Signal changes in Placerville help Hwy. 50 flow

Caltrans recently retimed the signal lights on Highway 50 in Placerville to help traffic flow in both directions.

On weekends until the Christmas close of apple season, signal lights at Canal Street, Spring Street and Bedford Avenue will be timed to maximize Highway 50 traffic flows. Based on computer modeling, Caltrans has programmed a combination of preset signal cycles to smooth actual traffic volumes at various times of the day. Signals that normally permit 120 seconds of highway traffic will be extended up to 180 seconds and optimized to assist flow between intersections.

These new “Apple Hill” plans were first used over the Labor Day weekend, some adjustments were made, and now the plans are in effect and running through the end of the Apple Hill season.

The new signal timing may also be used on other high-traffic holiday weekends and parts of ski season. Traditional signal timing will remain during weekdays.

Although motorists crossing north or south through the Highway 50 intersections will have a longer wait, the project will minimize the gridlock that can prevent north-south traffic from crossing the highway.

Calif. changing rules for

toxics in consumer products

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Hundreds of items found on supermarket shelves, such as shampoos, cleaning supplies, cosmetics and food packaging, could get chemical makeovers under new rules being put in force by California.

On Thursday, state toxic chemical regulators unveiled what they say is the nation's most comprehensive program for identifying and reformulating common consumer products containing hazardous chemicals.

In the past, the state took a piecemeal approach. Lawmakers would ban specific chemicals from particular products, such as bisphenol A in baby bottles and sippy cups.

That's being replaced by a more systematic approach. Under the new rules, which go into effect Oct. 1, the state will identify classes of products for review, such as nail polish. Manufacturers will then have to perform detailed analyses to justify whether hazardous chemicals are needed or whether substitutes are available.

Read the whole story

Kahle looking for youth basketball players

Registration is open for the upcoming girls' and youth basketball leagues at Kahle Community Center.

The girl's division are: grades 3-5 and 6-8t. The girls play 3-on-3 on a small court and the cost is $85. The younger girls play on Tuesday nights while the older girl's play on Wednesdays and some Mondays.

There are several youth leagues offered. The 3-4 grade division plays on Tuesday nights on a small court and the cost is $70. The 5-6 grade division and 7-8 grade division plays on a full court with the 5-6 grade playing on Thursday nights and the 7-8 grades on Wednesday nights and maybe some Mondays. The cost for these divisions is $80.

All games are played at Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

For more information or to register, call (775) 586.7271.

S. Tahoe man going to prison in DUI fatal

By Kathryn Reed

A South Lake Tahoe man was convicted this week on several charges involving the death of another resident.

An El Dorado County Superior Court jury on Oct. 1 found Larry L. Halverson, 61, guilty of gross negligence vehicle manslaughter while intoxicated, an enhancement of fleeing the scene, and felony hit and run. The jury was hung on the murder charge.

Patrick Purnell, 51, was killed Sept. 4, 2011, when he was crossing Ski Run Boulevard near Forest Avenue. A vehicle driven by Halverson struck him. He was driving despite having his license revoked for prior DUIs.

Sentencing is set for Nov. 1. The sentence for the vehicle manslaughter charge could be 15 years to life.

Deputy District Attorney Bill Clark told *Lake Tahoe News* the case went to trial because "I wouldn't offer anything that didn't have double-digit prison time." And Halverson, who was represented by a public defender, wanted less than 10 years.

Halverson has nine prior driving under the influence convictions, of which eight were talked about before the jury in Judge Steve Bailey's court.

"He had four priors in South Lake Tahoe before the one in Nevada and never once did anyone see he that he did not sign up for the treatment programs he was supposed to," Clark said. "Would it have changed his mind? Maybe, maybe not. We have to do a better job of monitoring high-risk DUIs."

Photo potentially altered to hurt STHS teacher

By Kathryn Reed

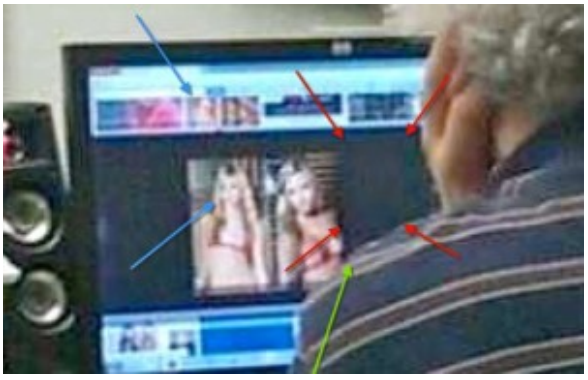
A photo showing a South Tahoe High School teacher looking at half naked women on a computer in his classroom has been circulating around the district and beyond.

