Time to apply for California Legislature's fellowship program

Applications for the 2013-14 California Senate Fellows Program and Assembly Fellowship Program are available to interested college graduates.

The programs provide college graduates an opportunity to become full-time Senate or Assembly staff members at the State Capitol in Sacramento for 11 months beginning in October.

Fellows are assigned to the personal or committee staff of a Senator or Assembly member, and also participate in academic seminars with legislators, senior staff, journalists, lobbyists, and state government officials. The fellowship programs are administered by the Center for California Studies at CSU Sacramento in partnership with the state Senate and state Assembly. The programs are geared toward Republicans and Democrats.

Fellows are paid a monthly stipend plus health, vision, and dental benefits. They enroll as graduate students at Sacramento State and receive graduate units from the Sacramento State Government Department or Public Policy and Administration Program. The enrollment fees are paid by the programs.

Anyone who will be at least 20 years of age and a graduate of a four-year college or university by Sep. 1, 2013, is eligible to apply. There is no preferred major. Individuals with advanced degrees and those in mid-career are also encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is Feb. 11.

For more info, call (916) 278.6906 or email calstudies@csus.edu.

Cross country skiing – no need to pay, travel far

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – If you don't like to break trail, wait a day or two after a snowstorm and it's possible snowmobilers will have laid down a path that is better than what fellow human-powered recreationists have done.

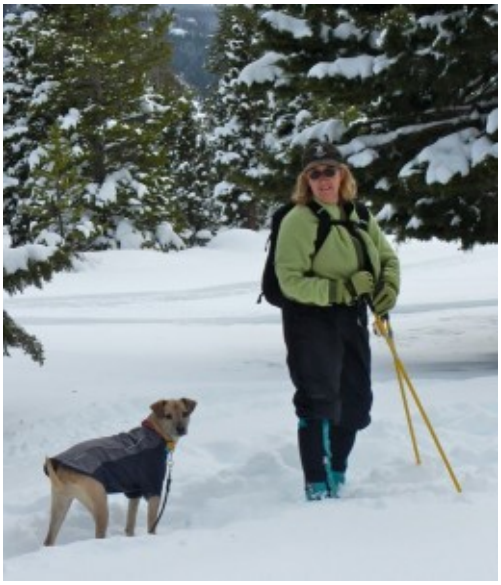
Those sled tracks are wide enough to find your own groove, whereas someone else's skis may be too wide or narrow to adequately follow.

Last weekend we found great snowmobile tracks to follow in Meyers just off Highway 50.

I've never been one who likes hills on cross country skis, so this flat area was ideal. Plus, the snow was the perfect consistency – whether in powder or the sled trail.

With three snowmobilers still out playing when we arrived, we were the first to benefit from their maneuvers. And we thanked them for that.

It doesn't take long to think we're in some remote location. The din of the highway has disappeared and pristine snow shimmers around us. Pines with their boughs full of clumps of snow loom tall.



Sue and AJ on a trek through the snow in Meyers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Smiles cross our faces as we glide along in what becomes our private playground.

Then we stumble upon modern-day equipment. This is where the U.S. Forest Service in summer 2011 installed a fire weather station.

Forward we go and head a bit to our right. There we see houses. People along Modoc and other streets have this area practically in their back yard.

Not much farther and we hit the road that leads to Tahoe Paradise Park. Had we crossed it, we would have come to Lake Tahoe Golf Course. Instead, we choose to ski along the tennis courts at the park.

Across Lake Baron we see a group of snowshoers exploring that section of the forest.

Oddly, we see signs saying no dogs or trespassing at the lake, but no sign saying there is a lake there. It looks like a drowning waiting to happen. It’s not obvious it’s a lake with

the snow on it.

We shake our heads and meander farther. As we head back toward the highway we veer out to the right to make this as wide of a loop excursion as possible.

While this trek didn’t get the heart rate up, it was a great way to get a little exercise outdoors without seeing many people on a busy weekend.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go west on Highway 50. Go beyond the bug station. The Caltrans chain RV was out when we went. We parked well before that. This is before the climb up Echo Summit. Climb the snowbank and start having fun.

