U.S. Marines get taste of Tahoe before deployment

By Kathryn Reed

American flags are apt to be in abundance today as 75 Marines arrive on the South Shore for a bit of mountain fun before being deployed overseas.

When the men and women took off first thing this morning from Hawthorne, Nev., they didnâ€™t know where they were headed.

“It’s a random act of love,” is how Gary Weigel described it.

His friends, Greg and Jeanne Burns of Gardnerville, have a son-in-law (Sgt. Steve Morris) in the 3rd Recon Battalion. The Burnses set up the Carson Valley fun, while Weigel used his connections at Lake Tahoe.

The idea was simply to provide the soldiers some fun after spending the last six weeks in mountain warfare training in California and Nevada. The soldiers’ home bases are Okinawa and Arkansas.

Breakfast will be at Minden Park. Then the bus is scheduled to arrive at 10:30 this morning at the transit center near Stateline, where the public is welcome to greet the soldiers.

Andrew Strain, with Heavenly Mountain Resort, will welcome the men and women. (His father served in the Marines.)

Then the platoon will take a ride on Heavenly’s gondola. Shopping is also on the agenda.

Then it’s back on the bus to go to Zephyr Cove Resort for a barbecue. It’s possible a local bagpipe group will serenade them on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

Now that their training is complete, these Marines have two weeks to spend with their families before being deployed to the Middle East.

Bicycle plan subject of KTHO radio show

Hear Karen Fink, transportation planner with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, talk about the update to the pedestrian-bicycle plan on KTHO AM-590 or www.kthoradio.com on Saturday at 10am or Monday at 6pm.

Saturday is last TRTA trail work day of season

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association needs volunteers Saturday frm 9am-4pm near Heavenly Mountain Resort to help reroute a portion of the Tahoe Rim Trail.

The work will begin at the Kingsbury South Trailhead in the Stagecoach parking area. All skill levels welcome.

Bring lunch and water, wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, boots and work gloves. The TRTA will provide hard hats and trail tools.

Pizza at 4pm for the workers.

www.tahoerimtrail.org or (775) 298.0239

Swine flu prevalent throughout LT Basin



By Kathryn Reed

This week California and Nevada received their first shipments of the H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine.

This is a good thing because several cases have been reported throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Twenty-four cases were confirmed on the South Shore in July, 11 in August and 29 in September.

El Dorado County has documented 52 swine flu cases, with one person on the West Slope dying from the illness.

Barton Community Hospital has treated two patients with swine flu since May. Hospitals test for H1N1, not doctorsâ€™ offices.

Throughout California as of this week 2,510 people were hospitalized because of swine flu and 181 people have died. U.S. figures are 16,174 in the hospital and 1,379 deaths.

Placer County officials are estimating 100,000 residents just in the North Shore county may become infected with the potentially deadly flu in the next year.

In a Field Poll survey released this week it showed 51 percent of Californians are worried about swine flu. The theory is with so many not concerned about it, the odds are they will not get the vaccine.

Most cases of H1N1 are not life threatening. Pregnant women, children younger 5 and adults older than 65 are most at-risk.

A notice at Lake Tahoe Community College tells people with flu symptoms to stay home.

Schools everywhere are warning parents to keep kids home if they are sick.

â€œWe have been working with the El Dorado County Health Department and Lake Tahoe Unified School District and have placed an order to cover our usual vaccine population and the school district,â€ Barry Keil, director of pharmacy for Barton Health, said in a prepared statement. â€œWe anticipate receiving enough Flumist for younger children and enough injections for older children and adults.â€

Students in Douglas County School District are vaccinated through the Carson City Health Department.

â€œOur county will receive the vaccine in several shipments,â€ El Dorado county Health Officer Olivia Kasirye said in a press release. â€œFor people who are anxious to get the vaccine, we ask that they be patient. We believe that eventually everyone who would like to get the vaccine will be able to receive it.â€

Health officials everywhere say the same thing â€“ people who develop flu symptoms such as fever with cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, fatigue, diarrhea or vomiting, should

stay home from work, school and not visit any public places â€“ even grocery stores. Remain home until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours.

The Centers for Disease Control and Preventions says the ways to help prevent the spread of H1N1 include:

* Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw it away. If tissues aren’t available, cough into your elbow or sleeve (not your hand).

* Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners containing at least 60 percent alcohol are also effective.

* Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth to avoid spreading germs.

* Avoid close contact with people who are sick (hand holding, hugging, kissing).

* Avoid sharing items such as food, drinks, and lip gloss with others.

Ways to get more info about swine flu: www.bartonhealth.org/flu, www.flu.gov, www.edcgov.us/publichealth, http://www.placer.ca.gov/, www.cdph.ca.gov, and http://flu.nv.gov/.

Sidewalk improvement in South Tahoe



Shane Jones improves the sidewalk this week in front of the Star Building. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It’s a whole lot easier to access the Star Building on Lake Tahoe Boulevard and Lodi Avenue in South Tahoe since Gary Jones Paving improved the sidewalk this week.

Now people in wheelchairs can get out at the bus stop and have easy access to the building. The walkway was widened by about a foot.

Child averts being taken by stranger



By Kathryn Reed

Law enforcement has beefed-up its presence at Lake Tahoe Unified schools after a stranger tried to lure a 6-year-old from the Environmental Magnet School in Meyers on Tuesday.

The mother of the child did not report the incident to authorities until Wednesday.

