Alert from El Dorado County

No public services will be available at the following Placerville locations due to ongoing power failure and persistent icy conditions:

* Human Services and Public Health Facilities on Spring Street

* Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Business Office on 415 Placerville Drive

* Animal Services Business Office on 415 Placerville Drive

* Animal Services Shelter on 511 Placerville Drive

The public can contact the above departments at the following numbers for additional information about services:

* Human Services at (530) 642-4888

* Public Health at (530) 621-6100

* Animal Services at (530) 621-5795

Due to the need to clear the parking areas of ice and snow, employees who have not yet reported to work should not attempt to access the Spring Street facility. Staff who have not yet reported to work should contact their departments for further instructions.

All other county facilities are currently open under normal operating conditions.

Steve Wysong, SLT city treasurer, dies

Steve Wysong, South Lake Tahoe’s city treasurer since 1990, died this morning.

Services are not known at this time.



Steve Wysong

For a more complete story about Wysong, click here.

“I’ve known Steve for many, many years. He was one of the exceptionally wonderful beings,” Tom Davis said this afternoon.

Art gallery walk in South Tahoe

On Dec. 18 from 4-7pm is the third Friday Gallery Art Walk in South Lake Tahoe. Wine and hors dâ€™oeuvres will be served.

South Shoreâ€™s Village Center is the place for art lovers to visit. Located a block from the casinos and next door to the Heavenly Village.

Handcrafted jewelry, Tahoe landscape photography, and original and limited edition paintings, this new Art Center of South Lake Tahoe â€œhas it all.â€

Visit the Village Center on the third Friday of the month between 4-7pm for their Gallery Walk event. Many of the galleries feature live artist demonstrations and serve wine and hors dâ€™oeuvres.

Participating galleries are all located at:

4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Untamed Art 530-544-7099 Suite #3 www.signaturegalleries.com

Marcus Ashley Galleries 530-544-4278 Suite #23 www.MarcusAshley.com

Wyland Galleries 530-541-7099 Suite #3 www.wyland.com

Sun Art 530-544-1341 Suite #27 www.sunartgallerytahoe.com

Jon Paul Gallery 530-544-4269 Suite #18 www.jonpaulgallery.com

Artifacts 530-543-0728 Suite #18

Stateline casino turmoil: Bill’s closing, MontBleu staff cuts

Publisher’s note: *Updated as of 8:19pm Dec. 14.*

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Bill’s Casino in Stateline will cease to exist as

of Jan. 4 when the world’s largest casino company closes one of its smallest gaming venues.

Letty Garay, who has been a slot host for 19 years at the casino, said the nine employees were told about the closing on Monday. Seven work part time and two are supervisors.

The casino, which opened in 1987, once employed about 200 people. Before it was Bill’s, it was Barneys Casino.



Bill's Casino in Stateline is empty Dec. 9. It will close Jan. 4. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On Wednesday, it was hard to find an employee or patron to speak with.

Walking the casino floor, Garay appeared to be the only employee on duty. The bar was closed. A sign said go next door to Harrah’s if you need change or to cash a check.

Garay, who lives in South Lake Tahoe, doesn’t know what she will do next. She plans to take the severance pay.

Bill’s officials said employees have the choice to be relocated or take the money.

Garay wasn’t surprised about the closing. “I understand with the economy,” she said.

It has been the Y in South Lake Tahoe with its boarded up buildings that was the eyesore of the South Shore. Now the east end of the South Shore may look no better with a vacant casino joining the bankrupt concrete-rebar site known locally as the "hole in the ground" (one day it might be a convention center-hotel-retail complex).

Tourism officials don't believe plywood will be used to shutter Bill's – realizing the image it provokes and how nasty it looks in South Lake Tahoe.

The one good thing about the would-be convention center is it looks like a construction site and doesn't scream economic strife like empty buildings do.

Casino officials are optimistic the closure will be good in the long run.

"One of the key things I think is between Harrah's and Harveys we can work more on positioning to make them stronger as we move through and get through the current recessionary problems," casino spokesman John Packer told *Lake Tahoe News*. "When we get out of the recession, it will be key to be in the right position."

Only three people were playing slots Wednesday afternoon at Bill's. TVs and the one-armed bandits made noise, but it still had the feel of a ghost town. It was almost sad. This casino that has operated for than 20 years has been slowly dying, much like all of Nevada gaming.

