Polar plunge to benefit Special Olympics

Hundreds of Californians and Nevadans will plunge into the winter-chilled waters of Lake Tahoe on March 29 all in the name of Special Olympics.

Donned in costumes but without the protection of wet suits, Special Olympics athletes and their supporters will jump into Tahoe's icy waters at Zephyr Cove for the South Lake Tahoe Polar Plunge.

This is a fundraiser for Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada

Plungers, which include individuals, companies, law enforcement, families and schools, are asked to raise a minimum of $125 – which provides one season of sports instruction and competition at no cost to the Special Olympics athlete.

In 2013, the polar plunges had more than 1,400 plungers, who raised more than $450,000.

Registration and donations for the South Lake Tahoe Polar Plunge are being accepted online and will be accepted on site. Registration is at 1oam and the plunge at noon.

Study: Pesticide linked to

Alzheimer’s

By Robin Lally, EcoWatch

Scientists have known for more than 40 years that the synthetic pesticide DDT is harmful to bird habitats and a threat to the environment.

Now researchers at Rutgers University say exposure to DDT – banned in the U.S. since 1972 but still used as a pesticide in other countries – may also increase the risk and severity of Alzheimer’s disease in some people, particularly those over the age of 60.

In a study published online last week in JAMA Neurology, Rutgers scientists discuss their findings in which levels of DDE – the chemical compound left when DDT breaks down – were higher in the blood of late-onset Alzheimer’s disease patients compared to those without the disease.

Read the whole story

Washoe, fire topics at Truckee chamber meeting

Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce is having two speakers at its Feb. 11 meeting.

Will Richardson from Tahoe Institute for Natural Science will discuss post-fire ecosystems and issues related to managing environments for safety, fuels, and ecosystem health and recovery.

A member of the Washoe Tribe will talk about the tribe's use of the area, significant places, travel routes an the importance of the Truckee River.

The breakfast meeting is from 7-8:30am at the Truckee Airport. Cost is $10 for members, $12 for others.

For more info, call (530) 587.2757.

Improv comics deliver laughs for 50 years

By Kathryn Reed

Comedy is more than making people laugh. It's also about getting people to think and perhaps letting them forget about their life for an hour or two at a time.

Budd Friedman didn't seek out to be the master of comedy. But now with 23 Improv clubs across the nation, that is what he is. He's celebrating 50 years of being in the business.



Howie Nave warms up audiences at the Improv at

Harveys five nights a week.
Photo/LTN

“I really started out opening a coffeehouse in Times Square for Broadway singers after their show. Within a year comedians started coming in. I realized I had a better ear for comedy than singers,” Friedman told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That was 1963. In 1975, the first California club opened in Los Angeles. In 1985, the push was on to open clubs throughout the country. The Stateline Improv just turned 13, having opened originally at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe on Jan. 15, 2001. Now the show is at Harveys.

Howie Nave has been the emcee at the local club since its inception.

Nave first worked for Friedman when the former Reno Hilton, which is now the Grand Sierra, had an Improv. Nave said the Hilton’s general manager at the time told him he wanted Friedman out and Nave to stay. Nave chose to stick with Friedman. That’s what led to an Improv at the lake.

“Budd has been like a second dad,” Nave said of the comedy maestro. Because of that, Nave’s loyalty has been with Friedman all these years even when other venues have tried to woo him away. Their closeness is evident in the fact Friedman was at Nave’s wedding a few years ago.

It’s Friedman’s voice people hear introducing Nave at the start of the show. The comedy leader comes to Tahoe every now and then. And when he is in town, he’ll often take the stage to say a few words.

Friedman and Nave agree getting comics to Tahoe is easy. Comics are booked through July. They like what Tahoe has to offer and the crowds are always receptive. Plus, it is a diverse audience based on its being a mix of locals and tourists.

But it’s not easy to get into an Improv for comics.

“You have to have a lot of credit,” Nave said. He has freedom with deciding who will be the two other comics joining him each night. The Stateline showroom is dark on Mondays and Tuesdays, while there are two shows on Saturdays.