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Chamber mixer benefits 2 South Shore food banks

For the past five years, it has been a holiday tradition for the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce to give back with a Business After Hours Mixer.

Every holiday season the chamber hosts its Holiday Mixer to give back to those less fortunate in the community. This year’s event is Jan. 10 from 5:30-8:30pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe. Beneficiaries are Christmas Cheer and Bread

& Broth. Bring canned and non-perishable food items to donate. For each item you bring, you will earn extra raffle tickets. Event proceeds will be split between the two food banks.

Tickets are only $10 for members or $20 for prospective members, and include food prepared by Riva Grill, one drink and raffle tickets.

For more information, call Emily Abernathy at (775) 588.1728, ext. 303.

Nobel Prize winner to talk climate change at Tahoe forum

Chris Field, a 2007 Nobel Prize team winner and lead author of the study on the effects of global climate change, is the keynote speaker at Operation Sierra Storm Meteorologist Conference in Stateline on Jan. 10.

Field, was the co-chair for Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that shared the 2007 Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore. He’s the director of the Department of Global Ecology, Carnegie Institution for Science at Stanford University and a 2009 Heinz Award recipient.

The three-day conference combines education, topical and newsworthy discussions, networking opportunities and live broadcasts from news affiliates throughout the West Coast. Attendees include television meteorologists from Houston, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Diego, Sacramento, San Francisco and Reno.

This year’s conference will examine current and future climate change expectations, policy matters, Hurricane Sandy and avalanche forecasting, awareness and safety.

Field’s presentation is open to the public. It will be from 8-9:30am at Harveys Cabaret Theater. Seating is limited. RSVP online by 5pm Jan. 7.

Top Caesars exec leaves company

By Hoa Nguyen, Press of Atlantic City

Big D – as Don Marrandino was known when he ran Harrah’s Tahoe and Harveys – stepped down as head of Caesars Entertainment properties in Atlantic City and Philadelphia on Friday, according to the company.

No reason was given for his departure, although company officials said in a release he was leaving to pursue new opportunities. Marrandino could not be reached Friday night.

The prolific Atlantic City native was named Caesars’ eastern division president in 2009, returning to his hometown after working in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe.

With credentials that include singing backup vocals for Donny and Marie Osmond and friendships with celebrities, such as rock legend Sammy Hagar and country star Toby Keith, Marrandino was known for his sense of entertainment and ability to deliver popular acts to the resort.

This year, Caesars, under Marrandino's leadership, brought Guns N' Roses to the House of Blues in Showboat Casino Hotel as well as Van Halen and Madonna to Boardwalk Hall.

"Throughout his career with Caesars, Don has been a great partner and contributor, displaying a dedication to service and a knack for cultivating innovative entertainment strategies," Tom Jenkin, Caesars' president of operations, said in a release.

N. Nevada casinos remember Elvis on his birthday

By Mel Shields, Sacramento Bee

In July 1971, huge letters atop the Sahara Tahoe (now the Horizon) announced Elvis Presley's first Northern Nevada engagement.

It cost $15 plus tax to see the show. He would play the High Sierra Theater at the hotel several more times until his last date in May 1976, each visit prompting huge press and long lines, along with increasing prices.

In 1973 he donated money to Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe for its new intensive care unit (now named for his mother, Gladys); five days after doing so he was admitted with the flu and had to cancel his remaining concerts.

It has become traditional in the past few years for casinos to celebrate the King's birthday (his 78th would have been Monday) during the post-holiday slump. Impersonators are booked practically everywhere to celebrate the man who entered the Nevada showroom market and changed it forever. Plenty of stars had played the rooms before his first concerts at the Vegas International, but Elvis made every appearance an event.

• The Silver Legacy hosts "Elvis and Friends" tonight with a series of parties. Johnny Baron (a veteran of "Legends in Concert") performs as Elvis at 8pm in the coincidentally named Silver Baron Lounge.

