Credit union opening branch in S. Lake Tahoe

Sierra Central Credit Union will be opening a branch in South Lake Tahoe in September.

A company representative said they are hoping to hire four people locally.

The branch will be located in the shopping center on the corner of Ski Run Boulevard and Highway 50.

It will serve members acquired in the recent acquisition of 49er Federal Credit Union.

“We are planning to expand member eligibility to everyone who lives or works within 25 miles of the new branch,” Pam Sweeney, with the credit union, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Travelers spend record sum in Calif. in ’13

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

More than 235 million people – visitors and residents alike – traveled within California in 2013, spending an all-time record of $109.6 billion, according to a report released by Visit California, the nonprofit that helps develop the state’s travel and tourism marketing programs.

Visit California said last year’s travel-related spending

generated $2.8 billion in local tax revenues and $4.3 billion in state tax revenues.

The report, compiled by Portland-based Dean Runyan Associates and commissioned by Visit California, also noted that the state's travel industry last year employed 965,800 people, the highest number since 1992, when employment data started being tallied.

"California tourism is on the rise, and that means new potential for creating jobs and increasing economic impact throughout the state," said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California, in a statement.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The early bird tickets for SnowGlobe 2014 are sold out. More tickets will be released later in the year.

• World-class paddlers will be at El Dorado Beach on June 28-29 for Race the Lake of the Sky. More info is online.

• El Dorado County Board of Supervisors approved $800,000 for Marshall Medical Center to expand the availability of cancer treatment services to county residents.

• South Lake Tahoe's summer activity guide is available online.

• The California Water Board has a seven-part film series titled “Slow the Flow: Be a California Water Warrior”.

Guilty plea in Thunder Valley Casino fraud case

By Denny Walsh and Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

High-flying developer Bart Wayne Volen pleaded guilty Thursday to three felonies in connection with a scheme that prosecutors say looted between $17 million and $19 million from the owners of Thunder Valley Casino near Lincoln.

Volen, 55, also agreed to pay restitution of at least $17 million and to cooperate with federal prosecutors seeking convictions of two other men who are charged with helping him defraud the United Auburn Indian Community in an overbilling rip-off involving a massive construction project.

Wearing a white dress shirt and khaki slacks, the once boisterous Volen spoke in a hushed voice Thursday before Judge Troy L. Nunley in U.S. District Court in Sacramento as he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud, wire fraud, money laundering and filing a false tax return.

The plea deal obligates the government to recommend a sentence of up to nine years in prison and a $15,000 fine, but the final outcome likely will hinge on the extent of Volen’s cooperation against his co-defendants – former tribal administrator Greg Baker of Newcastle and construction project manager Darrell Hinz of Cameron Park.

Read the whole story

If you’re not eating enough, you might gain weight

By Heidi Mills, Outside

Shannon Scott thought training for a distance triathlon would help her drop the few extra pounds she’d always hoped to shed.

Scott began working out for an hour and a half to two hours each day. When she didn’t lose weight, she cut back her daily calories to 900 a day. Still, she couldn’t get the scale to budge.

She signed up for Ironman Canada, adding even more volume to her training schedule each week. Aware of the physical demands on her body, she raised her daily caloric intake to 1,200 calories a day, but wouldn’t allow herself to eat any more than that. Each week of training, she gained another pound.

“It was so frustrating and counter intuitive,” Scott said.

Scott is just one of many athletes who start training for an endurance event with the expectation of losing weight. While some do indeed drop weight, others feel defeated as they watch the scale move in the opposite direction. On forums of endurance web sites such as Slowtwitch.com, conversation threads show athletes expressing frustration over weight gain during training.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe’s 2 tourism agencies as unique as the destinations they represent



Emerald Bay is one icon all tourism agencies at Lake Tahoe promote. Photo/LTN file

Publisher’s note: ***This is this first of an occasional series of stories about the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association.***

By Anne Knowles

Last year’s room nights on the South Shore were worth celebrating. After more than a decade of declines, save for a minor uptick a few years ago, room rentals were on the rise

again, jumping 10 percent on the California side and almost 1 percent on the more active Nevada side between October 2012 and September 2013.

The new 12-month rolling year started auspiciously, too. In October 2013, room nights in California climbed about 11 percent to nearly 34,000 and just more than 9 percent to more than 45,000 in Nevada.

Then winter arrived. And the snow didn't follow. Room nights started to fall, dropping in the California market by as much as 43 percent in January from the same month a year earlier.

The cumulative effect is that in the five months from October 2013 to February 2014, room nights throughout the South Shore of Lake Tahoe fell by almost 8 percent.

"Winter wasn't good to us," Carol Chaplin, executive director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The LTVA is one of two major organizations at the lake tasked with marketing the area, driving tourism and putting heads in beds.

