Barton turns community clinic into health center

By Kathryn Reed

Walking in the front door it's like entering brand new doctors' offices. Gone is the cramped, dingy reception area. Beyond the waiting area are exam rooms that while sterile in a good way, are welcoming.

And gone is the name. Barton Community Clinic is now Barton Community Health Center.

"It's a better fit for what we provide," Barton spokeswoman Monica Sciuto said of the new name.



Barton Health Care Center on South Avenue in South Lake Tahoe near Barton Memorial Hospital. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It was in 1989 that doctors Paul Rork, Greg Bergner and Martin started the clinic. Barton took over in 1995. Martin is the only one still directly involved with the clinic.

For the past year the clinic-health center has been going through more than just a remodel. It is now a 7,379-square-foot facility. An additional 3,000-square-feet was added to

the existing structure. It went from 11 exam rooms to 18, which includes two procedure rooms.

The front door is on the opposite side of the building. The old front door is now the employee entrance. And what was the waiting room is a doctor's office.

The doors on the $1.4 million renovation were opened last month, with the official dedication planned for July 27.

Debbie McCarthy, outpatient clinical director, came on board three months ago to head the facility. She also runs Barton Family Medicine.

She didn't get to see what the old facility looked like, but she has heard plenty of stories.

Three hallways divide the care areas. The ob-gyn area is set off in its own area, with an entrance next to the main one. This is so if someone from the general population has chicken pox or something else contagious, the expectant mother will not come in contact with that person.



The reception is more professional then the old clinic.

The plan is to provide services from day one of pregnancy through post partum. Other services are being talked about – like nutrition, adding a social worker, teaching how to breast feed and how to use a car seat.

With the state projecting a 40 percent increase in Medi-Cal patients when the Health Care Reform Act takes effect Jan. 1, Barton Community Health Center knows its numbers will go up as well.

Barton is already doing outreach to let people know about the changes that are coming because of the federal medical reforms, but also plans to do more to reach the community that today is uninsured.

The facility primarily serves the uninsured on the South Shore, along with those on Medi-Cal, Medicare or who have limited insurance.

The center is averaging about 1,200 patients a month, with 1,113 coming in May, the last month numbers are available. Demand for services has been increasing since January 2009. The clinic has treated 1,600 patients in a month.

To help with demand the center is open on Saturdays. But for now, no staff has been added. There are five nurse practitioners, two physician assistants, four registered nurses, two medical assistants, four technician-receptionists, and six receptionists. That would change if the patient numbers spike 40 percent.

(Some jobs are being reclassified as the health center approach is implemented. More training is taking place as needed.)



Exam rooms are new or completely remodeled.

General practitioners come in, as well as specialists, plus there is a growing telemedicine component.

Going from clinic to health center, it’s less about giving a patient a pill and sending them home and more about education, prevention and follow-up consultations to cut down on repeat visits.

“It’s wellness focused, not illness focused,” McCarthy said. “As we get more people who will quality for insurance, we hope they will seek health care and focus more on prevention and a better quality of life.”

The medical home model is being looked at. It’s about whole care coordination. It’s about educating people about their disease, following up with them via telephone, and having an RN on call 24 hours to answer questions.

“Especially with chronic diseases you want quality of life,” McCarthy said.

While the center is operating as usual, a few things are still being ironed out. And it is clear the decorating is one of the last items to be addressed.

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Notes:

• Open house on July 27 from 9-11:30am, 2201 South Ave., South Lake Tahoe. There will be tours and free health screenings.

• Funding: Barton Foundation $137,441; Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary more than $1 million.

• Barton Health has information online about the Health Care Reform Act. People will be able enroll in the health care exchanges in California and Nevada in October.

Opinion: TRPA makes it easy to remodel a home

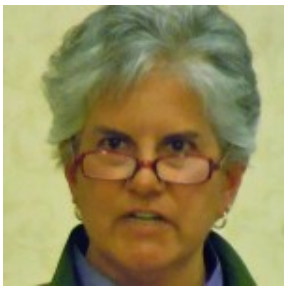
By Joanne Marchetta

Can I help save Lake Tahoe and also improve my home?

