Bomb threat closes Sierra-at-Tahoe

Updated Jan. 14 7:55pm:

By Kathryn Reed

Sierra-at-Tahoe was evacuated Tuesday afternoon after someone phoned in a bomb threat.

The call came in about 3pm Jan. 14 to the season pass office. Resort and law enforcement officials were not releasing any details about the caller, what was said or potential motive.

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum said the scene has been cleared before 8pm and no device was found. Two bomb sniffing dogs from the California Highway Patrol were used.

Steve Hemphill, spokesman for the resort, said he did not know of any other time when a bomb threat had been placed to Sierra. He also said there have been no layoffs and would not speculate on a reason for the threat.

Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*, "(We'll be) checking with the phone company and looking at persons who may be disgruntled with Sierra."

The base lodge was immediately evacuated. Then systematically the lifts were cleared of skiers. Guests were not told why the resort was closing at 3:30pm. Access to the mountain was cut off at 4:30pm.

West Bowl is only open from 10am-2pm, so no one was over there who had to be evacuated.

About 300 people were evacuated, according to Van Arnum.

"In this day and age it's not worth taking any chances so we

are allowing them to do their thing," Sierra General Manager John Rice told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Resort officials plan to open as normal on Jan. 15.

S. Tahoe city attorney receives positive review

South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Tom Watson was given a glowing review by the City Council in closed session on Tuesday.



Tom Watson

However, there are no changes to his three-year $154,000 contract that was entered into in May 2013.

"He battles for the city just like he were battling for his own family," Mayor Hal Cole told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Cole said his way to determine how a city attorney is doing is based on the outcome of cases.

"Some cases like STATA are huge. Before he came along we were looking at a six-figure number and we got it down to a manageable figure," Cole said of the transportation case.

Watson's next task now that litigation has settled down is to

have his office go through the city ordinances to clean them up in terms bringing consistency and to eliminate “patch work” as Cole described them.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Affordable Care Act enrollees have new challenges

By Robert Pear and Abby Goodnough, New York Times

FORT WORTH – Paul D. Donahue and his wife, Angela, are among more than a million Americans who have signed up for health coverage through the federal insurance exchange. Donahue has a card in his wallet from his insurer to prove it. But when he tried to use it to get a flu shot and fill prescriptions this week, local pharmacies could not confirm his coverage, so he left without his medications.

Similar problems are occurring daily in doctors’ offices and drugstores around the country as consumers try to use insurance coverage that took effect on Jan. 1 under the Affordable Care Act.

In addition to the difficulties many face in proving they have coverage, patients are also having a hard time figuring out whether particular doctors are affiliated with their health insurance plan. Doctors themselves often do not know if they are in the network of providers for plans sold on the exchange. Many are also having trouble reaching exchanges and insurance companies to confirm their enrollment or pay their first month’s premium. Doctors’ offices and pharmacies, too, are spending hours on the phone trying to verify patients’

coverage, sometimes to no avail.

Read the whole story

Truckee sex offender loses Supreme Court case

By David Kravets, Wired

A convicted sex offender's loss at the Supreme Court on Monday was indirectly a boost to the privacy rights of travelers crossing the border to the United States.



Howard Cotterman Photo/California Sex Offender Archive

Without issuing a ruling, the justices let stand an appeals court's decision that U.S. border agents may indeed undertake a search of a traveler's gadgets content on a whim, just like they could with a suitcase or a vehicle. That is known as the "border search exception" of United States law, where travelers can be searched without a warrant as they enter the

country. The Obama administration has aggressively used this power to search travelers' laptops, sometimes copying the hard drive before returning the computer.

However, in a rare win for digital privacy, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling last year concluded that a deeper forensic analysis by border officials using software to decrypt password-protected files or to locate deleted files now requires "reasonable suspicion" of criminal activity – an outcome the justices refused to tinker with today.

It's a victory of sorts for the public at large. But for convicted sex offender Howard Cotterman of Truckee, the decision upholds a forensic search on his gear that, authorities said, led to the discovery of hundreds of child porn images that can now be admitted in court as evidence.

