Environmental-science docents needed on N. Shore

Do you love Lake Tahoe and have an interest in learning more about the lake? Do you enjoy science, learning new information, and sharing your knowledge?

Residents who would like to help people learn about the region's environmental assets and challenges are needed to serve as volunteer docents at the Tahoe Science Center (also known as the Thomas J. Long Foundation Education Center) and the UC Davis Eriksson Education Center. The former is located in Incline Village and the latter in Tahoe City.

Visitors to the centers include school groups from the greater Lake Tahoe-Truckee region as well as local residents and visitors to the basin.

The training courses and a copy of the UC Davis Docent Training Manual will provide new docents all the information they will need to discuss the scientific research at Lake Tahoe, local environmental issues, and natural history of the region. No prior experience is necessary, and all are welcome.

The first two docent training classes will be held June 7 (2–5pm) and June 8 (9am–noon) at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, on the Sierra Nevada College campus in Incline Village. The third training will take place July 9, starting with a boat ride aboard the UC Davis Research Vessel John LeConte and finishing at the UC Davis Tahoe City Field Station. Space aboard the boat is limited and will be available on a first-come basis. Attendance at all three training sessions is strongly recommended.

To RSVP for the training, contact docent program manager Alison Toy at (775) 881.7566 or email antoy@ucdavis.edu.

Voluntary boat inspections resume in Truckee area

For a fourth season, watercraft inspections and boater education on aquatic invasive species will take place at Donner Lake and Boca, Prosser, and Stampede reservoirs from late May through early September.

Inspections are voluntary, but highly recommended to help boaters avoid spreading aquatic invasive plant and animal species, which could threaten the ecological and economical integrity of the Truckee-Tahoe area.

Started in 2009, the Truckee Regional AIS Prevention Program works to provide community education on AIS and implements boat inspections, which are the front line to prevent the introduction of AIS, as boats and other motorized watercraft are the highest-risk vectors for spreading AIS into new water bodies.

Decontaminations will be available for a fee for high risk vessels launching at Truckee area water bodies. Decontaminations will take place at Alpine Meadows, off Highway 89, and Northstar, off Highway 267.

El Dorado officials offer tips to avoid plague

Due to increased plague activity in the Lake Tahoe Basin last fall, El Dorado County health officials advise caution this summer.

The California Department of Public Health routinely monitors rodent populations for plague activity in California. Last September and October, a surveillance effort identified three chipmunks as positive for plague in the South Lake Tahoe area; two were found near the U.S. Forest Service Taylor Creek Visitor Center and one was near the Tallac Historic Site. There were no reports of illness to people.

Signs will continue to be posted throughout this year to help advise the public.

According to El Dorado County Public Health Officer Alicia Paris-Pombo, “Plague is naturally present in many parts of California, including higher elevation (mountainous areas) of El Dorado County, so we all need to be cautious around animals that can carry it.”

Plague is an infectious bacterial disease that is spread by squirrels, chipmunks and other wild rodents and their fleas. People can become infected through close contact with infected animals or the bite of an infected flea. Plague can be prevented by avoiding contact with these rodents and their fleas, and by keeping pets away from rodents and their burrows.

Tips to prevent plague include the following:

• Do not feed squirrels, chipmunks or other wild rodents.

• Never touch sick, injured or dead rodents.

• Do not camp, sleep or rest near animal burrows.

• Look for and heed posted warning signs.

• Leave pets home if possible; otherwise keep pets confined or on a leash. Do not allow pets to approach sick or dead rodents or explore rodent burrows. Protect pets with flea control products.

• Cats can pose a higher risk of plague transmission to humans when they have contact with infected rodents. Keep cats away from rodents. Consult a veterinarian if your cat becomes sick after having been in contact with rodents.

• Wear long pants tucked into boot tops to reduce exposure to fleas, and apply insect repellent containing DEET on socks and trouser cuffs.

