Sierra introduces untraditional ski event

Sierra-at-Tahoe will host freeskier Tanner Hall and the inaugural Tanner Hall Invitational on March 30.

Linked to the birth of freesking, Hall is an accomplished all-around freeskier with multiple X Games gold medals in slopestyle and superpipe.

Hall has invited 15 of the best skiers in the world to participate in a one-of-a-kind event with a feature that will offer a different format than the traditional slopestyle contest.

Snow Park Technologies, the Reno-Tahoe-based company that builds the X-Games courses, will work with Sierra Resort to build the unique feature that will incorporate a hip and quarterpipe. The contest will be a jam format with the athletes also serving as judges.

The hip session will be 1 hour, 15 minute-long jam session, followed by a quarterpipe jam session of the same length.

The cash purse will be a minimum of $10,000.

World-class skiers including Henrik Harlaut, Phil Casabon, Sammy Carlson, Torin Yater-Wallace, Mike Hornbeck, Joffrey Pollet-Villard, Duncan Adams, and more will attend the event.

The contest will be broadcast on a live webcast.

K’s Kitchen: Asparagus is the star

By Kathryn Reed

Make sure the marinade covers all of the noodles; otherwise you’ll think this is rather bland. And feel free to use more asparagus, but then I’m not sure you could ever have too much asparagus.



The recipe below is from “Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone” by Deborah Madison.

I’ve used different noodles, so I would pick the Asian noodles you like best. My guess is the recipe would taste good over rice, too.

While I have not tried the marinade with other veggies, I can see this working with other vegetables or used on meat – or tofu.

Sesame Noodles with Asparagus Tips

The Marinade

¼ C sesame oil

3 T dark sesame oil

7 T soy sauce

3 T Chinese black or balsamic vinegar

3½ T dark brown sugar

2 tsp chili oil

1 T minced ginger

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

¼ C chopped cilantro

The Noodles and Asparagus

Salt

2 pounds asparagus, trimmed and thinly sliced on a diagonal

1 14-ounce package thin Chinese egg noodles

10 scallions, including the firm greens, thinly sliced

¼ C sesame seeds, toasted until lightly brown

Mix the marinade ingredients together, stirring to dissolve the sugar.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add salt and the asparagus. Cook until bright green and tender but still firm, just a few minutes. Scoop the asparagus out, rinse it under cold water, and set on a towel to dry.

Pull the noodles apart with your fingers, add them to the boiling water, and give them a quick stir. Boil until tender but not overly soft, tasting them often as they cook. It should take only a few minutes. Pour the noodles into a colander and immediately rise under cold water. Shake off the excess water.

Toss the noodles with all the marinade and most of the scallions, sesame seeds, and asparagus. Mound them in a bowl or on a platter, then garnish with the remaining asparagus, scallions, and sesame seeds.

U.S. trying to lure foreign tourists

By Kevin Sullivan, Washington Post

The Obama administration, along with the U.S. travel and tourism industry, is spending millions of dollars this year to lure foreign visitors. A “Discover America” campaign includes television commercials in nine nations; ads on the Tokyo subway; banners in London and Vancouver, B.C.; Facebook pages in Portuguese and German; and Tweets about the charms of the Dakotas.

The United States has Hollywood, the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, Hawaiian surf, Maine lobsters, Florida beaches and the neon dreams of Las Vegas. We have Graceland, the Golden Gate Bridge, Disney World and the bright lights of Broadway.



The Golden Gate Bridge is a huge draw for foreign visitors. Photo/LTN file

But as global travel and tourism has boomed to historic levels, tourism industry officials said the U.S. share of those visitors has shrunk by almost a third in the past

decade. That’s partly because of increased U.S. security after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but industry analysts say it’s also because China, Turkey and other nations have become huge tourist magnets.

So the United States is now doing what once seemed profoundly unnecessary: shelling out millions of dollars to promote America as an international travel destination. It’s an investment, U.S. officials said, in growing the economy and creating jobs in hotels, restaurants, stores and anywhere else where tourists spend money.

“The more folks who visit America, the more Americans we get back to work,” President Obama said last year in announcing an executive order designed to increase visitors by marketing America abroad and cutting red tape for tourists seeking visas.

