4 U.S. women in top 10 in downhill in France

By USSA

VAL d'ISERE, FRANCE – Leanne Smith parlayed an early start number into a career first Audi FIS Alpine World Cup podium, finishing second in the Val d'Isere downhill behind Swiss winner Lara Gut on Dec. 14.

Smith, who started third, led four Americans into the top 10 on a shortened course after high winds forced a move of the start.

Lindsey Vonn crashed hard into the B-netting, but skied away with no major injuries. Vonn remained third in the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup overall and still leads in downhill standings with Cook second.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was seventh, Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) eighth and Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) 10th.

K's Kitchen: A chowder without any clams

By Kathryn Reed

One of the good things about cookbooks is authors will put together ingredients I would never have thought of combining.

My leap of faith to trust the author has backfired from time to time, but usually the recipe is a keeper.



Such was the case recently as I was in search of new soup recipes. It seems like I've already gone through my usuals and it isn't even technically winter.

I really liked the recipe below because it is different, the flavor is great and it was thick. Sometimes soups that are more broth than anything else don't seem like a meal. Sue liked the soup, but was not as enamored as I was with it.

I don't really know how much corn I used because during the summer I had blanched ears of corn and then froze the kernels. And one of the two bags I used had green and red peppers in it.

I didn't use any salt because I think soy sauce is pretty darn salty. I used a full 2 T of soy sauce.

As for the mushrooms, I'm pretty sure what I have are wood ear mushrooms that I got in San Francisco. But the packaging doesn't say. There is a Chinese market in the Town and Country Center in South Lake Tahoe where Whiskey Dicks is.

This recipe is from "The New Moosewood Cookbook" by Mollie Katzen. All the comments below are hers.

Chinese Vegetable Chowder (4 to 6 servings)

Simple and delicious – made with no dairy products no eggs, no oil, no garlic, no onions!

The mushrooms need to soak for at least 30 to 40 minutes ahead of time, and this can be done a day or two in advance.

2 ounces dried Chinese black mushrooms

5 C boiling water

1 pound package frozen corn, defrosted

1-1½ tsp salt

1-2 T soy sauce

black pepper, to taste

1 medium carrot, diced

1 stalk celery, minced

1 8-ounce can water chestnuts, minced

Place the mushrooms in a medium-large bowl, and pour in the boiling water. Cover with a plate and let stand for at least 30 to 40 minutes, or until the mushrooms are soaked through and very soft. Drain well, reserving both the mushrooms and the water, squeezing all the excess liquid from the mushrooms. Place the mushrooms on a cutting board and slice thinly, removing and discarding their tough stems.

Combine the mushroom water and the corn in a food processor or blender, and puree until as smooth as possible. (You will probably have to do this in more than one batch.) Transfer to a kettle or a large saucepan. (For a smoother soup, you can strain the puree on its way into the kettle.) Stir in salt, soy sauce, and black pepper to taste.

Lightly steam the carrot and the celery until just tender. (If you have one, a microwave oven will do this in 2 minutes.)

Add sliced mushrooms from step 1, carrot, celery, and water chestnuts to the soup. Heat gently just before serving.

U.S. traffic deaths at lowest point in 6 decades

By Ashley Halsey III, Washington Post

Deaths behind the wheel of an automobile fell last year to the lowest level since the Truman administration, but there was an increase in fatalities among bicyclists, pedestrians, motorcycle riders and big-rig truck drivers, according to federal figures released Monday.

Overall, highway deaths dropped to 32,367, almost two percent lower than they were in 2010, and a 26 percent decline since a peak in 2005. Maryland outpaced the nation with a 2.2 percent decrease, but deaths rose by 3.2 percent in Virginia and 13 percent in the District of Columbia.

The downward national trend began before the recession took some drivers off the roads, and it accelerated last year. It has been attributed to several factors, including increased use of air bags, seat belts and other vehicle safety features, improved roadway designs, and increasing awareness of the perils of driving drunk.

“In the past several decades, we’ve seen remarkable improvements in both the way motorists behave on our roadways and in the safety of the vehicles they drive,” said David L. Strickland, administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

He said police enforcement of seat belt and sobriety laws have played a key role.