Now the answer is yes and here is how: Before the first nail is pounded, before the first coat of paint goes on, many simple home improvement projects have already started helping protect Lake Tahoe. That’s because water quality best management practices to minimize stormwater pollution and erosion are required with every significant remodel or house addition project.

Leading up to the 2012 Lake Tahoe Regional Plan update, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency heard loud and clear that simplified land coverage rules were needed to keep many of these lake-saving projects moving forward. We listened, and through hard-fought compromise, we’ve made a start at making

coverage rules more user-friendly. New land coverage exemptions are in effect that give a break to many homeowners who have installed their BMPs and could make a small addition to your Tahoe home possible.



Joanne Marchetta

Here are the basics. The water quality plan for Lake Tahoe is innovative because it is based on soil protection. What happens on the land affects Tahoe's water, so requiring a certain amount of open space on every parcel is a cornerstone of the water quality plan. The rest of the parcel can be covered with structures or pavement, called land coverage, as long as the soil on the property is considered non-sensitive. In the past, home improvement projects were blocked on some parcels because there was already too much coverage. Now, the new rules encourage small home improvements and additions by exempting certain permitted structures and surfaces from a parcel's land coverage limit with a BMP completion certificate.

Any property owner in the basin can protect Lake Tahoe and help restore its lost clarity by installing water quality BMPs. Science shows that 72 percent of the fine sediment entering Lake Tahoe is from stormwater runoff from our homes, roads and businesses. Most property owners choose to install and certify their BMPs only during a renovation project, so the more home improvement projects completed, the cleaner the lake gets. The new regulations will improve water quality by encouraging more small projects that include BMPs. This is

part of the incentive-based approach to environmental improvements TRPA is implementing in the new Regional Plan.

To help you understand what types of structures are exempt and how to find out if these exemptions can be used on your property, TPRA has put together a helpful information packet available at your local building department and online. In many cases, your local government planning department will be able to permit your exemption on TRPA's behalf because of agreements in place that streamline the permit process. Regardless of where you apply for your exemption, the primary starting point is your parcel's land capability and amount of existing coverage. If you haven't had either of these verified by TRPA, you will need to apply for a site assessment as soon as possible to help move your project forward.

For many property owners, a deck or room addition that couldn't be built before due to lack of coverage may now be possible. Since there are approximately 25,000 properties remaining in the Lake Tahoe Basin that do not have a BMP completion certificate, this could lead to many more homeowners doing their part to improve Lake Tahoe's clarity.

TRPA is moving forward to implement the updated Regional Plan. Land coverage exemptions for homeowners are only a part of it. The new rules also support other environmental benefits such as encouraging more bike trails by exempting them from land coverage mitigation requirements and encouraging restoration of sensitive stream environment zones. When implemented, the plan is projected to eliminate 10,000 vehicle miles traveled annually in the Tahoe basin.

So when you sit down to start planning that remodel or addition, take some time to find out about the new land coverage exemptions that may be available for your property and remember these new exemptions are part of what you can do to protect and restore Lake Tahoe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

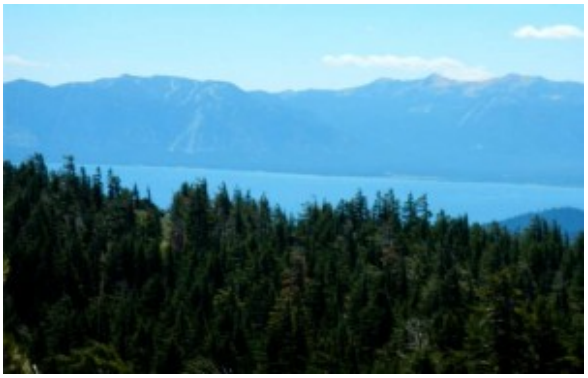
Air quality station at LTCC to aid students, TRPA

By Kathryn Reed

An air quality station that is going to be installed at Lake Tahoe Community College by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is also going to have an educational component to it.

The college board at its meeting last week heard a presentation by a member of the bi-state regulatory agency about the station that will monitor visibility, ozone and meteorological data. The board is expected to vote on the MOU at the Aug. 13 meeting.

The two entities are entering an agreement to place the device behind the physical education building near the South Tahoe Public Utility District pump house.



