Rotary taking a day to help seniors

Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club is helping seniors on April 27.

As part of the Rotary at Work Day the group will go to seniors' homes and help them with such things as changing light bulbs, changing batteries in smoke detectors, yard work, and more.

Any senior who would appreciate such help is asked to call Dan Oaks at (775) 790.0330 or Tim Buscher at (530) 573.0575.

Chinese interested in California produce

By Donna Jones, Santa Cruz Sentinel

WATSONVILLE – Cathy Calfo couldn't help but be impressed by the wholesale produce market in Guangzhou, China, with its 40,000 workers, hundreds of trucks, and "unimaginable" quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables changing hands in all-cash transactions.

Calfo, executive director and chief executive officer of Santa Cruz-based California Certified Organic Farmers, toured the market as part of a state trade delegation to China. The delegation, led by Gov. Jerry Brown, spent April 9-15 promoting California products and learning about the massive Chinese market.

"You can't imagine the energy and activity there," Calfo said

of the Guangzhou market, though she may well have been referencing the country at large. She was struck overall by the “numbers of people, the pace of growth, the diversity of methods employed to produce energy, to produce housing, to produce food.”

So many cranes topped high-rises under construction in Shanghai, people joked that they were the national bird, she said. Nearby, the group visited an island with a deep water port. A 14-mile road lined with windmills linked the island to the mainland. Construction of the complex took just three years.

“You visit a market like China, and it’s so huge that you see more and more opportunity,” she said.

That’s not to say Calfo didn’t notice the downside of crowding millions of people into urban areas, especially after experiencing the much publicized poor air quality.

But the trip, well-organized by state officials, was productive, Calfo said, The 75-member delegation reflected California’s economy, with representatives from technology, tourism, real estate, clean energy and agriculture. The agricultural group was similarly diverse, with representatives from dairy and cattle industries, raison, nut and citrus growers, wine producers, Driscoll’s Berries, and organic as well as conventional farmers.

For Calfo, it was an opportunity to learn more about reaching Chinese consumers and making the contacts that could help CCOF’s members enter the vast market.

The delegation met with government officials, toured grocery stores and talked to entrepreneurs, including a group of young online marketers who are developing a home food delivery business in Beijing and already had signed up 300,000 subscribers. The scale, she said, was amazing.

“Everywhere I went, there was a keen interest in California products, organic in particular,” Calfo said. “People were anxious to talk about food, food safety and the availability of good healthy food, both grown and produced in China and also that could be exported to China.”

South Tahoe women change lives in Kenya

By Jen Gurecki

NAIROBI, Kenya – “This is the most dangerous thing you’ll do all day,” I said to the group as we crossed the road.

No lions or machine guns, just cars, motorbikes and matatus. The traffic lights function, but most people are color blind to the red, green and yellow. Crosswalks should be called cross*runs*.

And Americans make driving through roundabouts look easy.

These are just a few of the realities of Nairobi, Kenya, that turn every single day into an adventure. In January, eight Lake Tahoe women made the 26-hour journey to Nairobi to experience this.

When they stepped onto Kenyan soil, they knew they would be exploring one tiny corner of a vast continent, immersing themselves in a culture far different than their own, and witnessing the work of the Zawadisha Fund. What they didn’t realize is that when they returned home, they would have a new lease on life, inspired to make change locally based on what they saw was possible in a place where most people think

everything is impossible.



Julie Lowe of South Lake Tahoe works with the children of Kenya. Photos/Provided

These eight women – Wendy David, Hannah Greenstreet, Doris Groelz, Betsy Williams, Teresa Bertrand, Julie Lowe, Angela Swanson and Pat Papp – are the same women you see in Lake Tahoe at school board and City Council meetings, and contributing to the local economy through their thriving businesses. They are activists building a healthy and vibrant community we call home.

What became clear during our two weeks together is that they had a keen ability to find connections with one another, despite race, class, political affiliation, or location. They were able to hold a space in their hearts and in their heads for those whom they thought they would never meet. And they refused to accept the inequality that other women face simply because of where they were born.

It was the latter that sparked the creation of the Zawadisha Fund, a micro-credit organization started in Lake Tahoe, whose mission is to empower, entrust, and expand opportunities for women in Kenya. Through an intelligent approach to micro-lending, we are improving the quality of life of women through small business loans, savings, education, and preventative health care. For as little as $60, we can vastly improve a

woman’s life, granting her the opportunity to enter the job market and provide for her family. It seems nothing short of a miracle, and this is what has drawn so many people to this part of the world.