To report a sick or dead rodent or for questions about plague, contact El Dorado County Environmental Management at (530) 573.3450.

TRPA building allocation policy confounds board

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – It was obvious during a lengthy and at times heated discussion Wednesday that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board does not fully understand the building allocation policy. And they are the policymakers.

After last month's meeting where staff enlightened the board about how 86 of a possible 130 allocations would be doled out,

there was a bit of an outcry by local jurisdictions and contractors.

What was introduced at the May 22 meeting was a plan to distribute the remaining 44 allocations. Seventy-five percent will be given to South Lake Tahoe and the four counties at the lake (Douglas, Placer, Washoe and El Dorado) where building takes place. (Carson is also in the basin, but it's all forest.) The remaining 25 percent, or 11 allocations, will be used for sensitive lot retirement and development right transfer programs that TRPA staff will be in charge of.

While this scenario was created in a month, associate planner Patrick Dobbs and other staff members told the board there isn't enough time to alter plans for 2014 because there are more pressing matters to be dealt with. He didn't say what those are.

At one point board member Steve Robinson said, "It's complex. We are asking the public to jump through hoops when we don't understand it. If we have to throw it out and start over, then do so."

Member Nancy McDermid said, "This decreases the ability of local jurisdictions and their residents to have options."

Elizabeth Carmel, who was at her first board meeting, thought the 25 percent figure could be increased because those allocations would better serve the environment.

The point of having allocations is to limit development in the basin. Before the updated Regional Plan was passed last year, 300 residences could be built each year. Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said it was in the 1980s that all 300 were last used.

In 1987, when the previous Regional Plan was adopted, 6,000 allocations were created for the more than 17,000 vacant parcels in the basin. The 2012 plan has 2,600 allocations

available for about 4,700 vacant parcels. This comes to the 130 a year. (Government agencies own more parcels today than in 1987.)

Part of the allocation decision process is that jurisdictions get a set number based on a formula that deals with how well they met TRPA mandated environment improvement goals.

Board member Hal Cole has a huge issue with this criterion because he believes it punishes residents who want to build a house on land they own, but are not able to get an allocation based on things that are beyond their control. Instead of a city being punished for not meeting its environmental goals, individuals are hurt based on the jurisdiction not receiving its full allotment of allocations. Cole keeps saying this is unfair and wants staff to change it.

While economics are now supposed to be a factor in decision-making by the board, the lone contractor who spoke Wednesday believes the board is thwarting economic growth. John Adamski said his math shows the reduction of allocations from 300 to 130 year will impact the Lake Tahoe Basin by millions of dollars.

Jennifer Merchant with Placer County told the board that local jurisdictions have been talking since the April meeting, with the consensus being that all potential allocations should be distributed. She also enlightened the board that staff already takes 10 percent of the allotted allocations for the same pool where the newly created 25 percent of the leftovers will go for sensitive lot transfers. Staff never mentioned this in their spiel.

Merchant said a sensitive lot has not been retired in exchange for an allocation since 2005, so she questions the need to build up that supply.

McDermid said if the 11 allocations are not used this year, then a new system needs to be created.

By the end, the board said the way staff wants to give out the remaining 44 is fine. The Advisory Planning Commission will look at what is proposed and then the Governing Board will vote on it in June.

The board said flexibility needs to be incorporated into future policies

After the meeting, TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen told *Lake Tahoe News*, "Too much development too fast slams the system and does not allow enough time for mitigation strategies like stormwater and transportation improvements to catch up and then keep up."

But it was said by board members that development on vacant lots is good for the environment because it means people are putting in erosion control measures instead of allowing all of those dirt lots to send sediment into Lake Tahoe. It's fine sediment that TRPA and others say is the biggest contributor to the decline of Lake Tahoe's clarity.

Internet – a tool for the good and bad guys

By Ted Long

This week's session was a two for one, with a combination of investigation and Internet safety. Both sessions were unique in that the presenters did not carry guns and in fact one said she had no shooting ability or interest.

