Budget gifts: Notecards by photographer Dirk Yuricich



Publisherâ€™s note: *Get in the spirit and share your idea for a gift valued at $20 or less. Click here for details.*

South Shore photographer Dirk Yuricich offers boxed sets of 10 notecards for $20. Each set contains 10 notecards with 10 different images. The notecard sets are grouped thematically, for example, the Cats notecard set includes cat images from all around the globe, or by location, such as Lake Tahoe, Yosemite, Japan, Paris, or Croatia.

Each notecard is printed and hand folded by Dirk and his wife, Lisa, so giving a box of notecards is like giving 10 mini-photo prints.

The notecard sets can be ordered online at: www.dirkphotoz.com/notecards/notecards.html or at the Dirk Yuricich Photography Gallery/Studio at 171 Shady Lane, Stateline or by phone at (775) 588.5816.

Low-income housing stock to increase in South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A 56-unit low-income housing project was unanimously approved Thursday for South Lake Tahoe.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s Governing Board signed

off on development. Construction could begin in summer 2010 next to the fire station at Ski Run Boulevard and Pioneer Trail.

Pacific West Communities of Boise is the developer of the nearly $17 million project.

Potential residents will need to make about 60 percent of the median income for El Dorado County. This is about $25,000 for a single person and $52,000 for a family of three.

“Fifty-two percent of our population is estimated to meet that income level,” said Nancy Kerry, housing manager for South Lake Tahoe.

These units are also considered workforce housing.

Kerry expects them to be filled fast because the 76-unit Sierra Gardens project at the Y has a lengthy waiting list.

Like that project, which was developed two years ago, the new one will allow for 1.5 vehicles per unit.

The developer has agreed to be as green as possible – using LEED guidelines, pervious concrete, energy efficient windows-doors-appliances, and making it as sustainable as possible.

The next step for the developer is to secure tax credits and private financing. South Tahoe’s Redevelopment Agency loaned the project $1.5 million and the state contributed $2.1 million.

The city’s Planning Commission mandated local contractors be used and that emphasis be put on contractors who hire locally, not just have an office here.

Want to count eagles in Tahoe?

Volunteers needed to participate in Tahoe eagle count Jan. 8.

Contact Rena Escobedo at the U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe; (530) 543.2733 or rescobedo@fs.fed.us.

KTHO helping raise money for Jaycee Lee Dugard



The Jaycee Lee Dugard fund is $800 short of $50,000. KTHO FM-96.1/AM-590 (www.kthoradio.com)is offering one week of free advertising for every $100 donation made to the fund at Bank of the West. Checks may be sent to Bank of the West, Jaycee Dugard Family Fund, 2161 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. The account number is 186153508.

Vacancy signs up and down Highway 50

By Kathryn Reed

Coming off the worst November on record, lodging properties on the South Shore are hoping the holiday season will resurrect their businesses.

Jerry Bindel said many properties have dropped their prices to lure tourists to Lake Tahoe. But he isnâ€™t sure this brings new people to town, but said instead it is more likely to get the people who are on the fence to make a decision.



Business owners hope more tourists fill hotel rooms. Photo/Kathryn Reed

As general manager of Lakeland Village, president of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, member of the Tourism Improvement District and board member of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, Bindel has his pulse on what is going on in town.

But one only need look at all the vacancy signs and empty parking lots to know the crowds have yet to arrive. With this being the last day before winter break for many schools throughout the country, the headlights are likely to be streaming toward Tahoe in the days to come.

The trend of last-minute bookings is continuing. Fortunately, the snow has the phones ringing. This time last year it was dry roads and dirt on the slopes.

Bindel said the number of bookings for the two-week holiday period is decent, as are holiday periods in 2010, but otherwise itâ€™s lean.

â€œIf you are by the (Heavenly) gondola, the numbers are better (than this time last year). If youâ€™re not, youâ€™re lucky if you are doing the same as last year,â€ Bindel said.

Marketing dollars are needed to drive business to Lake Tahoe. Starting today lodging guests in South Tahoe will pay a $1 or $1.50 more per night. The assessment by the Tourism Improvement District was OKâ€™d by the City Council earlier this month.

It means hotel-motel guests will pay a $3 assessment and time share-property management operators collect $4.50 a night.

