey was just hoping for a little mistake to find the window in the finals."

In addition to strong performances by the workhorses Puckett and Rahlves, Shepherd was thrilled with the women's finish, which saw former U.S. Alpine Ski Team racer Ciccone crack into the finals for the first time, finishing 28th.

"This was a great confidence builder for Caitlin," said Shepherd. "While she's been racing for a while, today was the first time she ever qualified into heats to race against other skiers. She was nervous and went out in the opening round of finals. But she also gained some experience and confidence which she can take into tomorrow."

Shepherd has been actively recruiting women to the newest Olympic sport. Ciccone, along with fellow skier Langely McNeal (Ketchum, ID), who was 44th, are on the World Cup looking for Olympic quota spots.

The skiers are back in action Tuesday with another World Cup in the northern Italian resort.

Innichen/San Candido, Italy, Dec. 21, skicross

Men

1. Michael Schmid, Switzerland

2. Xavier Kuhn, France

3. Casey Puckett, Aspen, CO

4. Audunm Groenvold, Norway

5. Tomas Kraus, Czech Republic

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13. Daron Rahlves, Sugar Bowl, CA

52. Justin Johnson, Park City, UT

53. Jean Christophe Rudigoz, Sun Valley, ID

81. Scott Horn, Truckee, CA

Women

1. Anna Holmlund, Sweden

2. Ashleigh McIvor, Canada

3. Ophelie David, France

4. Sophie Fjellvang-Soelling, Denmark

5. Emilie Serain, Switzerland

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28. Caitlin Ciccone, Littleton, NH

44. Langely McNeal, Ketchum, ID

Forest Service looking for Tahoe ski guides

The U.S. Forest Service Ski with a Ranger Program is looking for ski and snowboard volunteers to lead guided tours at Heavenly Mountain Resort one day a week. Volunteers will be provided with a thorough orientation and a day pass for the day of each tour. The expected commitment of time depending on

your availability, will be four to six hours a week from January through April.

All volunteers are required to attend the program orientation Jan. 11.

Contact Tara McCarthy at (530) 307-9610 or email tmccarthy@fs.fed.us for more information.