Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Swimming lessons aren’t just a summer thing in South Lake Tahoe. That’s the advantage of having a dome over the city pool. Check out the website for more info.

• South Tahoe Refuse will be collecting canned and packaged foods left curbside Dec. 10-14. Or people may drop items off at 2140 Ruth Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

• Lonely Planet says the Eastern Sierra is one of the top 10 U.S. travel destinations for 2013.

• Fireside Pizza at the Squaw Village is celebrating its 10th anniversary this month.

• Here is the Caltrans roadwork plans for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra.

Kirkwood celebrating 40 years on New Year’s Eve

Kirkwood celebrates its 40th anniversary with a full day of festivities on Dec. 31 that leads into a New Year’s celebration with fireworks, music and the annual NYE torchlight parade.

The parade is open to intermediate to expert level skiers and

snowboarders aged 10 and up.

Also offered on New Year’s Eve is a special holiday snow cat tour that takes guests to the top of Chair 2 to watch the fireworks while enjoying Champagne or sparkling cider. It is followed up with dinner at the Wall Bar.

Letter: LTCC admin team helps Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth is very thankful that for the second time this year Lake Tahoe Community College administrative staff members sponsored an Adopt A Day of Nourishment. The $250 donation covered the cost of food, serving materials and utilities needed to serve the hot, nutritious evening meal on Nov. 26 to the needy of our community.

Once again, LTCC was represented by a helpful and energetic sponsor team which consisted of Julie Cathie, director of Financial Aid; Tom Green, vice president of Academic Affairs & Student Services; Tracy Thomas, interim director of Students & Academic Support Services; and Jeff Defranco, vice president of Administrative Services.

In addition to providing sustenance and a safe gathering place for those in need, the Bread & Broth program engenders a spirit of good will for those who volunteer at the evening meals. Helping at their sponsorship dinner was a “wonderful experience, we would do it again! Volunteers and dinner guests were enthusiastic and shared time together.”

Bread & Broth commends the Lake Tahoe Community College staff for their involvement in strengthening the social fabric of our community and their generous monetary and volunteer support of the B&B program.

For information on Bread & Broth donation or volunteering opportunities, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Gift wrapping helps Friends of the Library

Love shopping, but hate wrapping? Then have the Friends of the Library wrap them on Dec. 15 from 1-4pm.

Donations of $2 per gift are requested for this service. All proceeds go to Friends of the Library and are used to support the library.

The South Lake Tahoe library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

USFS taking reservations for

Winter Trek Express

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin accepting reservations for the 2013 Winter Trek Express program on Dec. 17.

Teachers may reserve a spot by calling the Forest Service front desk at (530) 543.2694, Monday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm.

Winter Trek Express is a fifth-grade environmental education program that takes place at Heavenly Mountain Resort via the gondola. Forest Service rangers lead the class through the wilderness to learn snowshoe skills and discover winter adapting animals.

Winter Trek Express is a cooperative effort between the Forest Service, Heavenly Mountain Resort, South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Heritage Foundation.

Winter Trek Express is Jan. 8-March 28. Field trips are offered on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10am-1pm.

For more information, contact Megan Dee at (530) 543.2618, email mldee@fs.fed.us or Joy Barney at (530) 543.2685, email jbarney@fs.fed.us.

Delving into reasons why seniors more prone to scams

By Patti Neighmond, NPR

Lots of scams come by phone or by mail, but when the scam

artist is right in front of you, researchers say the clues are in the face.

“A smile that is in the mouth but doesn’t go up to the eyes, an averted gaze, a backward lean” are some of the ways deception may present itself, says Shelley Taylor, a psychologist at UCLA.

Taylor wanted to know if older people recognized these visual cues as readily as younger people. She brought 119 adults older than 55 into the research lab along with 24 younger adults in their 20s. Both groups were shown 30 photographs, each depicting either a trustworthy, a neutral or an untrustworthy face.

“The older adults rated the trustworthy faces and the neutral faces exactly the same as the younger adults did, but when it got to the cues of untrustworthiness, they didn’t process those cues as well,” she says. “They rated those people as much more trustworthy than the younger adults did.”

In a small follow-up study using brain imaging, Taylor’s findings suggest older adults may have less activity in the very area of the brain that processes risk and subtle danger. Another possible reason older adults don’t pick up on warning signs, she says, is an increasing bias against negativity.

“It’s part of this effort to make life more positive after a certain point in life, which is normally just a wonderful thing,” Shelley says. “Older adults are really great emotional regulators, but it leaves them with this particular vulnerability so that they don’t recognize untrustworthy cues when they should.”

A survey last year from the AARP analyzed the behavior of 723 victims of fraud and compared them to the general public. The survey found the average age of fraud victims was 69.

“Fraud victims tend to be much more likely to do things like

open junk mail, listen to unknown callers on the phone who are telemarketing," says Doug Shadel, who's with AARP in Washington state and who headed the survey. "They're more open to putting themselves in sales situations, and this explains in part why they may be defrauded."

They are also inclined to believe those too-good-to-be true promises, like a guaranteed 50 percent return on investment with no risk. Ironically, it was older men with experience in investing who lost the most. Women were more vulnerable to petty fraud – things like sending in $50 to collect on that $50,000 sweepstakes they just won.

The current biggest scam, says Shadel, a former fraud investigator who wrote a book titled Outsmarting the Scam Artists: How to Protect Yourself from the Most Clever Cons, are gold coins often advertised in print and broadcast.