Hazy skies like these on July 14 in Lake Tahoe might be something the station at

LTCC would soon be able to monitor. Photo/LTN

“To provide mutual benefit with LTCC, we will provide the Science Department with a web–based display of the meteorological and particulate sampling from the equipment,” Jeff Cowen, TRPA spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The primary intent of the LTCC monitoring station is to gauge how the basin is doing in terms of regional and sub-regional visibility, which is a measure of particulate matter in the air from wood smoke and suspended soil.”

According to the July 9 LTCC staff report, “Graphic display of the monitoring data will include hourly, daily and historical air quality trends on a 32-inch LCD screen.”

TRPA used to have a monitoring station near Timber Cove in South Lake Tahoe. The agency has had a station at D.L. Bliss State Park since 1991, and also has facilities in Kings Beach, Tahoe City, Incline Village, Echo Summit and at its Stateline office.

Air quality is one of the thresholds in TRPA’s Compact.

The Tahoe Basin Regional Air Quality Monitory Program is a jointly managed by TRPA, California Air Resources Board, UC Davis, Desert Research Institute and the Environmental Protection Agency.

TRPA is responsible for paying for the installation of the station at the college as well as all operational and maintenance expenses. This includes installing power, telephone service and fencing.

Assistance available to pay utility bills

El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency has money through the federally-funded Home Energy Assistance Program to help income-eligible families pay their energy bills.

HEAP can help with electricity, wood, propane, pellets or heating oil. Renters whose utilities are not separate may qualify for help.

HEAP applications are available in South Lake Tahoe at 3368 Lake Tahoe Blvd., No. 202 or call (530) 573.3490, and in Placerville at 937 Spring St., (530) 621.6150.

Teens can learn to water ski or wakeboard

The STAR Teen Camp on Aug. 19-31 is Water Skiing & Wakeboarding.

Preregistration is required.

Campers will choose between water skiing and wakeboarding. This camp is taught by Lake Tahoe Water Skiing/Wakeboarding School.

Cost is $150.

For more info, contact Jen Menzel at jmenzel@cityofslt.us.

USFS working to create a stronger baseball bat

The U.S. Forest Service is intricately involved in the world of Major League Baseball.

The feds have been testing and analyzing thousands of shattered Major League bats, at the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) to develop changes in manufacturing. It has resulted in decreasing the rate of shattered maple bats by more than 50 percent since 2008. While the popularity of maple bats is greater today than ever before, the number of shattered bats continues to decline.

The joint Safety and Health Advisory Committee of Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association began working to address the frequency of bats breaking into multiple pieces five years ago. FPL wood experts looked at every broken Major League bat from July to September during the 2008 MLB season.

The research team found that inconsistency of wood quality, primarily the manufacturing detail “slope of grain,” for all species of wood used in Major League bat manufacture was the main cause of broken bats. Also, low-density maple bats were found to not only crack, but shatter into multiple pieces more often than ash bats or higher-density maple bats. Called multiple-piece failure, shattered bats can pose a danger on the field and in the stands.

Slope of grain refers to the straightness of the wood grain along the length of a bat. Straighter grain lengthwise means less likelihood for breakage.

With the help of TECO, a third-party wood inspection service, the FPL team established manufacturing changes that have proved remarkably successful over time. Limits to bat geometry dimensions, wood density restrictions, and wood drying recommendations have all contributed to the dramatic decrease in multiple-piece failures, even as maple's popularity is on the upswing.

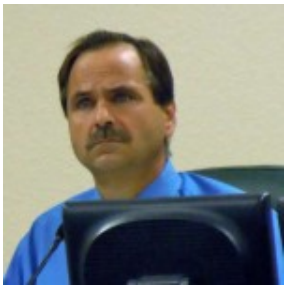
The Forest Service research team has been watching video and recording details of every bat breakage since 2009. The team will continue monitoring daily video and studying broken bats collected during two two-week periods this season, working to further reduce the use of low-density maple bats and the overall number of multiple-piece failures.

Agencies linked to Nutting want funds restored

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

In the 375-page El Dorado County grand jury transcript of The People v. Raymond James Nutting, a prosecutor took aim at two checks that an official from an obscure local resource district co-signed on behalf of another agency.

Deputy District Attorney James Clinchard asserted the state fire prevention grant checks paid to Nutting in 2009 were evidence the four-term county supervisor was guilty of a felony conflict of interest.