The other is the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. The two divide the 72-mile shoreline into north and south, including a branding campaign that identifies the two Tahoe markets simply as North and South.

The LTVA and NLTRA are similar but different and cooperate and compete. And they are not always well understood by those who live at the lake who rely on tourism to drive their communities' economy.

Both organizations, like the industry they serve, have evolved over the last decade.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Association

The LTVA, for example, no longer is financed by the city of

South Lake Tahoe, which for years supported the LTVA through its general fund.



Room taxes from Stateline casinos are a substantial part of the LTVA's budget. Photo/LTN file

"City of South Lake Tahoe historically funded LTVA through the (transient occupancy tax), but they kept reducing it and in 2008 the last $350,000 was cut and the (Tourism Improvement District) was formed to replace the contribution," Chaplin explained.

The TID consists of all lodging businesses – hotels/motels, timeshares, condos, triplexes, duplexes and homes under management contracts – located within the city limits of South Lake Tahoe.

Initially, they were each assessed a flat rate per paid occupied room per night of $2 on hotels and motels and $3 per on timeshares, condos, triplexes, duplexes and homes. That recently was raised, through 2018, to $3 and $4.50 per night, respectively.

LTVA receives 95 percent of those fees, on a monthly basis, while the TID retains the remainder for special projects. For fiscal year 2015, that amounts to about $1.8 million.

The other half of LTVA's budget – about $2 million – comes from Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority, which was created in 1997 to levy a separate lodging tax for the benefit of the Tahoe township, which is better known as Stateline. Those LTVA funds are made of 60 percent of the 10 percent room tax charged by the TDVA as well as two-thirds of an additional 3 percent lodging license fee the county began charging a few years ago.

The budget is divvied up between what LTVA calls sales, or promoting the destination internationally, usually through tour operators. The cost of some of that – in Australia, United Kingdom and France, specifically – is shared with NLTRA.

There's advertising and social media, which runs the gamut from TV ads running on Comcast during Oakland A's games to its website.

The LTVA and NLTRA share a single-page website that links back to their respective and separate websites.

All advertising decisions are made by the LTVA board based on recommendations from its marketing committee. That committee recently expanded from seven to 11 members. It is comprised of members from ski resorts, casinos, condos, marketing firms and Barton Health.

"A lot of the roll-up-your-sleeves work is done at that level," Chaplin said.

The seven-member LTVA board, which has public monthly meetings, consists of two representatives appointed by the TID (currently Chairman Patrick Ronan and Jerry Bindel), two placed by TDVA (Bryan Davis with Edgewood and Harrah's/Harveys Lake Tahoe's John Koster), a South Lake Tahoe City Council member (Tom Davis), a member chosen by the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce (Heavenly Mountain Resort's Peter Sonntag) and the district's Douglas County commissioner (Nancy

McDermid).

There are no term limits, but the members from the TID and chamber, Chaplin said, tend to serve for the same period they serve on the boards they are appointed from.

Finally, there are events, including the American Century Championship celebrity tournament at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course each July. Chaplin said the LTVA, though, is in the process of reevaluating its event strategy since the recent brouhaha over the Fourth of July fireworks display, which unexpectedly cost the organization approximately $33,000 in legal fees.

“It’s changed the way we look at our involvement with events producers. We’ll be spending more on legal contracts and consultants. We’re rethinking how we’re going with fireworks,” said Chaplin. “But we heard the message loud and clear from the community that it is a big event for us.”

The LTVA may also pull back on small grants to other events for help with their marketing, a decision that will be made after this month’s board meeting.

“We are asked a lot to bring large events here, but we don’t have the infrastructure to support them,” Chaplin said.

North Lake Tahoe Resort Association

Infrastructure is one key way the LTVA and the NLTRA differ.



This is one of the ads created for North Lake Tahoe by School of Thought. Photo/Provided

NLTRA is tasked with, and has a specific funding source, for transportation and infrastructure projects. NLTRA recommends the work to the Placer County Board of Supervisors which approves it. That's funded by an additional 2 percent TOT approved by voters through 2022.

Overall, NLTRA receives 60 percent of TOT collected in eastern Placer County. In 2013-14, the group's budget was $4.4 million from TOT, minus about $1.5 million which is set aside for county services.

NLTRA once adhered to a spending formula that was replaced in 2012 with a "priority-based" method, but it still spends about 42 percent on marketing and 58 percent on transportation and infrastructure, said Sandy Evans Hall, chief executive officer/executive director.

NLTRA, formed in 1995 after a master plan study of tourism recommended it, comprises two entities: the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Tahoe North Visitors and Convention Bureau.