El Dorado County sheriffâ€™s officials distributed a flyer that all kids were to take home on Thursday.

â€œThis little girl did great for her age,â€ sheriffâ€™s Sgt. Matt Underhill said.

When the woman approached her, saying her mom said to go with her, the child said no, that she was waiting for her 8-year-old brother. Her brother walked up about that time and the woman leftou

Underhill said the woman drove off in a small green car headed toward San Bernardino Street.

The suspect is described as white, with black curly bushy hair, blue eyes, pierced ears, approximately 5-foot-5, with a medium build. She was wearing a white tank top, brown shorts and white tennis shoes.

“We encourage parents to report things as soon as possible because if they think something is wrong, there probably is. It allows us to act sooner,” Lt. Les Lovell said. “If we don’t get the information quickly, it handcuffs us.”

The school district is advising students not to walk alone or to leave campus with a stranger.

For many, this brings back the horror of Jacycee Lee Dugard being plucked from a bus stop in June 1991 as she waited to go to the Meyers elementary school. Dugard was found alive in August in Antioch. Her suspected abductors are behind bars in Placerville.

Anyone with information pertaining to this weekâ€™s incident should call the El Dorado County Sheriffâ€™s Department at (530) 573.3002 or (530) 573.3300.

Stateline casinos struggling

Stateline casinos recorded their worst August on record.

The $21.9 million take is a drop of 29 percent from a year ago. Records for casino revenue have been kept since 1983.

Overall, Nevada casinos took in $847 million in August, which is 9.3 percent less than 2008. This is the 20th consecutive month the stateâ€™s casinos have had year-over-year declines, the Gaming Control board said Thursday.

The bright spot is the casinos are doing better with baccarat â€“ a more high-stakes came. Slot machines are down the most â€“ 13.4 percent, while table games are off 3.7 percent throughout the state.

Sustainability leader gives primer to SLT commission



By Kathryn Reed

Making a city green or sustainable takes some green, aka cash, to make it a reality.

That was one of the key messages conveyed by Leon Churchill, city manager of Tracy.

He addressed South Lake Tahoeâ€™s Sustainability Commission on Wednesday afternoon. South Tahoe Mayor Jerry Birdwell heard Churchill speak last month at the League of California Cities meeting and believed his message should be heard locally.

Churchillâ€™s presentation touched on how funding is critical, as is buy-in from the community â€“ the general public, businesses and economic developers.

â€œOne thing I had to communicate to the City Council is not only do people expect sustainability, but businesses do,â€ Churchill said. â€œHigh-growth companies are green companies.â€

He told the commission and audience that itâ€™s a cityâ€™s choice to mandate sustainability or encourage it through incentives. Tracy has opted to take the incentive approach by having green builders go to the front of the line and having about 30 percent of their fees waived.

Churchill admitted Tracyâ€™s planning process had to be redesigned as the city took on sustainability.

Claire Fortier, co-chairwoman of the local commission, asked Churchill how Tracy defined its goals.

The city manager explained that some things are somewhat

automatic like land use planning, whereas other issues were handled by teams set up to talk strategy.

He further said that a city could steer behavior by using tax benefits or a penalty fee to get what it wants.

Churchill said itâ€™s important to turn emotional support of sustainable practices into financial support. He added that many resist the green-sustainable movement because of fear and false belief it will hinder economic development.

Even though going green may use dollars up front, there are long-run economic benefits â€“ not just the environmental pluses.

Tracy has reduced its energy consumption by 40 percent by using sustainable practices.

â€œThatâ€™s a real savings. It preserves jobs,â€ Churchill said.

He told the commission to think about hiring a grants writer or fundraiser â€“ someone who may take 20 percent off the top, but doesnâ€™t cost the city a penny. Another way to fund sustainability is to partner with a 501(c)3 or foundation. He said to tap into federal stimulus money, the state and consider in-kind donations.

â€œMake sustainability and its funding a deliberate strategy,â€ Churchill said.

West Shore museum all about

watercraft

Living history â€“ itâ€™s the tagline of the Tahoe Maritime Museum in Homewood.

Most of the vessels on display continue to ply the waters of Lake Tahoe. Miss Tessa, a 1930 Dodge, was on display when the 5,800-square-foot facility opened in 2008. In 2007, it churned the waters during the annual Concours dâ€™Elegance.

The exterior of the building is reminiscent of an old boat house. The interior of the two-story structure next to Homewood Ski Resort is open and airy.

Watercraft on display is rotated. Boats not in Homewood are stored at the museumâ€™s annex in Truckee.

Itâ€™s an ideal outing for families because of the rich history depicted in seeing old vessels, as well as the display cases that change to keep the museum fresh, the simulator that demonstrates commandeering a boat on Tahoe, the motors filling one wall, activities corner for kids, old tools and other exhibits.

A 1922 Chris-Craft called â€œGodfatherâ€ was the sixth boat produced that year. Itâ€™s part of the museum collection. History about Gar Wood and Chris Craft are on display.

Two hydroplane boats are on a wall. Racing those boats used to be a big sport at the Lake. A rowing skiff from the 1960s is propped against one wall looks like it would have been one of heck of a workout to power it across the water.

For information, go to www.TahoeMaritimeMuseum.org or call (530) 525.9253.

What’s up with the TRPA?



Hear Lake Tahoe News Publisher Kathryn Reed moderate the Ask the TRPA show this morning at 10:15am on KTHO AM-590 or www.kthoradio.com.