Study: Pot use among high school students increasing

By Anahad O'Connor, New York Times

A federal report shows that the percentage of American high school students who smoke marijuana is slowly rising, while the use of alcohol and almost every other drug is falling.

The report raises concerns that the relaxation of restrictions on marijuana, which can now be sold legally in 20 states and the District of Columbia, has been influencing use of the drug among teenagers. Health officials are concerned by the steady increase and point to what they say is a growing body of evidence that adolescent brains, which are still developing, are susceptible to subtle changes caused by marijuana.

"The acceptance of medical marijuana in multiple states leads to the sense that if it's used for medicinal purposes, then it can't be harmful," said Dr. Nora D. Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which issued the report. "This survey has shown very consistently that the greater the number of kids that perceive marijuana as risky, the less that smoke it."

Volkow said that one way marijuana might affect cognitive function in adolescents was by disrupting the normal development of white matter through which cells in the brain communicate.

Read the whole story

Sandoval wants Nev. mental health system studied

By Phillip Reese and Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Brian Sandoval on Monday announced the creation of a special council to review Nevada's embattled mental health care system and offer recommendations for improvements.

The announcement followed a *Sacramento Bee* investigative report published Sunday that found numerous patients discharged from Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas to Greyhound buses bound for other states were later arrested at the destination cities for crimes that included murder, assault, theft, vagrancy and sex offenses.

The new Behavioral Health and Wellness Council will be "comprised of members of the Legislature, law enforcement officials, national experts, and providers of behavioral health services in Nevada," Sandoval said in a statement. It will "assist in closing gaps in services and offer policy recommendations to help improve the quality of life for those individuals living with behavioral health conditions."

Read the whole story

Tips be safe while driving in winter conditions

With another winter storm hitting the Lake Tahoe Basin today, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office is reminding drivers that winter driving can be risky.

“We see too many crashes from drivers not slowing down and not being prepared to drive in winter conditions,” Capt. Duane Meyer said in a statement. “We ask that drivers slow down, wear their seat belts and turn off their cruise control.”

Statistical data show that as many as 800 car accidents in Nevada were caused by unsafe driving behaviors in wet and snowy conditions last year.

The sheriff’s office is asking drivers to remember the three P’s of safe winter driving: Prepare before you leave; Protect yourself; and Prevent an auto accident.

Prepare:

Travel in winter weather only when necessary. Leave enough time to safely reach your destination and plan your route to avoid snowy-icy areas and steep hills.

Check weather and road conditions by dialing 511 in Nevada.

Maintain your car: check your battery, tire tread, windshield wipers, levels of no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir and your antifreeze.

Maintain a high fuel level in your gas tank.

Keep a basic winter travel kit in the car: chains, a flashlight, jumper cables, shovel, snow brush, ice scraper, water, road flares and a blanket.

Protect:

Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.

Avoid quick starts, stops and fast turns. Accelerate, brake and steer smoothly and gradually.

Reduce Speed. Speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions, not winter road conditions.

Don’t slam on brakes. Apply steady pressure on ABS-equipped vehicles and pump the brakes if necessary on non-ABS vehicles.

Keep additional distance from other vehicles.

Don’t pass without good distance and sight clearance.

Avoid using cruise control in inclement weather.

Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shady areas; they may freeze first.

Comply with all posted chain requirements.

Watch carefully for snow removal equipment.

If vehicle begins to skid, steer in direction of slide and slowly remove foot from accelerator.

Prevent:

Before driving, place your cell phone in the glove box where you won’t be tempted to use it while driving. Or you can simply turn off your phone when driving.

Remove snow and ice from all car windows, mirrors, lights, turn signals and license plates.

Make sure vehicle exhaust system is clear of snow when parked.

If you plan on drinking, designate a sober driver.

Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest before a trip. Try to stop every three hours and rotate drivers if possible.

If your vehicle has snow tires, install and use them between Oct, 1 and April 30.

If parked or stuck in snow, leave window slightly cracked for ventilation.

Mountain bikers eager to test Heavenly's trails

By Kathryn Reed

Mountain biking. That could be what Heavenly Mountain Resort is known for in the future.