The investigative session was in two parts. The first was a presentation of process of collecting and analyzing

information to find patterns and behavior and similarities of actions. For example, in a series of house break-ins, is there anything in the way the crime was done or in the timing or similarity of the areas? The investigator uses things like Google maps, Facebook and other social media to gather information. It's amazing what some people will say on the Internet and to compare data.

If you saw the recent "Master Piece Theater" on PBS where four former code busters from World War II England join together to collect information and to find patterns in behavior to capture the bad guy, you saw exactly what this department does.



Ted Long

The second aspect is gathering and presenting statistics to show crime patterns and trends. This information is published annually and is available on the sheriff's website. It is used by the sheriff to schedule patrols and enforcement behavior. If crime goes down, it helps him in re-election, if it is up, his opponent no doubt will use it. Realtors for example show low crime rates in the neighborhood they are trying to sell you a house. You can pinpoint your house and see the kinds of crimes that go on around you.

The second half of the evening was about the Internet; again in two parts. The first detective told us of the types of cases they handle. From computer fraud to sex cases that use the Internet – mostly kiddie porn. The capture of child pornographers seemed to be a major part of the job. The

detectives go online disguised as young girls and trap older men into setting up a meeting where they can be arrested. In other cases they are able to trace down addresses through Web addresses.

The police have many tools available that the public does not, and they have equipment to recover virtually everything from a computer or smart phone deleted or not. In addition to the police work, we were given advice on protecting ourselves from identity thieves and just good computer habits like password protection and the use of wireless connections. Did you know that a person can set up a station, capture your signal and use your address for illegal activity?

One of the scams that is difficult to believe actually works is the attempt of criminals to convince you that you won the Italian lottery when you have never even heard of it. You would be surprised about how many fall for it and send money, only to be ripped off. Any offer on the Internet to give you money, in any way should be ignored and reported. I personally have three checks on my wall from “secret shopper” schemes. They offer you at a great rate of pay to shop, send you a check for more then agreed and ask you to send them the difference. Of course their check bonuses and you are out. Beware. The sheriffs’ office has several booklets and other information to aid the public. Check the website or call them.

Ted Long is a South Lake Tahoe resident participating in the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Citizens Academy.

Opinion: Lawsuit threatens

public unions' rights

By Peter Scheer

Public employee unions face a new, and mortal, threat. It's not the unfunded liability of union pension plans or municipal governments' resort to bankruptcy to void union contracts. It's not state initiatives to restrict collective bargaining rights or other outpourings of voter resentment. No, the new existential threat facing government unions comes from . . . the First Amendment.

In a scarcely-noticed lawsuit filed earlier this month in federal district court in Los Angeles, a conservative nonprofit, the Center for Individual Rights, claims that California's system for collecting union dues from government employees abridges free speech safeguards by compelling employees to subsidize union political advocacy and activities with which they disagree.

On first look, the suit looks like a loser because the challenged union practices were upheld in a 20-year-old US Supreme Court decision, Abood v. Detroit Board of Education. Nonetheless, on second look, the suit has a very respectable chance of succeeding because of a 2012 Supreme Court decision, Knox v. SEIU, in which five justices said, in effect, that the Abood decision was a mistake. Also, the plaintiffs are represented by Jones Day, one of the biggest and best law firms in the country, which wouldn't have taken the case unless prepared to litigate all the way to the nation's highest court.

And if they prevail? Public employee unions, not just in California but across the country, would lose the bulk of their dues funding—and with it, the ability to wield decisive political influence in state and local governments everywhere. That is a big deal.

Non-management government employees in California, as in many states, are required to belong to a union, and pay union dues, whether they want to or not. However, employees can't be forced to pay for union political activities—as opposed to union representation on pay, benefits, job security and like issues—because of first amendment protections against "forced association" with political viewpoints. The question is: how, practically-speaking, to enforce this right?