But there already have been indications that the downward

trend has ended. Preliminary data for this year indicated that fatalities increased 13.4 percent in the first three months of this year, and the total for April, May and June was 5.3 percent higher than in 2011.

“As we look to the future, it will be more important than ever to build on this progress by continuing to tackle head-on issues like seat belt use, drunk driving, and driver distraction,” said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, who has made distracted driving the cornerstone of his safety agenda.

The NHTSA data said the number of people killed in distraction-related accidents increased almost 2 percent, to 3,331, from 2010 to 2011. Federal and highway safety advocates said the increase may reflect better reporting of the distraction issue than an actual increase in fatalities.

The number of people injured in distraction-linked crashes declined by 7 percent, to 387,000 people in 2011, the federal agency said.

The evolution in travel patterns, relaxed safety standards and an improving economy were singled out for three of the areas in which fatalities bucked the downward trend.

The number of bicyclists killed increased by 8.7 percent and pedestrian deaths were up 3 percent.

“Our culture is beginning to move away from driving and toward healthier and greener modes of transportation,” said Jonathan Adkins, deputy executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association. “We need to be able to accommodate all these forms of transportation safely.”

Adkins said a more-than-2-percent increase in motorcycle deaths was attributed to the fact that “state legislatures continue to listen to anti-helmet rider groups and ignore clear research supporting helmet use and laws.”

The largest increase was a 20 percent jump in the number of drivers and passengers of large trucks killed in accidents.

“There are more questions than answers about what is occurring here,” Adkins said, “but this could be in part to a strengthening economy.”

The data, collected under a federal system called the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), indicated that there were 1.1 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2011, down from 1.11 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2010.

The FARS statistics are based on numbers collected by each state, and Adkins cautioned that preliminary data indicates that the decline in highway deaths may end this year.

“Based on what we are hearing from states, we fully expect an increase in fatalities for 2012,” he said.

In 2011, 36 states had fewer traffic fatalities, led by Connecticut (100 fewer fatalities), North Carolina (93 fewer), Tennessee (86 fewer), Ohio (64 fewer) and Michigan (53 fewer). In Maryland, there were 11 fewer deaths than the 496 the previous year, while Virginia saw 24 more people die in 2011 than the 740 who died in 2010, and deaths in the District increased by three to 27.

Concessionaire sought for Spooner Lake

Nevada Division of State Parks is looking for someone or a business to provide concessionaire services at Spooner Lake.

Bike rental, bike shop operations, hiking supplies, cabin rentals, prepackaged food and drink sales, and shuttle services are what park officials want to provide. Winter operations would include snowshoes, cross country skis and other snow play items.

Max Jones for 27 years operated the concessionaire for the park at the junction of highways 28 and 50. This will the first winter without a formal cross country facility at the park.

The deadline to respond to the request for proposal is Feb. 15 at 2pm.

More info is online.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

More people expected to travel at the holidays this year

AAA projects 93.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holidays, an increase of 1.6 percent from the 91.8 million people who traveled last year.

This increase brings holiday travel figures to within half a million of the decade high mark seen during the 2006-07 season. The period is defined as Dec. 22-Jan. 1.

Ninety percent of travelers (84.4 million) are expected to travel by automobile, representing 26.7 percent of the total U.S. population. Holiday air travel expected to increase 4.5 percent to 5.6 million travelers from 5.4 million in 2011.

AAA estimates the national average price of gasoline will slowly drop through the end of the year and average between $3.20-$3.40 a gallon by New Year's Day. Gas prices dropped about 50 cents a gallon on average from September through early December, but remain at record highs for this time of year. AAA does not expect gas prices to have a major impact on travel volume, but consumers could have more money to spend on holiday shopping, dining and entertainment if prices drop through December as expected.

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, year-end holiday hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase 2 percent from a year ago, with travelers spending an average of $129 per night compared to $126 last year. Travelers planning to stay at AAA Two Diamond hotels can expect to pay 3 percent more, at an average cost of $95 per night.

