Organic food movement hits Capitol Hill

By Mary Clarie Jalonick, AP

WASHINGTON – The organic food industry is gaining clout on Capitol Hill, prompted by rising consumer demand and its entry into traditional farm states. But that isn't going over well with everyone in Congress.

Tensions between conventional and organic agriculture boiled over this week during a late-night House Agriculture Committee debate on a sweeping farm bill that has for decades propped up traditional crops and largely ignored organics.

When Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., a former organic farmer, offered an amendment to make it easier for organic companies to organize industrywide promotional campaigns, there was swift backlash from some farm-state Republicans, with one member saying he didn't want to see the industry get a free ride and another complaining about organics' "continued assault on agriculture."

"That's one of the things that has caught me and raises my concerns, is that industry's lack of respect for traditional agriculture," said Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., referring to some organic companies' efforts to reduce the number of genetically modified crops in the marketplace.

At the same time, Scott acknowledged that he and his wife buy organic foods.

Growing consumer interest in organics has proved tough for some Republicans on the committee to ignore. Eight Republicans, most of them newer members of the committee, joined with all of the panel's Democrats in supporting the amendment, which was adopted 29-17.

Rep. Vicky Hartzler, a Missouri Republican who owns a farm equipment business and a corn and soybean farm, said she supported the amendment not only because helping organics is good for agriculture but because many of her constituents eat organic foods.

“Organics are a niche market in agriculture with a growing market share, so it makes sense for me to allow farmers to invest some of their own funds to promote their products,” she said.

The amendment would allow the organic industry to organize and pay for a unified industry promotional campaign called a “checkoff” that is facilitated by the Agriculture Department but is no cost to the government. These promotional programs have traditionally been limited to individual commodities or crops, producing familiar campaigns like “Got Milk?” and “Beef: It’s What’s for Dinner.”

The amendment would not set up such a program for organics, but it would allow USDA to approve an organic promotional campaign if the industry decided it wanted one. Laura Batcha of the Organic Trade Association says one reason the industry would approve a campaign is that many organic producers are concerned that consumers don’t understand that products labeled “natural” aren’t necessarily organic, which requires certification.

The organic industry has exploded in the last decade, with $35 billion in sales and 10 percent growth just last year. There are more than 17,000 certified organic businesses in the country.

Producers of organic crops and conventional crops have long been at odds, as organic products have grabbed market share – more than 4 percent of food and beverage sales in 2011 – and the industry has advertised organic foods as healthier than other foods. Organic products are required to be certified by

the USDA and are grown without pesticides and genetically modified ingredients, mainstays of traditional agriculture.

Government-managed promotional checkoff programs like the one that would be allowed under the amendment are required to be positive and not disparage other products, and some lawmakers seemed wary that such a campaign would be possible.

“How do I present organic pork without disparaging non-organic pork?” asked House Agriculture Chairman Frank Lucas, R-Okla., who opposed the amendment.

Mike Conaway, R-Texas, took issue with part of the amendment that would allow the organic producers to opt out of other commodity campaigns, an option that isn’t given to conventional producers.

“Looks to me like they have a free ride on this thing,” Conaway said, in an at times angry exchange with Schrader.

Despite the rancor, the chances that the amendment will become law are good, as the Senate Agriculture Committee added the same amendment to its version of the farm bill.

Schrader told his colleagues that embracing organics is essential to appealing to consumers in a time when big farms are often demonized by popular culture. He said that many young people are coming back to farms because of nontraditional agriculture.

“American agriculture is under siege,” he said. “Urban folks do not understand where their food and fiber comes from. … The point here is to hopefully position American agriculture where we’re not always trying to catch up to what the American consumer wants.”

Slightly Stoopid ready to rock Tahoe

Slightly Stoopid is returning to the South Shore this summer.

The San Diego-based headliner, with a legion of followers known as the Stoopidheads, will bring its folk, rock, reggae and blues fused with hip-hop, funk, metal and punk to MontBleu on July 18.

The last time the band was here was in 2011 at Harveys.

The show begins at 6pm.

Tickets are $37.50 online or at the MontBleu box office 888.829.7630.

North Shore burglary suspects being sought

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

TRUCKEE – The Placer County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's help in identifying three persons of interest in a series of auto burglaries.

The burglaries occurred April 20 along Highway 89 between Truckee and Tahoe City.

"The subjects are persons of interest and sheriff's detectives would like to speak with them," sheriff's Detective John

Riella said in a news release.

Anyone with information about the case is asked to contact Riella at (530) 581.6325 or jriella@placer.ca.gov.