For the 2008-09 fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the TID collected $1.2 million. With the new rates, the TID expects to generate $1.8 million in 2009-10.

South Lake Tahoe councilmembers a couple years ago stopped allocating funds for marketing, despite tourism being the primary business in town. This is why the lodging association decided it needed to take matters into its own hands.

When heads are not in beds, it affects nearly every other business in town â€“ no one is in town to gamble, get a massage, eat out, buy products or ski.

The money is used for marketing. Ten percent of what is collected goes directly to events. Bindel has long been a proponent of bringing more events to town â€“ ones locals and tourists would be interested in and possibly midweek when things are slow.

The irony is the transient occupancy tax the city collects from hotels is one of the three main revenue sources for the general fund. Sales tax is another. Without tourists, those

coffers are bare.

In years past the city has allocated more than $300,000 a year to the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority. No more. Instead it spent about that much money in the last year fighting to get rid of two employees who won their right to stay employed.

One has to wonder if the money had been spent on marketing the town, if the economy would be better and unemployment not close to 20 percent.

Homewood ski resort opening Dec. 18

Homewood Mountain Resort opens Dec. 18.

The more than 5 feet of snow so far in Lake Tahoe means 100 percent of the terrain at this West Shore resort will be open.

Homewoodâ€™s two day lodges (North and South Lodge) will be open to guests offering ticket and season pass sales; equipment rentals; adult and kidsâ€™ instruction; Snow Rangers full and half-day childrenâ€™s programs; dining; and aprÃ¨s-ski refreshments.

The resortâ€™s Mid Mountain Pavilion restaurant and Happy Platter surface lift will open Dec. 26.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 17



Cheap tickets are to be found at Diamond Peak today with the Incline resort spinning chairs for the first time today. Here is the ski report for the day, brought to you by Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Wunderlust at Squaw

Wunderlust at Squaw Valley – July 29-Aug. 1. Click here for details.

Budget gifts: A magic show at MontBleu



Publisherâ€™s note: *Get in the spirit and share your idea for a gift valued at $20 or less. Click here for details.*

It’s being billed as â€œThe best-priced family-entertainment show at South Shore during the holidays.â€

Sometimes the best thing to unwrap is a ticket to a performance.

Joseph Gabriel, awarded 2009â€™s â€œBest Stage Magician,â€

will entertain families Dec. 26-Jan. 3 at MontBleu in Stateline.

Tickets start at $12.95 for children (17 and under).

Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased by calling Ticketmaster 866.448.7849, online at www.ticketmaster.com, or at the MontBleu Box Office 800.648.3353.

LTCC offers sports filmmaking class

Jump into the action this winter with â€œDMA 131K â€“ Special Topic: Action Sports Digital Filmmaking” at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Tahoe.

This ground breaking new class will explore the tips, techniques and digital filmmaking technology that makes it possible for anyone to make compelling, entertaining and even profitable action sports films. The class will be hands-on experience for students interested in learning more about this unique and popular specialty genre of filmmaking that is particularly appropriate for Lake Tahoe.

Classes will consist of weekly shooting sessions on the mountain during the day and editing sessions on campus at night. Sierra-at-Tahoe has made this class possible by offering a special lift access price of $100 for 10 shooting sessions on the mountain.

After the initial first week of in-classroom preparation, the on-mountain shooting classes will begin at 9 Tuesday mornings. After class ends at noon, students will be able to continue

skiing, snowboarding and shooting on their own for the rest of the day with their special one day passes issued by Sierra-at-Tahoe. Students may also use their own Sierra-at-Tahoe season passes if they already have them.

Instructor Rob Armenti is an experienced filmmaker specializing in action sports and documentary filmmaking.

In addition to the focus on winter action sports, students will learn the craft of storytelling and reporting by creating short films pertaining to the various aspects of ski resort operation, winter life, scenic winter beauty and other stories taking place on the mountain. Students may use their own video camera equipment or use a limited number of compact Mini DV cameras available through the college.

Final Cut Express will be used to edit footage shot on the Tuesday morning shooting sessions. Editing sessions will take place on campus Thursday evenings on Apple Macintosh computers. Basic knowledge of computer use is advised along with intermediate skiing or snowboarding ability. PC users will learn the basics of how to apply their computing skills to the Macintosh operating system.

Snow riding ability will be accessed during the first on-mountain session. Class size is limited to 15 students.