Read the whole story

Drought could be a political test for Brown

By David Siders and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

As California withered through a drought in 1977, Gov. Jerry Brown called for a 25 percent reduction in personal water use statewide and flew to Washington to press the Carter administration for federal aid. He reduced the spray of his shower head and, in a characteristic moment of stagecraft, replaced a pitcher of water at a news conference with a single cup.

Today Brown is governor again, and California is entering one

of the driest winters on record. Two dry years already have depleted many reservoirs. The snowpack is meager, and streams and rivers are running low. Although California has experienced many droughts, historically there have never been clear rules about when to formally declare one. Scientists use the term to refer to abnormally dry conditions, which California is clearly experiencing. But for governors, formally declaring a drought has been largely a political decision based on mounting anecdotal reports of weather-related hardship and evidence that relief is not in the forecast.

If it remains dry – as long-term forecasts suggest – the drought will test the management abilities of a governor who, with the exception of the Rim Fire last year, has largely avoided widespread natural disasters since returning to the Capitol in 2011.

Read the whole story

No snow: People spending money at Heavenly Village

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

The lack of snow had people spending a significant amount of time in the Heavenly Village during December. And it's still common to see people milling about.

“I don’t know if it was more people coming up because they didn’t have to deal some of the snow issues we usually have to deal with. People didn’t have to think about getting stuck,” Jana Harrah, owner of Heavenly Village Cinema, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I saw people in sports cars. We had a really good holiday, but then we had good movies.”

Gary Casteel, who runs the village, told South Lake Tahoe officials that sales were extremely high in December for the multitude of stores and restaurants.

The city’s parking garage had its highest revenue-generating month ever – $150,000.

Sales tax numbers are not out yet.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

TY&FS looking for mentors

With January being National Mentoring Month, Tahoe Youth & Family Services is looking for mentors.

Mentoring helps youth and teens because it guarantees that there is someone who cares for them and they are not alone in their day-to-day challenges, according to TY&FS.

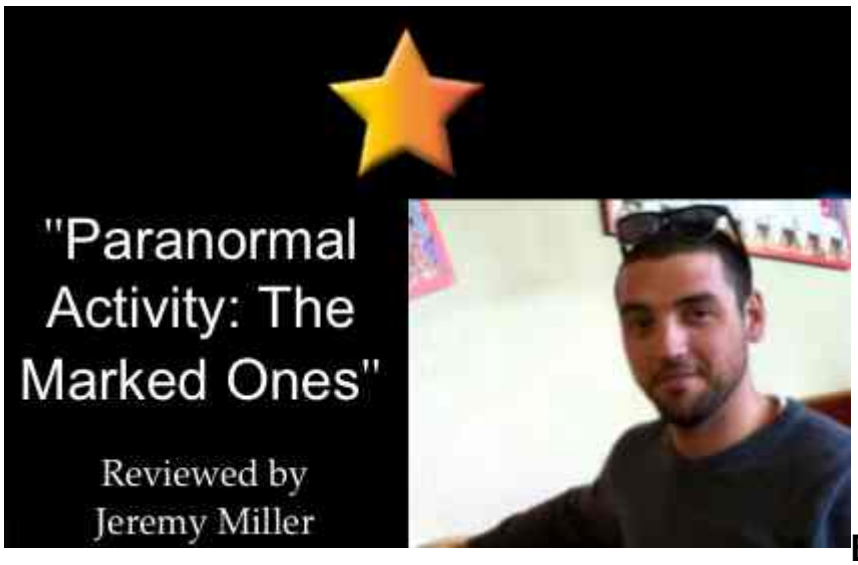
The goal is mentors provide mentees with the gift of having an experienced friend to help them through a number of situations.

Students who meet regularly with a mentor are 52 percent less likely to skip a day of school, 46 percent less likely than peers to start using illegal drugs and 27 percent less likely to start drinking, according to a Public/Private Ventures

Study of Big Brother's Big Sisters.