Maps with colorful squiggly lines filled the U.S. Forest Service conference room Wednesday night as people came and went during an informal information meeting about the South Shore resort's plans to turn the mountain into more of a summer playground.

And while rope courses, hiking trails, ziplines and canopy tours are part of the overall design, it is the biking opportunities that are generating the most buzz.



U.S. Forest Service recreation specialist Jonathan Cook-Fisher, center, talks Dec. 18 to people about Heavenly's proposed mountain bike trails. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Jonathan Cook-Fisher, USFS recreation special uses program manager, said mountain biking is also bringing in the most comments on the scoping document.

(The deadline to comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement is Dec. 20. The Forest Service expects to release a draft environmental impact statement in August 2014 and a final EIS the following January. For more info, go online.)

“We have a TAMBA trail map and there is a black hole where Heavenly is,” Ben Fish told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That would change with what is mapped out.

The plan is people could ride from lake level up the mountain or take the gondola to access trails. Then the trails will connect with other established routes like the Tahoe Rim Trail. Heavenly’s trail system will be a connection that has long been missing.

Mountain bikers already use the public bus system to get to the Stagecoach area of Heavenly and then make their way down to Stateline or South Lake Tahoe. Some of those riders lament the fact BlueGo only allows two bikes per bus.

A group of cycling enthusiasts on Dec. 18 pointed out how Van Sickle Bi-state Park is likely to get more use, especially from people descending the mountain. They spoke of the need to put in signage so people understand the bike park boundaries and know when the trail becomes mixed use.

The Panorama Bike Trail could be what Ridge Run is to skiers – a route that offers sweeping views of Lake Tahoe, where photographs are a must. The difference between this bike trail and the Flume Trail is that it should be reasonable to stop to take a picture or two.

Right now a proposed trail goes under the mid-station of the

gondola, but there is no connector to the deck area. With weddings and sightseeing being a draw to the mid-station, the thought is cyclists would negatively impact those users and could stir up a lot of dust. But some people want the Forest Service to rethink putting in a connector.

The actual bike park and concentration of trails are in Nevada and outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. This means they are outside Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's jurisdictions.

"The mountain bike park will be smaller than Northstar's park. But Northstar doesn't connect to the national forest. It doesn't have a ride-through capability," Cook-Fisher told *Lake Tahoe News*.

There will be a mountain bike skill park outside the Tamarack Lodge.

Cycling advocate Kevin Joell sees the improvements as an economic driver for the area as well as another place for locals to play.

"What's been missing is an inclusive trail network for beginners to advanced," Joell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Opinion: Barton working to get residents insurance

By Leanne Wagoner

Signing up for health insurance can be a frustrating and time-consuming process. To ease the insurance buying process, Barton Health has stepped up by partnering with Covered

California, California's Insurance Exchange Marketplace, to assist our community members and provide certified enrollment counselors for the uninsured.

Barton enrollment counselors help California residents navigate through CoveredCA.com, where they can select insurance in an open market setting. Even though Covered California does not reimburse Barton for the enrollment counselors, we felt it was important to donate staff time to support our community during this difficult transition.

So far, counselors have delivered complimentary enrollment sessions at the Family Resource Center, Lake Tahoe Community College and South Lake Tahoe Library. Enrollment Counselors. The English and Spanish speakers have assisted over 75 Lake Tahoe families and households.

Barton enrollment counselors also provide free one-on-one assistance to community members. Additional Barton staff, volunteers, and counselors have fielded nearly 200 phone calls and completed over 60 one-on-one appointments.

I'd like to extend my great appreciation to Barton's certified enrollment counselors who have taken the extra time to train and then assist our community members. Barton's 16 enrollment counselors include employees from Barton Community Health Center, patient accounting, customer service and admitting and have taken on this responsibility in addition to their regular jobs. Counselors took part in a rigorous certification process. All counselors completed 20 hours of training, a certification exam, and thorough background checks. As of Dec. 15, Barton has donated almost 600 hours of employee time to help during this major change in our nation's healthcare system.

