Profits climb for El Dorado Savings

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Placerville-based El Dorado Savings Bank reported a profit of $9.83 million for all of 2013, up 9 percent from $9.02 million in 2012.

Fourth quarter 2013 net income totaled $3.68 million, up sharply from $2.8 million in the year-ago period.

Total assets as of Dec. 31 were $1.86 billion, up $47 million from the previous year.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Tahoe dying from being 1 dimensional



Why isn’t the South Shore promoting snowshoeing-hiking, history, art and hockey? It’s time to be more than a ski destination. Photos/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Unemployment, jobs and the economy were big topics in President Obama’s State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

“Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by – let alone get ahead. And too many still aren’t working at all,” Obama said.

They are topics that also resonate in the Lake Tahoe Basin, especially this winter. With the dismal amount of snow, businesses are not hiring the number of people they usually do this time of year. Hours are being cut. It’s getting hard to pay bills.

The national unemployment numbers that came out this week are

the lowest in five years at 6.7 percent. California's unemployment rate is at 8.3 percent, whereas Nevada's is 8.8 percent.

The good news is unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County ended lower than what they started at in 2013. The numbers are also lower than what they had been the previous few years during the height of the recession.

Even though retailers and ski resorts tend to ramp up hiring in December, it's not unusual for the unemployment numbers to slip a little compared to November.

Here are the 2013 unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe:

January 10.2 percent

February 9.6 percent

March 9.4 percent

April 8.6 percent

May 8 percent

June 8.1 percent

July 8.5 percent

August 7.8 percent

September 7.4 percent

October 7.6 percent

November 7.6 percent

December not released.

These are the unemployment numbers for Douglas County in 2013:

January 11.8 percent

February 11.5 percent

March 11.3 percent

April 10.8 percent

May 10.2 percent

June 10.4 percent

July 9.6 percent

August 9.5 percent

September 9.4 percent

October 9.6 percent

November 9 percent

December 9.5 percent.

This all equates to an annual rate for Douglas County of 9.4 percent. Data is not collected in a manner to know the unemployment rate just at the lake portion of Douglas County.

What will be more telling about the local economy is what the numbers are like the first quarter of 2014 because of what the weather has done to hiring practices.

But what does not show up on unemployment charts is people with reduced hours, pay cuts or people who have stopped looking for a job.

People aren’t coming to Tahoe to play and spend money right now because it’s a one-dimensional economy. Tourism works when there is a product. Lake Tahoe is known for its winter snow fun and summer beach-hiking-biking fun.

If spastic, unpredictable weather is the new normal, then the status quo is no longer acceptable from our government leaders and more important our tourism officials. Why isn’t there a

push to get people to Tahoe to enjoy what the locals are doing? Talk to hikers and cyclists – trails are pretty incredible. Learning to ski or snowboard is ideal now because roads are clear, skies are blue and those slopes are well covered in white stuff.

Having a chamber official tell a Sacramento television station that people can kayak and paddleboard is dangerous when morning temps are well below freezing. It's one thing for locals to tackle Tahoe this time of year; it's another for those unfamiliar with this unforgiving body of water.

Then having her say come to Tahoe to shop because ski gear is cheap isn't really touting what Tahoe has to offer.

Where was the promotion for the restaurant week that happened earlier this month?

The South Shore needs to be showing people what the area is about, not using gimmicky make-believe characters telling people to come to the wild side.

It has long been proved that events bring people to town. But on the Lake Tahoe Visitor Authority's website there are no events listed for January or February, and one for March on the "2013 Tahoe South Travel Planner". Note the year our tourism people are telling visitors about.