TYFS is accepting ages 4-17 who need a mentor and adults who would like to be mentors. Programs are based in South Lake Tahoe, Markleeville and Minden. In Alpine County, contact Betty Hathaway at (530) 694.9459, betty@tahoeyouth.org; South Lake Tahoe or Douglas County, contact Emily Bennett (530) 694.9459, emily@tahoeyouth.org.

'Paranormal Activity' not worth the money



By Jeremy Miller

"Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones" is the newest installment of the Paranormal Activity franchise. Written and directed by Christopher Landon (who's responsible for Nos. 2, 3, and 4) the story surrounds a trio of teens.

It stars Andrew Jacobs, Jorge Diaz and Gabrielle Walsh.

Warning: This review has spoilers toward the end.

Jesse (Jacobs) and his pals Jorge (Diaz) and Marisol (Walsh)

are going about their daily business when out of the blue his downstairs neighbor is murdered. Upon investigation he develops a mark on his arm and some pretty fun new abilities. Things start to get weirder and weirder, as they typically do when demonic possession is at play, and Jesse's new abilities seem more like a curse than the next YouTube sensation.



The crew decides to take action by investigating downstairs. They discover a super creepy book full of demonic illustrations and witchy nomenclature.

Like every single other horror movie in existence they don't stop there.

Now, I have enjoyed the paranormal flicks thus far. They progressively get worse, as most horror film series do, but I still enjoy them. Where this one went wrong was plot. You come to discover that what's happening is much bigger than some creepy girlfriend getting possessed and killing her boyfriend. It's actually a band of witches who put a spiritual entity into unborn babies and then "harvest" it 18 years later. Their goal? To eventually breed an entire army of spirits all over the world. So, there's that.

Once the crew tied it all together and I discovered that's where this is all going, they lost me completely. These witches eventually kidnap Jessie as his demon is ready to be pulled from his body. Marisol and Jorge call upon the services of some hard-hitting gangsters they know through an old

friend. The two gangsters, along with Jesse's friends mob out to the house we saw in the fourth film to seek vengeance and pull Jesse out. They pull up to the house with some firearms and start looking.

Here is where it really lost me. As they're walking around, all of a sudden there's a witch standing there and boom! Blown away with a shotgun! There's another one? Boom! Hit pointblank and thrown 9 feet back. This guy goes on a shooting spree just blasting witches left and right. Savage.

Now, that's awesome, and I was laughing harder than I have in a while, but this isn't a comedy. Right? Darn. It just gets worse.

Suddenly as Jorge realizes that Jesse is long gone, he runs around like an idiot (passed over a dead gangster's gun) and ends up stumbling through a demonic, time traveling sort of portal and ends up in a house. Whose house? Katie's! Oh, man! We're back in the first one.

Katie comes creeping down the stairs; Jorge scares her and when Micah sees some dude in his house, Katie stabs him, not the obvious choice of the creepy dude who magically appeared in their kitchen.

Role credits, and that's it. Wow. If I really put my head to it, I could probably understand the correlation, but honestly, if they're trying to complicate it that much, it's because they know they don't have a movie. On a hot summer day, I love an ice cold Coke with lime. Problem is I only have one lime wedge. I squeeze and squeeze and I can see that nothing is coming out, but I keep trying. I have to get that Coke with lime. OK, I finally squeeze it to the point you can't even tell that thing was ever a lime wedge, take a sip and … can't even taste it. Get it? The template for Hollywood moneymaking is perfectly summed up right there. Catch it on the RedBox and until then; avoid creepy witch books, Simon says, and senile

old woman painting manikins planning your next birthday.

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

Brewery brings Old World style to Tahoe-Truckee



Eli Pasciak, Tahoe Mountain Brewing Co. brewmaster, explains the significance of barrels. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – Some were blondes, others a rich red, some were full bodied, others were classic. All were 3 ounces of liquid enjoyment.

The sampler at Tahoe Mountain Brewing Co. introduces people to eight of the more than 20 varieties of beer at the Tahoe City pub. A few miles away in Truckee these concoctions and others are being made.

