Calif. districts grapple with transgender law

By Alejandro Lazo, Wall Street Journal

SACRAMENTO – School districts in California are grappling with a newly enacted, first-of-its-kind law that spells out rights for those students who don't identify as being the gender of their birth.

California law AB1266, the first such statewide legislation in the country, grants students who identify themselves as transgender the right to choose the sports teams and extracurricular activities—as well as the bathrooms and locker rooms—that correspond to their gender identities. Backers of the measure say transgender children have been subject to bullying in such settings and have thus taken to avoiding using the restroom or participating in athletics.

There are no firm estimates of how many such students might attend California schools, and no specific guidelines for determining if a youngster should be considered transgender.

Read the whole story

Drugs a leading cause of women's incarceration

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Drugs, alcohol and violence are the three primary reasons women end up in jail in El Dorado County. And meth is

the drug of choice.

It takes a minimum of six years to kick the habit. And the deterioration of what one looks like is rapid and dramatic. But sometimes by the time they get out of jail they are returning to their original selves.

El Dorado County sheriff's Capt. Randy Peshon spoke last week to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe about women behind bars and what is going on with the two county jails. The Placerville facility has 311 beds, while the one in South Lake Tahoe has 158. Both are co-ed, though seldom do the two populations mix.



El Dorado County sheriff's Capt. Randy Peshon talks Jan. 22 about women in jail. Photo/LTN

There are between 60 and 75 women in the jails at any given time. Most are between the ages of 24 and 56.

"The No. 1 tool for managing a jail is the TV," Peshon said. "If a fight breaks out, the TV is turned off."

He said it's a lot like raising children. Take away what they want and the behavior is likely to change.

"There's not a lot of difference between the females and males in jail except for relationships," Peshon said. "They care for each other unless you've committed a crime against a child.

That’s where the men and women are the same.”

Riot gear is needed to deal with problems with the men. Sitting down and talking is how issues with the women are handled.

Women like the dormitory style housing because it is more sociable. The men don’t like this because it means living with other men.

Peshon has been in the jail division for decades. Before being promoted to captain a few years ago he ran the South Lake Tahoe facility. Now he is in charge of the entire jail system for the county.

He’s a big believer in programs for inmates instead of just having them sit around. The goal is to keep them productive. Peshon said about 80 percent of the people have problems that can be worked on, while there isn’t anything that can be done for the other 20 percent.

Mental health services are needed by 18 percent of the population. This is 4 percent higher than the national average.

“Jails have become the mental health providers of the county,” Peshon said.

It’s possible to obtain a full general educational development certificate, work skills, resume writing and other basic skills. Inmates may obtain a laundry manager certificate, which doesn’t cost the county a dime. This is the second year adult education classes have been offered.

One of the most successful programs started in 2007 is a partnership with Lake Tahoe Community College. The culinary arts program teaches them skills in the kitchen. They make meals for their peers and there is also a catering component.

Ninety percent of the inmates in the culinary program find a

job – not necessarily in a restaurant – when they are released.

While most facilities would never put men and women together, Peshon likes to challenge the status quo. The culinary program and GED are co-ed. The thinking is that if one of the problems to begin with was the inability to get along with the opposite sex, isolation during incarceration is not going to help when they get out.

All the teaching also helps keep people from making a return stay at the jail. And it's working. El Dorado County is renting out bed space to other counties.

Opinion: Climate change deniers on thin ice

By Phil Plait, Slate

To me, one of the most fascinating aspects of climate change denial is how deniers essentially never publish in legitimate journals, but instead rely on talk shows, grossly error-laden OpEds, and hugely out-of-date claims (that were never right to start with).

In 2012, National Science Board member James Lawrence Powell investigated peer-reviewed literature published about climate change, and found that out of 13,950 articles, 13,926 supported the reality of global warming. Despite a lot of sound and fury from the denial machine, they have not really been able to come up with a coherent argument against a

consensus. The same is true for a somewhat different study that showed a 97 percent consensus among climate scientists supporting both the reality of global warming and the fact that human emissions are behind it.

Powell recently finished another such investigation, this time looking at peer-reviewed articles published between November 2012 and December 2013. Out of 2258 articles (with 9,136 authors), how many do you think explicitly rejected human-driven global warming? Go on, guess!

One. Yes, one.

Read the whole story

No snow: Sierra-at-Tahoe reduces workers' hours

Publisher's note: ***This is one of a series of blurbs about how the lack of winter is impacting the Lake Tahoe Basin. If you have an idea, please email it to info@LakeTahoeNews.net.***

Sierra-at-Tahoe ski school employees were sent an email Jan. 23 saying their hours would be cut as well as the hours the employee bus will be running.

"We are doing our best to manage labor and reacting to daily business volume. This also directly affects our bus routes. We will be running the red/blue bus route this upcoming weekend," Steve Hemphill, spokesman for the South Shore resort, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Everyone is doing their best to adapt to current conditions. We are not closing and do not plan to close. We will be staying open until mid-April."

He would not say how many people are affected, when it takes effect, what the hours were and are now, or if others have had or will have hours cut.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

North Shore nonprofits compete for cash at Northstar

Representatives from 11 North Lake Tahoe environmental foundations and nonprofit organizations gathered at Northstar Jan. 16 to participate in the inaugural Northstar Ski Challenge.

Teams competed for a prize purse totaling more than $23,000 in cash and in-kind donations.

