Ice skating show in South Tahoe

On Dec. 5 at 5pm the Tahoe Figure Skating Club will be performing to holiday music. The Lake Tahoe Elementary Choir will be performing also.
The free event is at theÂ South Tahoe Ice Arena.

Christmas Cheer shares its needs with KTHO listeners



Joanne Shope with Christmas Cheer – the year-round nonprofit that provides food to people in need – talks about the organization on KTHO FM-96.1/AM-590. Listen Saturday at 10am or Monday at 6pm. (www.kthoradio.com)

Phillip Garrido apologizes in letter

KCRA TV

SACRAMENTO – In his third jailhouse letter to KCRA 3, Phillip Garrido issued an apology “for what has taken place” and referenced “ending a sexual problem believed to be

impossible.”



Phillip Garrido

Garrido is the convicted rapist accused of kidnapping Jaycee Lee Dugard nearly two decades ago and holding her in a backyard compound at his Contra Costa County home. He’s also believed to have fathered two children with her.

Read the whole story

Sierra faithfuls pray for snow

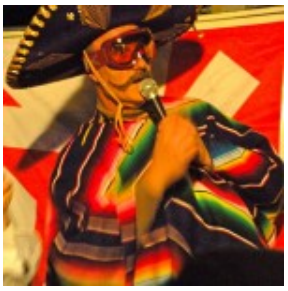
By Kathryn Reed

It was cold enough to snow Thursday night – which was just what the throng of people at Murphy’s Irish Pub in South Lake Tahoe were hoping for.

It was wall-to-wall people at Sierra-at-Tahoe’s annual Pray for Snow Party. A mix of young and old turned out for the raucous event.

New this year was a mini halfpipe for skaters set up in what is usually the lawn area.

Back as usual was the snow calling contest. Sierra's General Manager John Rice started things off as he transformed himself into El Nino Grande. His gringo Spanish was hard to hear over the din of the crowd. His sombrero, poncho and goggles easily won best costume contest – though that wasn't an actual category.



El Nino Grande, aka John Rice, doing a bilingual snow calling chant Nov. 12. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Judges awarded the ladies from Weidinger Public Relations – Jenn, Jenna and Ashley – first place. Apparently their boss' advice to them before they left the office – makeÂ sure everything was in sync as they danced – did the trick.

Coming in second was Rich Hodge who scribbled his lyrics on a napkin about an hour before hitting the stage.

JC took third – proving being loud has merit.

Sierra is relying on Mother Nature for an opening date – early December, most likely.

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South Tahoe business license fees may go up

Business license fees might be going up in South Lake Tahoe.

As a way to generate money and make the system more equitable, the City Council has decided to discuss the topic further at its Dec. 8 meeting. The annual fee is based on gross income. There are minimums and maximums. The council is contemplating changing the cap, though it's likely all fees could go up.

Itâ€™s possible the idea would be put before the voters in June.

Invasive aquatics not a priorty with EDC supervisors

By Kathryn Reed

A crash course in invasive species was given to El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday during their once a year meeting in South Lake Tahoe.

A number of non-native aquatic organisms already call Lake Tahoe home. Although this is not a good, what could be worse is if quagga or zebra mussels enter the water.



Quagga mussel

Last week a federal task force adopted a plan to deal with the invasives. Lake Tahoe is one of four entities in the country with an interstate plan to stop the mussels from migrating. This allows the area to receive federal money to help with inspection costs.

It would cost the Lake Tahoe Basin millions of dollars a year if these mussels ever reached the lake. This would be in lost property, damage to water treatment plants, and tourists not coming.

The California Department of Fish & Gameâ€™s website says, â€œU.S. Congressional researchers estimated that an infestation of the Zebra mussel in the Great Lakes area cost the power industry $3.1 billion in the 1993-1999 period, with an economic impact to industries, businesses and communities of more than $5 billion. California could spend hundreds of millions of dollars protecting the stateâ€™s water system from a Quagga/Zebra infestation.â€

Eradication isnâ€™t possible â€“ at least with todayâ€™s science and technology.

Ted Thayer, wildlife program manager with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, explained what his agency has been doing to prevent the mussels from entering Lake Tahoe.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Ron Briggs sounded like he knew nothing of the mandatory inspection program that was in place for the entire 2009 boating season.

Supervisor Jim Sweeney got hung up on thinking the mussels had something to do with lake clarity.

Supervisors barely discussed an ordinance from Lake County that encompasses Clear Lake and if they would want to adopt something similar. There was talk by some supervisors that they have little interest in paying for prevention and enforcement.

â€œIâ€™m not going to take a deputy off the street to fight mussels,â€ Briggs said.

This was after Thayer explained some of the consequences that could occur if the mussels enter Lake Tahoe as well has what has happened to the Great Lakes and Lake Mead.