The Supreme Court in Abood approved a system that requires employees, if they don't wish to pay for their union's political activities, to "opt out"—meaning, they must pay all dues first, then apply to receive a prorated refund later. The theory of the lawsuit filed Monday, Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, is that an opt out procedure is constitutionally defective because it compels employees to make a loan to the union for its political activities, and because even the unions' supposedly nonpolitical activities—such as opposition to charter schools or support for higher taxes to pay for pension benefits—are fraught with political and ideological choices that are objectionable to some employees.

The lawsuit contends that the first amendment requires an "opt in" procedure. While it may seem trivial, the difference between opt out (where the default is that the union has all your money and you have to ask for a portion to be refunded) and opt in (where the default is that the union has to persuade you to give money to support its political activities) is the difference between public employee unions that are rich and powerful and unions that are poor and politically neutered.

Last year in the Knox case, the Supreme Court decided, 5-4, that the first amendment requires California government unions to use an opt-in dues collection procedure for special dues assessments needed to finance political campaigns. Justice Allito, writing for five justices, went out of his way to

raise doubts about the Abood decision and, in effect, to invite a test case to overturn it. The Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association lawsuit is an RSVP to that invitation.

How will the unions respond? In 2012 California unions spent some $75 million to defeat a ballot initiative, Prop 32, that would have shifted California's default from opt out to opt in. Now, consider that a successful Supreme Court challenge would yield the same result, not only in California but across the nation, and that it would be immune from legislative repeal. Organized labor, once it figures out what is happening, will treat this litigation like the existential threat that it is.

Peter Sheer is executive director of the First Amendment Coalition.

Soroptimist honor South Shore students



Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe on May 22 gave out several scholarships to South Tahoe and Whittell high school students, and to Lake Tahoe Community College students.

In the photo back from left are: Deanne Balardino (LTCC), Chad Laurence (LTCC), Emily Barnett (STHS), Heather Dominguez (STHS), Tyler Myers (STHS), Brenda Yan (STHS), Amanda Harris (Whittell), Emily Harris (Whittel.), Anders Chaplin (Whittell); and front from left, Bailey David (STHS) and Joshua Johnson (STHS).

Receiving awards but not attendance are: Jack Coolbaugh, Cody Higgins and Thomas Smith (all STHS), and Eunice Romero and Christopher Sidell (LTCC).

Slight drop in travel expected over holiday weekend

AAA Travel projects 34.8 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home this Memorial Day weekend, a 0.9 percent decrease from the 35.1 million people who traveled last year.

The anticipated decline in holiday travel is predominately due to a decline in air travel of 8 percent, fee fatigue among travelers and a waffling economy.

Highlights from 2013 Memorial Day Travel Forecast include:

Eighty-nine percent of travelers (31.2 million) to travel by automobile, an increase from 31.1 million last year

Holiday air travel expected to decrease eight percent to 2.3 million from 2.5 million in 2012

Memorial Day holiday travel volume is expected to remain above the 12-year historical average of 34.7 million

Median spending is expected to decrease more than 6 percent to $659, compared to $702 in 2012 with transportation costs consuming about 28 cents of every travel dollar.

Travelers intend to journey an average of 690 miles which is higher than last year’s average of 642 miles.

A survey of intended travelers found that gasoline prices would have no impact on plans for 62 percent of travelers. Of the remaining 38 percent of travelers who said gas prices would impact their travel plans, 27 percent plan to economize in other areas. Eight percent are planning to take a shorter trip and 3 percent will travel by an alternate mode of transportation.

Sue Huff – 1954-2013

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Deborah Sue Huff died May 21. She was 59.

She was born April 4, 1954.

Sue and Curt Huff were married in their hometown of Benton Harbor, Mich., on Nov. 16, 1974. For their honeymoon they packed up their Chevy van and moved west to California.

They spent six years in Long Beach, where their two children were born, Dustin Huff (1975) and Jennifer Huff-Derks (1980).