Nevada lawmakers may tackle concealed weapons on college campuses

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY -– A newly elected Republican state lawmaker plans to push forward with a bill next session to allow students and others with permits to carry concealed weapons on the campuses

of the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Assemblywoman Michele Fiore, R-Las Vegas, elected to Assembly District 4 in November, has submitted a bill draft request to prepare a measure for consideration in the 2013 legislative session.

The one-line description for the request says: “Authorizes the possession of a concealed firearm on property of the Nevada System of Higher Education under certain circumstances.”

Fiore, a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, made 2nd Amendment rights a key part of her campaign for the Assembly.

The “campus carry” issue was a controversial topic in the 2011 session, when former state Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, brought a similar bill to the Legislature. The bill passed the Senate but did not get a vote in the Assembly Judiciary Committee late in the session.

Lee sponsored the bill on behalf of Amanda Collins, a concealed weapons permit holder who was unarmed when she was raped by James Biela in a UNR parking garage in 2007. Collins gave emotional and candid testimony on behalf of the measure at the 2011 session.

Fiore cites the Collins case in requesting the bill, saying in an email there is no reason to prohibit concealed weapons permit holders from being able to protect themselves while on a campus of Nevada’s higher education system.

“In our communities today the bad guys have guns and the good guys obey the law and sometimes because of our firearm laws us good guys are put in a compromising position,” she said. “That is not OK. I will not hesitate to protect myself with my handguns. If I have to make a choice between saving my children’s lives or my own life or letting a scum bag take our lives, I’ll choose to take the culprit out.”

Collins said in her 2011 testimony that she could have defended herself if she had been allowed to carry her weapon on campus.

Biela was sentenced to death in 2010 for the murder of another Reno woman, Brianna Denison, in 2008.

Lee said at a hearing on his bill in 2011 that the decision to make Nevada college campuses “gun-free zones” actually created “defenseless-victim zones.”

CCW permit holders must be at least 21 years of age and take an eight-hour training class.

The Nevada System of Higher Education and several law enforcement groups opposed the measure, however, arguing in part that the discretion to deal with weapons on campus belonged to the Board of Regents, not lawmakers.

Concerns were also cited with how to deal with campus athletic events where alcohol is served, and how to ensure weapons would be safely stored in student dormitories.

Ski report: Bundle up

Get out and find the powder the stashes. But bring the hand and toe warmers because the thermometer is in single digits as this hour.

Here is the Dec. 14 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Fortier quits, but forgets to tell anyone at city hall

By Kathryn Reed

“Today is the first day of a whole new adventure. No more politics. No more mayor. No more Tahoe. I am soon off to Redmond, WA. Better make some room in the closet for my clothes, Maria. I am on my way.”

That is what Claire Fortier wrote on her Facebook page Friday morning just before 7.

The South Lake Tahoe (former?) city councilwoman forgot one step in the process. She has not given the city a resignation letter – either in the professional way of being on real paper or the less professional way via email.



Claire Fortier

Lake Tahoe News first reported in May that Fortier was unlikely to finish her term that expires in December 2014 because her spouse had taken a job in Washington state.

Fortier long held the belief she was the only one on the council who could shepherd the Regional Plan update through the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. With the TRPA approving that plan on Wednesday, Fortier believes she has done her job

even though the people elected her to do a job that lasts another two years.

The process is that the remaining council members must decide within 60 days of a council position being vacated whether to appoint someone or to call for an election. There are three specified dates in 2013 when an election could occur – March 5, June 4 and Nov. 5. The election cannot occur less than 114 days from the date it is called. So, the soonest there could be an election to fill that vacated seat is June 4.

But the council cannot go forward without a letter of resignation.

Setting a reasonable pace, expectations make for happy holidays

By Mandy Kendall

The holiday period can be busy enough with present buying, menu planning, travel arrangements, house decorating and more that day-to-day routines can often get thrown into disarray. Healthy eating and exercising can often go by the wayside and we may end up feeling like we need a vacation after all the festivities.

Figuring out what is most important to you and your family will help prevent you from being drawn into other people's

agendas and feeling exhausted at the end of it all.



