U.S. athletes getting an early taste of Russia

By Stephen Wayne Kasica, Outside

Behind the Olympic-caliber athletes scarfing down 5,000-plus daily calories at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs is a hardworking chef creating the food that fuels peak performance.

And with 350 weary, ravenous athletes walking into the dining hall each day, you get a pretty good idea of executive chef Jacque Hamilton's job.

Besides making sure there's enough milk — OTC athletes gulp down about 15,000 gallons of the stuff annually — she keeps meals fresh and nutritious by varying menu items.

Recently, that's meant a variety of Russian-themed cuisine in preparation for the February games in Sochi. Popular items include wild-mushroom stroganoff, a delicious meatless alternative for vegetarian athletes. Other big hits include eggplant caviar served on blini, a Russian-style pancake.

Perhaps the most popular dish is Borscht. Hamilton's take on the traditional beet-based soup includes more beets for extra antioxidants and more meat for a little more muscle-fueling protein.

Read the whole story

STPUD makes case for rate increases

By Kathryn Reed

It's possible South Tahoe Public Utility District customers could be paying $78.60 more a year for water and sewer service starting July 1.

This breaks down to another $4.40 per month for water over 10 years and $2.15 a month for sewer in the same time period. It's called the "optimum" plan to accomplish the district's goals. Other scenarios include increases just for meter installation or spreading all costs over 20 years. Board members could develop other alternatives.

More than a dozen people on Dec. 19 attended a workshop designed to touch on the reasons the South Shore entity needs more money. The five board members were hearing some of the numbers for the first time.



South Tahoe PUD General Manager Richard Solbrig, left, explains the district's capital improvement needs Dec. 19. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In the coming months the electeds will be tasked with deciding if rate increases should be sought. A preferred plan is expected to be decided in March, with public hearings on a rate increase and the 2014-15 budget in May.

While one slide of the presentation said salaries and benefits have been cut by 3 percent, this is a bit misleading. What the district pays out is down by that amount over the last two years. There has been no cost of living increase, however some people have had salary increases to keep them on par with their peers in other districts. Three and half positions have not been filled. And the district saved money by switching from being self-insured for health care to going with a group of state water districts to lower the costs by about $900,000 per year.

Another cost-savings came from cutting the operations and maintenance budget by 20 percent.

Risk vs. affordability is how district staff is putting forth the discussion. Can the district keep going forward without having adequate fire protection? Where does the money come from to put the remaining 8,300 water meters that need to be installed by 2025 in the ground? Is Lake Tahoe threatened without upgrades to the sewer system?

The board was fairly silent until an audience member asked what they thought of the staff presentation.

President Eric Schafer said for the nearly 13 years he has been on the board he has advocated for small increases. (Later that afternoon at the regular meeting Schafer was appointed to be chair for another year and Randy Vogelgesang vice chair.)

“We want to give the public a system they don’t have to worry about. There is a price for that. It won’t get cheaper,” Schafer said. “I’m advocating doing as much as we reasonably can.”

Board member Jim Jones said 1 percent of the value of the $1.6 billion infrastructure that is in the ground should be spent each year to replace what is wearing out. That would be $16 million a year. He pointed out the district has been spending closer to $6 million a year for the last 10 years.

Some of the parts in the district are 50 years old – the life expectancy of much of the equipment.

“Lines wear out from age, not use,” General Manager Richard Solbrig said. “The water system is protecting your house whether you are there or not.”

But not every house has large enough water lines out front to fight a fire. The district says it will take $67 million over 10 years to upgrade the water system. The bulk of that money is so there are 8-inch water lines for adequate water suppression pressure.

The district has to have all customers on meters by 2025 per state law. A previous board decided the district would put in the meters instead of mandating individual property owners do it.

The California Department of Public Health is offering a 20-year zero percent loan. The application is due in June. The $21.5 million loan would equate to ratepayers paying an additional $1.10 per month. A 5 percent interest rate on a loan would come out to $1.75 a month for customers.

District customer Bob Olsen questions why he would have to pay to install other people’s meters when he paid for his own.

Solbrig said expenses have to be spread out and that it isn’t possible for each customer to be charged for the exact cost of delivering water or taking away sewage. He gave the example of how some houses on hills require more electricity to pump the water, but are charged the same as everyone else.

With 30 percent of the sewer budget spent on exporting the wastewater to Alpine County, one person asked why not lobby to get rid of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act.

“It’s probably regarded as the single most successful thing that has been done to protect Lake Tahoe,” Solbrig said of the federal mandate.

He doesn’t believe the district has any chance of winning that battle in Sacramento or Washington.

The Luther Pass pump station needs substantive upgrades, including increasing the voltage to get the wastewater up and over the mountain pass. Parts are so old that Liberty Utilities does not have back up parts.

Holidays don’t have to be full of stress

By Mandy Kendall

Christmas is coming up fast and so are the situations that can stress us. Here are some *Qwik-e* tips to help reduce the stress and increase the fun.