"The teacher is on administrative leave pending an investigation. Since this is a personnel matter, we have no further comment," Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It is easy to look at the history of websites that have been viewed on a computer. It is not known if the district has done

so and what was found.

Lake Tahoe News had an independent photo attorney analyze the picture to help determine if it is real.



According to attorney Carolyn Wright, “The square indicated by the red arrows indicates someone blocked out what was there. The green shows the shoulder is not a clean line, indicating poor cloning. The blue arrows show the women’s faces are clearer but the photos on the top and bottom of the screen are extremely blurry.”



This is the original photograph sent to Lake Tahoe News.

“There are several indications that this photo has been altered,” attorney and professional photographer Carolyn Wright told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The photo shows teacher Paul Kushner looking at a questionable website. It’s a picture of the back of his head with him focused on a computer that has images of women in bras.

But the pixilation is not the same throughout the photo.

Plus, the whiteboard in the background and his clothing are in focus, while images on the computer are blurry. Cameras can’t make the middle part of photo blurry. They can make the foreground or background sharp or fuzzy – not the middle, as is the case with the photo in question. And cell phone cameras don’t have the capability to do anything but keep everything in focus.

Kushner has been teaching in Lake Tahoe Unified School District for decades and is the founder of the district’s choral program. He has a master’s degree in computer

education.

He was not available for comment. Jodi Dayberry, head of the local teacher's union, did not respond to an inquiry.

However, this is not the district's first foray down this path. In 2006, Meyers Elementary School teacher Karsten Gronwald was arrested on child pornography charges. In 2008, he was sentenced to eight years in prison.

If it turns out someone was out to slander Kushner, they could face criminal charges.

Gaines to run for state insurance commissioner

Ted Gaines, who represents most of the Lake Tahoe Basin in the California Senate, is running for state insurance commissioner in 2014.

Gaines believes under the current leadership, the California Department of Insurance has become a hostile bureaucracy that is driving companies out of the state.



Ted Gaines

"The insurance commissioner should work to protect consumers,

keep rates low, and make it easier for companies to hire and retain workers," Gaines, R-Rocklin, said in a press release. "When the insurance commissioner pushes insurers out of California just to score political points, the result is less competition and ultimately fewer choices and higher rates for all our citizens. More competition means more choices and better rates for consumers."

For nearly 30 years, Gaines has run a family insurance business, representing individuals and small business clients as an independent insurance agent.

Gaines represented Tahoe in the Assembly from 2006 until he had to resign to take the state Senate job.

The 1st Senate District encompasses parts of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento and Sierra counties. Gaines was elected in January 2011 in a special election to fill the seat of Dave Cox who died the previous July.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Teachers learn what to do if shooter is on campus

By Kim Segal, CNN

The sound of metal hitting the floor echoed through the hallways of the childless elementary school. It was an empty clip from a gun, fallen to the ground.

"That sound should be imprinted in your brain," Zach Hudson, co-founder of Defensive Tactics Solutions, told the educators

in the audience. “That is the sound of survival. That is the sound of opportunity.”

That, Hudson said, is the best time to attack a shooter if one enters the school or classroom.

On a recent Saturday in Lake Mary, Fla., Hudson and his partner, Mike Friedman, conducted a free active shooter self-defense workshop for teachers and school staff members.

Since the deadly school shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, last year, school security plans have included arming teachers, adding police officers and armed security guards, changing how schools are designed and adding bulletproof backpacks and whiteboards to schools.

In the new school year, some educators are taking it upon themselves to be prepared for the unthinkable.

Read the whole story

John Matus – 1913-2013

John Matus passed away on Sept. 24 at age 100.

At the time of his death John was residing at Carson Valley Senior Living Center in Gardnerville. We are very thankful for the loving care he received while living there for the last four years.