On the first day of our two weeks together, I shared “How to Write About Africa,” a scathing satirical essay by the highly acclaimed Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina. He has said that when writing about Africa, sunsets and starvation are solid starting points. Broad brush strokes to define a continent made up of 54 countries, 900 million people.

Africa is: poverty, HIV, conflict, diamonds.

Africans are: corrupt, destitute, infected, hungry.

The story has been told a thousand times over, fact woven with fiction. When we think about people living in poverty on the continent of Africa these are the images we see in our minds. Yet these sorts of images evoke pity, and pity is an incredibly unproductive and disempowering agent of change.

Enter Winnie and Duncan, the founders of Dolphin Anti-Rape & AIDS Control Outreach. Their energy and passion for ending violence against women through self-defense workshops is contagious and completely shifts pity into power. Zawadisha’s collaboration with Dolphin is rooted in our belief that business loans alone cannot empower women. If we truly want to increase their quality of life, we need to look at poverty through a wider lens. Violence is an issue that affects women’s status in society, and through Dolphin’s workshops they not only learn how to protect themselves, but how to have a stronger voice. In a world where exploding violence against women has threatened the very fabric of many societies, Dolphin has inspired the women and children of Kenya – and South Lake Tahoe – to reclaim their bodies, their homes, their schools, and their communities.



The Zawadisha Fund is helping to provide a better life for the women and children of Kenya.

Our group spent three days with Dolphin, first being trained on the self-defense skills and then two days in schools working with children.

“I have never taken self-defense training. So actually running through the training and cultural curriculum with the Dolphin team in the Kolping House garden was gift enough. But then we had the opportunity to go with Dolphin into two Nairobi schools and see how they connect, and practice and sing and touch the lives of these boys and girls of all ages,” Julie Lowe said. “It brought tears to my eyes to see how culturally-relevant rape prevention coming from the minds and mouths of smart, energetic Kenyan women and men could transform the culture from the little ones on up.”

Zawadisha’s two-week Service Adventure Tour was designed to provide an experience where people could connect to one another, people whom we often believe are fundamentally different than ourselves. These perceived differences faded away during our two-day financial literacy workshop with Tuinuane Lending Circle. Tuinuane is Swahili for “to lift up,” and that is the name this group of women from Eldoret, Kenya gave themselves nearly two years ago as Zawadisha’s first group of borrowers.

“I loved every part of this travel adventure, however, the 2½ days that I spent with the Kenyan women was a life changing event for me. Seventeen women arrived at 4 in the afternoon and by 7 that evening they were joyfully singing to us and soon we were all singing and dancing together with the camaraderie of being women that truly cared about each other,” Wendy David said. “I was transformed by their warmth, their attitude of joy, their stories of creating small businesses to support their children’s education or to feed their families. I felt proud to be a woman walking, singing, teaching, learning, laughing and weeping with these strong beautiful women. I look at life through a different lens now, a lens that focuses even more on where real joy is lives. It is in the heart.”

Our time with Dolphin and the Tuinuane women were unforgettable, but the three-day safari in the Maasai Mara was unmatched in beauty and excitement. We found ourselves surrounded by animals most people only see in a zoo: elephants, giraffes, lions, zebras, cheetahs, hippos and even a leopard.

“We discovered the connection between power and harmony in the vast and animal-rich Maasai Mara. The sheer beauty of the giraffes, cheetahs, leopards and lions brought us a deep understanding of the circle of life,” Hannah Greenstreet said.

It was during the safari that our group took on the moniker “Bahati Dumas” or “lucky cheetahs” after witnessing a mother cheetah and her two cubs hunt, kill and feast on a Thompson gazelle.

They made a significant mark on the individuals they encountered, and they too were deeply transformed by their experiences.

Jen Gurecki is a Lake Tahoe resident and the founder of the Zawadisha Fund.

–

Note:

The Zawadisha Fund is organizing the next Service Adventure Tour to Kenya on Feb. 1-16, 2014. If you would stare in amazement at elephants, cheetahs, lions and giraffes; walk in humble appreciation through the slums; marvel at the resiliency and grit of our micro-loan recipients; find courage as we assisted Dolphin in teaching self-defense skills to children; and embrace our new friendships, email jen@zawadisha.org or go online to learn more.

Cops: Woman loses paycheck at casino, makes up crime

A South Lake Tahoe woman who gambled away her entire paycheck lied about it, but deputies quickly figured out the truth.

The 42-year-old woman, whose name is not being published because she has not been charged with a crime, was found in the trunk of Mercedes Benz this morning. An employee at Zephyr Cove Lodge heard pounding from the trunk, found the keys in the ignition and was able to free the woman.