Each organization's team received a Northstar Ski Challenge passport at the start of the day; skiers and riders toured the mountain to visit five locations to learn about the mountain's Habitat Management Plan and competed in other ways.

Participating were: Fives Foundation, Tahoe Rim Trail Association, Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe, Truckee River Watershed Council, Sugar Pine Foundation, Truckee Trails Foundation, Tahoe Institute of Natural Science, Tahoe Fund, Excellence in Education, Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe, and Truckee Donner Land Trust.

The winners were:

First place: Tahoe Fund – $10,000

Second place: Truckee Donner Land Trust – $3,000

Third place: High Fives Foundation – $2,000

Best Epic Photo: Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe – $1,000

Runner-up Epic Photo: Excellence in Education – $1,000

Fastest Northstar Ambassador Epic Race Time: Excellence in Education – $500.

Bear trap tampering case going to trial

Tampering with a bear trap could cost two women $1,500 if they are found guilty.

An April 9 trial date has been set for Cheryl Ann Morrison, 63, of Truckee and her daughter, Season Marie Morrison, 35, of Reno. On Jan. 21 they pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor charges of obstructing or interfering with a Nevada Department of Wildlife officer and tampering with a vehicle. The trial is scheduled to start April 9.

A trap had been set by NDOW in Incline Village in October to snare a problem a bear. The two women allegedly tampered with the trap.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. closer to banning plastic bags

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Disposable plastic bags would be banned from grocery check-out stands in California and consumers would pay at least a dime for a paper or re-usable plastic bag under a compromise proposal negotiated with key opponents of last year's bill to ban plastic shopping bags.

Lawmakers plan to unveil the deal Friday at a Los Angeles-area manufacturing plant.

Senate Bill 270 seeks to temper some manufacturing industry opposition by providing $2 million from state recycling funds. Plastic bag makers would be able to apply for grants to re-train their workers or re-engineer their operations to make plastic bags that meet new criteria spelled out in the bill.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe loses winter X Games bid

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

X Games owner ESPN and the Aspen Skiing Co. announced Wednesday a deal that would keep the winter carnival of now-Olympic athleticism at Aspen's Buttermilk ski area for another five years. The X Games launches its 13th year in Aspen this week. By 2019, the Roaring Fork Valley will have hosted the

iconic contest for 18 years.

“It’s amazing how X Games has seemingly become part of Aspen/Snowmass’ identity over the years,” said Aspen Skiing Co.’s John Rigney, who spent countless hours negotiating renewal contracts with ESPN in 2004, 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2013, in a statement released Wednesday. “There’s a rich cultural history here and we’re fortunate to host many world-class events, but I can’t think of a single event that resonates so well with kids and young adults as X Games does – and that’s a win for our resort, and more importantly the sports we love. Our community is proud to collaborate with ESPN and we look forward to five more great years together.”

Aspen beat out several other bidders to host the snowy bacchanal. Park City in Utah initially expressed interest but wanted the event to reschedule to April. Two Lake Tahoe ski areas in California – Squaw Valley and Heavenly – submitted a joint bid that would have separated X Games events into two venues across the lake. Whistler in British Columbia pondered hosting, but local officials demurred at the idea of flipping, racing snowmobiles, a lucrative staple of the X Games. Quebec City in Canada also submitted a bid.

Read the whole story

Coyote gunned down on South Shore



This coyote was killed Jan. 22 on the South Shore. Photo/Provided

Updated Jan. 23 6:05pm:

Someone shot and killed a coyote on the South Shore Jan. 22.

The animal was left to bleed to death in the snow.

This occurred off Ottawa Drive in the unincorporated area of El Dorado County.

Neighbors have been interviewed, but there are no suspects yet, according to El Dorado County sheriff's officials. John Setnor, the owner of the house where the coyote was found, denies involvement.

"The only gun that he owns is a BB gun, which wouldn't have caused the large bullet hole in the coyote. The coyote was shot in the woods near his home, but there are no witnesses and no one heard a shot," sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*. "All indications are that he likes the animals in his back yard, and he is a supporter of (Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care). Another neighbor saw a male subject in a black raised pickup with two dogs in the truck wearing a camo jacket. He was watching a coyote in the area and appeared to want to hunt the coyote. No plate on the truck."

It is not illegal to hunt coyote, but it is illegal to discharge a firearm in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

No one answered the phone at the Setnor residence with *Lake Tahoe News* called.

A neighbor told *Lake Tahoe News*, " (Setnor) was one of two people who were aware of a dead coyote behind his house. The initial blood was found approximately 30 feet from his back deck and the body about 30 yards from that after following the blood trail. The other individual did not remove the coyote after it was reported. The blood trail leads directly to a spot behind his deck where he would have an unobstructed shot from his house. The blood trail is still on the ground. The coyote was removed and the only evidence that is left is boot prints from a large shoe covering the area where the coyote died and also on top of the blood trail."

Coyotes have been heard on the South Shore in the last week in large numbers at night after a presumed kill. Some have been wandering neighborhoods without the pack.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

USFS pile burning near Luther Pass

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews resumed prescribed fire operations Jan. 23 off Highway 89 near South Lake Tahoe.

Crews are burning piles in the Luther Pass campground and will continue operations through Jan. 24, weather 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 from prescribed fire may continue for several days after the initial ignition. Smoke that settles in low lying areas in the morning usually lifts out of the area during normal daytime heating.

Forest Service staff post road signs around the areas affected by the prescribed fire, send email notifications, and update the local fire information line at (530) 5432600, ext. 6. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.