Get the best price – Whether you buy discount gift cards to give them directly to someone or to buy a gift with you can save up to 30 percent buying discounted gift cards. You can also sell gift cards that you know you will never use. Just Google “discounted gift cards” for a range of different sites. You can also Google “discount codes” to find sites that offer promotional codes to be used on websites for rebates or free

shipping, etc. There are also sites that track prices for you to make sure you get the price you want for a particular item.



Mandy Kendall

Check your loyalty points – Apparently the U.S .is sitting on $5 billion worth of unused loyalty points. If you shop at a store frequently, you may find you have a nice balance you could use toward Christmas.

Agree on a budget for everyone – It is easy to get carried away with expensive gifts. Perhaps suggest to the adults in your family that there is a maximum amount to be spent per gift. It’s surprising how creative you can get when you are on a budget.

Free fun – One of my most favorite childhood Christmas memories is caroling around our neighborhood. You can deliver cards and gifts (saving on postage) and spread some holiday cheer at the same time.

Family fun – Playing games is much more conducive to family bonding than lying around watching TV all day, and better for you, too.

Christmas budgets – If the kids in your life have wish lists that make your bank balance groan (and you too), you can either join forces with other relatives or have a heart-to-heart talk with the kids about what they can realistically expect. According to a survey by Red Tractor food standards watchdog, more than one in four kids worries about how their family will afford Christmas, so it might not be a difficult

conversation.

Spread the love locally – Buy certificates to encourage family and loved ones to support businesses in town.

Don't buy it, make it – Nothing says "I care about you" more than something you have made yourself.

Have fun with e-cards – There are huge variety of animated e-cards you can send to family and friends at the fraction of the cost of physical cards (in fact many e-cards are free). This frees up time and money, which can be donated to your favorite charity.

Trouble thinking of a gift for someone – How about donating to their favorite charity on their behalf?

Eat before you go to a party – This may sound a bit counterproductive, but it will help you make wise choices at the buffet table. Eating some protein first will also keep you feeling fuller for longer.

Keep hydrated – Alcohol can lead to dehydration (amongst other things). So, to help stave off a headache in the morning and possibly embarrassing situations at the party, try drinking a glass of water in between each glass of your favorite cocktail.

Over indulge in nutrition – The fast pace of Christmas, added to the less nutritious dietary temptations during the holidays, can lead to a sluggish immune system (as well as you feeling sluggish). Balancing indulgences with good healthy foods will help you fight off seasonal sickness, and an expanding waistline.

Wishing you, and yours, a happy and healthy holiday.

Until next year.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe,

which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

Letter: Live Violence Free says thank you

To the community,

Live Violence Free would like to send a huge holiday appreciation to community members who helped out children and families this Christmas season.

LVF extends deep gratitude for the Tahoe Douglas Rotarians and Sealed with a Kiss who hosted their annual Christmas Rotary Party, warmly welcoming 15 families to join the festivities, including a gourmet dinner and a variety of gifts. This year 48 of our clients and their family members benefited from this event.

Also, LVF sends extensive thanks the Tahoe Douglas Elks Club No. 2670 for their immense ongoing commitment and volunteerism at LVF and their generous donation of granting 20 children with Kmart shopping sprees. These children were able to pick anything up to $50 that they desired to take home, making Christmas extra special for children in need.

Lastly, LVF sends blessings and acknowledgement to all of the donors who participated in our 13th annual Adopt-A-Child

program. Over 90 children were adopted this year by local residents who profoundly enhanced the Christmas celebration for many families in our community.

Thank you to all the service clubs, citizens, and leaders in the community to bring Christmas cheer and light to clients who are facing dark and challenging life circumstances. LVF is excited for the New Year to come and welcomes all volunteers interested in joining the organization.

Hannah Greenstreet, Live Violence Free

Eateries creating special menus for restaurant week

Sixteen restaurants are participating in the inaugural South Shore Restaurant Week, Jan. 10-17.

Participating restaurants will feature specially-priced and prix fixe menus highlighting the theme Made with Altitude.”

No special reservations are needed for this event.

Participating restaurants include: 11th Frame Diner (inside Tahoe Bowl), Apres Wine Co., Basecamp Pizza, Beacon Bar & Grill, Boathouse on the Pier, Edgewood, Getaway Café, Gunbarrel Tavern, Hard Rock Cafe, Jimmy’s, MacDuff’s, Red Hut Café (three South Shore locations) the Riva Grill and Sorensen’s Resort.

For restaurant week menu information, go online.

North Shore to host U.S. cycling events

The 2015 and 2016 USA Cycling Amateur and Para-cycling Road National Championships will be in North Lake Tahoe.

USA Cycling on Dec. 19 announced the six locations for 2015-16 USA Cycling national championships. The exact dates will be revealed after the first of the year.

Gravity Mountain Bike National Championships will utilize the course used for the 1996 UCI Downhill Mountain Bike World Championships at Mammoth Mountain. Cross-Country Mountain Bike and Enduro National Championships will be on Mt. Bachelor in Bend, Ore. Marathon Mountain Bike National Championships are slated to be in Columbia County, Ga. Collegiate Mountain Bike National Championships are slated to be at Snowshoe Mountain in West Virginia. Professional Criterium National Championships will be in Greenville, S.C.