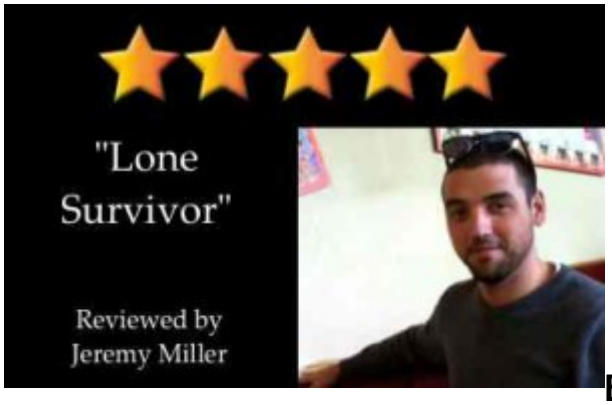
What about a big Super Bowl party? It doesn't matter that there isn't a California team in the game.

Why not have a mini Olympics or make up sports that locals and tourists could compete in? Why aren't we embracing our athletes who will be going after gold next month?

Another thing Obama said Tuesday night was, "In today's global economy, first-class jobs gravitate to first-class infrastructure."

Are you listening Lake Tahoe?

‘Lone Survivor’ authenticates Afghan war battle



By Jeremy Miller

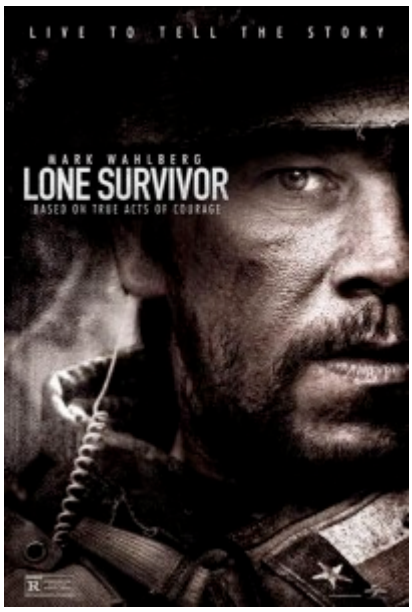
Based on the incredible true story of Operation Red Wings, “Lone Survivor” is a true to life, super charged thrill ride depicting the battle between four soldiers and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Mark Wahlberg, Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch and Ben Foster star. Behind the camera and screenplay was director Peter Berg.

Let me just say that it’s extremely fulfilling to see Berg finally do something worthwhile with his talent. I feel like the past 10 years he’s been so up and down (“Hancock” and “Battleship” to name a couple), it’s nice to see him finally nail down something worth watching.

The four soldiers are deployed to Afghanistan to pursue a tier 1 target by the name of Ahmad Shahd. One thing I absolutely loved about this film was how Berg set the scenes in Afghanistan. He opened almost every scene with a beautiful wide aerial shots to show you just how massive the mountains of the area really are, which in turn boosts your reality on just how impossible it would be to escape such a place. They

hike up a mountainside just outside a little village, where days prior the villains assassinated several innocent villagers.



Early on you get the picture that communication is near impossible, just like finding cell service in a mountainous area, they too struggle with secured and unsecured satellite phones. They decide to post up and rest before they execute their mission and take out their targets. Danny Dietz (Hirsch) is on watch and suddenly a heard of goats starts flocking toward him, followed by three men and a boy. The soldiers wake up and start frantically trying to decide on their next move … kill the compromise and sacrifice integrity and break rules of engagement? Or let them go and risk the entire operation, not to mention they are tremendously outnumbered. After a pretty deep pros and cons list and some debate, cursing and yelling they make a decision and let them go, and within a very short time they're completely surrounded by Taliban.

They enter into one of the most intense gunfights I've seen in years. They're completely outnumbered and their odds seem impossible. Here is where each of them shows off a little acting talent. From this point forward there's an equal amount of badass action shoot 'em up war scenes, along with immensely powerful emotion highlighting camaraderie between them that is incomparable.

These four Navy Seals prove their reputation as the toughest men on Earth, and certainly earn the title through the beating they take not only through firefight but the terrain as well. Brutal.