The Obama administration, in partnership with the travel and tourism industry, is spending $150 million this year on its promotional effort. Part of it is a “Discover America” campaign that includes television commercials in nine nations, ads on the Tokyo subway, banners in London and Vancouver, Facebook pages in Portuguese and German, and tweets about the charms of the Dakotas.

U.S. officials also have added to staff and offices in China and Brazil to speed the visa process for millions of new visitors.

Some Republican members of Congress have criticized Brand USA, the partnership between the federal government and the travel industry that is coordinating the effort, as a waste of taxpayer dollars that benefits mainly wealthy companies in the travel business. But supporters say that promoting tourism benefits the U.S. economy as a whole.

“Travel and tourism is the quickest way back to economic development and jobs,” said Christopher Thompson, chief

executive of Brand USA. “9/11 changed the world and changed the way people look at us, so we had to up our game.”

Record numbers of tourists are coming to America; last year more than 66 million came, and they spent more than $168 billion here, according to the Commerce Department. But tourism officials said those statistics mask the fact that growth in tourism to the United States has not kept pace with growth in global tourism.

Officials at the U.S. Travel Association, a private industry group, said that a more revealing look at the state of U.S. tourism comes when visitors from Canada and Mexico are removed from the statistics. That leaves “long-haul” tourists, those who travel from one world region to another — say, Europe to Asia or the United States. Those tourists are the most sought-after: They tend to invest more to get here and spend more when they arrive, so they are widely considered a better indicator of the strength of the U.S. market.

Geoff Freeman, a top executive at U.S. Travel, said the number of long-haul travelers to the United States has grown 1 percent in the past 10 years, while long-haul travelers globally are up 40 percent. So the U.S. share of the global market has sharply decreased.

Freeman describes a “lost decade” after 9/11: Long-haul tourists in America did not return to their 2000 levels until 2010. In that decade, the nation lost 460,000 jobs and more than $600 billion in total travel-related spending by foreign tourists, his group estimates.

“There was a perception that America didn’t want their business,” Freeman said, noting that heightened security and stricter visa laws created a “Fortress America” image that deterred many potential tourists.

Other countries have flung open their doors. From Southeast Asia to South America to Eastern Europe, countries have pumped

up their tourism marketing budgets. Some, including Australia and Mexico, are spending more than $100 million a year promoting themselves, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Brand USA is quickly expanding its marketing campaign. It began last year with advertising blitzes in Britain, Canada and Japan. In the coming months, it will restart ads in those countries and add Mexico, Brazil, South Korea, Germany, Australia and China.

“Those nine markets represent 75 percent of all inbound travel to the United States,” said Anne Madison, a Brand USA spokeswoman. “We want to fish where the fish are biting.”

She said that Brand USA has offices in nine countries to pitch U.S. travel to tour operators and the travel press, and it is about to open six more, including ones in China and India.

The marketing campaign features TV ads with a tune called “Land of Dreams,” written and performed by singer Rosanne Cash, and inviting scenes of American life – picnics, beaches, weddings, ballroom dancing. There also are ads in the Tokyo subway, billboards in Vancouver and even a banner near London Bridge.

On Twitter, Brand USA staffers Tweet about everything from Zion National Park in Utah to “the gentle rumbles of the Old South at the Mississippi Delta.” Brand USA also is about to launch a partnership with ESPN to deliver advertising and promotional programming to TV viewers and Web users in Britain.

In October, DeMint and Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., issued a report accusing Brand USA of waste and political patronage. The report said Brand USA threw an needlessly lavish launch party in London last year and has a board stocked with major Democratic donors.

Brand USA officials said the launch was held at the world's largest English-speaking travel trade show and made "good business sense." They said all board members are experienced travel industry leaders appointed by the secretary of commerce in a "politically neutral process."

The report criticized what Brand USA was claiming as "in-kind" contributions when seeking matching federal funds. It said Brand USA had claimed that newspaper stories or television interviews about Brand USA's activities had a value that could be used to claim matching funds. For example, it said, Brand USA claimed a segment on Travel Channel International had an in-kind value of $4.9 million.

Madison, the Brand USA spokeswoman, said all such in-kind contribution requests have been withdrawn. She said Brand USA officials are working with the Commerce Department, which approves the organization's requests for matching funds, to create clearer guidelines for in-kind contributions.