John Matus

John was born in Riverside on Aug. 27 either in 1913 or 1914. (Records are conflicting.) He is the son of Albert and Mary Grucella Matus.

The Matus family was a large Polish/Czech Catholic family and John was the sixth of 11 children who grew to adulthood. John completed high school in Riverside and then was recruited to UCLA on a baseball scholarship, but chose instead to accept an acting scholarship to the Pasadena Playhouse. There he discovered his passion for stage craft and began his career as a scenic artist and set designer in the movie, television and theater industry.

After Pasadena Playhouse, John assisted with classes in the theater department at UCLA and it was there that he met the love of his life, Elizabeth Johnston. They were married shortly after her graduation. During World War II, John was drafted into the Army and landed at Normandy on the second day after the invasion. He was captured and taken to a POW camp in East Germany. When the Russians liberated the camp over a year later, he and his fellow released prisoners made their way on foot to Odessa where they were picked up and sent back to the U.S.

When he returned to LA, he and Liz were intrigued with a growing television industry and moved to New York City to work in that field. Their first daughter Virginia was born in New York in 1947. They moved to Leonia, N.J., where they adopted a

son, Joseph in 1955, and their son, Michael was born in 1956.

John worked as the set designer on several TV shows, including “As the World Turns” until 1967 when he moved his family back to Los Angeles in order to be closer to family.

In Los Angeles, he and Liz worked both in movies and television. In the late 1970s, they began thinking about retirement and while on a visit to John’s sister and brother-in-law, Dorothy and Don Clark in South Lake Tahoe, they purchased a lot in Cave Rock Estates, on which they eventually built their retirement home. They retired full time to Lake Tahoe in 1978, where John was an active member of Our Lady of Tahoe parish. After Liz, his wife of 43 years, passed away suddenly in 1984, John began working with a local stained glass artist. He later designed the stained glass windows for Our Lady of Tahoe Church.

John is survived by his daughter, Virginia and her husband Norm Glenn; his sons Michael and Joseph Matus; his brother George Matus, and sister Margaret Clabough, brother-in-law Richard Johnston and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife Liz, his brother Joe and sisters Mary, Ann, Frances, Dorothy, Barbara and Helen.

The memorial service will be Oct. 21 at 10am at our Lady of Tahoe Catholic Church at 1 Elks Point Road, Zephyr Cove.

John will be interred alongside his wife Liz at Forrest Lawn in Hollywood Hills.

Arrangements are being made through Walton’s Mortuary in Gardnerville.

For more information, call Virginia Glenn at (530) 541.5938 or vmatglenn@aol.com.

Tahoe trying to find sustainable workforce

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Employers, educators and workforce providers spent nearly threes hours Wednesday trying to figure out how the Lake Tahoe Basin and Truckee can have a sustainable, year-round pool of workers that people want to hire.

Two of the main objectives of the meeting were to find out what the people in the room have to offer and what they need to better perform their jobs. Their needs, along with challenges they have and what they have to offer were recorded on large sheets of paper.



Kim Bateman, dean of Sierra College in Truckee, talks Oct. 2 about course offerings. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The diverse group gathered at the Parasol Foundation in Incline Village on Oct. 2. Representatives were from the four colleges in the region – Lake Tahoe Community College, Sierra

Nevada College, Western Nevada College and Sierra College in Truckee, along with Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe, California Conservation Corps, Harrah's Lake Tahoe, Sierra-at-Tahoe, El Dorado County, real estate, artists and others.

For more than a year the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative has been meeting to deal with a variety of issues. The workforce issue is the focus of the Economy-Education-Culture working group.

Inadequate public transportation, housing that isn't affordable and lack of communication between the sectors were major issues that were unearthed.

But as the human resources rep from the Ritz said, nothing he heard on Wednesday was new. And that concerned him – that nothing innovative came out of the meeting.

College personnel said they could do a better of job of getting the word out on what they offer.

Those helping workers find jobs said rules about crossing county and state lines make it difficult at times to place people.

Simple things that could come out of the session include developing a more robust internship program at the colleges with area businesses; and having businesses communicate with colleges what they would like from a graduate so perhaps courses could be developed to meet those needs.