Ray Nutting

Yet now, following the release of the grand jury transcripts, two El Dorado County resource districts – and a former official who co-signed the checks to Nutting – wonder about the prosecution's assertions.

They question authorities' theory of political corruption that connects Nutting's grant income to his votes to fund two other local districts that handle conservation projects.

They contend the local resource districts have been unfairly tainted by the Nutting controversy and – as a consequence – have temporarily lost their county funding until the matter is sorted out.

"I want to assure you there is no collusion going on and no special favors," said Al Hubbard, who served until 2012 on the Georgetown Resource Conservation District, a local board that pays state and county money to contractors for fire safety, water and habitat projects. "I can promise you that."

Read the whole story

Saturday voting may be

possible for all Californians

By Annalise Mantz, Sacramento Bee

For California voters, finding time to cast ballots on a Tuesday could become a thing of the past.

A bill by state Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, would give them a chance to vote on a Saturday in the month before an election. Senate Bill 637 would require counties to have a polling place open for early voting for four hours on at least one Saturday in the 29 days before Election Day.

Twenty-five counties in California already allow voters to cast a ballot on a Saturday before Election Day, according to a survey conducted by the Los Angeles County registrar of voters in 2012. Nationwide, 32 states and the District of Columbia allow early voting in addition to mail voting.

Yee, who is running for secretary of state in 2014, said local elections with low turnout rates, such as the 23 percent of voters who cast ballots in June’s Los Angeles mayoral race, show voting needs to be more accessible. He blamed low participation rates on the stresses and time commitments of a hectic lifestyle.

Read the whole story

California milk war heating up

By Michael B. Marois, Bloomberg

Ray Souza’s voice cracks a bit when he says it, when he tells how his family’s Turlock dairy farm is struggling to pay the bills.

“We go from black to red month by month,” the 66-year-old said. “For us, it’s break even at best.”

Souza is like many other dairy farmers in the state who say the price they’re paid for milk from cheese producers isn’t enough to cover the soaring cost of feeding cows. Those economics have caused a fifth of California’s dairies to shutter since 2007, according to state agricultural figures.

California is the largest milk-producing state in the U.S., accounting for 20 percent of the national supply. Cheesemakers buy about 43 percent of all the milk produced in California at prices set under the state’s unique pricing system rather than by federal formulas.

The dairy industry has petitioned the state to raise the prices cheesemakers must pay to buy California milk and have sought legislation to change a pricing system that dates to the 1930s. The producers say raising prices will harm them, the very people the dairy farmers need to buy their milk.

“There needs to be a balance between producer prices and what the market can bear in terms of the product we manufacture and the market for those products,” said Rachel Kaldor, executive director of the Sacramento-based Dairy Institute of California, which represents processors. “In order for us to be able to stay in business, we need to be able to buy milk at a price that allows us to do that.”

Under California’s system, the state Food and Agriculture Department sets the minimum price for five classes of milk. The most expensive is fluid milk found at the dinner table. The cheapest is cheese. The system was set up in part to encourage more cheesemakers to open plants in California.

Farmers say the state system pays less than federal prices for milk used to make cheese and for whey, a dairy byproduct. California's system worked for dairy farms a half-century ago, when 60 percent of milk sold was fluid. Now, almost 80 percent is sold for products such as butter, dry milk, powders and cheese, the least profitable of the classes.

The system has left cheesemakers paying less for milk they buy from California than elsewhere. California farmers in March were paid 19 cents per gallon less for milk sold to cheesemakers than those in Washington, Oregon, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Texas and Arizona, according to state and federal figures.

With the bulk of their product sold at the cheapest prices, hundreds of dairy farms were unable to stay in business as livestock feed costs rose. Corn prices, for example, reached a record $8.49 a bushel on Aug. 10 after last year's drought, the worst since the 1930s, lowered U.S. output by 13 percent.

Frantic to boost income, farmers have been flooding the market with as much milk as they can, causing prices to decline even more.

"The last-man-standing syndrome comes into play," said Sybrand Vander Dussen, president of the Ontario, California-based Milk Producers Council, which represents the state's family-owned dairy farms. "You are trying to last longer than your neighbor."

The farmers have been pressing California Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross to add as much as a $1.20 subsidy per 100 pounds to the price of milk used for cheese. The price reached $15.91 in June.

