Young professionals go German for first mixer of 2013

Tahoe Regional Young Professionals will ring in 2013 with a sampling of German-style food and beverages at Himmel Haus for TRYP's Jan. 22 mixer from 7–10pm.

The evening will also include live acoustic music and networking opportunities.

Admission is free for TRYP members and $5 for non-members. Annual TRYP memberships cost $40.

The Himmel Haus is at 3819 Saddle Road, South Lake Tahoe.

For more information about Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, go online.

NV Energy customers allowed to keep old-style meters

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

Facing pressure from state officials and customers, NV Energy will let ratepayers continue using old-style meters instead of switching to new digital ones.

The power company, which serves about 90 percent of Nevada's population, said Wednesday it will offer an analog meter to customers who do not want a digital "smart meter," which transmits power-usage data from a home or business directly to the utility.

Customers critical of smart meters have said they would rather keep their existing analog reader. But under NV Energy's plan, those meters will be replaced with "refurbished" ones to ensure that all company readers meet industry standards for accuracy, the utility said.

NV Energy is advising customers not to call to schedule an installation, as the company must still file more paperwork with the state Public Utilities Commission. Once approved, the company said, it will contact people who have said they do not want a smart meter and set up an appointment for the new analog one.

The PUC has estimated that 4,500 consumers in Clark County and 3,000 in Northern Nevada do not want a smart meter.

NV Energy's announcement came hours after the PUC voted 2-1 to give NV Energy more discretion in choosing an alternative meter, leaving open the possibility that customers could keep their current analog readers. In his dissent, Commissioner David Noble said the analog meters are inadequate and run slower with age.

The commission on Wednesday also OK'd lowering customers' installation costs of an alternative meter to $52 from the previously approved $107.

At the hearing, Commission Chairman Alaina Burtenshaw said there was a "good indication" that dissatisfied customers wanted to keep their analog readers or make the company replace the smart meters with analogs.

"This is a win for the people," Dan Jacobsen, technical staff manager for the state Bureau of Consumer Protection, said of the vote. "The commission gave them what they wanted."

Las Vegas-based NV Energy plans to replace all 1.35 million of its analog meters with digital ones. Some 1.22 million smart meters had been installed statewide as of late November.

Nevadans have complained, with little proof, that smart meters can cause hair loss, insomnia, birth defects, DNA damage, brain-wave alteration and terrorist attacks.

An Energy Department report said many companies had not done enough to protect smart meters from hackers. Also, a branch of the World Health Organization in 2011 reportedly called radio-frequency radiation from cellphones, utility meters and other devices a “possible carcinogen.”

Ski report: Wear warm clothes

Layer up and enjoy the great snow quality.

Here is the Jan. 11 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

TY&FS helping students in LTUSD with behavioral issues

Tahoe Youth & Family Services was awarded a subcontract with El Dorado County for the Primary Intervention Program at Tahoe Valley, Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet and Sierra

House elementary schools.

The goal of the program is to help kindergarten through third-grade students with mild aggression, withdrawal, learning difficulties, or who may be at-risk for developing emotional problems to enhance their social and emotional development.

The PIP program is funded through the California Mental Health Services Act and supports 12 to 15 weeks each semester for individualized, non-directive play therapy sessions with the PIP worker and the child.

Scientist: Consumers have role in climate change; forecast for Tahoe bleak because of less snow

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – While China was the No. 1 fossil fuel emitting country in 2011, what is missing from most conversations is who is consuming all the goods that country is producing.

A significant amount of CO2 emissions comes from making things. And it is people in the United States who are buying those things made in China.

This was one of the points driven home Thursday by Chris Field – that consumers have a role to play and must be held accountable, just as the polluter does and should be.

Field was the keynote speaker Jan. 10 at the Operation Sierra

Storm Meteorologist Conference in Stateline. The four-day conference ends Saturday.

The scientist was part of the team that won the 2007 Nobel Prize and lead author of the study on the effects of global climate change.



Scientist Chris Field on Jan. 10 talks about climate change. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Field explained how it was thought when the 1997 Kyoto Protocols were adopted that developing nations had a long ways to go to catch the industrialized nations when it came to emissions. That theory was proved wrong.