“Our goal is to create a more dynamic drinking experience,” Eli Pasciak, head brewer at Tahoe Mountain Brewing Co., told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We want to accentuate aromas. We don’t want a one-note experience or drink.”



A sampler of beers.

Based on the variety of samples – which come in tiny glasses that are placed on a serving board in the shape of Lake Tahoe – Pasciak has achieved his goal.

Sue liked the Paddle Board, a well-balanced pale ale with hints of fruit. I was most enamored with the Sugar Pine Porter that has a chocolate finish.

The Viejo Rojo is their top seller. It’s a barrel aged sour.

Aaron Bigelow and Tanya Thayer opened the pub on June 2, 2012. There is a small brewery upstairs, but the bulk of the beer is made off-site. Only their beer is sold at the pub. They also run a bottle shop in Truckee that carries 400 beers from

around the world. The main brewery, which offers tours by appointment, also has a tasting room.

The couple quit their jobs – he was a custom homebuilder and she a dental tech – to open Tahoe Mountain Brewing Co. The seasonality of the business has been one of the harder things to cope with. But on Saturday the place was packed as snow and rain drove people indoors.

“Even if all the locals came in every day, it’s not enough to support what we are doing. We rely heavily on visitors,” Bigelow said.

The pub is across from Commons Beach in the Cobblestone center. The large picture windows, and interior of wood and rock give it a definite Tahoe feel. TVs in the bar and dining area are muted, but it is definitely loud with just the cackle of conversations. The openness is casual and inviting.

The menu is typical pub food, with limited choices for a vegetarian. Cutting back on the number of items was something the couple had to learn so the kitchen didn’t get backed up. (Neither one had prior restaurant experience.)

The service was excellent. And that’s one thing Bigelow lamented about – the seasonality often means having to lay off quality employees who may have moved on when he is ready to put them back on the payroll.

A pub wasn’t even in the original plans. The couple looked for a place in Tahoe City to start the brewery but could not find the right parcel, so they ended up in Truckee. But when the restaurant space became available they jumped at it. So now they have the dual operation.

Bigelow’s interest in a brewery started with creating beers at home. But he knew he needed to hire experts if he were to be successful. Two brewmasters and an apprentice work in Truckee coming up with beers that are made in the Old World – Belgian

style. Maybe a dozen craft beermakers are doing this in California. (Not all the beers are made this way; there are traditional lagers and IPAs.)



Tanks at the Truckee facility.

“They call them the Burgundies of Belgium. They are called sours because of the yeast strains,” Bigelow told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are the only all grain from scratch not from extract brewery on the lake.”

It takes longer to create this type of beer. But the richness is evident in each sip.

“They drink more like wine. They are more complex, much dryer, have low pH levels like in the 3.2, 3.6 range. That would be similar to a dry brute Champagne,” Bigelow said. “A lot of times we back blend fruits. Maybe for two or three months it sits on fruits – cherries, blueberries, strawberries.”

Pasciak’s experience as a chef contributes to his awareness of what works on the palate. He wants to blend flavors to create complex beers, but also beers that will pair well with food.

“We like different brews from course to course,” he said. It’s

much like pairing wine with food.

On the status board at the brewery is a list of what needs to be done, what beers are in which vat, and other details.

Pasciak had been out shopping for the bacon that morning for what will become Bacon Baltic Porter. It will require a longer fermentation process and need to be kept cooler – more like 50 degrees. (An ale is usually at 60 to 70 degrees.)

The 11 tanks are mostly stainless steel, though copper is also used. Some are cone-shaped which allows the yeast to filter out.

In a neighboring building are the more than 300 barrels. Some are from wine, others from Cognac, Bourbon and Muscat. Soon a trip will be made to France to inspect nine Fudore barrels that can store 3,000 to 5,000 gallons.

Bigelow called this a rare find.

“The idea is with less surface area of the oak the oak influence becomes smoother,” he said.

Each barrel has its own peculiarities. For Pasciak he wants to know the entire history of the barrel so he will have better knowledge of what it will do to the beer.

