4 hurt in Kingsbury Grade crash

Four people were seriously injured in a two-car accident Friday afternoon on Kingsbury Grade.

Nevada Highway Patrol did not have the names, ages or hometowns of any of the women.

Two women were taken to Renown Medical Center in Reno by CareFlight and two by ambulance. NHP Trooper Dan Lopez told *Lake Tahoe News* they all had serious injuries.

Firefighters had to extricate some of the women. Lopez said a Toyota with three women was headed west when it crossed the center line and struck a Subaru going in the other direction. The cause of the Nov. 1 2:08pm accident is under investigation.

The road was reopened to one-way traffic at 3:15pm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Pediatricians: Turn off electronic devices

By Andrea Petersen, Wall Street Journal

Parents should ban electronic media during mealtimes and after bedtime as part of a comprehensive “family media use plan,” according to new recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The influential new guidelines are being spurred by a growing recognition of kids' nearly round-the-clock media consumption, which includes everything from television to texting and social media.

"Excessive media use is associated with obesity, poor school performance, aggression and lack of sleep," said Marjorie Hogan, co-author of the new policy and a pediatrician.

Families should have a no-device rule during meals and after bedtime, the guidelines say. Parents should also set family rules covering the use of the Internet and social media and cellphones and texting, including, perhaps, which sites can be visited, who can be called and giving parental access to Facebook accounts. The policy also reiterated the AAP's existing recommendations: Kids should limit the amount of screen time for entertainment to less than two hours per day; children younger than 2 shouldn't have any TV or Internet exposure. Also, televisions and Internet-accessible devices should be kept out of kids' bedrooms.

Read the whole story

Time running out to get USFS firewood

Forest roads are closing soon and fuelwood permit sales end in November. The last day to purchase a fuelwood permit from the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is Nov. 22 and the last day to cut wood is Nov. 24.

Fuelwood permits cost $20 per cord, with a two-cord minimum purchase and a limit of 10 cords per household.

Some cutting areas may not be accessible by vehicle in areas where gates have closed. Permit holders should check whether road closures are in effect and should not go behind closed gates. More info is online.

No off-road travel is allowed and permit holders must comply with all permit conditions.

For more information, call the South Shore office at (530) 543.2694 or the North Shore office at (775) 831.0914.

Concussions and the classroom being studied

By Jan Hoffman, New York Times

Because of heightened awareness about the hazards of sports-related concussions, many states have implemented standards determining when an injured student may resume playing contact sports. But only a few states have begun to address how and when a student should resume classwork.

On Sunday the American Academy of Pediatrics issued recommendations for "return to learn" checklists to alert doctors, school administrators and parents to potential cognitive and academic challenges to students who have suffered concussions.

"They're student athletes, and we have to worry about the student part first," said Dr. Mark E. Halstead, the lead author of "Returning to Learning Following a Concussion," a clinical report in this week's Pediatrics.

For adolescents prone to risk-taking behaviors, concussions

are not just the nasty by-products of sports. Halstead, an assistant professor in pediatric sports medicine at Washington University, recently treated a 15-year-old girl whose concussion came not from a soccer match, but because “she was running backwards in a school hallway and cracked heads with someone.”

The academy emphasized that research about recovery protocols and cognitive function is scant: There is no established rest-until-recovered timeline. The new recommendations are based on expert opinions and guidelines developed by the Rocky Mountain Youth Sports Medicine Institute in Denver.

Doctors generally recommend that a student with a concussion rest initially, to give the brain time to heal. That may mean no texting, video games, computer use, reading or television. But there’s a big question mark about the timing and duration of “cognitive rest.” Experts have not identified at what point mental exertion impedes healing, when it actually helps, and when too much rest prolongs recovery. Although many doctors are concerned that a hasty return to a full school day could be harmful, this theory has not yet been confirmed by research.

Read the whole story

Oversight missing on Calif. plastic bag recycling

By Laura Olson, AP

SACRAMENTO — Seeking to reduce the number of plastic shopping bags cluttering California’s beaches and landfills, the state

Legislature in 2006 passed a law requiring grocery stores and other large retailers to give consumers an easy way of returning used bags.

Stores handing out plastic bags to customers were directed to collect used bags for recycling and make reusable bags available for purchase.

Seven years later, recycling bins continue to sit outside California stores. But the agency in charge of the recycling program can’t say how many bags are being recycled or whether the program has affected the demand, factors that could help state lawmakers in weighing proposals to ban the product.