Mandy
Kendall

So, here are a few more holiday *Qwik-e* tips to help you have your favorite Christmas this year:

Plan – I know, I know. I've talked about lists many times, but they really do help. You can use them to prioritize into "must do" and "nice to do" sections. You can also add a time element to them; what time a task needs to be completed by or how long it should take you to do. If you list out what needs to be done and how long it should take you, you will quickly find out if you have enough hours in the day and where you might need to delegate or rethink.

Preparation or socializing – No time to do both? Having a baking party with girlfriends or a group gift shopping expedition will make sure you don't miss out on time with family and loved ones.

Set parameters – We can't do it all. Set the important things taken care of first (this means taking care of you, too) and get to less crucial things if you can. If you can't do it all, don't beat yourself up. Pick and choose your holiday engagements. Map them out in your calendar and be honest as to whether you really want to go or just feel obliged to.

Pace yourself – Adding some down time in your calendar to do what you want to do, whether it's some alone time with a book in the bath, or catching up with a special friend, will help preserve your energy and sense of humor.

Gifts – Are often the most costly part of Christmas. Setting a price limit with family or friends can make sure the spending doesn't get out of hand. Some families choose to focus on gifts only for the kids, just make sure the big kids in the family won't feel left out. A last minute dash to the store for a forgotten present can be avoided by giving the person your own gift card, i.e. promising them something they would enjoy doing with you; perhaps a movie or dinner.

Relax – A calm mind is a productive mind. A few minutes to yourself will do wonders for your focus and stamina. Just pausing to gather yourself with some deep breaths, or doing a few stretches, will set you up for the next stage of your day.

Feed yourself – Skipping breakfast because there's no time is not a great way to start the day. You will likely end up grabbing sugary snacks to help keep you going and throw off your energy levels. Need I say it, but six cups of coffee is not the same as six glasses of water.

Indulge a little – I like to work on the 80/20 rule when it comes to Christmas eating and treating myself. I will indulge, but I will choose my indulgences carefully. It might be one particular party or event, or one particular dish that I decide I won't go without. That way I don't overindulge, but don't feel like I've deprived myself either. If you know your self-control is probably going to desert you, then how about making a pact with a friend to hit the gym in the New Year?

What will be will be – If you have a tendency to want to control everything and every detail, be daring this year and let go a little. Let others take charge and enjoy what happens. Sometimes the most unexpected things make for the best memories.

Wishing you and yours a very happy and healthy Christmas.

Until next time.

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Note: Join the Health Connective team this January and kick start your New Year with a New You. Feel fabulous with a nutritional cleansing and weight release program and a few sessions with a holistic health professional of your choice. Email connect@healthconnective.com for more details.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

Letter: A successful chamber Winter Wine Walk

To the community,

The TahoeChamber would like to thank all of the business hosts, volunteers, board members and attendees that participated in the Winter Wine Walk BAHM! (Business After Hours Mixer) in the Shops at Heavenly Village. Over 125 members and friends gathered in the Marriott Grand Residence lobby to pick up their passports and enjoy a taste of El Dorado County wine provided by Madroña Vineyards.

The Marriott lobby was beautifully decorated for the holidays.

Fifteen participating businesses were displaying their goods, offering raffle prizes, pouring tastes of wine, and sampling food.

Thank you to the following participating chamber member businesses: Red Poets & Skyhawk Lane Wines, Pacific Crest Gallery, Apricot Lane, Base Camp Pizza, Around Tahoe Adventures, Marriott Grand Residences, Blue Sky, K-Tahoe Radio, Fire & Ice, Patagonia, Quicksilver, Heavenly Sports, Serenity Day Spa, and Kalani's At Lake Tahoe.

A special thank you goes out to the following food and beverage providers: Exquisite Grill, Crystal Basin Cellars, Madroña Vineyards, Bumgarner Winery, Grace Patriot Wines, and Tahoe Blue Vodka.

South Lake Tahoe offered free parking in their covered garage and Yellow Cab gave free safe ride vouchers to the attendees.

Many guests completed their passports for a chance to win the grand prize gift basket consisting of an item from each participating business.

Thanks to all who came out for the festivities and mark your calendar for the third annual Winter Wine Walk Dec. 12, 2013. Have a safe and Happy Holiday.

Jessica Cunningham, TahoeChamber