Callers who wish to remain anonymous may call Placer County Crime Stoppers at 800.923.8191. Tips leading to the arrest of any suspects in this case may be eligible for a reward of up to $1,000.

Hospice provides sensitive life-ending care

By Rebecca Wass

Enjoying life to the fullest may be difficult for a terminally ill person without help. Hospice care provides physical, emotional, spiritual, and social support for those who need health care associated with a terminal illness.

“Barton Hospice is attentive, sensitive, and responsive to patients’ and families’ needs, from information to reassurance and presence as they move through this difficult period,” says Rebecca Phillipsen, licensed clinical social worker from Barton Home Health & Hospice. “In addition to addressing the physical needs of the patient, hospice understands the importance of listening to and supporting the emotional and spiritual needs of the patient and family together.”

Patients who qualify for hospice care usually have a life expectancy of less than six months.

“Patients must be referred by a physician to qualify, but

we’re always here to help answer any questions,” says Jason Collin, director of Barton Home Health & Hospice. “Most hospice care is covered by Medicare, private pay, private insurance, Medi-Cal, Medicaid, and, for those who qualify, Barton’s Helping Hands program.”

Care in the comfort of home

The Barton hospice team works with individuals, their family, and their physician to determine the most beneficial treatment. Care is provided in the comfort of the patient’s own home.

“We also provide care at our skilled nursing facility at Barton Memorial Hospital,” says Collin.

The type of care provided is dependent on the patient’s needs.

Hospice services include:

• Physician services

• On-call nursing care, 24 hours a day

• Dietitians

• Home health aides

• Symptom and pain management

• Social services and case managers

• Medical supplies

• Inpatient care for acute care and short-term respite

• Physical, occupational, and speech therapy

• Spiritual care

• Bereavement follow-up for family

Family involvement

Family members are encouraged to take an active role in providing supportive care to the patient. In doing so, the family experiences fewer feelings of helplessness.

“Participating in a loved one’s care not only allows a family member to provide love and support—it also reduces any feelings of guilt or regret that may be experienced later,” Phillipsen says, “and it enables everyone to get through it together.”

If you or a loved one is interested in learning more about Barton Hospice, call (530) 543.5581.

Rebecca Wass is the communications specialist for Barton Health.

LTCC solidifies administrative team

Interim has been lost from the title of two employees at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The board this week made Virginia Boyar permanent dean of Career and Technical Education and Kurt Green permanent dean of Instruction. Both had been in the respective jobs on a temporary basis.

Because there is no increase in the number of administrative positions the college did not have to advertise for the jobs.

On a 4-0 vote the board approved both. Molly Blann was absent May 14.

Boyar's contract is through June 30, 2016, while Green's is until June 30, 2014. He plans to retire at the end of the next school year.

At the May 28 board meeting one of the main topics will be the college's facilities masters plan. In June the board will discuss whether an intercollegiate soccer program should created.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Proper food storage can keep bears at bay



Bears in Tahoe sometimes like to forage for people food. Photo/Janice Eastburn

With the summer season approaching, agencies are asking residents and visitors to practice proper food storage and trash disposal when living in or visiting bear country.

There are an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 American black bears living in the Sierra Nevada.

Spring is the time when bears emerge from their winter dens in search of food. They are attracted to anything edible or scented. Once they get access to human food and garbage, bears lose their fear of humans and can cause property damage and threaten public safety.

Back-to-back dry seasons in the Lake Tahoe Basin mean bears are likely to seek out trash. Residents and visitors can help keep bears wild and reduce potential conflicts between bears and humans by properly storing food and garbage.

Follow these tips to prevent a bear encounter:

· Purchase, store all trash in, and properly close bear-resistant garbage containers.

· Freeze strong smelling left overs, such as fish, until trash day to reduce the smell.

· Wait to put trash out until the morning of collection day.

· Keep garbage cans clean and deodorize them with bleach or ammonia.

· Don’t leave trash, groceries, or animal feed in your car.

· Keep barbecue grills clean and stored in a garage or shed when not in use.

· Only provide bird feeders from November through March.

· Don’t leave any scented non-food products outside (or in your car), such as suntan lotion, lip balm, insect repellent, toothpaste, soap or candles.

· Keep doors and windows closed and locked when the home is unoccupied.

· Consider installing motion-detector alarms, electric fencing or motion activated sprinklers.

· Harvest fruit off trees as soon as it is ripe, and promptly collect all fruit that falls.

· Securely block access to potential hibernation sites, such as crawl spaces under decks and buildings.

· Never feed wildlife.

Tips for safe-guarding campsites against a bear encounter:

· Always store food (including pet food), drinks, toiletries, coolers, cleaned grills, cleaned dishes, cleaning products, and all other scented items as soon as possible after use in the bear-resistant containers (storage lockers) provided at your campsite.