Sue Huff

In fall 1980, they decided it was time for a new adventure and moved to South Lake Tahoe. The following year they experienced a true Tahoe winter. With obscene amounts of snowfall, the neighborhood banded together creating lasting friendships that eventually grew into their Tahoe family.

Sue worked for the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* for eight years. In that time more endearing friendships were made and their love for this community grew.

In 1988, Sue began to work for Lake Tahoe Community College. Sue worked at LTCC for 19 years before retiring in 2007. In that time she earned her associate of arts in Liberal Arts, a goal she worked hard for and was proud of achieving.

Sue was an avid outdoor enthusiast, spending summers exploring the Sierras, searching for hot springs and mountain lakes to camp by. Her love for singing songs with her kids as her husband played the guitar around the campfire has been carried on by her children.

When winter set in Sue enjoyed knitting while watching her family enjoy football or cross country skiing with friends.

In 2006, Sue was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. She did not let cancer slow her down. During the last seven years Sue has witnessed her daughter, Jennifer, marry Todd Derks in 2008 and her son, Dustin, marry to Hillary Wilson in 2009. She was the first to hold her three

beautiful grandchildren, Attigen Wilson Huff (2010), Paxson Hill Derks (2012) and Anaya Sue Huff (2012).

Sue's love of travel took her to Alaska, Hawaii, Bahamas, Nicaragua and all over the United States.

Sue will forever be missed by all those who knew her. Her beautiful smile would light up a room. Sue leaves a strong legacy of love behind with her husband, children and grandchildren.

Please join us in a celebration of life on May 26 at 2pm at Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers to honor an amazing woman, mother, and wife.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in Sue Huff's name to: Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation (MARF) or the I.A.T Cancer Clinic West, Atlantic Blvd., Freeport, Grand Bahamas.

Home brewing tests some legal boundaries

By Melissa Maynard, Stateline.org

WASHINGTON – Americans have been brewing beer in their homes since colonial times – both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were home brewers. Even so, a recent explosion of interest in the hobby has created tricky questions for state alcohol regulators.

As of July 1, home brewing will be legal in all 50 states. But many states still prohibit home brewers from transporting their beer to club meetings or competitions. Some states also

limit the amount a home brewer can produce in a year.

The remaining restrictions rankle home brewers, who say swapping samples and competing with other brewers is what their culture is all about.

“You could just drink your home brew at home, but you’d be missing out on a large part of the community,” said James Spencer, who hosts a popular podcast about home brewing.

Some states have been lax in enforcing such rules, but the hobby’s popularity and the growth of home brew supply stores is making it harder to justify a hands-off approach. About a million Americans brew their own beer at least once a year, according to the American Homebrewers Association. The group now has 37,000 members, up from 8,700 in 2005.

The tension has sparked legislative fights in several states. In 2010, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission shut down an annual home brew competition at the Oregon State Fair that had been held for 22 years. In response, the Oregon Legislature scrapped state restrictions on where home brew can be made and consumed, and legalized fees and prizes at home brew competitions. Oregon home brewers also can engage in small-scale professional brewing at pubs.

Other states have taken similar action. Wisconsin lifted many of its restrictions in 2012, after the Schooner Home Brew Competition was spirited to a nearby city to appease uneasy city officials. And this year, Georgia and Iowa approved laws allowing home brewers to take their beer out of their homes. State lawmakers in Illinois and Missouri also are considering measures that would allow home brewers to participate in public festivals and competitions.

But the American Homebrewers Association advises its members to proceed cautiously in state capitols. “If it is technically not legal to share home brew at a club meeting in your state, but there has not been any enforcement of that law, it may not

be worth exposure of home brew club activities, when changing the law is not guaranteed and could end up taking years," it says.

In some states, home brewing restrictions have deep cultural roots. The last two states to legalize home brewing were Alabama, which legalized it on May 9, and Mississippi, where it will be legal starting July 1. The legislation wasn't an easy sell in either state – in part because both still have dry counties and memories of moonshine.