• Another "Legends in Concert" Elvis-impersonating alum plays the Jackson Rancheria on Sunday. Johnny Fortuno got his start playing with Don Ho in Hawaii but moved on to master Elvis, winning Vegas' Ultimate Elvis Competition in 2011. He will be joined by members of the Stamps Quartet (backers of Elvis from 1972-77).

• Brian Andrews (once an "American Superstars" regular) performs as Elvis in the cabaret of the Carson Valley Inn through Jan. 12.

California wineries forecast healthy sales in 2013

By Chris Rauber, San Francisco Business Times

A surprisingly healthy Bay Area wine grape harvest in 2012 is bolstering spirits of local vineyard and winery owners, while

weak harvests in France and other competitors is another short-term boost.

That doesn't mean the region's wine industry is entirely out of the woods, after several tough years, but it gives folks some things to be happy about, along with stronger sales in some categories.

"We've seen an upswing in our sales" in 2012, said Tim Persson, recently appointed CEO of Napa's Hess Collection winery. "It's been very welcome, after several years of intermittent results."

Persson, who started as chief executive in July, said the industry as a whole is benefiting from the broader economic recovery and is experiencing something of a supply-demand rebalancing after years of "a glut of supply relative to demand" in international wine markets.

But Bay Area wineries still face dangerous potential icebergs, including the fears that "debt wranglings" in Washington, D.C., could tip the economy back into recession or otherwise weaken the value of the dollar.

Dangers more specific to the wine business also lurk in the coming year and the years ahead.

"The wine business itself is very robust and has pulled out of the recession pretty nicely," said Rob Carrol, a San Francisco-based partner at Nixon Peabody LLP law firm and head of its Beverage Alcohol Group. But some higher-priced wines could continue to suffer since recession-tutored consumers "realize there are some fine wines at the lower price levels."

Carrol and others, including Persson, believe the industry is likely to see further consolidation in coming years at all levels, from the rapidly merging distribution channels to vineyards and wineries in the Bay Area's backyard.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Squaw Valley ski patrol offers a free avalanche awareness and companion rescue workshop twice a month to anyone who is interested in polishing their skills or learning for the first time. Next session is Jan. 15 from 5:30-7pm at the Ski Patrol Locker Room (between Squaw Kids and the Far East chairlift). For info, call ski patrol at (530) 452.7260.

• Interested in curling? The Lake Tahoe Epic Curling club is based in Nevada but plays at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena. More info is online.

• Did you attend SnowGlobe and leave any items behind? A lost and found has been setup at the South Lake Tahoe Police Department located at 1352 Johnson Blvd. or contact the non-emergency line at (530) 542.6100.

• *Nevada* magazine, the official state tourism publication, has partnered with Reno-based Nevada Matters Media to host a weekly radio show. It can be heard Sundays at 6pm on 99.1 FM as well as various times Monday through Saturday on 101.3 FM.

• The ski industry’s National Safety Awareness Week is Jan. 19-27.

Truckee resident takes bronze at cross country championships

By USSA

SOLDIER HOLLOW, Utah – APU Nordic had a strong day Friday at the U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships with Erik Bjornsen (Winthrop, Wash./APU Nordic) and Rosie Brennan (Park City/APU Nordic) taking their first U.S. titles.

Bjornsen won the men's 15K freestyle individual start in 37:02.7, a 6 second margin over U.S. Ski Team teammate Tad Elliott (Durango, Colo./Ski and Snowboard Club Vail).

Matt Gelso (Truckee/Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation) took bronze.

APU Nordic swept the women's podium with Brennan winning the 10K in 29:12.3 – an 11 second margin over Sadie Bjornsen (Winthrop, Wash./APU Nordic). Kate Fitzgerald (Palmer, Alaska/APU Nordic) won bronze.

More than 430 athletes from around the country are taking part in the U.S. Championships at Soldier Hollow, the 2002 Olympic venue.

Ski report: Storm on the horizon



A chance of snow later today and through Sunday.

Here is the Jan 5 ski report.

— *Curtis Fong*