In 2011, the top four emitters in the world accounted for 62 percent of global emissions: China – 28 percent; United States – 16 percent; Europe – 11 percent, and India – 7 percent.

But that is not the whole story.

“Per capita, China’s emissions are one-quarter what they are per capita compared to the United States,” Field told the group gathered at Harveys casino.

Based on data from the Mauna Loa Observatory he said there is proof atmospheric CO2 has increased 40 percent since the 1950s.

Beyond that, ice cores extracted from Antarctica can show scientists what was going on thousands of years ago.

To simulate how small amounts of particles can change the composition of the atmosphere, Field took two 1-liter bottles of water. Into one he inserted drops of red dye to represent the amount of CO2 released in the atmosphere during the Industrial Age.

Then he shined a red light and green light through the now pink water. The red went through, the green did not. The experiment was to show selective absorption – which is what happens in the atmosphere.

“Heat trapping gas alters climate,” Field said.

And while it has been proved fossil fuels are altering the atmosphere, which in turn changes climate, Field readily admits, “Mostly we live in a fossil fuel powered world.”

For Lake Tahoe, a diminishing snowpack and greater threat of wildfire are two of the key factors as climate change continues to take hold.

“Snowpack is vital to the economy and ecosystem. There is a clear trend of warming in mountain ranges. Snow melts earlier each spring,” Field said.

He said some models show the snowpack in the Sierra diminishing by 50 percent by the end of the century, while other models say it will be 90 percent.

This in turn will lead to greater wildfires because the brush will be so much drier. The threat is already there because the time between snowmelt and first storms is getting longer.

Another consequence of less snowpack is less water reaching the agricultural heartland of California. Farmers in the Central Valley grow crops with irrigated water – from reservoirs that have been filled from Sierra snow.

Field said it is going to take technology, leadership and cultural change to alter the course the world is on when it comes to climate change.

Classical musicians to play at Edgewood Tahoe

W’intermezzo at Edgewood Tahoe is a classical concert and artists’ reception featuring the internationally acclaimed classical duo of American pianist Deborah Dewey and Icelandic violinist Elfa Run Kristinsdottir.

The Jan. 31 event is a fundraiser for Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe.

Tickets are $29 in advance and $35 at the door. They are for sale online and during business hours at Deb Howard & Co. in South Lake Tahoe.

The performance starts at 6pm at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Letter: Sierra Valley Electric gives back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

The guests at the evening meal provided by Bread & Broth on Jan. 7 were graciously served by the willing and helpful employees of Sierra Valley Electric Inc. and two of their family members.

The volunteer crew representing the evening's Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor included Nick and Hailey Chandler, Craig and Megan Hall, Sandy Herback and Tim Coolbaugh.

It was the first time that Sandy Herback had volunteered at a B&B dinner and found it to be a "very thought provoking and gratifying experience." She also "highly recommends to other people this volunteering opportunity."

Bread & Broth, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing hot meals to the hungry of our community, is sincerely grateful to Sierra Valley Electric for their sponsorship and donation of $250 for the costs of the dinner. With the financial support of individuals, club/organizations, churches and local businesses like Sierra Valley Electric, B&B has been able to provide full course meals every Monday for the past 23 years at St. Theresa Church parish hall and soup dinners every Friday at the Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church for the past three years.

The volunteers of Bread & Broth appreciate the commitment of Sierra Valley Electric, Inc. to the goals of B&B and the less fortunate members of our community. If you are interested in supporting the B&B program in any way, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Panelists warn lawmakers about challenges of online gambling

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

As the prospect of passage of federal legislation legalizing online poker play continues to dim, several states are looking to move independently to offer various forms of Internet gambling.

But panelists in Sunday's closing session of the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States had cautionary advice for lawmakers: Glean as much regulatory expertise as you can find, stay ahead of the technology curve and be prepared for a lot of disagreement.

The council concluded three days of meetings that brought about 100 lawmakers and regulators from 21 states, a Canadian province and Washington, D.C., to the Rio. Representatives of several American Indian tribes that operate casinos also attended.

Late last year, the council adopted a resolution on its position on federal Internet gaming legislation. Citing states' rights in the oversight of public policy within their borders, the council stated that it would oppose any federal legislation that would diminish state policymakers' authority over gaming within their states.

