Death of El Dorado County teen under investigation

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Department is investigating the death of a teenager who was found critically injured in a roadway early Saturday morning.

Deputies responded about 4:19am to a report of a man lying on Sand Ridge Road in south Placerville. When they arrived, they found a 17-year-old boy lying in the roadway in critical condition, according to a sheriff's department news release. Emergency medical personnel transported the youth to Marshall Hospital in Placerville where he died of his injuries.

Sheriff's officials said the young man has been identified and his family has been notified of his death, but his name is being withheld pending further investigation.

They said the teenager reportedly left the area of Gopher Hole Road in Somerset on foot early Saturday morning. Detectives were told that he was walking toward a friend's house on Sand Ridge Road before he was discovered in the roadway. Sheriff's officials said his injuries were consistent with being struck by a vehicle, but the cause of death has not been determined.

Anyone with information pertaining to the case is asked to call Detective Jon Densmore at (530) 642.4718.

Business seminar in health care reform changes

Business owners, employers, HR managers, controllers, and managers who need to move forward in addressing the issues associated with health care reform are invited to attend “Health Care Reform – What Employers Need to Know” on April 23 from 9am-noon at the Chateau at Incline Village, 955 Fairway Blvd., Incline Village.

This is an opportunity for employers to assess best-practice programs and make the decisions necessary to develop plans that work with the new requirements. At this seminar sponsored by the North Lake Tahoe and Truckee Donner Chambers of Commerce in partnership with the Sierra Human Resources Association, participants will also learn about the new reporting requirements and when they need to comply, how the new legislation interacts with state laws, and how health care reform affects their current benefit plans.

The speaker, Lauren Yurick, has been in the insurance industry since 1989. Yurick co-founded Benefit Resource Group in 2003 which services employers in both the public and private sector. She has served as local president as well as a state board member for the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, and currently sits on the broker advisory committee of a local HMO in the Reno area.

Register online. It is ree for SHRM and SHRA members, $15 for chamber members, $20 for non-members. Beverages and snacks will be provided at 8:30am.

For more information about the workshop, call Laura Moriarty of SHRA at (530) 573. 0224.

Day devoted to getting girls interested in math, science

A Math and Science Career Day for girls in grades 6-10 is April 20 at Lake Tahoe Community College from 9am-3pm.

The free event is hosted by LTCC and the American Association of University Women.

This conference will feature workshops by local women with backgrounds in math and science. The keynote speaker will be LTCC President Kindred Murillo.

The conference includes hands-on learning and real-life connections to careers in math and science.

Lunch is provided free to all attendees.

Sign up by contacting Bev Palley at (530) 544.2724 or bpalley@sbcglobal.net.

LTWC releases bald eagle into the wild

That was no ordinary bald eagle soaring near the Carson Pass on Sunday.

Four months ago he couldn’t do that. But thanks to the volunteers and experts at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care the animal

was nursed back to health and on Sunday released back into the wild.

The bird came to the South Shore animal rehab facility in December with a damaged right wing.



A bald eagle on April 14 is released back into the wild. Photo/John Adamsky

“The bird could not hold the wing in the proper position and could not fly. After X-rays were taken, it was determined that there were no broken bones, so, it just needed time,” said Tom Millham, who with his wife Cheryl, run the facility.

Before the eagle was allowed to soar on its own the center’s volunteers began exercising it two weeks ago.

On April 14 with about 70 people watching, LTWC volunteer Pete Van Arnum released the animal at the overlook near Red Lake.

On Sunday, it just kept flying. No one ever saw it land in a tree.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Legislature nixes lifetime unit limit at community colleges

By Melody Gutierrez, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to make California's community college system more efficient and increase access for students hit a road block last week as lawmakers rejected his proposal to set a lifetime limit on the number of units students can take at reduced in-state rates.

Budget panels in both houses of the Legislature rejected a provision in Brown's budget proposal that would limit community college students to 90 units, or force them to pay more than four times the current $46-per-unit price.

The proposal was part of Brown's spending plan for the state's 112 community colleges, which included efforts to increase graduation and transfer rates by discouraging students from lingering or taking courses without an academic plan.

Reworking California's public college system has been a priority for Brown, who has, among other things, proposed expanding access by increasing online course offerings.

Lawmakers said capping units is not the way to increase access or success. Assembly Budget Chair Bob Blumenfield, D-Woodland Hills, called the unit cap proposal inappropriate and off target.

"The administration proposals simply stick it to students who have already had to contend with fewer classes and massive fee increases," Blumenfield said. "They respond to symptoms of a much bigger problem. Even if the administration could offer evidence showing a budget savings associated with these

proposals, they are bad policy choices to make today.”

Critics expressed concerns that unit caps would hurt double majors or laid-off workers who have a degree but need to return to school for a new skill set.

Last month, the Senate’s education finance subcommittee voted against capping units for University of California or California State University systems. The Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance will weigh the proposal to cap units at UC and CSU on April 24.