I loved this film because unlike a lot of the war films I have

seen in the last five or 10 years this wasn’t solely based on character. “The Hurt Locker” was a great flick, but there was no plot, it was simply character-based drama with occasional explosions and action. “Lone Survivor” hit me much like Spielberg’s “Saving Private Ryan” or “Black Hawk Down” but with an extremely stimulating modern look and feel. The costume design and special effects were also commendable as I truly felt like I was watching real soldiers.

The performances were all tiptop, especially Ben Foster. I’ve always been a huge fan of all four of the lead actors, but Foster just really impresses me and he held true to that in this flick. The one and only thing I didn’t dig in this flick was the overuse of dramatic music. The beginning almost had a Michael Bay feel to me, which forces me to cringe like nothing else. Overall, I absolutely loved the film and I recommend it for anyone wanting an epic, masterfully told story of courage, brotherhood and bravery.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.

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2 people hurt in Placerville apartment fire

By KCRA-TV

An early-morning apartment complex fire in Placerville that injured two people is being investigated by police.

The fire broke out just after 5am Jan. 28 at the complex at 2661 Woodridge Court.

Two men were found outside the apartment building with burns when officers arrived at the scene. They were taken to UC Davis Medical Center for treatment.

Read the whole story

Antonucci to talk Olympics in Incline

The Incline Village Crystal Bay Historical Society's next History Happy Hours will feature David Antonucci, author of "Snowball's Chance – The Story of the 1960 Olympic Winter Games – Squaw Valley & Lake Tahoe".

The event is Feb. 5 at Tunnel Creek Café, 1115 Tunnel Creek Road, Incline Village.

Food and beverages will be available for purchase. Doors open at 6pm, presentation begins at 6:30pm.

Autographed copies of his book will be available for purchase.

Suggested donation of $5 for the historical society.

Olympic fears growing among families, athletes

By Sarah Lyall, New York Times

Athletes and their families are becoming increasingly anxious about possible terrorist attacks at the Winter Olympics in Sochi, so much so that some families have decided not to attend and others plan to curtail their activities once they get to the Games in Russia.

No American athletes have yet canceled plans to compete because of terrorist threats. But with increasing talk about unrest in the region and threats from would-be suicide bombers, some family members say they are reconsidering long-held plans to support the athletes at the Games.

In the most recent in a series of unnerving incidents, the Olympic teams from the United States and some European countries received emails last week warning them that they would be attacked if they took part in the Games. The messages were determined to be hoaxes, but the episode added to the skittishness that is permeating the mood as the Feb. 7 opening ceremony approaches. Members of Congress have recently expressed concern about the safety of the 10,000 or so Americans planning to travel to Sochi.

Read the whole story

Tax workshop for individuals, business owners

Michelle Larsen, a financial guru from David & Johnson, is putting on Tax Prep 101 on Feb. 19.

This is for individuals and small business owners.

The 5:30-6:30pm event is at Lakeland Village, Lakeshore

Pavilion meeting room, 3535 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

It is free for Tahoe Regional Young Professionals members and $10 for others.

Students may compete for cash in content creation contest

Film-television, journalism and social media college students in California may compete for cash prizes while doing social good.

Generation Next competition is accepting submissions through Feb. 14.

The purpose of this competition is to empower the next generation of content creators to use the power and influence of media to promote accurate and authentic portrayals of mental health in storytelling, news reporting and social media campaigns, by recognizing their immense talent.

Twelve semi-finalists will be mentored by entertainment, journalism, and social media professionals, as well as mental health experts. Three winners – one from each of the three categories (film and television, journalism and social media) – will be rewarded with $4,000 cash prizes and will receive recognition at the 2014 PRISM Awards Ceremony. In addition to this, winners will have their student productions aired on EICnetwork.tv, a global Internet television network, and have the opportunity to take part in a collaborative program with Active Minds, a mental health organization led by college students.

For a complete list of health and social issues addressed by EIC and local projects, visit EIC's website. Here is the Generation Next website.