"I think clearly there are hiccups that the Brand USA team went through in the early stages," Sorenson said. "I think if we could start the whole thing all over, some of those hiccups would have been avoided. I don't think they're monumental."

Beyond Brand USA's activities, the State Department is spending millions of dollars to make the visa process easier for foreign tourists, especially in China and Brazil, where demand is growing fastest. It has added two consulates in Brazil and one in China, and several more are planned. Others are being renovated and expanded, and the department has added more staff to process visas.

Edward Ramotowski, the State Department official in charge of visa services, said improving services in Brazil and China was the best way to get "bang for our buck."

U.S. officials said that in 2011, the number of Brazilian tourists increased 26 percent, to 1.5 million, and that they

spent and estimated $8.5 billion. The number of Chinese tourists increased 36 percent, to nearly 1.1 million, and they spent an estimated $7.7 billion. The average tourist from Brazil or China spends more per visit than tourists from any other nation, industry officials said.

A visa process that often took just days before 9/11 took weeks or months after the attacks when Congress mandated that almost all foreigners applying for visas be interviewed personally by U.S. consular officials abroad.

Average waiting times have now been cut from almost five months to less than a week in Brazil and from 72 days to less than three weeks in China, Ramotowski said.

Mancuso 2nd overall in super G for season

By USSA

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland -– Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) capped an incredible super G season with a second place finish in the women's super G standings. She was in contention for the title, but high winds and heavy overnight snow forced officials to cancel the final Audi FIS Alpine World Cup Final super G, handing the title to Slovenia's Tina Maze.

Mancuso finished top six, including four podiums in the six contested super G races this season.

Mancuso ended the season just a mere 55 points behind Maze, who locked in the overall title nine races before the end of

the season.

Also in super G, Lindsey Vonn (Vail) missed the final two races due to injury, but captured two wins and finished fourth.

Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.) was 12th, Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) 13th and Stacey Cook (Mammoth Lakes) 34th.

This was the second day in a row that finals races had to be canceled due to challenging weather.

Canceled races at the World Cup Finals cannot be rescheduled.

Gamestop fraud has connections to Tahoe

By Rachel Weber, Game Industry International

Frank Christopher Olivera, former vice president of corporate communications and public affairs at Gamestop Texas, has been sentenced to 51 months in federal prison for defrauding the company.

Olivera invented a company, Cloud Communications LLC, and used it to steal over $1.7 million from GameStop, using fake invoices and a fictitious employee.

“Olivera directed Gamestop to send the payments from Gamestop’s offices in Grapevine to Cloud Communications LLC in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe, Nevada and in Canada,” said a statement from the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

“In addition to creating a fictitious company, Olivera also created a fictitious person, ‘Jennifer Miller,’ to serve as the point of contact at Cloud Communications. Upon receipt of payments from Gamestop, Olivera would deposit the checks into a bank account held by Cloud Communications and then would transfer the fraudulently obtained funds into his personal bank account.”

Olivera pleaded guilty to the charges last November and was sentenced by Judge Boyle last Thursday. As well as the jail time he’s been ordered to pay $134,651 in additional costs. He has already returned “most of” the $1.7 million to GameStop.

Ski report: Wax your skis, board



Follow the sun and wax your skis.

Here is the March 14 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

USFS wants input on OHV grant

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is seeking public comment for an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Cooperative Funds Grant application recently submitted to the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

The OHMVR grant is used to provide staffing for OHV education and information, law enforcement patrols, resource and use monitoring, and to provide protection for both natural and cultural resources in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The 30-day public comment period ends April 1. Electronic comments may be submitted to Don Lane at dlane@fs.fed.us or the OHMVR Division at OHVinfo@parks.ca.gov. Written comments may be sent to Don Lane at the LTBMU Forest Supervisor's Office at 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

Orthopedic center at Kahle Park proposed

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Barton Health and Douglas County are in talks to locate an orthopedic center of excellence in Kahle Park.

Barton approached the county with the idea and this week the Douglas County Board of Commissioners approved a letter of intent allowing county personnel to explore a possible project in Stateline, according to Steve Mokrohisky, Douglas County manager.

Any deal would likely involve a long-term lease of the property and include county use of a Barton building for a library, senior services or some other public use, Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News* after the inaugural Financial State of the County meeting on March 11 at the Carson Valley Inn in Minden.