· Clean the barbecue grill after each use and store properly.

· Always place trash in bear-resistant dumpsters in campground or in bear-resistant containers at your campsite and close and lock after each use.

· Never leave scented items unattended in your campsite, tent, or car.

· Never leave trash at your campsite.

· Never feed wildlife.

To report bear conflicts in California, call (916) 445.0380. To report bear conflicts in Nevada, contact the Nevada Department of Wildlife at (775) 688.2327. If the issue is an immediate threat, call 911.

Agencies involved in this effort include the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Tahoe orchestra-chorus sets summer concerts

TOCCATA Summer Solstice Serenade concert series is June 20-25.

The program includes works by CPE Bach, J.S. Bach, Vivaldi, and Reinberger with guest flutist Josue Casillas; tenor, Daniel Paulson; and organist, David Brock.

Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus performances are:

June 20 at 7pm at St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church in Incline Village (341 Village Blvd.)

June 21 at 7pm at Trinity Church in Reno (200 Island Ave.)

June 23 at 5pm at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sacramento (17th and L streets)

June 25 at 7pm at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe (1041 Lyons Ave.).

Tickets are available at the door or online. General admission is $25 adults, $20 seniors, and $5 students (19-23). Preferred seating is $35 and $15 for youth/students. Youth under 19 years of age are admitted free in non reserved seating. Contact TOCCATA at toccatatahoe@gmail.com or (775) 313.9697.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Lake Tahoe Historical Society on May 28 at 7pm at Camp Richardson Lodge will host Dave Borges, who will talk about air flight in the Lake Tahoe Basin – the successes and tragedies.

• The Reno Tahoe Chapter of the Entrepreneurs' Organization's 2013-14 board of directors as of June 1 are: President Rick Graver, President Elect and Communications Chair Laura Partridge, Membership Chairs Doug Erwin and Karen Nichols, Finance Chair Michelle Sherven, Education Chairs Karen Purcell and Bob Morales, Forum Chair Tilio Lagatta, Integration Chair John McCarty, Strategic Alliances Chair Mike Bosma and Joann Blake, and Past President Steve Conine.

• Wilbur D. May Arboretum and Botanical Garden's annual plant sale is from 8am-noon June 1; Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, 1595 N. Sierra St., Reno.

• Mammoth Mountain will close after Memorial Day.

• At the May 16 South Tahoe PUD meeting the board agreed to extend the agreement with Lukins Brothers Water through Aug. 1. This is to give the T.J. Maxx center water in case of an emergency.

Chateau project’s water lines become an issue

By Kathryn Reed

Who owns the water lines at the Chateau site?

The answer is being debated. And until it’s resolved, the necessary contracts to go forward with covering some of the concrete and rebar at the far eastern edge of South Lake Tahoe can’t be signed.

When Lake Tahoe Development Company was going to build the convention center, two hotels and retail, it meant some infrastructure needed to go in to service those facilities. Under what is the foundation for the parking garage are 604-lineal feet of 12-inch sewer main, 240-lineal feet of 8-inch sewer main, 50-lineal feet of 6-inch sewer main, eight manholes, 2,700-lineal feet of 14-inch water line and 90.5-lineal feet of 6-inch water line.

Tahoe Stateline Ventures, the company created by property owner Bill Owens, believes South Tahoe Public Utility District owns the water lines. The district isn’t so sure.



Water line ownership at the Chateau site remains unresolved. Photo/LTN file

“We didn’t construct the water lines and we don’t believe we own them,” attorney Kara Thiel of Feldman-McLaughlin-Thiel told STPUD’s board at the May 16 meeting. “Our contention is that TSV should not be burdened with ownership of the lines.”

Those lines when they were put in in 2007 were never dedicated to the district. That is why South Tahoe PUD doesn’t believe it owns the lines. However, the district has been using the lines.

While Thiel and Kevin Lane, consultant to the developer, were at Thursday’s meeting seeking a contract agreement, the board unanimously said not so fast. The board wants to see what staff and legal counsel work out with TSV before agreeing to anything.

“I think there is a fair list of things to be settled. I want to see a response to it,” board President Eric Schafer said.

He also said he remembers being “backed into a corner by the city” six years ago and expressed little desire to be bullied again.

Lane, who is the son of Randy Lane, one of the principals of the bankrupt Lake Tahoe Development Company that was to build what was to be a $410 million project, said it’s possible to get STPUD approval at the board’s June 6 meeting so city permits could be in hand by the end of June. Construction of the proposed 30,000-square-feet of retail along Highway 50 from Stateline Avenue to about McP’s Pub must start by July 15 or else the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency permits expire.