When Douglas County sheriff's deputies first arrived about 8 Tuesday morning she told them she had been gambling at Lakeside Inn and Casino on Monday night and left with approximately $1,500 in cash. As she was walking back to her vehicle someone knocked her out by striking her over the head with an unknown object.

As the investigation went on April 23, the woman admitted to deputies she made up the story because she was afraid to tell her husband she had gambled away her entire paycheck.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Felon behind bars on weapons, abuse charges

A South Lake Tahoe man was booked into jail on several felonies today and a 12-gauge shotgun, .270-caliber rifle, 9mm handgun with high capacity magazines, and drug paraphernalia are in an evidence locker.



Anthony Corbin

The city's SWAT team was used to execute the search warrant in the 2400 block of William Avenue on April 23 because of perceived violent threat of the suspect, 46-year-old Anthony Corbin. He is a member of the South Lake Tahoe Brotherhood Motorcycle Club. Corbin is an ex-felon with a violent criminal history, and he unlawfully possessed several firearms and high capacity magazines, officers said.



These weapons were confiscated April 23 from a South Lake Tahoe residence. Photos/Provided

In mid-March officers identified Corbin as the suspect who severely beat a 34-year-old South Lake Tahoe man. The victim was left with significant injuries, including several broken bones. Officers said Corbin had another altercation with the same victim on Monday.

“During this encounter Corbin’s 49-year-old wife was present. Corbin allegedly drew a knife, threatened to kill the man, and then attempted to attack the male victim,” police Lt. Brian Williams said in a press release. “Corbin’s wife stood between them in an effort to intervene. Corbin battered his wife to get her away from him. The male victim was able to get away to safety.”

The woman called police. She has since been placed in a safe location.

Corbin was arrested on charges of being an ex-felon in possession of firearms and ammunition, assault with a deadly weapon, making criminal terrorist threats, battery with serious bodily injury and domestic violence.

This is the second Brotherhood member to be arrested in a month. Ryan Marino was arrested in March.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Pet food becomes haute cusine

By Lauren Coleman-Lochner and Leslie Patton, Bloomberg

Brad Kriser has been known to down a dog biscuit or two. Kriser, the founder of an upscale pet-food chain that's opening stores in major U.S. cities, sees his pets as family, and sampling their diet is what good parents do.

"People will really do absolutely anything they can for their pets," said the founder and chief executive officer of Santa Monica's Kriser's, which forecasts that revenue will increase 40 percent this year. "The way that people treat them is sometimes better than their non-furry children."

While fancy dog food has been mostly a luxury item for almost a decade, the trend has picked up considerable steam as the economy has recovered from the financial crisis. The lure of selling dog food for more than twice its traditional price has drawn big-box pet chains PetSmart and closely held Petco Animal Supplies into the gourmet kibble business. It also has private-equity investors eyeing upstarts such as Kriser's.



AJ likes high-quality birthday treats. Photo/LTN

“It’s really capitalizing on the trend of health and wellness,” said Josh Goldin, a managing partner at Alliance Consumer Growth in New York, a private-equity firm seeking high-growth consumer brands that invested in Kriser’s last year.

His firm is betting big on the trend, with investments in the Honest Kitchen, a maker of human-grade dehydrated pet food, and PawGanics, which sells nontoxic cleaning products for families with pets. PawGanics is already being sold by Petco, the San Diego chain that Texas Pacific Group and Leonard Green & Partners purchased in 2006 for about $1.8 billion.

The natural pet foods trend started about a decade ago, around the same time consumers started paying more attention to their own food, said Josh McBee, an analyst at researcher IBISWorld in Santa Monica.

Natural products got a boost in 2007 after 4,000 pet owners said their pets were killed by eating contaminated food. The animals died of kidney failure after eating food made with Chinese wheat gluten tainted by the chemical melamine, added to make the protein content seem higher.

Super-premium pet food, which includes most natural and organic products, makes up about 11 percent of the $20 billion U.S. pet-food market and is growing at a faster pace than lower-priced selections, said Shannon Brown, an analyst for researcher Packaged Facts. Premium and natural foods will help the overall market gain 3.5 percent to 4.5 percent annually for the next few years, she said.

Allison Thompson, 30, said she doesn’t mind spending a little extra on grain-free food for Bella, her 6-year-old Boston Terrier.

“She had cancer last year, so I put her on a natural diet,” she said, while picking up a 4-pound bag of Fromm Beef Frittata Veg dog food for $13.49 at a Kriser’s in Chicago’s

Bucktown neighborhood.

Bella is “very picky, but she loves this,” Thompson said.