â€œYou canâ€™t walk with a your toes in the sand on the beach with razor sharp shells. The shells gum up engines of boats,â€ Thayer told the five elected officials who were meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Perhaps instead of having the Tahoe supervisor sit on the TRPA Governing Board, one of the other four should so more supervisors have a better understanding of what is going on at the lake with aquatic species and other important subjects.

The TRPA website and DFG website have detailed information about the mussels.

Forest Service opens Angora burn area

The U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit lifted the area closures put in place for public safety

during the hazard tree removal project in the Angora Fire area.

Large numbers of standing dead trees and damaged live trees are present inside and outside the project area. Storms and high winds can cause standing dead trees to fall or snap. Several dead trees along with damaged live trees came down in the October storm. The USFS warns hikers, bikers and winter recreationists to use caution within the fire area and avoid areas with large concentrations of dead standing trees.

When conditions are favorable next year, felled dead trees between Angora Creek and Lake Tahoe Boulevard will be removed.

For more information, call (530) 543.2694.

Zephyr Cove estate's link to public pension fund probed

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO — With the fortune he has made using his connections with public pension funds, it's hardly a surprise that Alfred J.R. Villalobos owns a sprawling, 9,100-square-foot home overlooking the emerald-blue waters of Lake Tahoe.

But the way in which Villalobos financed construction of the $2.7-million mansion is fueling new questions in an investigation by the California Public Employees' Retirement system into the activities of so-called placement agents such as Villalobos.

Read the whole story

STHS security guard arrested; student involved

By Kathryn Reed

For the second time this calendar year a security guard at South Tahoe High School has been arrested.

The latest arrest was of Larry Brown on Nov. 6. The 63-year-old was pulled over by an El Dorado County sheriff's deputy on a routine traffic stop. The smell of freshly burned marijuana allegedly spewed from the vehicle.

In the passenger seat was a 16-year-old female STHS student.

The District Attorney's Office received the report yesterday and expects to review the case next week and determine what charges are likely to be filed against Brown.

"Possession of marijuana on a highway is a fine only. The other stuff is potentially extremely serious," Hans Uthe, assistant district attorney, told *Lake Tahoe News* today.

The sheriff's report recommends Brown be charged with transportation of marijuana, selling the illegal substance and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Brown has posted bail.

The teenager was released to her parents. She reportedly told deputies the two had been at Pope Beach drinking beer and smoking pot.

The vehicle was pulled over about 3pm last Friday near the Y in South Lake Tahoe.

STHS Principal Ivone Larson deferred comments to the district office. Superintendent Jim Tarwater is out today.

Human Resources Manager Jim Watson said the district is reviewing the case to determine what action will be taken against the employee. Watson would not say if Brown was on paid or unpaid leave.

This means South Tahoe High is down to two security guards, plus South Lake Tahoe police Officer Scott Willson. Willson is the school resource officer. The other security guards are employees of the school district and don't carry weapons. To be hired, a background check is done. A state certification is also required, which entails 24 hours of training.

Last month Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill that takes effect July 1, 2010, mandating anyone who supervises a school club or is a coach must obtain an "Activity Supervisor Clearance Certificate" from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Fingerprinting is part of that process, as well as state and federal criminal records reports from the Department of Justice. How this relates to guards is not known.

Such checks can prevent a district from hiring someone with an unsavory past, but do nothing to prevent someone from committing a crime after being hired.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District keeps finding this out.

The other STHS security guard arrested this year was Irma Torres Salazar, 22. She was convicted in the spring on misdemeanor charges of interfering with the investigation of a gang related beating.

Karsten Gronwold was arrested four days before the first day of school in 2006 after teaching in the district since 1990. The former magnet school teacher was sentenced in 2008 to eight years in federal prison on child pornography charges.

Last month he was sentenced to three years in state prison. That sentence for committing a lewd act on a child will run concurrent with his federal time.

A district psychologist had marijuana charges dropped against her in May 2008, but her employment with LTUSD was severed.

Snow covers Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A blanket of white fluffy stuff is covering the Lake Tahoe Basin.



It's winter in Tahoe on Nov. 12. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Forecasters were right – 2-3 inches fell at lake level overnight.

Despite the gray skies first thing this morning, the weather guys say to expect a sunny day. Winter could return Friday night – just as everyone gets all dolled up for the annual Soroptimist wine event at Harrah's Tahoe.

Expect sun for the weekend, with winter returning Tuesday. Highs will be in the 40s, lows in the 20s.

Chains or 4-wheel drive was the norm for most of the highways in and out of the basin this morning. Road conditions can easily be accessed via the top of *Lake Tahoe News*‘ Home page.

Ski resorts didn’t have snow accumulation totals posted before 7 this morning. But suffice it to say, this storm and the two on the radar screen bode well for resorts like Heavenly that plans to open Nov. 20 and Squaw on Nov. 21.

Sierra-at-Tahoe’s annual Pray for Snow Party is tonight at 7 at Murphy’s Irish Pub on Emerald Bay Road in South Lake.

Kirkwood’s party is at McP’s pub near Stateline on Nov. 19.