Harrah's Entertainment owns Bill's, Harrah's and Harveys at Stateline. Harveys was acquired in 2001.

Bill Harrah started the company in Reno 70 years ago. On Jan. 28, 2008, Harrah's Entertainment was acquired by affiliates of private-equity firms TPG Capital and Apollo Global Management.

Bill's Casino had been completely remodeled in 2006 and went

smokeless in December of that year.

In July 2008, the casino eliminated all of its table games and with it, 28 employees.

The corporate website says, “Harrah’s Entertainment is focused on building loyalty and value with its customers through a unique combination of great service, excellent products, unsurpassed distribution, operational excellence and technology leadership. We concentrate on building loyalty and value for our customers, employees, business partners, and communities by being the most service-oriented, technology-driven, geographically-diversified company in gaming.”

It might need to rewrite that statement.

Lake Monster Tattoo has one of its shops inside Bill’s. Owners Reed and Nerissa Murin had planned to consolidate into their store at the Y in South Lake Tahoe before getting the official word from management at Bill’s about the closure.

They have had the casino shop for four years.

“We’ve seen it coming for a long time,” Reed Murin said.

The couple said that while the casino floor has lacked patrons, their shop and Bar 24 have stayed busy in these lean times.

The phone at Bar 24 has been ringing off the hook for more than a week. It is not known how many employees lost their job there.

Bill’s used to be the spot where locals would hang out. It had a more laid back feel than the big four.

Like all the casinos at Stateline, Bill’s used to be packed. It would be wall-to-wall people on weekend nights. When other casinos had $5 blackjack tables, people were hovering at Bill’s $2 tables waiting for a seat.

There was a time when Bill’s didn’t have doors. The entrance – on both ends of the casino corridor were open 24 hours day. It wasn’t quite gaming al fresco, but it had that funky, Tahoe feel.

Packer remembers in the early days of the casino when people filled the sidewalks outside of Bill’s and the other casinos. He also acknowledges in recent times it has seemed like employees have outnumbered customers at the small facility.

Bill’s clients are considered “retail customers” – ones who just show up. No player cards were issued, which in turn meant not knowing the players by name or address. This meant they could not be marketed to to lure them to Lake Tahoe with specials.

In the late 1980s the upstairs McDonald’s was popular with locals and tourists craving junk food. Various restaurants have come and gone from what was Bar 24.

What will happen to the property is not known. Harrah’s Entertainment owns the building and land.

“Once it is closed, we will look at our options,” Packer said. “We will button it down. The parking lot will be used as overflow for Harrah’s. The building itself will be closed.”

MontBleu layoffs

The Tuesday before Thanksgiving 27 people were laid off from MontBleu casino in Stateline. The casino still has more than 600 employees.

The pit is closed during the graveyard shift because the casino floor looks like a cemetery at that time of night â€“ no one walking around.

The reservations desk is open only from 11am-7pm

Many of the lost jobs are people who earned $7 or $8 an hour.

But also out of work is the director of casino operations. The director of food and beverage has been replaced.

Tropicana Entertainment out of Las Vegas owns MontBleu. It renegotiated its lease with Edgewood Companies (formerly Park Cattle) earlier this year. It now expires in 2028.

Indian gaming's role

Indian casinos have increasingly been the nemesis of Stateline and Reno gaming halls. But even they are having to layoff workers. Red Hawk in Shingle Springs just laid off more people.

Tom Davis, who last month was laid off from MontBleu and is a former mayor of South Lake Tahoe, said at the Dec. 8 City Council meeting, "It's the Indian wars now."

Billboards throughout the Central Valley are for the Indian casinos in Jackson, Shingle Springs and Roseville. On Highway 99 between Sacramento and Turlock not a single Tahoe or Reno casino is advertised. Interstate 80 and Highway 50 west of Sacramento have limited advertising for Nevada casinos.

Workers at Thunder Valley in Roseville agreed this week to join the Teamsters union. But unions are no guarantee of a job.

America brings its U.K. roots to Harrah's

One of contemporary musicâ€™s most popular and enduring bands, returns to the South Shore of Lake Tahoe, for one show at Harrahâ€™s on Dec. 12.

The founding members of America, Gerry Beckley, Dewey Bunnell and Dan Peek, met while still in high school and all three were sons of Air Force officers stationed in the U.K.

