Survey: Cycling makes people happy

By Michael Roberts, Outside

Early last year, a doctoral candidate at Portland State University in Oregon made headlines when he presented findings to the national Transportation Research Board showing that riding a bike makes us happy.

According to his survey of more than 800 commuters, bikers rated higher on a well-being index than people using any other form of transportation, including walking. To the country's growing legions of everyday cyclists, the news was hardly a surprise.

A new kind of cycling lifestyle is on the rise. In cities large and small, bike lanes are being built, bike-share programs are taking off, and people who'd never considered pedaling around town are saddling up to save money on gas and get a little exercise.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Royal Gorge Cross Country is open.

• The recreation facilities JPA will be meeting Jan. 24 from 9-11am at Lake Tahoe Airport.

• The U.S. Postal Service is expecting Dec. 16 to be the busiest mailing day of the season and Dec. 19 the biggest delivery day.

• Afrolicious brings the funk for a one-night only dance party to celebrate the New Year at the Crystal Bay Club on Dec. 30. Show time is 10pm. The concert is free, but only open to those 21 and older.

• *National Geographic* calls Reno one of the top 10 Emerging Ski Towns.

Creativity required to get kids exercise at school

By Maanvi Singh, NPR

Avery Stackhouse, age 7, of Lafayette, says he wishes he had more time for phys ed.

“We just have it one day a week – on Monday.” There’s always lunch and recess, he says. “We play a couple of games, like football and soccer,” he tells Shots.

But at Happy Valley Elementary, where he goes to school, recess last only 15 minutes and lunch is 45. Between eating and mingling, he says, “there’s only a few minutes left where we play games and all that.”

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NPR

Fifty-six percent of parents say their elementary school kids are getting just one or two days of physical education a week, according to NPR poll conducted in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health.

Fewer than 1 in 5 parents with children in kindergarten through fifth grade said their kids were getting physical education daily.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Crisp a good alternative to pie

By Kathryn Reed

After going to Apple Hill earlier this fall, I had a lot of apples to deal with. Not a bad problem to have. But I also didn’t want them to go bad.

I decided to turn the remaining ones into a crisp instead of

pie. In large part this had to do with not wanting to make a crust. Having recently made sugar cookie, the whole rolling out dough thing was very unappealing.



I came across the recipe below from the Food Network website. When I saw it had maple syrup I knew I had to make it. I haven't found a recipe yet with maple syrup that Sue doesn't like. There's something about Vermontners and their syrup.

I didn't use the pecans because I'm not a big fan of nuts in my desserts. I used a mixture of apples. And because I don't have ramekins I baked it all together in a pan. A square pan would be best.

And like all apple desserts, serve it with vanilla ice cream.

Apple Crisp

Filling:

5 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, chopped small

1/4 C finely chopped pecans

3 T all-purpose flour

1/2 C brown sugar

2 T maple syrup

1 T lemon juice

Topping:

3/4 C all-purpose flour

1/3 C brown sugar

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1/4 tsp salt

6 T chilled butter, cut into pieces

1/4 C coarsely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

For the filling:

Mix all the ingredients together. Place into 7 to 8-ounce ramekins.

For topping:

Mix the flour, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt in large bowl. Blend the butter into the mixture until it forms pea size lumps. Stir in pecans and sprinkle over filling.

Bake crisps for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before serving.

Health concerns lead to drop in diet soda sales

By Mike Esterl, Wall Street Journal

Joanna Stepka is the soda industry’s new nightmare.

The 33-year-old Rhode Island resident began drinking Diet Coke in kindergarten, graduating to three cans a day by adulthood. She quit in August after her gym trainer told her artificial sweeteners are unhealthy and make people fat even if they don’t have calories.

“I thought it was a win-win, but after learning about the chemicals, definitely not,” says Stepka, a parenting lifestyle blogger.

Coca-Cola Co. and rivals hoped zero-calorie recipes would lift the $75 billion U.S. soda industry after Americans began scaling back on full-calorie carbonated soft drinks in the late 1990s amid obesity concerns. For a while they helped: Diet soda’s share of consumption rose from 26 percent to 31 percent between 1990 and 2010, according to Beverage Marketing Corp., even as many consumers complained about the taste.

Now diet soda is the industry’s weightiest problem. Store sales of zero- and low-calorie soda plunged 6.8 percent in dollar terms in the 52 weeks through Nov. 23, while sales of regular sodas dropped 2.2 percent, according to Wells Fargo, citing Nielsen scanner data. As a category, diet soda has contracted more than regular soda for three straight years.

“We are seeing a fundamental shift in consumer habits and behaviors,” PepsiCo Inc. Chairman Indra Nooyi said recently.

PepsiCo gets about a quarter of its U.S. revenue from soda. Coke and Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. both derive more than half their U.S. sales from soda.

Read the whole story

Cost of skiing making it an exclusive sport

By Rob Lovitt, NBC News

Skiers and snowboarders searching for “the steep and deep”

this winter may find that the concept has taken on a much less appealing connotation: The price of the sport is getting so steep that some believe it may be becoming the exclusive domain of those whose pockets are exceedingly deep.