Another issue with the existing water lines is the party that has the drawings for where the lines are will not release them. This is because that firm was never paid by Lake Tahoe Development Company in the bankruptcy proceedings.

(STPUD had a third party inspect the water lines at the get-go, for which it has never been paid because of the

bankruptcy.)

Where future lines will go is another issue that has not been finalized. Those drawings are supposed to be provided to STPUD by Monday. The next phase that could start this summer includes about 330-lineal feet of 14-inch water line.

A performance bond will be required by the district for the line.

The right-of-way is an issue for where the line will be placed. Still to be worked out is if the line is in the Caltrans right-of-way or if it would be put in under the yet-to-be-built sidewalk.

“I’m concerned about placing it under a sidewalk for future repairs,” South Tahoe PUD attorney Gary Kvistad said.

Kvistad brought up another unresolved issue – the agreement between STPUD and Lakeside Park Association. Lakeside provides much of the water for that area. But it never had the capacity for this project.

STPUD was to provide all the water for fire suppression and potable water for Phase A. Lakeside was to provide potable water for Phase B. With the project being more than those two phases, a new agreement needs to be drawn up.

Kvistad also said the district will make sure the six parcels that are slated to be built on this summer have one parcel map. The city allowed construction to start on the 11-plus acre site six years ago without consolidating the 29 parcels.

Meditation can be an easy route to relaxation

By Mandy Kendall

Gone are the days when it was thought that in order to meditate you had to spend hours crossed legged on a hill somewhere in the middle of nowhere focusing on trying to relax.

Studies have shown that even just a few minutes of concentrating on something (pretty much anything that isn't stressing you out at that moment) can positively change your brain, increase your energy and reduce the physiological and damaging effects of stress on the body. So much so that meditation is being likened to going to the gym for your brain. Research is also suggesting that meditation can help reduce blood pressure and improve cellular health.

Meditation is like exercise. There is something for everyone and I highly recommend trying a few techniques to find one that fits you. There are no rules. You can sit, stand or lie down. You can have your eyes open or closed. You can say things in your head or out loud. You can listen to a guided meditation, be on your own or take a class … whatever works for you.



Mandy Kendall

Like getting physically fit, meditation takes practice. It can

be frustrating at first but is ultimately worth every minute.

So, here are a few *Qwik-e* (quick and easy) meditation tips:

Visualizing

Your thoughts – In this technique you do focus on the thoughts that crowd your mind. However, you visualize them as words or images drifting by on individual clouds. You don't judge them (or yourself) or rationalize them. You just let them drift on as you watch the next cloud float by. The intention here is to be an objective observer and not get emotionally involved.

Fire – For this one you can either sit in front of an actual fire or imagine you are. Then you imagine you are throwing whatever worries, or pieces of emotional baggage you want to get rid of into the fire and watch them disappear in smoke.

Laughter – Spending five to 10 minutes imagining humorous things that make you smile, or, even better, laugh out loud, can do wonders for your state of mind.

Your happy place – Imagine you are in a wonderfully serene place. Maybe it's somewhere you've been before or it could be a place you have made up in your imagination. Spend some time imagining how it feels, smells and sounds. If you visit this place in your mind often enough it can be an extremely good antidote to stressful situations, or even a great way to help yourself drift off to sleep.

Focusing

Candlelight – Try focusing on a flame for as long as possible without letting any thoughts come into your mind. This definitely takes practice, but when a thought does drift or come barging into your head, just acknowledge it and then imagine it drifting away on a cloud without paying it any further attention.

Working through a maze – By totally distracting yourself with

a mundane task like navigating your way through a maze, you may find that your subconscious is able to reveal the solution to another problem you have been facing.

Breathing

Counting breathes – This is a very simple way of focusing on something and helping preventing unwanted thoughts from entering your head. Just simply count each breath as it comes and goes. Imagine each number as you count, changing size and color and pattern with each number to really focus your thoughts.

Accepting and releasing – This is by far one of my favorite techniques. It's quick and easy and can be very effective at diffusing those tense moments when your emotional temperature starts rising and you need to let off some steam. The basic version is to simply breathe in thinking about accepting (maybe the situation you are in, anything or nothing … whatever works for you) then as you breathe out just think about releasing (maybe the way you're feeling about the situation or anything at all). After a few breaths you should feel the stress pressure dropping. You can do this anywhere and no-one will be any the wiser. The more you do this the more you may find that seemingly unrelated thoughts pop into your head when thinking about accepting and releasing. However you might find that these thoughts may be at the root cause of the stress you are feeling.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a

time.