Stores are required to submit annual reports detailing how many bags were bought by the store, how many were returned by consumers and which recyclers processed them.

A review by the Associated Press found data has not been analyzed since 2009, two years after the law took effect. Then, 3 percent of California’s plastic bags were being recycled, a 1 percentage point increase.

While totals of bags purchased and recycled during the last three years were made available after an AP request, Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery spokesman Mark Oldfield said those numbers have not been verified so the official recycling rate can be updated.

He said the program lacks resources to analyze recent reports. No fees are charged to bag manufacturers or retailers. While the law allows for fines if stores do not comply, no violations have been issued.

“Work on the program at this point consists of a few weeks of data entry by entry-level staffers when the reports come in during the spring,” Oldfield said.

Last year, lawmakers renewed the law through 2020. But in

doing so, they did not give the recycling department, known as CalRecycle, more authority or money to improve oversight.

At least four other states, including New York and Delaware, have enacted statewide recycling programs to prevent plastic waste. More than a dozen states this year considered fees or bans on the bags, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Former Democratic Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, who authored the California recycling legislation, said he hoped the program would help prevent the tangle of dirty bags in tree branches in his San Fernando Valley district. He initially sought a fee on bags, but the plastic industry urged him to first try recycling.

“My goal was to eliminate plastic bags from polluting the environment,” Levine said. “It’s now 2013 and recycling rates have only marginally improved. It’s absolutely pathetic.”

The state’s raw data from the last three years appears to show the weight of bags bought by retailers has decreased, while the weight of bags being recycled grew slightly.

Retailers reported purchasing 62.3 million pounds of bags in 2012, down from 107.4 million in 2008. They reported 4 million pounds of bags and 27 million pounds of mixed bags and plastic film were returned for recycling in 2012.

But those figures don’t reveal how many bags were recycled. A study by CSU Sacramento, which calculated previous recycling rates, showed the store-submitted totals for collected bags often included other materials. Without verifying the stores’ totals, it’s impossible to say how much was from bags, plastic film or general garbage.

Mark Murray, executive director of Californians Against Waste, said his group has not pushed CalRecycle to update recycling rates because he does not want to take resources from more

effective programs.

“I’m not sure having state bean-counters counting recycling that’s not happening is all that useful,” he said.

Murray credited the law with increasing recycling of commercial plastic film stores previously discarded, but said it has failed to significantly affect how many shopping bags are recycled. He faulted the plastics industry for not doing enough public outreach.

Plastics industry officials say they fulfilled their role by creating the bins, signs and other educational materials. They say grocers failed to aggressively promote the program, while the state grocers association argues education was the responsibility of manufacturers.

“It didn’t increase recycling the way we had hoped,” said Kevin Kelly, chief executive of Union City-based Emerald Packaging and among those involved in discussions on the original recycling legislation.

Grocers acknowledge they have changed their position on recycling and now support phasing out bags. California Grocers Association spokesman Dan Heylen said stores have been shifting away from plastic as California communities approved local bag bans.

More than 80 counties and cities in California have banned plastic bags, including South Lake Tahoe, where a ban starts in January.

Levine says he is disappointed the program – and what his former staffers affectionately refer to as “the Lloyd bins” – has not had a greater effect. He now supports a statewide bag ban.

“It’s never too late to increase awareness on recycling,” he said. “But at this point, I am skeptical of whether that will

ever be as effective as we'd like."

Sandra McElroy – 1958-2013

Sandra McElroy, longtime owner of Grass Roots Natural Foods in South Lake Tahoe, died Oct. 19. She was 54.

Born Nov. 11, 1958, to Jack and Carole Spraggins, she and her four sisters grew up in Houston. Gail, Becky, Sandra, Lenny and Kitten sang professionally as "The Spraggin Sisters" for many years in the Houston area. Sandra also did modeling and acting jobs during that time.



Sandra McElroy

In 1989 she moved to Lake Tahoe where she met Jon McElroy. They married in 1990.

Sandra and Jon worked together for almost 25 years running Grass Roots Natural Foods. Sandra always appreciated everyone who worked for her, and saw them more as friends than employees.

She loved hiking in the mountains, swimming in the lake and doing yoga on the beach. She loved to travel, especially anywhere tropical. She loved the hula and took many classes at

Lake Tahoe Community College.

Sandra loved to express her creative side. She was a talented artist, enjoying painting, drawing, photography, writing stories and screen plays, playing her drums and sewing.