The first Kriser’s store opened in Chicago’s tony Lincoln Park neighborhood in 2006, across the intersection from a Petco shop. Kriser’s expects to operate more than 20 stores by the end of the year, with 11 in Chicago and the remainder divided between Southern California and Denver, where it expanded last year. It’s scouting new markets.

The company’s executives call their chain “The Whole Foods of Pets” and like to locate shops, which average about 2,400 square feet, near those grocery stores because they serve similar customers – largely affluent and health-conscious.

PetSmart, headquartered in Phoenix and with more than 1,200 locations, also is getting in on the action, selling grain-free Innova Prime dog food made from chicken, peas and turkey for $52.99 for a 25-pound bag. The chain also sells 33-pound bags of Blue Buffalo Life Protection foods, some made with free-range lamb, for $51.99. In contrast, a 30-pound bag of Pedigree dog food is $19.99.

Super-premium brands such as Blue Buffalo have been “a major component of the success of PetSmart over the past couple years,” said Sean McGowan, an analyst at Needham & Co. in New York. Not only do the brands carry higher profit margins, they also bring in new customers who purchase other items, he said.

PetSmart shares more than tripled from 2008 through the end of last year. As of the end of last week, they sat at just under $67 per share.

About 79 percent of pet owners consider the quality of pet food to be as important as the quality of human food, according to market researcher Mintel. That is why closely held Newman’s Own Organics, headquartered in Connecticut, began selling pet food about 12 years ago, said Chief

Executive Officer Peter Meehan.

“This whole industry has grown up around anthropomorphic behavior of humans – we take trends and things that we’re doing and we apply them to animals,” he said.

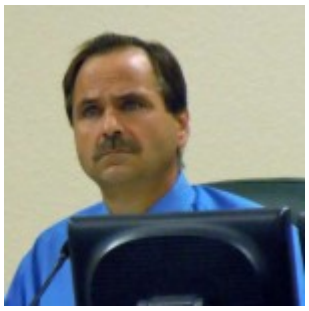
Newman’s Own Organics pet food is twice as expensive as some brands. Still, customers are loyal to its offerings – some made with organic beef from Uruguay and lamb from New Zealand, said Meehan, who declined to provide sales figures.

While Kriser’s doesn’t disclose revenue, the chain’s owners say same-store sales may gain as much as 20 percent this year, following increases of more than 10 percent in previous years. The stores try to lure customers with regular events, including pet birthday parties, lectures, and grooming and training sessions.

Kriser and President Ken Grouf, who are cousins, even taste a lot of the food themselves, Kriser said. So how are those biscuits?

“You would probably think that you’re eating Teddy Grahams,” he said.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting continues to be in the news regarding his use of state money to clear his property of brush. Here is a link to the latest story, which includes Nutting on video.

• The Tahoe City Transit Center was honored this month with a

prestigious 2013 Small Project Award from the American Institute of Architects.

• Expect an increase in traffic April 25 during an earthquake drill at Incline High School. Do not call 911 unnecessarily and try to avoid the area, authorities urge.

• Tahoe City Wine Walk is giving away a vacation. Click here for the details.

• The League to Save Lake Tahoe received a $60,000 Wells Fargo grant to support volunteer programs that protect water quality.

Nevada on path to repeal gay marriage ban

By Anjeanette Damon, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Following more than an hour of riveting and personal floor speeches – during which one state senator publicly announced for the first time he is gay – the Nevada Senate voted 12-9 to begin the process of repealing the gay marriage ban from the state Constitution.

Only one Republican, Sen. Ben Kieckhefer, joined with Democrats to vote in favor of Senate Joint Resolution 13, which would repeal the ban on gay marriage and replace it with a requirement that the state recognize all marriages regardless of gender.

The late night vote came after more than an hour of emotional

floor debate, during which opponents of the measure decried efforts to label them as “insensitive and unenlightened,” and supporters argued marriage equality should be extended to all regardless of gender.

In a particularly emotional moment, Sen. Kelvin Atkinson, D-North Las Vegas, publicly declared for the first time that he is gay.

“I’m black. I’m gay,” Atkinson said in a trembling voice after describing his father’s interracial re-marriage that would have been banned earlier in American history. “I know this is the first time many of you have heard me say that I am a black, gay male.”

Atkinson went on to rebut the argument that gay marriage threatens any other definition of marriage.

“If this hurts your marriage, then your marriage was in trouble in the first place,” he said.

Both Democrats and Republicans sought to balance religious convictions with their stance on public policy. Both came down on different sides of the issue.

“I don’t know if I’ll be allowed in church on Sunday,” said Sen. Ruben Kihuen, a Catholic, who said his “more progressive” girlfriend often berated him for resisting gay marriage rights. He ultimately voted in favor of SJR13.