Douglas County is considering Barton's proposal to build an orthopedic center at Kahle Park in Stateline.

For Barton, a central facility would consolidate four doctors' offices and bring seven physicians into the same building with a surgery center, radiology, sports performance center and other services, said Jonathan Finnoff, a doctor of osteopathic medicine and the medical director of rehabilitation and sports medicine with Barton's Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

"All different parties with a vested interest under one roof," Finnoff said, would enable the practice to integrate various programs and better consult with and refer patients to one another.

Barton looked at 17 sites on the South Shore, but found no existing structures that could accommodate their plans, according to Chris Proctor, director of the Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

Barton is still considering several sites, but if Kahle Park worked out, the health facility would be built near the existing parking garage and all other structures already in the park would remain. Initial concept designs have been rendered for partners and potential investors, but Proctor cautioned that it's early in the process and many factors, such as site and cost, will determine the final plan.

If all goes to plan, Barton is expecting to have the new center completed in two years.

The possible Barton deal was talked about at the county meeting as part of Douglas County's plans to cut costs and increase revenue in order to deal with a lingering $3 million budget deficit.

"If we fix it one year at a time, we won't fix it structurally," Mokrohisky said during his presentation to about 100 attendees.

To do that, the county now is using priority-based budgeting. Instead of instituting across the board cuts to meet goals, said Mokrohisky, the county is reassessing what it spends on everything and reallocating money where it is most needed while reducing overall costs.

For example, the county decided its permit requirement for home-based businesses was a waste of staff time and is now spending some of that money on better enforcement of vacation home rentals, mostly at Lake Tahoe.

It is also taking some property tax money to help pay the annual $4 million road maintenance tab.

The county says it wants to work with and support businesses wherever possible. The potential Barton deal may be the most ambitious, but the county is also making zoning changes and reviewing sign ordinances to better accommodate businesses. And in a first, it filed an amicus brief in support of Sierra

Colina, the proposed housing development in Stateline that is being sued by the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

The county is also working with other area municipalities to generate revenue and outsource services. Douglas County has added $330,000 to its general fund by providing geographical information services to Carson City and Storey and Lyon counties, and saves about $50,000 a year contracting with Carson City to supply signal light maintenance.

Since 2008, about 60 staff positions in the county have been eliminated and in 2011 salaries were reduced 5 percent. Since 2010, employees have absorbed all of the annual 10 percent increases in health insurance costs.

The county's projected budget for 2013-14 is $39.9 million, about $1 million above its projected revenues of $38.9 million.

Letter: Unity provides meal for Tahoe's hungry

To the community,

The Bread & Broth program is very grateful to be the recipient of Unity at the Lake's "We Believe in You" tithe donation which recognizes organizations and individuals who make a difference in the world.

Unity at the Lake members have long supported Bread & Broth's feeding of the South Shore's hungry. In fact, many of B&B's fourth Monday of the month's cooking and serving volunteer crew are members of Unity at the Lake.

Unity at the Lake’s donation was used toward the Feb. 25 Adopt A Day of Nourishment. An energetic Unity sponsor crew joined the regular B&B crew to provide a Mexican theme dinner featuring a tasty taco casserole and lots of guacamole.

Paige Rice, a Unity sponsor volunteer wrote, “It was an honor to meet and serve the spectacular people of Lake Tahoe. Unity at the Lake is happy to continue their support of the B&B program.”

Bread & Broth is very fortunate to have the support of Unity at the Lake and their exceptional members whose work and service have made South Lake Tahoe a more enlightened and giving community. B&B appreciates Unity’s involvement in this much needed community service.

If you would like to join Bread & Broth in feeding the hungry of our community, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Carson City bounty hunter faces charges in S. Tahoe

Five misdemeanor charges have been filed against a Carson City bounty hunter in regards to his actions in South Lake Tahoe.



Ty Robben

Douglas Lewis with Justin Brothers Bail Bonds has been charged with unlawful arrest, aggravated trespass, vandalism, battery and damaging a vehicle.

The incident occurred in October at the South Lake Tahoe home of Ty Robben. Robben wanted felony charges filed against the suspect. He said the bounty hunters broke down his door and used a Taser on him.

Robben has since filed a civil suit against the Carson City firm.

It was the delay in action that led Robben in January to protest near the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report