Those with the means can ski in and out at the Ritz-Carlton Bachelor Gulch at Beaver Creek. Photo/LTN file

“You have the haves and the have mores,” said Douglas Quinby, principal analyst at PhoCusWright, which conducts market research on the travel industry. “When you factor in the airfare of the typical ski trip, the accommodations and the length of stay, you’re talking about a pretty significant penny.”

Coupled with lift tickets that can top $100 per day and clothing and equipment that can cost thousands, it’s not surprising that both the industry and its fans are concerned about the sports’ long-term viability for those of more modest means.

Skiing, of course, has never been considered an inexpensive activity, but the sport has seen a significant upward shift in visitor demographics in recent years.

Last year, 54 percent of skier visits, defined as one skier or snowboarder riding for one day, came from households earning more than $100,000, according to the National Ski Areas

Association. That’s up from 48 percent five years ago, a 12.5 percent increase.

In contrast, visits from households earning less than $100,000 during the same period slipped from 52 percent to 46 percent – an 11.5 percent decrease.

Read the whole story

LTCC offering 2 weeks of Spanish in Guatemala

Lake Tahoe Community College is offering students an opportunity to learn Spanish in Guatemala next summer.

The program is open to anyone who is at least 18. Participants do not have to be current LTCC students. All levels of Spanish language learners are welcome.

The two-week program starts July 27.

Students will receive six hours of Spanish language instruction every day through the PLFM Language School. The program also includes a home stay with a Guatemalan family. All host families live within walking distance of the PLFM school. Host families will provide room, board, and all meals except on Sundays.

As part of the program price, participants will also have the opportunity to take side trips.

The program price is $2,943 if registered by Jan. 17 with a $200 deposit.

To register for this program, go online. The group leader is “Barclay,” and the Group ID number is 85515.

For more information, contact Nancy Barclay at (530) 541.4660, ext. 204 or Barclay@ltcc.edu) or Sara Pierce at (530) 541.4660, ext. 255 or Pierce@ltcc.edu).

Food allergies require digging to find true source

By Erik Tormoen, Outside

To those on allergy-free diets: A larger number of popular, nutrient-dense foods may be available than you think. Just consider eating a part or variation of your allergenic cuisine.

Instead of abstaining entirely from eggs, for example, you may need only to shear away the egg whites—or whichever part of the egg makes you react allergically, according to a presentation by allergist Sami Bahna last month at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

Allergist Joyce C. Rabbat confirms, writing, “Certain proteins of a food are more allergenic (i.e., more likely to cause an allergic reaction) than other proteins of the same food.”

To determine which parts of a food are fine to eat and which parts will actually cause a reaction, allergists perform oral food challenges. These involve feeding a patient tiny amounts of the suspected allergenic food in increasing doses.

Read the whole story

Story time-pajama party at S. Tahoe library

Christie Rassuchine Higman and Robyn Lindner, two authors who grew up in Tahoe, will be reading from their newest book in their Crazy Club series, “The Crazy Club’s First Slumber Party”.

This story deals with overcoming homesickness through the help of friends.

Friends of the Library are putting on this free story time-pajama party at the South Lake Tahoe library on Dec. 21 at 1pm.

For more info, call (530) 573.3185.

Live at Lakeview concerts coming back in 2014

By Kathryn Reed

With Lakeview Commons still in its infancy, South Lake Tahoe officials are struggling to figure just what it should be.

While the agenda topic Tuesday at the council meeting was to recap the summer concert series run by Rob and CarolAnne Giustina of OnCourse Events, much of the talk was about what else the area at El Dorado Beach could offer.

Family nights, movies, alcohol-free events, different musical acts – all of these were suggestions. Instead of expanding what OnCourse does the council instead directed city staff to come up with events, perhaps with partners, that the city can call its own.



Live at Lakeview will be returning for a third summer in 2014. Photo/LTN file

One of the issues brought up by Lauren Thomaselli, city recreation manager, during her Dec. 10 presentation is that even though the city is a major sponsor of Live at Lakeview, it was not featured prominently in advertising and promotional material. Besides providing $2,500 in cash, the city waived $5,000 worth of staff hours and $3,250 in rental fees.

Top billing went to Coors and Heavenly Mountain Resort. To eliminate the beer sponsor it would cost the city an additional $12,000 per summer. To get rid of alcohol completely would require a $35,000 contribution, according to the staff report.

CarolAnne Giustina told the council the demographics of the audience changes throughout the course of the Thursday night Live at Lakeview concerts. It starts out with many who are older than 50, then families come and the later crowd is younger and tends to drink more.

People smoking pot was another issue that was raised. It was

agreed police officers will make a stronger presence early on and that perhaps fewer warnings and more citations will be issued.

It’s against the law in California to smoke marijuana in public even with a medical card. But one thing officers consider is whether the DA’s office will prosecute what amounts to a minor crime.

Next year parking will likely be problematic because the Harrison Avenue project will be under way. Everyone agreed better promotion of the free lot at the rec center is needed. Using a shuttle between the lot and Lakeview was also broached.

More than 1,000 people attended each of the 10 concerts. More than 300 came via bicycle, while a couple dozen were in some type of watercraft.

Despite some of the second-year hiccups, the council had high praise for the event and Giustina said she is willing to make necessary improvements.

OnCourse Events’ two-year contract runs through summer 2014. While the South Lake Tahoe company would like the first rights of refusal for 2015, that can’t happen because it was not in the original request for proposal.