Ross has said she doesn't believe the problems facing the dairy industry in California can be fixed simply by increasing the minimum price. Last month, she again rejected their petition and opted to add a temporary surcharge of 12.5 cents

per 100 pounds on average for all five classes for six months.

“California dairies and processors must operate within national and international markets that require the manufacture of milk products to be competitive with those produced elsewhere in terms of variety, price and quality,” Ross said in a letter announcing her decision June 21.

She also acknowledged that the program needs to change.

“Our system of regulated milk pricing is an antiquated one that impairs the ability of the dairy industry to rise to this challenge,” she said.

The dairy farmers pressed Assemblyman Richard Pan, a Democrat, to introduce a bill that would require the state’s milk-pricing system to more closely match how the federal program works. Pan’s bill was blocked by opposition from the cheese industry.

Nevertheless, Pan helped negotiate a short-term fix that has the cheese processors paying $110 million into a milk pool to be shared by dairy farmers while a task force devises a permanent fix.

“We needed to get immediate relief for California dairy farmers,” Pan said in an interview. “This is a good first step.”

Souza, the Central Valley farmer, said that in the last year he’s seen three of his neighboring farms go out of business. He watched one day as cattle trucks rumbled up to one of those farms and repossessed the owner’s Jersey cows.

“She was sitting off to the side and crying,” Souza said of the owner. “There is so much emotion right now in the industry. These are folks who have worked their entire life in dairy, sometimes multiple generations, and suddenly they don’t have a farm anymore.”

Odds favor previous Tahoe celeb golf winners

By Kathryn Reed

If the sportsbooks are right, there is going to be a repeat winner at this week's American Century Championship golf tournament.

Dan Quinn, who has the won the tournament five times – including last year, is favored this year with the odds at 7:2. Seven-time winner Rick Rhoden is behind him with 4:1 odds. Three-time winner Billy Jo Tolliver has odds of 9:2 and two-time winner Jack Wagoner has 6:1 odds to win.

Sneaking in at fourth favored, though, is John Smoltz. He has yet to take home the trophy or $600,000 purse.

While there isn't big action on the annual celebrity golf tournament, it can add another element of excitement to the event.



Odds makers say Dan Quinn. right, is favored to win the ACC tournament at Edgewood Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

“A lot of celebrities will go in and bet,” John Packer, spokesman for Harveys-Harrah’s told *Lake Tahoe News*. And many are betting on themselves. Some joke about thinking the odds are not what they would have set for themselves.

“There are probably seven to 10 who could walk away with it any given year,” Packer said, which means special attention has to be paid to how the algorithms are used to configure the odds.

Those who follow the Lake Tahoe tournament that is now in its 24th year won’t be surprised to learn Charles Barkley is the least likely man to win. But at 500:1 odds, he is not alone. Trent Green, Jay Demarcus and Kevin Nealon have the same odds.

Packer says some people have joked that Barkley should be closer to 1 million to 1 odds to win.

But sometimes a rather long shot wins. Mario Lemieux was at 40:1 to win. He paid off big for some people in 1998 when he took home the title.

Phil Weidinger, who handles the public relations and a lot more for this tournament, put down $100 on Lemieux that year. He was watching from the pressroom as Lemieux was coming down the 18th green. That putt he sank put $4,000 in Weidinger’s pocket.

Weidinger isn’t revealing who he has money on this year.

Besides the straightforward bets, there is also one prop bet.

Quinn caddies for pro Ernie Els on occasion. While Quinn is in Tahoe, Els will be at the British Open. The odds they will both win July 21 are 85-1, while the odds that they will not are 1:105. The latter bet means for every $105 spent, the bettor could win $1.

The two won the respective tournaments in the same year in 2012 and 2002.

Like all betting odds, the numbers are subject to change before play begins.

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Notes:

• NBC will televise the 54-hole tournament live July 19-21. The sportsbook at Harveys will be airing it on multiple televisions.

• Wednesday is a practice round.

• Thursday is a celeb-am tournament.

• Tournament tickets (Fri-Sun) are $25; the other days are $15. Discount tickets available at Raley’s.

• More than 40,000 attended last year – which was a record.

• The tournament is played at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

• For more info, go online.