The organization in late November notified Senate Majority

Leader Harry Reid and Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, who at the time were considering a last-ditch effort to bring Internet poker legislation to a vote, and other members of Congress of its position.

Lobbyists for the gaming industry, most notably the American Gaming Association, support federal legislation so that companies that operate in multiple states can have a consistent Internet gaming policy nationwide. The bill that Reid and Kyl have proposed would allow states to opt out of participating in iGaming.

Now that the council, which represents state lawmakers from several states that have some form of commercial or tribal gambling, has taken that position, many members are educating themselves about the industry and the issues. Sunday's panel included five Internet gaming experts, including two Las Vegas attorneys that have been on the front lines of the debate in Nevada.

Tony Cabot of the Lewis & Roca law firm, who also is an adjunct instructor in gaming law at UNLV, told lawmakers that Nevada has learned a great deal since it began issuing licenses to companies to operate intrastate Internet poker in 2012.

"Even the most experienced people are not completely ready to regulate online play," Cabot said. "You will need at least a year before a regulatory body can competently regulate it. If New Jersey thinks they can do it in three months, they're kidding themselves."

New Jersey recently became the second state to approve legislation to conduct Internet gambling.

Cabot said it took Nevada regulators six months to determine what companies and individuals needed to be investigated for licensure because it wasn't just the oversight of games that needed review but the means of communication. Many of the

regulations for poker play in casino poker rooms could be used for online poker, but state officials also had to review player eligibility verification by age and geography, the prevention of collusion and security concerns.

“You can be sure that hackers, cheats and scoundrels will try to hack the system,” Cabot said. “There will be persons trying to defeat the verification systems. They’ll find the weakest of the jurisdictions and compromise those jurisdictions.”

Toni Cowan of the Catania & Ehrlich law firm said she didn’t think most government entities realize how rapidly technology is changing the industry – which is one of the reasons she has more confidence in states regulating gaming than the federal government.

Federal lawmakers approved the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act to oversee aspects of tribal gaming, but she said the legislation “treats gambling and games as if they’ve been frozen in time.”

“Progressive states like Nevada and New Jersey are constantly changing their gambling legislation to try to keep up with changing technology,” Cowan said. “The federal government has done nothing, mostly due to political reasons.”

Panelists told lawmakers there are other things states must do if they are going to effectively oversee Internet gaming.

Kimberly Arnold, co-manager of the Denver-based Innovation Group, said it would be important for states to watch how social media sites affect the gaming landscape. Her company also is studying the potential of online casinos cannibalizing land-based casinos if Internet play is legalized.

Panelist Mark Hichar, a lawyer with the Hinckley, Allen & Snyder law firm in Boston, told lawmakers they’ll also need to pay attention to the lottery industry.

Lottery directors from Iowa and Kentucky were among the state

officials that lobbied against the Reid-Kyl online poker legislation. Some state lotteries already have moved into online lottery ticket sales, with Illinois and Georgia lotteries beginning sales last year.

And then there was panelist Michael Fagan of the St. Louis-based Center for Advanced Prosecution, who suggested that state lawmakers keep online gaming illegal.

“Public opinion polls show an overwhelming majority of Americans don’t want Internet poker casinos or other forms of Internet casino gambling legalized,” Fagan said.

He said the Reid-Kyl bill is “deceitfully titled” (the Gambling Prohibition, Poker Consumer Protection Act) and that analysts say the Internet poker business model is unsustainable.

“If Congress legalizes Internet casinos, it would put the federal government into the gambling business for the first time in modern American history,” Fagan said. “Governments should protect, not exploit, their people. For those with genuine concern about the supposed ambiguity of the (federal) Wire Act, a simple legislative fix effectively broadening the scope of the Wire Act to more clearly include all forms of gambling and all types of communication facilities, including the Internet, is all that is required.”

Sugar Bowl implements chairlift changes after boy’s

death

By Stephen Magagnini, Sacramento Bee

A year after John Henderson, an avid 7-year-old skier from Davis, fell off a chairlift to his death, Sugar Bowl has announced a comprehensive chairlift safety program inspired by the boy's parents.

The improvements recommended by John's mom and dad – UC Davis Medical Center doctors Helen Chew and Mark Henderson – include live video cameras at each lift and the lowering of the safety bar for kids under 51 inches, who aren't allowed to ride without adults.