A nameless horse began its gallop across international airwaves in 1972, introducing the poetic rock stylings of America to the world. Although hailing from England, America is best known as part of the â€œCalifornia Soundâ€, a description that spoke more about where a musician in the early â€™70s lived or honed their sound.

America made the kind of free and easy music that appealed to all crowds. They harmonized their way to the top of British pop charts on the strength of the debut single, â€œA Horse With No Name.â€

The group followed their British success to the U.S. that spring where â€œA Horse With No Nameâ€ became a No. 1 single, pushing Neil Youngâ€™s â€œHeart of Goldâ€ off the top of the charts. That summer they released â€œI Need Youâ€ which also rose to the Top 10, and led to the release their second album.

â€œVentura Highway,â€ the first single released from this collaboration, became their third straight Top 10 hit and also helped them secure a Grammy Award in 1972 for â€œBest New Artist.â€

After spending some time refining their sound, America released Homecoming in 1973 and reached the Top 10 in the U.S. once again, peaking at No. 21 in the U.K. Their essential sound, mixing rock, pop and folk elements, fit perfectly with the â€œmellowâ€ â€˜70s, which sought to find peace and meaning amidst the protests, carnage and confusion of the Vietnam War era.

Americaâ€™s 1976 release, “Hideaway”, went gold and peaked at No. 11.

Following the release of their next LP, Harbor, Dan Peek left

the group to pursue a career as a contemporary Christian recording artist. The group continued on as a duo with Bunnell and Beckley. Producer George Martin began to work with them on the album “Holiday”, which brought them back to the top of the charts at No. 3.

In 1982, â€œYou Can Do Magicâ€ was released and pushed America back to the top of the adult contemporary charts.

The music has never stopped for America.

Now in their fourth decade of performing and touring together, America recently released the two-disc set, “Here & Now”, in 2007. Last year America released a new DVD, “Live in Chicago”, which captures the highlights of where their life has carried them and chronicles the changes theyâ€™ve gone through both artistically and personally.

Show time is 7:30pm Dec. 12. Tickets are $55 each, plus fees. For information and reservations, call 800.427.7247. or purchase tickets online at www.SouthShoreRoom.com.

Snowmobiling with views of Lake Tahoe

Zephyr Cove Resort Snowmobile Center is opening Dec. 11.

The first two-hour lakeview tour is scheduled at noon Friday.

Regular tour schedule begins Dec. 12 at 10an, noon and 2pm.

Call (530) 543.6191 for reservations.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 9



It’s below freezing out there this morning – and that’s at lake level. It might be one of those days to wear everything you have in the closet and raid the person’s you live with. Click on the ski report to find out the scoop about the resorts. All of the info is provided by Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Thousands in Placerville in deep freeze

Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The deep snow blanketing Placerville and its surrounding foothills continued to cause disruptions Tuesday, with thousands of residents going a second day without power and heat.

The snow that fell Sunday and Monday brought down trees and limbs throughout the foothills, and in some cases power lines with them. By Tuesday afternoon, a few thousand PG&E customers in El Dorado County remained without power.

Don Davis, spokesman for Marshall Medical Center, said the hospital relied on its generators after the electricity went out. But about 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, the generators failed as well. The county Office of Emergency Services supplied portable generators until hospital generators were restored.

Read the whole story

Budget gifts: Black Bear Inn cookbook or ornament



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

Enjoy recipes from Lake Tahoeâ€™s most celebrated bed and breakfast. The Black Bear Inn Cookbook ($20) features all of the innâ€™s best breakfast recipes â€“ from Blueberry Streusel Coffeecake to Eggs Benedict.

Or trim your tree with a keepsake Black Bear Inn ornament ($14.95). A festive reminder of a great Lake Tahoe vacation, the hand-painted ornament features a snow-covered inn, decorated with holly and poinsettias.

Both are available at www.tahoeblackbear.com or at 1202 Ski Run Blvd, South Lake Tahoe.



Black Bear Inn cookbook



Black Bear Inn ornament

Vail Resorts posts second consecutive quarterly loss

Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc. Tuesday posted a wider loss for the second consecutive quarter, with the Colorado ski resort and hotel operator attributing a slide in revenue to the timing of real-estate closings.

Broomfield-based Vail Resorts (NYSE: MTN) reported results for the three months ending Oct. 31, which the company regards as its first quarter.

It cited a quarterly net loss attributable to the company of $41.2 million, or $1.14 a share, versus a $34.5 million loss, or 93 cents a share, a year earlier.

Read the whole story