Department of Finance spokesman H.D. Palmer said unit caps are a way to increase completion rates and create space for new students. Palmer said less than 30 percent of degree-seeking community college students transfer or earn a degree or certificate in six years. Sixteen percent of CSU students graduate in four years, while 60 percent of UC students complete their degree in that time, he said.

While the Legislature shot down unit caps, Palmer said it’s still early in the process.

“We have a ways to go,” Palmer said. “We intend to continue to have conversations with the Legislature.”

In separate votes on the community college issue last week, Assembly and Senate subcommittees rejected Brown’s plan along party lines, with Democrats opposed and Republicans supporting unit caps.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office has recommended adopting Brown’s unit-cap policy, saying it “creates positive incentives for students and motivates institutions to improve the efficiency of their academic programs.”

In the 2011-12 school year, there were nearly 95,000 students at community colleges who had earned 90 or more degree-applicable units, which is one academic year beyond what is

needed to transfer or earn an associate degree, according to the LAO's report.

Under the unit-cap proposal, many of those students would pay nonresident rates of $180 to $200 a unit, compared with in-state rates of $46 a unit.

The LAO said the unit-cap policy needed to be further developed so it included specifics such as which courses should be excluded and how to treat classes attempted but not completed. The current plan already excludes remedial courses, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate units earned in high school.

The LAO also recommended delaying the implementation for two years, instead of starting on July 1.

Opponents of the unit caps, including the community college system, said the proposal ignores a plan already in place to raise low completion rates.

That plan, which was required by lawmakers in 2010 and adopted by the college board of governors last year, will give priority enrollment to students who have developed an educational plan, taken a diagnostic assessment and have earned fewer than 100 units.

"That's a much more nuanced way of addressing it than a straight 90 unit cap," said Theresa Tena, vice president of Community College League of California.

Tena said the governor's proposal is superseding efforts already underway by the community college system.

"We'd like to see the system effort implemented to see if that gets at the same thing the administration is trying to get at," Tena said. "We think it will."

Weed control to close 2 El Dorado County trails

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A popular recreation area along the south fork of the American River in El Dorado County will be closed for two days this week for weed-control work.

The Bureau of Land Management announced that it will close the Cronan Ranch and Greenwood Creek parcels to public access Tuesday and Wednesday, when herbicides will be applied to control invasive weeds.

A notice of intent to apply herbicides will be posted on signs at the trailhead at least 24 hours before the application, and closure signs will be posted during the herbicide application, according to a news release from the BLM's Mother Lode Field Office.

Broadcast and spot herbicide applications are planned along approximately 14 miles of trail edges to reduce weeds and make trails more accessible for recreational use.

"We are taking an integrated weed management approach to control invasive weeds throughout the Cronan Ranch and Greenwood Creek areas," Jeff Horn, outdoor recreation planner with the Mother Lode Field Office, said in a written statement.

The weed treatments are needed to reduce invasive plants, predominantly yellow star thistle and medusahead, he said.

Land use practices, Horn said, have created extensive infestations of these invasive weeds throughout the Cronan

Ranch and Greenwood Creek areas.

In addition to herbicides, the BLM is using mowing, pulling and prescribed fire to help control weeds.

The BLM plans to use prescribed fire, possibly later this year, on 66 acres infested with yellow star thistle and medusahead within the Long Valley portion of the Cronan Ranch parcel.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• U-Haul in South Lake Tahoe is looking to build storage units at the Emerald Bay Road site.

• The High Fives Foundation, Alpine Meadows and Volkl Skis present Trains 2013 Freestyle Ski & Snowboard Contest on April 20 from 11am-4pm.

• The 9th annual Squaw Valley Prom raised $35,000 in ticket sales, of which $13,000 was donated by the High Fives Foundation to co-host nonprofit CharitySmith. CharitySmith is a national society that administers more than 100 memorial funds, including scholarships, medical research, funds for military families, and other charitable causes.

• Lake Tahoe Pizza is celebrating 40 years of serving pies in South Lake Tahoe.

• The South Tahoe Wooden Boat Classic is July 26-27 at the Tahoe Keys Marina.

S. Tahoe bike trails to be upgraded

Publisher's note: ***This is one of a few stories about construction planned for the Lake Tahoe Basin this summer. On April 16, the South Lake Tahoe City Council will be discussing this summer's construction plans. The meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport starts at 9am.***

By Kathryn Reed

Bike trails in Tahoe are so bad that some routes that were designed for road bikes, now necessitate the use of a mountain bike or are not rideable even when snow is gone in most places.

That is about to change in some locations of the South Shore.

The bridges over Trout Creek and Upper Truckee River will be overhauled this summer. The decking will be replaced with a hardwood material similar to what is on the 15th Street bridge.



The bike trail behind Meek's in South Lake Tahoe will be resurfaced this summer.

Photo/LTN file

The city received a $475,000 grant from the state and the recreation joint powers authority allocated $100,000 to be used to repave the trail behind Meeks Lumber in South Lake Tahoe.