Pursuit of powder requires a strategy

By Cindy Hirschfeld, New York Times

It’s every skier’s dream: to arrive at a resort just after a good storm, take one of the first lifts up and ply delightfully fresh, powdery tracks. The reality, though, is

that most of us can’t drop everything to chase storms. We have to plan a ski trip in advance. That means the odds of finding good snow, let alone a powder day (often defined as six or more inches of new snow), requires some strategizing.

The simplest trick (other than forking over a lot of money for a snowcat or heli-skiing trip, and even that’s no guarantee) is to pick a resort known for receiving prodigious amounts of snow.

But start talking to meteorologists and others who track snowfall, and it turns out it’s not so simple. The vagaries of mountain weather mean that snow conditions in a couple of months are nearly impossible to predict accurately.

“I really hate planning trips too far in the future, because you never know what’s going to happen,” said Joel Gratz, a Boulder, Colo.-based meteorologist and co-founder of the opensnow.com website, which specializes in ski-targeted forecasting. “Hope isn’t in my vocabulary.”

Short-term forecasting isn’t much easier. The craggy topography of mountainous terrain is partly to blame, as is the difficulty of measuring atmospheric moisture at mountain-top elevations and in the upper atmosphere. “A lot of the tricks of mountain forecasting come down to terrain and wind direction,” Gratz added. “To learn these local effects, you need to live there and have observed the weather for a few years.”

There is an elite club of American resorts that average 500 or more inches of snow annually. They include Mount Baker in Washington (655); Alyeska in Alaska (650); Kirkwood (600) and Sugar Bowl (500) in California; Alta (560), Snowbird, Brighton and Solitude (500 each) in Utah; and Grand Targhee in Wyoming (500).

Read the whole story

TRPA honors citizens helping to preserve Lake Tahoe

Eight people were recognized at the Lake Spirit awards ceremony at the Dec. 18 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board meeting.

The Lake Spirit Awards honor people making progress at restoring Lake Tahoe. Awards were given for exemplary citizen and exemplary agency representative or environmental scientist.

Exemplary Citizens

Tom Carter, North Shore, for spending his summers diving from his paddleboard to retrieve lost tires and debris from the bottom of Lake Tahoe.

Jeff Poulin, South Shore, for collecting as many as 20 bags of litter a day from alongside bike trails and roads at Lake Tahoe.

Exemplary Agency Representative or Environmental Scientist

Cindy Gustafson, Tahoe City Public Utility District, for her commitment to the North Shore, particularly in her perseverance to construct bike trails and sidewalks in and around Tahoe City and for her leadership in creating and chairing the nonprofit environmental foundation Tahoe Fund.

Kathy Strain, Lake Tahoe Community College, for being an inspirational and accomplished environmental science educator who also helped secure a $1 million grant to create the Summit to Sand environmental education program to promote environmental stewardship.

Citizens Honorably Mentioned

Dylan Eichenberg for his energy and enthusiasm as a 23-year-old volunteer cleaning up graffiti on rocks along the lakeshore, picking up trash along the beaches, and pulling aquatic invasive weeds to protect Lake Tahoe.

Tom Wendell (posthumous), for his years of working to encourage sustainability and being a passionate, outspoken advocate for improving recreation and non-motorized transportation at Lake Tahoe.

Agency Representatives/Scientists Honorably Mentioned

Missy Mohler, Sierra Watershed Education Partnership, for her work in the Truckee-Tahoe Unified School District to improve students' understanding of their watershed environment and for creating and maintaining many effective programs.

Dan Shaw, California State Parks, for his efforts battling Eurasian watermilfoil in Emerald Bay .

Study: Law enforcement often doesn't buckle up

By Jed Boal, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY – "Click It or Ticket." That's the highway patrol campaign in many states that urges everyone to wear their seat belts or face a fine.

But a study by California's Commission on Peace Officer

Standards and Training estimates that roughly half of law enforcement officers don't wear seat belts, while 86 percent of the public now buckle up.

Scot Stephenson, Utah's director of Peace Officer Standards and Training, was surprised to hear that. He said he believes 80 percent to 85 percent of law enforcement officers in Utah buckle up on the job because that's the way they train.

Stephenson said he can't be certain that's the way the officers behave after they finish training, but he said seat belt training is a major component of what they learn. Stephenson also said there's been a nationwide movement to cut down on the number of law enforcement fatalities.

Read the whole story

Measure would change criteria for teacher layoffs

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

A ballot measure submitted by a political consultant for education advocate Michelle Rhee seeks to remove seniority as a factor when California school districts lay off teachers, requiring instead that decisions be based on performance and student test scores.

That approach has been at the core of Rhee's advocacy efforts as head of StudentsFirst, a national group headquartered in Sacramento. Rhee, who is married to Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, has said she established the group to try to counter the influence that teachers unions have in decisions about

public education.

Unions generally reject the idea that teachers should be rated based on their students’ test scores, and prefer contracts that call for the most recently hired teachers to be the first let go during layoffs.

Read the whole story