"We've been working on this for five years," said Craig Hendry, president of Raise Your Pints, which led the campaign in Mississippi. "One year it was an election year, so of course they're not going to touch alcohol legislation then."

Alabama's debate was filled with filibusters and heated debate about the morality of allowing people to make their own beer.

"We're just completely opening up the whole state to alcohol – every family, every home, every block," Republican Rep. Arthur Payne said during a lengthy debate on the House floor. "I represent a district that has a strong family unit, and we don't want to flood our neighborhoods with alcohol."

Alabama's anti-home brewing attitude was clear last fall when agents of the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board visited Hop City, a craft beer and home brew supplier in Birmingham.

"They came in and raided us and said that we can't do any home brewing business," said Spencer Overton, a former commercial brewer who was hired to be the store's home brew manager. According to Overton, the agents threatened felony charges and confiscated $7,000 worth of merchandise. "They took some books about home brewing, which was very 'Fahrenheit 451' of them," Overton said, referring to the futuristic Ray Bradbury novel in which firefighters torch homes containing books.

Since home brewing was legalized, Hop City has stocked up on

home brew supplies and Overton will be teaching home brew classes.

State Sen. Bill Holtzclaw said he pushed for the Alabama bill because many of his constituents are NASA scientists who were risking felony convictions – and their top-secret security clearances – by brewing at home.

“It was easy for me to get behind this as an individual rights issue, and as an economic development opportunity,” said Holtzclaw, a Republican.

He noted that many craft brewers started out brewing at home. “Rather than see it as threat, (craft brewers) see it as a way for folks who are really serious to leave the hobby realm and move over to the professional realm,” he said.

During some of the state debates, local beer distributors have cautioned against allowing home brewers to act too much like commercial brewers without paying for licenses.

But most home brewers say they are determined to keep their craft distinct from the brewing business, even though the required equipment and ingredients are expensive. “The spirit of home is not to make it to sell,” said Spencer, the podcast host. “The spirit of home brewing is to make it to share.”

Sometimes this involves walking a difficult line. At a recent home brew competition in Washington, D.C., sponsored by craft brewer Samuel Adams, participating home brewers were required to cover their own costs, and all proceeds of the sold-out event were donated to charity. “The beer is free, and Sam Adams is even providing some free snacks, but if you want to come you have to donate to a great local charity,” the invitation said.

Josh Hubner, who heads DC Homebrewers, said his group negotiated a corkage fee with the hosting bar under a District of Columbia law that allows consumers to bring their own

alcohol to a restaurant for a small fee. “If someone came and they said ‘we want to drink the beer,’ we’d have to give it to them,” he said. “People are doing this totally for the love of home brew.”

Hubner said he doesn’t want it to be legal for people to sell home brew. “All I’d really want would be a general acknowledgement that this is something that people do, and that it is beneficial to the community,” he said.

Nevertheless, home brewing has become a training ground for craft brewers, which is why brewing companies such as Samuel Adams and Sierra Nevada have become huge supporters. Samuel Adams sponsors an annual national home brewing competition and mass produces the winning beers.

According to data from the Brewers Association, craft brewing sales have been increasing dramatically and taking over a greater share of the domestic beer market. Total craft beer sales grew 17 percent in 2012 and 15 percent in 2011.

Jim Koch, who founded Samuel Adams, started as a home brewer and created the first batch of Samuel Adams Boston Lager in his kitchen.

“Most craft brewing came out of home brewing,” Koch said. “This activity that used to be illegal everywhere has created 100,000 jobs in the last 30 years and probably encouraged the responsible consumption of flavorful beer. From the state point of view, the home brewer that you just legalized might be the employer of people in your state in the future.”

Koch’s advice to state lawmakers is to give home brewers the benefit of the doubt while putting reasonable safeguards in place: “Home brewers have an enormous amount of respect for the dignity of beer, so cut them a little slack,” he said.