Nave said even renowned political satirist Will Durst couldn’t get in to the Improv. Durst had helped Nave when both lived in the Bay Area. Nave returned the favor when he got the job in Tahoe and got Durst a gig at the local Improv. Durst was last here in December.



Howie Nave, left, and Budd Friedman opening night of the Improv in 1998 at the Reno Hilton. Photo/Provided

There was a time when the emcee got paid more than the headliner. A lot had to do with that person being at the club the entire time.

“The host is the most important job; every comic will tell you because you have to set the table, you set the tone. If it’s a s—— host, you are not going to want to watch the rest of the show,” Nave told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I am the appetizer for the main course. If the appetizer is bad, you are vomiting before the main course.”

The comedy business has changed quite a bit in the 50 years since Friedman started. In the early days clubs didn't have liquor licenses. It wasn't uncommon for teenagers to be in the audience. Now you must be 21 to get in.

"I would love to get in a few more casinos. They are easier to run because they take care of all the liquor and booze that are necessary," Friedman said.

But now in his 80s, Friedman is most interested in sustaining his business instead of growing it. However, this month he will be opening a 500-seat club in Irvine and closing the existing 300-seater. He said the trend is larger clubs. (The Harveys Cabaret seats almost 300.)

Comedy isn't completely recession proof, Friedman says, but he has survived. People want and need to laugh.

"With the advent of cable, the audiences are much more sophisticated than they used to be. They know what to expect when they walk into the club," Friedman said.

But knowing what to expect can be dicey for the comics. Nave half-jokingly says comedy clubs might need to install metal detectors because of the divisiveness of the country. Political humor isn't always funny depending if you wear blue or red.

For those who've never stepped inside a comedy club, this is what Friedman says you'll get, "I would say you are going to get current events in a palpable, amusing way. It's educational, yet funny. You will learn a different slant on life. I think that is what comedy does – particularly today. Just look at Bill Maher and Jon Stewart. My wife and I watch them all the time to get the news."

Letter: Parking fiasco should cause heads to roll

To the community,

The city is a corporation. It has a board of directors. It has a chief executive, the city manager. It has a legal department led by the city attorney.

The shareholders are the citizens of the city. The citizens who created the parking meter initiative that has been prepared for the ballot and approved has given a thumbs down, a vote of no confidence, to the board of directors, the City Council, and city manger and city attorney.



Bill Crawford

In the private sector such an event causes heads to roll. Members of the board of directors resign, CEOs are given pink slips, lawyers are replaced. A shake up takes place for, hopefully, the good of the corporation. So perhaps members of the City Council, in light of the vote of no confidence, should consider resigning. And the city manager needs to take a hard look at how and why she recommends the course of action for the council. The city attorney played bad politics on the creation of the initiative. He is guilty of misfeasance. Thus, he should be shown the door for cause without any waling

money.

It is time for those holding the reins of government in the city of South Lake Tahoe to realize that they have a social contract with the citizen, to govern in the best interest of the whole, not to create pet projects that are ill conceived and over the top throwing time and money to the wind.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Prescribed fires planned for Tahoe basin

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will continue prescribed fire operations in several locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin on Feb. 4.

On the South Shore, operations will take place on the east side of Tahoe Mountain in South Lake Tahoe, the south side of Highway 89 near Camp Richardson, and off North Upper Truckee Road in the Angora Fire area south of Mule Deer Circle.

On the West Shore, operations will take place across from Emerald Bay State Park and on the west side of Highway 89 near Tahoma.

Prescribed fire crews may continue operations through the weekend, weather, staffing, and conditions permitting

All prescribed fire projects are conducted in accordance with an approved prescribed fire burn plan. Burn plans describe specific conditions under which operations are conducted including the weather, number of personnel, opportunities to minimize smoke impacts, and available burn days. This

information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke may be visible on Highway 89 near Camp Richardson, Emerald Bay State Park, and Tahoma. Smoke from prescribed fire may continue for several days after the initial ignition.

