

LTUSD students post double-digit test score gains



LTUSD test scores are rolling forward.

By Kathryn Reed

Superlatives were rolling off educators' tongues when the annual test scores were officially released Tuesday.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District surpassed everyone's expectations as well as state and federal minimums.

If Tahoe Valley Elementary and South Tahoe Middle schools maintain this level of performance for one more year, they will no longer fall under "program improvement" status.

Of the district's six schools, half met the state's Academic Performance Index goal of a score of at least 800. Sierra House hit 799.

All of this testing is part of the federal No Child Left Behind. Instead of following the progress of a class of students, one third grade is compared to the next third grade "so improvements are not an apples to apples comparison.

However, the district has the capability to do that type of longitudinal analysis to know if a class or individual student

is regressing, progressing or at a plateau.

Students in grades 2-11 take the language arts-math tests.

One thing Superintendent Jim Tarwater points to as being a plus is all-day kindergarten and preppie K.

“The second-graders were the first class with full-day kindergarten and they scored about 20 percent better than the other grades (without all day K),” Tarwater said.

Tarwater, who is in his fifth year at the helm of the academically challenged district, said it would take three years to see improvements once the district and most of the schools hit PI status. His prediction was spot-on.

Teaching, looking at how well a student learned the material, and then re-teaching made the difference, Tarwater said.

He said during the last year more intensive math instruction was part of the game plan. Using a pacing guide so the instruction was completed before the standardized tests were given also helped.

A component that is missing for many students because of all this testing is instruction beyond English, language arts and math.

Tarwater hopes if test scores keep going up, social sciences, arts, science and the other disciplines that make for a well-rounded student will be incorporated back into the curriculum.

He admits that without learning science or subjects at middle school “and many are not” that those students are at a disadvantage when they reach high school.

Because South Tahoe High School is now in year three of being PI, it’s possible a District Assistance Intervention Team will come in to assess what the school is doing. It could mean losing a bit of autonomy.

Tarwater believes the 20-point API gain when only five were required will show the powers that be that the school is on a corrective course.

All eyes are also on Washington because President Obama has said he wants to overhaul NCLB because the goals are unattainable and funding for mandated programs was never in place.

2009 API results:

Bijou went from 625 to 689, gain of 64, state had set a minimum gain of 9;

Magnet went from 881 to 919, gain of 38, no gain required;

Sierra House went from 768 to 799, gain of 31, state had set minimum gain of 5;

Tahoe Valley went from 743 to 820, gain of 77, state had set minimum gain of 5;

STMS went from 772 to 800, gain of 28, state had set minimum gain of 5;

STHS went from 730 to 750, gain of 20, state had set minimum gain of 5.

“I don’t think we’ll always make double digit gains like this, but we won’t ease up,” Tarwater said. “We will continue to increase, but probably not as dramatically as this.”

SLT to honor Cal officers



Ally Jacobs
and Lisa
Campbell Photo
by Cathy
Cockrell/NewsC
enter

Two special guests will be at the Oct. 6 South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting.

UC Berkeley police Officer Ally Jacobs and UCPD special-events manager Lisa Campbell will be recognized by the council for their intuition and savvy that led to Phillip and Nancy Garrido being arrested in the kidnapping of Jaycee Lee Dugard.

Mayor Jerry Birdwell credits the two Cal employees for being the catalysts that led to Dugard's release from captivity after 18 years. Dugard was snatched from a bus stop in Meyers on June 10, 1991.

Councilwoman Kathay Lovell said the local fund set up for the Dugard family by Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe is close to the \$20,000 mark.

On Tuesday, investigators in Antioch searched the Garrido house and the one next door for evidence that could link the couple to other crimes in the Bay Area.

Redevelopment plan goes to the people



Empty
storefronts
are considered
economic
blight.

By Kathryn Reed

On a 3-1 vote, the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday said it's time to release its latest redevelopment plans for public review.

Councilman Hal Cole lives close the project area so he had to recuse himself and Councilman Bill Crawford had too many issues with the proposal to be able to vote yes.

It's not just about the Y or Tahoe Valley anymore. The plan covers the better part of the city. It includes Harrison Avenue down to Glenwood Way.

Multiple times city officials reiterated that eminent domain will not be a component of this project. Taking of land, albeit at fair market value, is something that happened on both sides of the highway in the Stateline area.

"The whole goal of the project is to create a financing tool," explained Gene Palazzo, SLT Redevelopment Agency manager.

(City councilmembers also act as Redevelopment Agency members. The meetings are continuous, with no action taken to distinguish between the two entities voting on particular matters.)

Palazzo's presentation forecasted the ability to generate \$178 million in tax increment in the next 45 years.