“We will be pulverizing the existing bike trail, regrading and paving over,” Jim Marino, capital improvements project manager for the city, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s a very efficient way to replace the system.”

The affected area goes west from Los Angeles Avenue at Harrison Avenue to the intersection of Third and James streets.

“We want to raise it so it’s not so wet,” Marino said.

Part of this trail is often covered with water well into the spring because of how the trail dips and in some parts parallels a marsh area. Plus, some businesses along the route push their snow onto the trail.

Cyclists and walkers heavily use this plot of asphalt. It keeps people off Highway 50 and in doing so provides a linear east-west link between much of the city limits.

The trail will not be widened to meet current new trail standards. Permitting and coverage issues precluded doing that. What will be done falls into maintenance replacement.

Another low-lying trail that needs substantive work is behind McDonald’s at the Y.

“We are going to have to look at ways to raise it and put a culvert under it. A lot of time in the year it is not useable,” Marino said.

The segment of trail only gets touched this summer if funding is found or other projects come in under bid.

The Bicycle Coalition is looking at installing wayfinding signs for the various trails so people will be able figure out how the trail systems connect, Marino said.

In 2014, the El Dorado to Ski Run trail will be built. This will be paid for from state and federal sources.

“Right now we are 98 percent funded,” Marino said. “We do have to acquire land. We will do that this summer.”

This will be a class one trail on the lake side of Highway 50 going from the Alta Mira Building to Ski Run Boulevard. That building will eventually be the eastern terminus for the Lakeview Commons project. (California Tahoe Conservancy is planning to buy the structure-land to return it to open space-recreation.)

When the Linear Park project begins this summer it will also include repaving of that entire trail.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Tattoo is a beautiful 7-year-old purebred dappled Dachshund who would like nothing better than to sit in your lap all day.



He likes to play with other dogs and is excellent at keeping cats and other small furry things out of his yard. He also likes well-mannered children.

Tattoo is neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. He is at the

El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Editorial: Gene damage linked to smoking

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the April 7, 2013, Times Colonist in Victoria, Canada.***

It's a remarkable fact that although lung cancer is directly linked to smoking, the disease was almost unheard of 100 years ago. Tobacco has been in circulation since the 1600s, yet as late as 1912, fewer than 400 cases had been reported worldwide. In the 1920s, medical students were still summoned when lung cancer was found in a patient, the condition being so rare.

Today, unfortunately, the picture has changed completely. Around 20,000 Canadians alone died of lung cancer last year, and death rates are sky-high in many Third World countries.

Part of the explanation for this public-health calamity lies in the way tobacco use has changed over time. Before mass

production became possible in the 1880s, cigarettes were in short supply.

Pipes were the favored utensil, but they produced a harsh smoke that was unpleasant to inhale. In contrast, modern cigarettes are more easily tolerated, and for that reason, more dangerous.

All of this is common knowledge, of course. That cigarette smoking brought with it an epidemic of lung cancer has been obvious for some decades.

But scientists are beginning to suspect that behind the direct, visible link, something more ominous may be going on. One clue is the large number of non-smokers who get the disease.

Nowadays, between 10 and 15 percent of lung cancer deaths occur in people who have never used tobacco. In B.C., that translates to 300 fatalities annually. Even 50 years ago, that would have stunned the medical world.

Without question, many of these “innocent” deaths are due to the impact of second-hand smoke, though most developed countries have aggressive laws against lighting up in public places.

However, in just the last year or two, a series of studies, some involving Canadian researchers, has revealed a chilling new possibility. It appears that parents who smoke may be passing on to their children genetic mutations caused by the habit. If true, that opens up an entirely novel form of disease transmission.

There is an important distinction to draw here. It’s well known that cancer is linked to certain genes, and that in some families, those genes are passed along from one generation to the next. Variations of the BRCA1 gene are a cause of hereditary breast cancer.

But what these recent studies show is that smoking injures healthy genes, and that these newly damaged genes can be handed down from parent to child.

Like any emerging field of knowledge, the research is not complete and these findings may not stand up. It’s also unclear whether offspring who inherit this damage will go on to become lung-cancer victims themselves.

What can be said so far is that the genetic damage occurs in areas of the human DNA chain that are linked to serious ailments. These include brain cancer and leukemia, and possibly also lung cancer.

There are profound moral as well as medical implications at stake here. Adults who smoke already know the risks they take with their own well-being.

But now it appears they could be jeopardizing the health of any children they may have. Playing dice with your own life is one thing. Playing with the safety of an unborn generation is another matter entirely.

It will have to be seen exactly what this line of research uncovers. But the results are already sufficiently troubling to warrant a broader debate.

Smoking remains legal in Canada, in part, because it was thought the risks could be contained. Now it seems that may not be the case.

Whether an outright ban is desirable, or even practical, is still perhaps in question.

But at a minimum, there are some new victims whose interests we must consider.