Scientists: Solar vortex could trigger 'Little Ice Age'

By Macrina Cooper-White, Huffington Post

If you thought the polar vortex was bad, get a load of a new climate phenomenon that just might be coming our way.

Scientists say we could be headed for another "Little Ice Age," given how eerily calm the sun has been in recent years.

First, a bit of background. The sun goes through cycles that last roughly 11 years, marked by the ebb and flow of sunspots on its surface. At peak sunspot activity, the so-called solar maximum, the sun sports lots of sunspots and is steadily unleashing solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs). Since our current solar cycle, Number 24, kicked off in 2008, the number of sunspots observed has been half of what heliophysicists expected.

Read the whole story

Neighbors perplexed about dead coyote

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – Where is the carcass of the coyote that was shot in Meyers and who shot it? Those are the questions that are still not answered.

Jeff Morales discovered the dead animal Jan. 22 on his routine walk with his dog.

“The blood trail intersects my existing trail,” Morales told *Lake Tahoe News*.

At first he thought it might have been a Husky that was killed because he just saw a pile of fur. He took his dog home and came back with a camera to document what he saw. This was after he made a series of phone calls to El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department, El Dorado County Animal Control, California Department of Fish Wildlife and Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.



Who killed a coyote in Meyers and took the carcass a day later is a mystery. Photo/Provided

Lt. Robert Gerat with Animal Control looked around a little

that afternoon according to Lynn and John Setnor whose house is the closest to the trail of blood, but reportedly didn't find anything. Gerat told *Lake Tahoe News* his agency has no jurisdiction over this incident. "No laws were broken that we enforce," he said.

Blood was visible Jan. 27 beginning about 100 feet near the Setnor property on Ottawa Drive, with it becoming more prominent where the animal likely ran farther into the forest from its aggressor before eventually collapsing and dying.

The Setnor property is surrounded by California Tahoe Conservancy land on both sides and national forest in the back. It is not fenced, so it looks like acres of open space.

John Setnor and Morales had a conversation last Wednesday, with Morales telling him about the coyote. Their recollections of the dialog as told to *Lake Tahoe News* are similar. They live in the same neighborhood. What is different is how well they say they know each other. Morales says they wave and are cordial. Setnor said he didn't know who Morales was when he was behind his house.

They agree Setnor was on his back deck with a gun. Setnor says the only gun he owns is a BB gun. He's not a hunter. He offered to let sheriff's officials search his home for weapons, though they declined to do so. Setnor said he had the gun because there had been suspicious people on his street.

Morales said from his vantage point he could not tell what kind of gun Setnor had.

Neither John nor Lynn Setnor have ventured to see the bloody trail. Walking on the slick area is not something they want to chance, especially with John Setnor having a surgically repaired leg. They vehemently deny having anything to do with killing the coyote, professing their love of wildlife.

When Morales was going back to the area the morning of Jan. 23

he ran into sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum so he offered to show the lieutenant the body. But when they got to the spot the coyote was not there.

Morales said there was no evidence of it being dragged off. Only large bootprints were left in the snow – and the animal's blood.

"It appears someone with boots removed the coyote," Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*. "If someone had taken the coyote legally, they could be entitled to the pelts. There is no evidence Mr. Setnor took it."

Van Arnum also does not believe Setnor killed the animal.

It is presumed a gun left the large hole in the side of the coyote's neck. But what type is hard to say because no official has looked at the carcass.

As for the legalities, coyotes may be hunted in the Lake Tahoe Basin with a permit and a shotgun, Van Arnum said. However, U.S. Forest Service regulations prohibit discharging a firearm of any kind within 150 yards of a house or building. This would have been that close.

Van Arnum said the odds of finding the culprit are not very good.

"If nothing else, all this uproar about the incident will probably keep someone from doing it again in that area," Van Arnum said. "Obviously, it was very close to a residential area. We don't want people shooting guns in residential areas."