Crawford's contention is that even though everyone boasts this money will stay in the city and not go to the state, he says it foresees most of it going to pay debt — like the \$7 million a year the city pays for the Heavenly Village project.

Councilman Bruce Grego raised concerns about this being on the books for so long.

Palazzo said because landowners will be asked to come to the city instead of the city going to them, he expects redevelopment to be a slow process.

Per state law, an area must be deemed blighted before it can be called a redevelopment area.

"I've learned blight is in the eye of the consultant," Crawford said.

He worries about what it will do to property values if an owners want to sell and prospective buyers learns the parcel is in a blighted area.

Crawford made much of the report that says tearing down the Mikasa-Millers Outpost buildings and starting new is cost-prohibitive.

"There is no real plan. It's just hoping someone will come in and buy the land to put up some buildings," Crawford said.

Palazzo said that's why it's even more important to deem make it a redevelopment area so a financing tool is in place to help would-be developers.

The document will be available for public review for 90 days. A public hearing will be scheduled in February at the earliest. The plan was not on the city's website (www.cityofslt.us) late last night. Redevelopment Manager Gene Palazzo may be reached at (530) 542.6044.

The council may have created more work for Palazzo when on a split vote the agreement with Urban Futures for nearly \$26,000 in consulting work on the project was nixed. Cole and Mayor Jerry Birdwell abstained because of conflicts, Crawford said no.

Swine flu update from El Dorado County



El Dorado
County
Health
Officer
Olivia
Kasirye

By EDC Health Services Department

El Dorado County health officials are continuing to monitor swine flu activity in and are reminding individuals that frequent hand washing and staying home when sick are still the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus.

Health officials are also advising parents of schoolchildren and business owners to be prepared for a potentially tougher flu season this year than in years past.

“Since last May when the first case of H1N1 was reported in our county, we have continued to receive reports of cases throughout the summer,” said El Dorado County Health Officer Olivia Kasirye. “With the fall and the regular flu season fast approaching, we are asking people who develop flu-like illness to stay home to reduce the spread of flu viruses and keep everyone healthier. If you or your child gets sick with a fever of 100 degrees or more, with a cough, you should stay home until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours. Employers need to be vigilant about telling employees to stay home if they are sick, and should send home any employee who develops flu symptoms.”

Kasirye adds that if a person has severe flu symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or dehydration from vomiting and/or diarrhea, they should seek medical advice. Pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions (such as a respiratory condition, immune disorder, or diabetes) should seek early medical care if they get the flu.

As of Sept. 3, there have been 23 confirmed cases of H1N1 infection in El Dorado County, although it is believed that more cases are circulating in the community. “The majority of H1N1 cases have been mild and similar to seasonal flu,” Kasirye said. “We are continuing to see that people with underlying medical conditions are most at risk.” There has been one H1N1 related death in El Dorado County in an

individual who had underlying medical conditions.

“We are working closely with the state Department of Public Health to receive updates on vaccine production and distribution,” said Kasirye. “We expect to get the H1N1 flu vaccine in mid- to late October at the earliest. In addition to our local health department, we anticipate that some health care providers in the community will have the H1N1 flu vaccine available. The initial allotment of vaccine is expected to be limited, so those who are at highest risk will be offered the vaccine first before it is made available to others. It is important to point out that the vaccine may not be recommended for everyone.”

Currently, health officials are not routinely closing schools where cases of seasonal flu and H1N1 infection are identified.

“In most cases, schools should be able to remain open, however we are strongly urging children and school staff to stay home, or be sent home, if they develop flu symptoms and until their fever is gone for at least 24 hours. This will help keep other students and staff from becoming ill.” said Kasirye.

Health and school officials will continue to monitor the situation, and if there is a need to close a school, parents will be notified. The Health Services Department has a Flu Watch system in place with local schools to track flu cases; school nurses send in weekly reports of student absences due to flu.

“If a child misses school due to the flu, please let the school know so that it gets noted in the school’s flu report,” said Kasirye.

Guest Chef weekend at Wilbur Hot Springs

Wilbur Hot Springs will host guest chefs Charlie and Marion Cascio Sept. 25.

Charlie Cascio has cooked throughout Europe, including Germany, France, Belgium and Spain. Cascio has worked as a personal chef and has been head chef for numerous restaurants. He has taught natural food cooking seminars to individuals, restaurants, and health professional throughout Europe and the Untied States.

He continues to cook for large conventions to develop natural health food products and recipes, and to teach courses on cooking, including cooking with raw foods.

Marion Cascio comes from a family of cooks and has been involved with restaurants since childhood. She studied classical culinary arts in Germany for five years and has cooked in many famous restaurants and spas. Marion Cascio was a staff cook at the Esalen Institute for five years where she learned ethnic cooking techniques and fell in love with cooking from the garden. Cooking is a creative outlet, a place where she can be an artist of taste and texture.