Though Barton cannot control the marketplace's glitches, our

enrollment counselors can offer information, assistance, and patience. One local self-employed, small business owner who signed up during Barton's enrollment session stated, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart, you have helped me so much and saved me hundreds of dollars each month."

We feel it is important for our community to understand that they have options, and we are proud that we are able to help those who need enrollment assistance.

The clock is ticking to sign up for insurance. To start receiving medical coverage on Jan. 1, uninsured community members must enroll by Dec. 23. California residents sign up here, and Nevada residents here. If you currently do not have medical coverage, community members can enroll in the insurance marketplace until March 31, 2014, to avoid paying a penalty tax.

Local one-on-one enrollment assistance with Barton is available by appointment, or residents can call local certified enrollment brokers. A list is available online or on Covered California's website above. Barton Health enrollment sessions in South Lake Tahoe are scheduled throughout January. You can find dates and details online or by calling (530) 543.5537.

Leanne Wagoner is Barton Health's community outreach coordinator.

Resume writing subject of

workshop

Tahoe Regional Young Professionals' is putting on a workshop Jan. 15 titled New Year, New Resume.

TRYP member Megan Arneson, a business coach and strategist, will talk about what to put on a resume and how to structure it.

The event is from 5:30-6:30pm at Blue Angel Cafe, 1132 Ski Run Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. It is free to TRYP members, $10 for others.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is planning a series of snowshoe excursions this winter. More info is online.

• Sugar Bowl signed a 25-year lease with the Truckee Donner Land Trust to operate Royal Gorge.

• People may ski or ride for free with Jonny Moseley at Squaw Valley on Dec. 28 and Dec. 30 from 10am-noon and at Alpine from 2-4pm. Squaw tours will meet at the Gold Coast Demo Center. Tours at Alpine Meadows will meet at the bottom of Summit Express.

• Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority is asking tourists to take a

survey about paid parking.

• This is the inaugural year for Squaw to shoot off fireworks on New Year’s Eve. They will light up the sky at 7pm, right after the 6:30pm torchlight parade.

Study: Livestock decisions should be made locally

By Eliza Barclay, NPR

To feed all 7 billion of us, address climate change and live longer, we all need to eat less meat. From Al Gore to the Meatless Monday movement to Harvard epidemiologists, that’s been the resounding advice offered to consumers lately.

But hold up a minute, says Mario Herrero, the chief research scientist at Australia’s national science agency, the CSIRO. Writing off food animals as greedy, inefficient polluters of land and water, artery cloggers and robbers of food from the mouths of hungry babes is perhaps a bit brash, he says.

Instead, it’s important to see the global livestock sector as a super diverse system of tiny backyards and massive feedlots that defies generalizations, Herrero tells the Salt. Shifting to this view is becoming more and more important as we plan for a future of 9 billion people on Earth by mid-century.

Read the whole story

9 Truckee youths accused of tagging

A six-week investigation into several graffiti cases throughout Truckee ended with the arrest of nine juveniles.

Most of the graffiti was considered to be tagging, with monikers related to the suspects, police said.

Additional suspects are being evaluated, according to Truckee police officers.

Police warn people that i t is a crime to supply a juvenile with spray paint, and it is a crime for a juvenile to possess spray paint.

“We take these cases very seriously and do not view them as petty crimes. Truckee is one of those communities where defacing property in any way will get our full attention,” police Capt. Rob Leftwich said in a press release.

Anyone with additional information should call (530) 550.2320.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

‘Thee and Thou and Now’ at Truckee High

Truckee High School’s drama club is putting on “Thee and Thou

and Now” Jan. 9-11.

Well-known works from Shakespeare and the play “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown”, and the classic Abbott and Costello bit, “Who’s on First?” will be paired with lesser known pieces from “Almost Maine” and others. One of the actors will perform an original monologue that she wrote.

The actors are preparing for the Lenaea Theater Festival at the end of January where many of these pieces will be entered for competition.

All shows are at 7pm in school auditorium, 11725 Donner Pass Road, Truckee. Tickets are $10 for adults and $8 for students. They will be available at the door.

For more info, call (530) 386.1929.