The soft skills are what employers said they need more than workers with technical skills. They are able to train the person to do the job. What they can't do is teach them how to set an alarm, not call in sick on a powder day and the importance of proper hygiene.

The group not at the table was the actual workers. So it's not known if they are having a hard time figuring out the higher

education opportunities in the Lake Tahoe-Truckee area, or if they know about job placement services, or if they know what employers want. And without workers it is not known why people are looking to leave, why they never accepted the job here, or even why they stay to find out what might be working.

One placement person said she has been told people leave the area because of lack of leadership within organizations in the area.

A man who has a small engineering firm said even a six-figure salaried position is hard to fill because people want more than the area can offer. They want better schools, more opportunities for their children and more personal professional development.

But expecting to find what a metropolitan area has to offer in a rural location is not realistic. Any professional in Tahoe looking for training beyond the work site has to travel to find it. There are tradeoffs to living and working anywhere.

On the other end of the spectrum was the desire to work with seasonal businesses to find year-round work for their employees so they aren’t continually training new people.

And while the arts received substantive discussion time as a potential economic savior in the way of providing a destination for visitors, tapping colleges that already have recognized programs, and embracing the renowned artists who live in the basin, their numbers skewed the discussion so it was hard to know if that is truly a viable and desired direction for the basin to go in.

The attendees said they want to meet again to possibly drill deeper into some of the issues that were broached.

Bullock gives ‘Gravity’ its real star power



By Howie Nave

It’s a well known fact that in space nobody can hear you scream. In a movie theater, though, yes they can. I admit upfront that there were a few scenes where I didn’t scream, but an occasional gasp of anticipation? Definitely.

“Gravity” may not be the most accurate space movie I’ve seen (there were plenty of technical flaws) but it certainly keeps you riveted to the big screen. Much of that credit goes to the movie’s primary star, Sandra Bullock. She plays astronaut Ryan Stone, one of several crew members working on the Hubble telescope outside of the space shuttle (which of course is no longer in existence). Fellow (and senior) astronaut Matt Kowalski (played by George Clooney) is the only one not doing any work but instead jetting around the space shuttle showing off his maneuverability skills making wisecrack remarks to his fellow astronauts and to Mission Control back on Earth, which by the way makes for an impressive backdrop.

“Gravity” was written and directed by Alfonso Cuarón, (“Y Tu Mamá También” and “Children of Men”) and definitely the most challenging for him. The special effects in this movie were

pretty amazing and must be seen in 3D. I normally wouldn't say that, but given the dimension and depth of outer space it is a necessity and really adds to the movie going experience.

If you're claustrophobic and hyperventilate easily, you might want to bring your own portable oxygen container when seeing this. Without giving too much away (nothing that the trailer hasn't already), a catastrophic "accident" on the other side of the planet changes everything for the astronauts putting them in survival mode. Things move pretty quickly after that and you'll be blown away (pun intended) at how fast the movie moves because everything is virtually in real time.

Sandra Bullock once again is caught up in what could be subtitled "Speed 3" but this time she's orbiting thousands of miles above the planet Earth and moving just as fast so one missed calculation would mean no potential sequel. It's not too much of a stretch to say that Bullock's character is the female equivalent of the Tom Hanks' character in the movie, "Cast Away." And like that movie Bullock carries the entire movie being on-screen for pretty much every scene. Clooney's character is more like an extended cameo. Bullock really worked out for this movie and director Cuarón makes sure that we get to see just how buffed out she is in all its 3D splendor.

A movie with just special effects would get old fast, so it's up to Sandra Bullock to bring us on board with her character and to make us care for her and she does that easily with work being her only passion and reason for living. Later on we get to see a little of the philosophical side of her and makes you think about your own place in this life and if you should make some changes to maybe live it more fully.

When you see "Gravity" pay attention to the voice that is Mission Control. That's Ed Harris you hear who had similar duties in Ron Howard's "Apollo 13" (1995) and who played astronaut John Glenn in "The Right Stuff" (1983) so a nice

touch given his experience in outer space. Overall not a bad flick falling into the trifecta genre of sci-fi, drama and a thriller. That’s why I’m giving it 4 out of 5 bagels. “Gravity” clocks in at a brisk 90 minutes and is rated PG-13 for intense perilous sequences, some disturbing images and brief strong language.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.