"John had a certain light about him, and the best way to honor his memory is to do something positive," said Henderson, associate dean of admissions at UC Davis Medical School. "For a long time, we didn't even want to get up in the morning."

John, 43 inches tall, was a second-grader at North Davis Elementary who rode the chair with two teammates on the Sugar Bowl ski team.

At 11:15am Dec. 18, 2011, John was riding the Mount Lincoln express chairlift when he fell 52 feet. Though he wore a helmet, he died of head trauma two days later.

"It's very rare for somebody to fall out of a chair," said Michael Berry, president of the National Ski Areas Association. "It's usually at the beginning or the end of the lift, not midride."

Sugar Bowl, on its website, said 13 new safety measures are being adopted this season because "ultimately our safety program was insufficient to prevent this tragedy."

The ski team coach allowed the three boys to board without supervision, and "we also believe the chairlift restraint bar

was not lowered properly at the loading terminal and children of this age were unable to lower the bar themselves," the resort said.

A 10-month investigation into the youngster's death was inconclusive because of "conflicting accounts and few direct eyewitnesses," but found no evidence of horseplay by the other kids.

Sugar Bowl's risk manager, Nicole Lieberman, said the resort worked closely with John's parents to craft the new chairlift safety measures.

"They have undergone an unspeakable tragedy and they chose to deal with that by working with Sugar Bowl and the industry to see what could be done differently," Lieberman said. "Working with them has been amazing and inspiring. We had many meetings, phone conversations and emails looking at lift safety."

The resort, 90 minutes from Sacramento on Donner Summit, averages 230,000 visitors a year and has 13 chairlifts and a gondola, Lieberman said.

The new safety measures this season include:

• The installation of a web-based camera at chairlift loading stations to monitor the loading process, lift operators and riders.

"The camera was our suggestion, so you can diagnose a problem and use it to change procedures and give feedback to a lift operator who isn't putting the bar down," said Henderson, who with his wife spent months studying ski-lift safety. "Most accidents occur because of problems with loading."

Sugar Bowl believes it's the first resort in the country to have cameras at chairlifts, Lieberman said.

• Skiers and snowboarders will ski up to a 51-inch mascot, the

“safety bear,” and those shorter than that will not be allowed to ride the chair without an adult.

Henderson said they got the idea from the height requirement for rides at Disneyland.

Sugar Bowl developed the height stations with Mammoth Mountain, Lieberman said. “These are the first height stations I’m aware of,” said Berry, who represents more than 300 resorts.

• Sugar Bowl installed bull’s-eye targets on the chair seats on three of its chairlifts so far – an idea the Hendersons borrowed from Canyons Resort in Park City. “It’s been really quite phenomenal to watch children and adults aim for those bull’s-eyes to help riders sit back on the seats and be properly spaced apart,” Lieberman said.

• Sugar Bowl installed a training chairlift in the base area that patrons can practice on, Lieberman said. “We plan to install another one,” she said. “We’re really focusing on education and outreach.”

• The resort will train lift operators and ski team coaches in lifts and promote lift safety through the National Ski Areas Association.

Berry said a ski safety website, www.kidsonlifts.org, “was inspired by John Henderson.”

“The legacy of this tragedy is that it’s not repeated,” Berry said.

Chew, professor of medicine and director of the clinical breast cancer program at the UCD Med Center, said she and her husband had no interest in filing a lawsuit against the resort.

“That was never our intention,” Chew said. “If we could actually get the resort to make some lasting changes and lead

the industry in chairlift safety, that would be the best outcome and could affect generations of kids.”

Henderson and his wife and son Paul, 17, still ski Sugar Bowl. “The anniversary of John’s death was Dec. 20, and it’s been a very difficult couple of weeks around Christmas without him,” Henderson said. “But I think these are wonderful changes.”

Weather delays opening of key road in Placerville

The closure of Fair Lane in Placerville has been extended due to weather delays.

The road is not set to reopen Feb. 4.

Access to businesses along Fair Lane will remain open via Placerville Drive. Access to the County Government Center will be via Forni Road or Ray Lawyer Drive.

People with questions or concerns should call (530) 642.5250.