She had a strong love for her family, and even with them miles apart, she never lost contact with any of them.

Sandra’s smile and cute dimples would light up any room she entered. She enjoyed life and tried to live it as fully as she could.

Words cannot express how much she will be missed by all who knew her.

GMO food label battle heating up

By Eric M. Johnson and Carey Gillam, Reuters

Major U.S. food and chemical companies are pouring millions of dollars into efforts to block approval of a ballot initiative in Washington state that would make it the first in the United States to require labeling of foods containing genetically modified crops.

Despite early strong support for the measure, a recent poll suggests sentiment against the measure, known as I-522, is growing amid an onslaught of corporate-financed advertising ahead of the Nov. 5 referendum. Voters will decide whether many common grocery items containing ingredients from genetically altered crops should be labeled as such.

Supporters say labeling foods made from genetically modified organisms (GMO) would provide information for consumers to make informed shopping choices. Food and chemical companies say the wording would suggest something is wrong with gene modified ingredients that the companies believe are safe.

Many foods are made with crops that have been genetically altered. Corn and soy, two top biotech crops, are key ingredients in processed foods from cereal to chips to cookies.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association, which represents more than 300 food and beverage companies, has put roughly $11 million into fighting the measure, or roughly half of the nearly $22 million raised by opponents of labeling, according to Washington Public Disclosure Commission figures as of Tuesday.

That far outstrips the roughly $6.8 million raised by supporters of the labeling initiative, according to the Commission.

“They are making this the most expensive race and are desperately adding last-minute money to try and buy this election,” said Liz Larter, spokeswoman for “Yes on 522” campaign, a reference to the ballot measure’s number.

State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat, said in a lawsuit filed Oct. 16 that the grocery group illegally collected and spent more than $7 million while shielding the identity of its contributors.

Read the whole story

Hockey team creating a buzz in South Tahoe



This is the inaugural season for Lake Tahoe Blue in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

I know very little about hockey other than players wear ice skates and try to hit a little black puck into the net with sticks that resemble oversized golf clubs. However, after attending the Lake Tahoe Blue game against the Long Beach Bombers last weekend, I realized something else about hockey: you don’t have to know anything about it to enjoy watching it.

The fast-paced game had players and pucks flying from one end of the rink to the other at speeds far greater than one would see at a football or basketball game. Blue players were racing back and forth and showed no reservations about ending up on

the ice, slammed into the wall, at the bottom of a dog pile, or in an old-fashioned fistfight. The game was anything but boring.

Based on the South Shore, this is the Blue's first season in Lake Tahoe. Part of the Western States Hockey League, the Blue is a Junior A team. But don't let the term "junior" fool you. The players are all between the ages of 18 and 20. Most are hoping to earn college hockey scholarships or be scouted into higher level leagues, maybe even the NHL.



Lake Tahoe Blue captain Kyle Blondin looks on as a fight breaks out with the Long Beach Bombers last weekend.

This is not just a local or California league either. The WSHL is made up of 24 teams spread across the Western United States, and players come from all over the world to play. In fact, nearly half of the Blue, including the coach, are from outside the U.S. Several reign from Canada, others from Sweden, Hong Kong, Latvia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

All have moved to South Lake to live, for now anyway, and play hockey.

Head coach Zoran Bendicak is originally from the former Czechoslovakia. He moved to the U.S. in 2000 to play in the International Hockey League and has been coaching players of all ages for more than a decade. He fell in love with Tahoe

many years ago on a vacation to Squaw Valley and calls the opportunity to live and coach hockey here “a dream come true.”

“I was waiting 10 years for this,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Bendicak’s dream finally came to fruition when Van Oleson, one of the founders of Tahoe Sports Entertainment which runs the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena, contacted Chris Collins, general manager of the Bay Area Seals Junior A hockey team, and Greg Jamison, former president and CEO of the San Jose Sharks. Together, the three worked out a plan to move the Seals to Lake Tahoe. In August the plan was finalized, and the Bay Area Seals became Lake Tahoe Blue.

Collins explained that the Seals’ rink closed in the Bay Area. The Seals had only been there for one season, and after watching the success of other small-town teams, Collins wanted to take his team somewhere smaller where they could really become an integral part of the community. When he was contacted by Oleson, everything fell into place.

“We want to represent South Lake Tahoe to the best of our ability, and it would be great to become part of the fabric of the community,” Jamison said.