"They'll say, 'During periods of economic instability, you can't trust the stock market, can't trust the bond market – the thing you can trust is precious metals,'" he says.

The genius of the scam is that you actually receive the coins. It's just that you've paid up to five times their market value. Scam artists today, says Shadel, are aided enormously by technology that enables them to simply press a button and send hundreds of thousands of emails.

The best defense, he says, is don't go for any of it. Throw out the junk mail. Don't answer unknown callers. And forget about those free lunches and dinners that promise great options for investment.

Changes to GED may impact those who want to take the test

By Diane Orson, NPR

When Toni Walker is not in Hartford, Conn., serving as a state representative, she can usually be found at the New Haven Adult and Continuing Education Center.

“We basically educate approximately 800 people a day,” says Walker, an assistant principal at the center. “It is open enrollment, so when somebody gets an epiphany and says, ‘I need to get my high school diploma so that I can get a job,’ they can walk through the doors, and they can get [their GED] here.”

From 9am to 9pm, the center’s classes are packed with people preparing to take the GED test. Steve Cober, a union carpenter for two decades, is one of them. “I come here to try to get my GED to go into … something different than carpentry. Medical field or something like that,” he says.

For years, the GED has offered millions of people like Cober a low-cost second chance at a high school equivalency diploma. The test is updated every decade or so, but some particularly significant changes are planned for 2014.

People come here with pennies and nickels, bringing us change to pay for their GED. So it’s going to be a class issue.

Last year, the GED Testing Service – part of the nonprofit American Council on Education – announced that it was merging with Pearson, a for-profit British company, and one of the largest educational testing companies in the world.

The merger, the testing service says, would help to generate

the money needed to revamp the test. The new assessment will be more rigorous and aligned with Common Core Standards, a set of uniform educational standards now adopted by almost every state. The test will be offered only on computer, and it will cost more.

Fees to take the exam vary by state, says Randy Trask, president of the GED Testing Service.

Administrators at the adult education center are concerned that the GED overhaul will make it harder for many test takers to complete the exam.

“Historically, states have chosen to subsidize the GED test; some partially and some in its entirety,” Trask says. “The state then chooses what to charge test takers for the test. And the state bears – or has historically born – all of the costs associated with the delivery of that test and the scoring.”

In Connecticut, it currently costs $13 to take the GED. The actual price of the exam is closer to $60, but the state subsidizes the balance. The price of the new test, however, will jump to $120. And though Connecticut may pick up the difference for a while, state Rep. Walker says that probably won’t last. As a result, she’s worried the higher cost will hurt the low-income people the test is supposed to help.

“It is going to be prohibitive … People come here with pennies and nickels, bringing us change to pay for their GED,” Walker says. “So it’s going to be a class issue. People who have no money will never be able to actually take the GED.”

The New Haven Adult and Continuing Education Center has begun to ramp up its computer capabilities to prepare for the online exam. But Walker says the change presents another hurdle to students here: Fewer than 20 percent of them have computers at home.

“So if we don’t show them how to use a computer, they’re never going to be able to pass the GED, because they won’t be able to do it online – and that’s the way they’re going to be delivering the test,” Walker says.

Though the GED is by far America’s most popular high school equivalency credential, states are starting to explore other options. New York, for example, has put out a request for proposals to companies that might be able to create an alternative test.

Meanwhile, the new GED is scheduled to replace the current exam in January 2014.

Ski report: Lots of groomers

Surface conditions are variable, but primarily machine groomed snow and skier-rider firm packed snow with packed powder on upper elevations.

Here is the Dec. 8 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Squaw’s Bennett second at U.S. Championship in downhill

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. – Jared Goldberg and Jacqueline Wiles conquered the U.S. Ski Team Speed Center at Copper Mountain Friday to capture U.S. Championship downhill titles.

Bryce Bennett of Squaw Valley was second for the men.

Traditionally held in February, the premier speed titles were shifted to December in order to take advantage of the world class facility at Copper, which is operated by the U.S. Ski Team until Dec. 15.

Goldberg proved to be the pace setter for the week after winning a pair of NorAm downhill races leading up to the championship event. Wiles danced with the top spot earlier in the week by taking third in each of the two warm up NorAm downhills before capitalizing during the big show.

The remaining U.S. titles – super G, giant slalom, slalom and combined – will be determined March 20-24 during the Nature Valley U.S. Alpine Championships at Squaw Valley.

Vonn, Mancuso share podium in

super G

By USSA

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland -– Lindsey Vonn (Vail) skied a tactically perfect weather shortened super G to capture her 57th Audi FIS Alpine World Cup victory and fourth this season. Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) continued the U.S. Ski Team's speed dominance with third, the fourth straight World Cup speed race where two U.S. athletes have been in the top three.

Slovenia's Tina Maze, who won the opening super combined in St. Moritz, was second by 0.37 to keep the overall chase tight.

It was the 20th super G podium of Vonn's career placing her second in all-time SG wins behind Austrian great Hermann Maier (24). She is now five short of tying another Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell for the women's all-time World Cup win total with 62.

This was Mancuso's second SG podium of the season.

"I like super G a lot and it's been good for me this year with my new equipment. I'm having fun. It was good that we had downhill before super G because I was really able to figure out what was working," Mancuso said.

Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.) was 15th, Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) 17th and Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) 26th.