“A barrel to me is an ingredient,” Pasciak said.

French oak offers more spice, sometimes coconut, whereas vanillans come out of American oak.

Each barrel has a different flavor profile.

In trying to be as sustainable as possible, Tahoe Mountain sends its spent grains to a farmer in Reno. It’s fed to his livestock and mixed with fertilizer for the fields. Produce and eggs are delivered to Tahoe Mountain, and some of the farmer’s goods are incorporated into the beer.

About 5,000 barrels, each containing 31 gallons, are produced annually. Capacity is about maxed out. And that’s fine for Bigelow – at least for now.

Opinion: Sustainable Lake Tahoe becoming reality

By Joanne Marchetta

We were invited to give the opening presentation at a national conference of weather journalists this month on the South Shore called Operation Sierra Storm. The main theme was Tahoe as a world leader in environmental sustainability and as we move into this new era of climate change, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has a lot to share with the world about what is happening here to adapt to the threats that come with it.

In the face of climate change, we all can contribute and make a difference. Sustainability for Lake Tahoe communities includes bringing mobility options, natural resource protection, health and social well-being, and a healthy economy together in ways that increase the long-term resilience of the natural and built environments. A number of sustainability actions are taking place at all levels around Lake Tahoe – from local green building codes to major transportation improvements – and 2014 is shaping up to be a critical year to press forward on climate change priorities and continue the positive progress happening in our communities.



Joanne Marchetta

First, the TRPA has partnered with other agencies and organizations to form the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program to bring a cohesive approach to everyone's efforts. The program is implementing greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies across the basin and will establish sustainability indicators as part of Lake Tahoe's climate action plan. The collaborative group is expected to release the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan in February with the Tahoe basin's first complete greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

It's also important to know that while this new partnership is taking shape in the basin, Lake Tahoe's sturdy regional framework has already put many sustainability measures in place. TRPA years ago established an urban boundary to stop sprawl, capped the roadway capacity of the Basin to reduce reliance on the private automobile, integrated land use and transportation plans, and set environmental standards on new development to stop additional impacts.

TRPA adopted the new Lake Tahoe Regional Plan in 2012 moving the basin into the 21st century with incentives for property owners to upgrade buildings with modern environmental design and to redesign town centers more around walking and biking. When we look at what has been done here to reduce our footprint on Lake Tahoe, there is a lot that is exportable to other communities and it is no wonder that conferences like Operation Sierra Storm are drawing people to come learn from us.

While implementation of the Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan is projected to reduce per capita emissions in the region by 7 percent by 2035, those reductions account for only mobile sources of greenhouse gases like cars and light trucks. The emissions inventory is showing that stationary sources like homes and buildings are an area where big improvements could also be realized. The Sustainable Communities Program is working to establish minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings in the Lake Tahoe Basin through local Area Plans and building codes. The partnership is bringing together existing actions with new and innovative ideas.

Along with the Sustainable Communities Program, TRPA in its role as the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization is making it possible to implement mobility options in our transportation plans. We are opening a grant program this month to bring forward community-based ideas for mobility and streetscape improvement projects. Called the On Our Way Community Grant Program, we are looking for community-based organizations to identify local improvements that will enhance streets and neighborhoods. The first grant application round will run from Jan. 15 to March 14. The program aims to help meet regional goals of encouraging biking, walking and transit use and supporting economic vitality by studying neighborhood-level improvements such as safe routes to schools and downtown street-design projects.

And last, there are more people all around us who are changing their daily habits to make a healthier Lake Tahoe and more sustainable planet. Whether you are shopping locally, insulating your home, or leaving your car at home one day a week, you are part of what will make Tahoe a better place to live. If you are one of the many who are stepping up with new ideas or are prepared to lead your community forward, I encourage you to find out more about the sustainability efforts taking shape in the Region and get involved. Lake Tahoe is on a world stage and we have an opportunity not only

to adapt our communities to climate change, but to set an example for communities around the nation and the globe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.