Jamison and Bendicak are hoping the Blue will inspire more kids from the area to get involved in hockey, and they see it happening already. All of the Blue players spend time working with the children’s teams, and Bendicak has 10-year-olds asking him if he thinks they can make the team someday.

“Little kids really look up to them; it’s really nice,” he said.



Lake Tahoe Blue goalie Olivier Gervais has played this position since he was 10.

One of those players helping to inspire the younger generation and hoping to “create a community” for hockey in Lake Tahoe is starting goalie Olivier Gervais. Out with a fractured thumb for the first part of the season, Saturday’s bout against the Bombers was his first game back.

It is not hard to see why younger players look up to Gervais. Originally from Montreal, Gervais admits he likes to be different. On the ice, he sports a helmet he painted himself with images of Chewbacca, the Road Runner and Scooby Doo. The pink ribbon painted on the back is in honor of his grandmother who had breast cancer. He is also currently sporting a blond mohawk in support of breast cancer awareness month. He said he was going to shave his head, but thought it might be more interesting if he shaved both sides of it.

Gervais has been a goalie since he was 10 years old and jokingly says it’s because he doesn’t know how to skate.

“It’s a tough job, but it’s the best,” he said in a French-Canadian accent.

Lake Tahoe Blue does have one local player, Evan Brown who is a South Tahoe High grad, and a few from elsewhere in California, including Mark De Vaughn from Sacramento.

De Vaughn played in New York last season, but says he is glad

to be closer to home this year. Even though he has only been playing with his Blue teammates for a couple of months, De Vaughn said they're like family to him.

"I'm really glad that I'm on this team with this group of guys because I wouldn't want any other family to play with," he said.

At 20, this is De Vaughn's last year in the league, and he is focusing on getting a spot on a college team next year. Gervais, on the other hand, said he would like to go to college, but is hoping to earn a spot on a professional team, perhaps in Europe.

Regardless of where they end up next year, from the coaches to the owners to the players, they all have one goal in common: to take Lake Tahoe Blue to this year's national championships.

"The only way to achieve excellence is by reaching for greatness," Collins said.

While the championship game is still months away, Saturday's 7-5 win over Long Beach was a step in the right direction.

The Blue will play three more home games this weekend against the Southern Oregon Spartans. They have 12 home games left during this season which goes through March. Tickets are $5 for children, $10 for adults, and season passes are also available.

Letter: Fear and hatred are destroying the U.S.

To the community,

Fear and hate defines the political age we live in; an age of attempts to manipulate the mass of citizens to fear and hate the target of the manipulators by any means necessary. Distortions, lies, whatever works.



Bill Crawford

An example is the campaign to disarm the president of the United States. For openers, he isn't a citizen. Though disproven time and time again, the birthers keep that iron in the fire. Regardless of the merits or lack of merits, the president supports a national health program. Therefore, he is a socialist. Those who make the charge never bother to define the word socialist. But everyone knows it's bad. And he's not a Christian. He's a Moslem. Has to be because his father was a black man from East Africa. So now the haters impose a religious test to hold public office. And the president is black (half). And for some citizens black men are feared. Therefore hated.

So with the above hit list some Americans are willing to bring down the federal government because the government is corrupted by the twice elected president who in the eyes of many is opposite of what America stands for. Home of the free and the brave have been lost, so they say. Texas is American

and Washington, D.C., is a foreign place, un-American full of strange hateful thoughts and ideas about civil liberties, voter rights, and social legislation to bring abut basic equality for all citizens. The manipulators are bent on destroying the Four Freedoms, the New Deal, anything that messes with their desire to have power.

We should be careful about what we wish for. For example, Nazi Germany. Many Germans "were drawn to one of the most poisonous myths to take root in defeated Germany, the so-called stab-in-the-back conspiracy. According to this myth, Germany hadn't lost the war on the battlefield, but rather had been betrayed form within. Chief among these internal traitors were Germany's liberal political parties…." (This is from Scott Anderson's "Lawrence in Arabia".)

From the destruction of the Weimar Republic came Hitler and the goosestep and World War II. Time flies, sometimes backward.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Local self-published author to give talk in S. Tahoe

John Hindmarsh, South Shore author and self-publisher, will share his latest books "Mark One" (a thriller) and "Shen Ark: Departure" (a science fiction novel) on Nov. 13 at 6pm.

Hindmarsh will also discuss the challenges of and how to self-publishing.

This Friends of the Library event is free and open to all. It

will be at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For more info, call (530) 573.3185.