Sen. Justin Jones, a Mormon, said he sees his gay brother-in-law each Sunday at church and couldn’t bring himself to vote against extending him marriage rights despite a threat from one of the earliest proponents of the gay marriage ban.

“I would rather lose an election than look my brother-in-law in the eye every Sunday and tell him he doesn’t have the same rights as I do,” Jones said.

Sen. Joe Hardy, also a Mormon, took a different tact, saying

marriage is “ordained of God” and that such relationships “perpetuate beyond the grave.”

“I do not believe this measure will strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society,” he said.

Sen. Mark Hutchison, also a Mormon, decried efforts to paint those who oppose gay marriage as intolerant.

“Until about a year ago this was the view of the president of the United States,” Hutchison said of President Obama’s initial opposition to gay marriage on religious grounds. “I do not recall his supporters labeling him as intolerant, or insensitive or hypocritical or unenlightened. He had a different view than others.”

Republicans largely objected to a late amendment to SJR13, which would require not just the repeal of the gay marriage ban, but also inserting into the constitution a requirement that the state recognize such unions.

“Process is important,” said Senate Minority Leader Michael Roberson, who supported the original version of SJR13, which simply repealed the ban. “The better course of action was and is to pass the original SJR13.”

Kieckhefer, who uttered not a word on the Senate floor, was the only senator to buck his caucus on the vote.

In 2000 and again in 2002, Nevada voters approved a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and woman. Proponents of SJR13 note a shift in public opinion away from that sentiment.

If SJR13 passes, the Legislature would have to approve it again in 2015. The measure would then be placed on the 2016 ballot.

“This is a vote to let the people vote for equality,” said Sen. Pat Spearman, D-North Las Vegas.

SF launches probe into Nevada patient-busing

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera on Monday announced a formal investigation into whether the State of Nevada improperly “dumped” psychiatric patients to his city and across California.

In a letter to the director of Nevada’s Department of Health and Human Services sent this morning, Herrera demands that the state turn over documents related to its aggressive practice in recent years of discharging mental patients to Greyhound buses and transporting them across the country.

The letter, copied to Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval and Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto, cites a *Bee* investigation detailing how the Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas bused roughly 1,500 patients to other cities and states from July 1, 2008 through early March 2013.

A *Bee* examination of Greyhound bus receipts found Rawson-Neal bused 500 patients to California during that period; roughly 30 of them were transferred to San Francisco.

One of the patient’s clients, James Flavy Coy Brown, recently turned up suicidal and confused at a Sacramento homeless services complex after he was discharged via Greyhound to Sacramento, with no prepartion for his housing, care or treatment.

The director of San Francisco’s Behavioral Health Services department told the *Bee* earlier this month that at least two

other Rawson-Neal patients had arrived in San Francisco in the last year “without a plan, without a relative.”

“Assuming the reports are true, Nevada’s practice of psychiatric ‘patient dumping’ is shockingly inhumane and illegal,” Herrera said in a statement. “We intend to investigate these reports thoroughly, and I am inviting input from providers of services to San Francisco’s homeless, who may be willing to volunteer evidence and testimony to assist the city in a potential civil action. ”

Herrera said the city will seek compensation from Nevada if it determines that “patient dumping” has resulted in the improper transfer of patients to San Francisco.

“We’re prepared to litigate aggressively on behalf of San Francisco and its taxpayers to recover whatever costs or damages we’re able to identify,” he said. “I also intend to pursue injunctive relief, including monitoring of the offending medical facilities, to send a strong message to any other state or locality that would consider similarly irresponsible public health practices.”

Several other agencies are also examining Rawson-Neal’s transfer policies.

A spokeswoman for the Joint Commission, which evaluates and certifies hospitals across the country, said last week that the organization is “aware of complaints around the discharge issue” at Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas, and is gathering information to determine whether a special on-site survey is warranted.

The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a federal watchdog agency, also is reviewing Rawson-Neal’s discharge practices. Spokesman Jack Cheevers said the agency asked Nevada’s health division to assist in a probe. Violations could result in a loss of critical federal funding.

The city of Los Angeles is gathering information to see if an investigation is warranted, officials there said.

Cinco de Mayo dance at senior center

There will be a Cinco de Mayo dance on April 26 from 7:30-10pm at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center.

The dance is open to all ages. The Tahoe Dance Band will provide the music. Mexican or Western wear is encouraged.

The $10 admission fee includes appetizers, dessert, wine and other beverages. For those who aren’t 21, the cost is $5 and no wine will be served.

The center is at 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

For more info, call Arline at (530) 545.1277 or Francine at (530) 541.8380.