Nev. farmers, ranchers contend with drought

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review Journal

FALLON – Nevada's severe drought is a tragedy unfolding in slow motion. But its effects will be far reaching – from rural communities that depend on ranching and agriculture for their existence to the prices we all pay for food at the grocery store.



Carson Valley cows had more natural grass to eat two years ago. Photo/LTN file

Nevada's wildlife will suffer as food supplies disappear and springs dependent on runoff from snowfall fail. Wild horses will suffer from a lack of forage.

Wildfires could become a major problem throughout the state, from the dry rangelands to the drought-crippled forests of the Sierra Nevada.

But most of all it will be felt by the ranchers and farmers and their families, those eternal optimists who prepare the fields and grow their cattle herds every year with fingers crossed that the rain and snow will come on time.

Read the whole story

‘Conversations’ will get you thinking and talking

By Kathryn Reed

I don’t know if it has ever been easy for mixed generations to talk to one another. One thinks the other is too old to understand and the other is too young without any life experience to contribute.

But if the dialogue were more about having a conversation, a discussion, sharing, then perhaps there could be an exchange of ideas instead of a litany of criticisms that are often followed by rolled eyes.



“Conversations” by Bob Keller of Glenbrook is aptly titled. He wrote it for his grandchildren. Sometimes it’s easier to read than it is to listen. It gives us more time to process what is being “said”.

The first page of the book explains his intent: “I seek to

raise questions and hope the reader will attempt to answer those questions for himself or herself. I do not seek to teach the subjects covered. I do not seek to convince the readers of a particular viewpoint. I do not seek agreement with me.

“I will have been successful if this book stimulates thought and discussion even if the result is complete disagreement with everything here. I will have failed if the reader is in complete agreement with me without having done any critical thinking and analysis.”

The 222-page book is a fast and easy read. There are typos and grammatical errors that would need fixing if the book goes into another printing. But those can be overlooked because the subject matter is more than compelling. (“Conversations” is available on Amazon.)

Not enough books today make us think without being preached to.

And while it is a quick read, it requires a certain amount of time in between chapters to contemplate what is being written. To get more out of this book I think it would have been better to read it in a book club setting or at the same time as someone else in order to have my own conversation.

What I was left with was wanting another chapter – really, another book. Keller said a second book isn’t likely, but he’s always open to conversations.

“From time to time, friends have asked me for a copy of the book. I sent them a copy and, if they had children above the preteen age, enough copies for them to share with those children,” Keller told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I’m afraid they were concerned that my pitiful effort would destroy the frail and vulnerable faith of their children and, hence, wouldn’t let them read it. It amused my atheist beliefs that they thought the efforts of their church and their own beliefs were not strong enough to be a complete answer to my comments on the

subject. But so be it – not my responsibility to raise their children."

Survey: Businesses expect to raise prices in 2014

By Ben Leubsdorf, Wall Street Journal

A growing number of U.S. businesses expect to raise prices in the coming months, according to a survey by the National Association for Business Economics.

About 43 percent of companies plan to raise prices in the first three months of 2014, far more than the 20 percent that said they actually did raise prices in last year's fourth quarter. Just over half – 56 percent – expect prices to stay flat and about 2 percent expect them to fall.

Read the whole story

Calif. prepping for nasty fire season

By Carmen George, Fresno Bee

Firefighters are bracing for a hot year as California's drought has forests primed for early wildfires.

CalFire spokesman Daniel Berlant said firefighters already

have responded to over 400 wildfires statewide this year. By comparison, there were no wildfires in the first 3 1/2 weeks of last year, he said.

“The conditions we are experiencing right now are similar to what we would be seeing in August – that’s how dry it is,” Berlant said. “Even though the calendar says it’s February and it’s winter, conditions are primed for wildfires.”

In response to the drought, CalFire staffing increased statewide last week. Last year, CalFire declared the official start of fire season on May 1. This year, it’s likely to be much earlier, Berlant said.

Read the whole story