"We have three functions," Hall told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The chamber, the visitors' bureau and making recommendations on transportation and infrastructure."

Like the LTVA, the NLTRA has a board, which has final say over marketing and advertising campaigns brought to it by a marketing committee.

The NLTRA outsources to two outside agencies – School of Thought in San Francisco and the Abbi Agency in Reno – to develop advertising and public relations campaigns.

“The staff works with the agencies, tells them here’s what we want to do, we give them the budget and they come back,” Hall said. “Then the NLTRA board has the final say.”

Nine members of the 11-member board are elected by NLTRA membership. They run to represent different categories such large lodging, small lodging or dining, serve on the board for three years and are limited to two terms. The other two members are appointed without term limits as is a third, non-voting member.

The committees are appointed by the board and besides the 13-member marketing panel, there are groups that advise the board on lodging, membership, finance, infrastructure/transportation and group sales.

The NLTRA also works closely with the Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Authority under an agreement forged six years ago, which created the North Lake Tahoe Marketing Coop, which is intricately involved in marketing decisions made by NLTRA.

“Six years ago we sat down and decided had competing messages,” said Hall. “We said we should market as one destination.”

Opinion: Misogynistic ravings inspire a powerful Twitter response

By Petula Dvorak, Washington Post

Yes, all women have been harassed.

Yes, all women have been judged by our looks, not our merit.

Yes, all women have been around men who have discounted, denied and demeaned us.

Yes, all women are outraged by the misogynistic ravings of Elliot Rodger, the narcissistic 22-year-old who went on a killing spree in Santa Barbara because women didn't respond to him the way he believed he was entitled to have them respond.

Rodger vowed to slaughter the magazine-beautiful blondes who didn't want to have sex with him. He posted rants in online forums where – surprise, surprise – that kind of misogynistic bile was unremarkable and other men ratified his hatred.

Women heard Elliot Rodger. And they began flooding Twitter by the hundreds of thousands with their responses, using the hashtag #YesAllWomen.

"I've spent 19 yrs teaching my daughter how not to be raped," one mother tweeted. "How long have you spent teaching your son not to rape? #YesAllWomen"

"Because I wasn't 'asking for it' when he hit me," another tweeted, "and I shouldn't have to defend myself a decade later. #YesAllWomen"

"#YesAllWomen b/c we are called fat, ugly, and slutty/threatened w/rape all the time online, & we are told to 'just ignore the trolls.'"

Read the whole story

Publisher's note: ***Petula Dvorak is a 1988 graduate of South Tahoe High School.***

Writers’ conference in Zephyr Cove

The 2014 Zephyr Point Writers’ Conference will run July 20-25.

Each day will include a time of ecumenical Christian worship and inspirational words from a featured presenter.

The Zephyr Point Writers’ Conference is led each year by writer and poet Marilyn McEntyre, tenured professor at the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program. McEntyre is the author of numerous books of poetry and three nonfiction works.

Her teaching on writing is grounded in the conviction that writing can be a spiritual discipline, can fuel prayer, and, at its best, can leave the writer as well as the reader “surprised by joy.”

This year’s retreat topic focuses on six elements of writing as storytelling, posed as “Six Questions” that will be explored through daily group presentations:

• accurate description (WHAT)

• lively characterization (WHO)

• articulation of process (HOW)

• space and place as contexts of story (WHERE)

• the time dimension in storymaking (WHEN)

• explanation, reflection, and the contemplative moment (WHY)

Conference price of $549 includes all meals and free parking. For more information or to register, go online.

Study: Calif. could have surplus of water

By Justin Doom, Bloomberg

Drought-stricken California has more than twice the water capacity needed to erase an annual deficit of more than 6 million acre-feet, through better conservation and management efforts, according to the Pacific Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Almost half of the potential 13.7 million acre-feet in savings could come from agricultural efficiency gains and conservation, with the balance from urban improvements, water reuse and captured storm water, the two groups said in a joint report this week.

One acre-foot is enough to cover an acre with a foot of water, approximately 326,000 gallons.

Read the whole story

Novasel, Curtzwiler in lead for EDC supe race

The November runoff for El Dorado County supervisor District 5 seat has changed.

As of 5pm June 12 the top two vote getters are Sue Novasel and

Kenny Curtzwiler. The top two will face each other in November.

Novasel retains a resounding lead as she did on election day, June 3. She currently has 28.51 percent of the votes or 1,556 votes. Rounding out the vote are:

• Curtzwiler – 17.83 percent, 973

• Angela Swanson – 17.68 percent, 965

• Kevin Brown – 17.61 percent, 961

• Gerri Grego – 12.48 percent, 681

• Teresa Piper – 5.64 percent, 308.

These are still not final numbers.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report