Charlie and Marion Cascio live completely self-sufficiently on land in Big Sur where they keep goats, bees, chickens, and an abundant garden. During their weekend at Wilbur, they will marry healthy, organic cuisine with exceptional taste.

For more information about Guest Chef weekend, visit www.wilburhotsprings.com, or contact the reservation line at (530) 473.2306.



Testing capabilities

firefighting



Tahoe-Douglas
crews test
Harrah's water
system.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Firefighters rolled up in front of Harrah's Lake Tahoe Tuesday morning and caused quite a stir. Traffic was shutdown in one lane. Water was spraying, but no flames were seen.

This is because it was all a test.

Tahoe-Douglas fire crews go out to Harrah's and Harveys once a year to test the casinos' fire valves.

“We do this every year. It’s for insurance purposes for the casinos,” explained fire Capt. Terry Hughes. “They have internal fire pumps inside.”

These are the only two Stateline casinos the fire district does the test for.

Tahoe well represented on US Snowboarding team

US SNOWBOARDING

PARK CITY – With athletes already landing on snowboard World Cup podiums this fall, U.S. Snowboarding revealed its 2010 roster which is highlighted by Olympic gold medalists Kelly Clark (Mt. Snow, VT), Hannah Teter (Belmont, VT) and Seth Wescott (Sugarloaf, ME).

Also bringing their medals to the scene are 2006 Olympic silver medalists Gretchen Bleiler (Aspen, CO) and Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton Mountain, VT), along with five-time X Games gold medalist Nate Holland (Squaw Valley, CA), 2009 X Games silver medalist Graham Watanabe (Sun Valley, ID), and World Championship bronze medalist Nick Baumgartner (Iron River, MI).

“There are again great athletes in our programs. The depth and amount of talent is incredible and we’re looking forward to getting competitions started,” U.S. Snowboarding Program Director Jeremy Forster said. “2006 was a great Olympic season and hopefully we can have another great performance in 2010.”

[Read whole story](#)

US Freestyle team teeming with Tahoeans

Ski Racing Magazine

Nine Olympians, including the three 2009 World Championship medalists, will head up the roster for a talent-stacked 2010 U.S. Freestyle Ski Team. A total of 36 athletes have been named to the Team, which kicks off its march to the 2010 Games with World Cup competitions in Finland and France.

Those ready to drop their skills on top of the Olympic community are World Championship gold medalists Ryan St. Onge (Winter Park, CO) and Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA), World Championship bronze medalist and World Cup moguls champion Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT) and Olympic moguls silver medalist Shannon Bahrke (Tahoe City, CA).

“Our team is stacked with athletes who have found success at all levels of competition and we are looking forward to keeping consistency on that front in 2010,” said U.S. Freestyle Ski Team Head Coach Jeff Wintersteen. “It’s going to be an exciting season for freestyle.”

[Read whole story](#)

SLT budget workshop

The South Lake Tahoe City Council will have a budget workshop at council chambers inside Lake Tahoe Airport to discuss the

2009-10 budget. The fiscal year begins Oct. 1, but the budget won't be adopted until after that date.

Overhaul of Big Meadow watershed about to begin



Big Meadow
will be
restored
starting this
fall.

Photo/Todd
Chaponot-USFS

By Kathryn Reed

It is difficult to pinpoint what are supposed to be four distinct areas within the 640-acre Big Meadow Creek Watershed.

“The big thing is some conifer encroachment is going into these unique areas. Some are no longer meadows because conifers are in their place,” explained Raul Sanchez, U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist.

Meadow, aspen stands, adjacent forest and riparian corridors dominate this area of the basin. Cattle grazing, fire

suppression and timber harvest through the decades have made this setting less natural and more forested.

For decades, fire has been lacking off Luther Pass. That's all about to change. Beginning this fall fire will be reintroduced by the USFS. Restoration work will also create better habitat for and diversity of wildlife.

The initial phase will be to thin some of the forest and then begin burning.

"The reason we need to do the pretreatment thinning and burning is we will reduce the amount of conifer encroachment," said Sanchez, project point man.

Pile burns will take place when weather conditions permit. After that a broadcast burn will begin.

"(This) means we put fire to the ground in a controlled manner and allow the fire to burn on its own," Sanchez said.

Because this is such a remote area without roads, hand tools will be used for thinning. It is on the left side of Highway 89 going toward Hope Valley from South Tahoe. From the Big Meadow trailhead walk in a ways; the meadow complex is part of the project, as are the two drainages that go farther up the watershed.

The proposed plan of action is at www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects; scroll down to Big Meadow.