Weather impacting schools on Friday

Zephyr Cove Elementary School is on a snow day.

Unsafe road conditions at higher elevations is putting Incline Village schools on a two-hour delay Friday morning.

Black Oak Mine School District in El Dorado County is closed because it does not have electricity.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Consider a local gift or one that keeps on giving

By Mandy Kendall

We are definitely at that time of year where our thoughts turn to the giving of gifts and what to give everyone. In this era of technology it is so easy to log onto the computer, browse the Internet and buy all your gifts online. However, that might not be the best for your local economy or show that you gave much thought to the gifts you were buying.



Mandy Kendall

How about making some of your gift purchases at your local businesses or with charitable organizations? Keeping it local gives the economy a boost and gets you and your loved ones more involved in your town.

When the New Economics Foundation, an independent economic think tank based in London, compared what happens when people buy locally to purchasing through big box stores it found that twice as much money stayed in the community when people bought from local businesses. The study also found that money circulated much faster when kept in the community, passing through many more hands and ultimately impacting multiple businesses.

So here are a few holiday *Qwik-e* tips to help your gift giving make a real difference this year:

Coupons and vouchers – Most businesses will offer a gift voucher for their goods or services but if they don't, ask them to make one up for you. Think of something the gift receiver might not necessarily treat themselves to. It could be a movie ticket, a mani/pedi, a house clean, a gym membership, a car valet, a spa treatment, a yard tidy or a visit to their favorite restaurant or salon.

Do it yourself – Time is a precious commodity for lots of people so offering to do something that will help free up some time for them might be the best gift of all, especially if you don't have much of a budget for gift buying. It is a great way for kids to give gifts that don't cost any money too. It could be anything from babysitting, dog walking, making a meal or maybe just painting that room they've been meaning to do for ages.

A new experience – Giving someone the chance to do something they would never do for themselves, and sharing it with them, makes for a great gift experience. A dance class, a sky dive, a horse riding lesson, a cooking class, an art class or

offering to be the designated driver on a wine tasting tour might be just the ticket.

Donating time – There will be many organizations in your area that would really appreciate some extra hands, especially around the holiday time. Christmas tree lots, food drives, deliveries, warehouse or admin duties require lots of people power. It's a great way to give back to the community and get out and meet people too.

Donating money – I know donating money at a time when you need every penny for gifts might seem a bit counterproductive but there are many ways to divert money to great causes especially during the gift giving season. With the advent of e-cards you can send free electronic Christmas cards to all those people you know with email and then send your favorite charity the money you would have spent on cards and postage. You can go a step further and donate the money you would have spent on some of the gifts you were going to buy and let your friends and family know that their gift has instead gone to a worthy cause this year. You could split your donations between local organizations and overseas charities if you want to spread the love. You could also soften the blow to the person you haven't given a gift to by letting them know their gift money has gone to something they are passionate about. A dog lover couldn't possibly be mad at you for sending their gift money to a dog rescue could they?

There are many other opportunities for doing good this holiday season, but far too many to list in this article so here is a link to some more ideas.

Until next time.

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.

Opinion: Infrastructure investments create several benefits

By Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times

I was in Chattanooga, Tenn., last week, and people were still buzzing about an unusual duet heard on Oct. 13, using superlow-latency videoconference technology and the city's new gigabit-per-second fiber-optic network. T-Bone Burnett, a Grammy Award winner, performed "The Wild Side of Life" with Chuck Mead, a founder of the band BR549, for an audience of 4,000. But Burnett played his part on a screen from a Los Angeles studio and Mead on a stage in Chattanooga. The transcontinental duet was possible, reported Chattanoogan.com, because the latency of Chattanooga's new fiber network was 67 milliseconds, meaning the audio and video traveled 2,100 miles from Chattanooga to Los Angeles in one-fourth the blink of an eye.

That cross-country duet is just one of many, many signs I'm seeing of bottom-up innovation happening in cities from Minneapolis to Chattanooga, where local Democrats and Republicans are coming together – in Chattanooga's case to pass a $229 million bond issue to build a world-class fiber-

optic grid that is spurring innovation and start-ups — to grow lots of good jobs. There is a huge amount of innovative thrust building, bottom-up, in the U.S. economy today. If Washington could just get the macro picture right, you could see a real growth surge in America. We're just a couple of grand bargains away from something big.

And that brings me to the news. It's good to see the budget talks between President Obama and the Republicans getting off to a solid start, but we know there will be plenty of partisan fireworks before any deal is cut. With that in mind, I hope the president will reframe and elevate the debate. It is vital that he not frame this as a discussion of just new taxes and spending cuts. His guiding principle should be "growth." Right now, the whole budget discussion reeks too much of castor oil — and which side will have to swallow the biggest spoonful.

I get why the president needs to stress that the wealthy will have to pay higher taxes before he can go to his base for spending cuts to restore long-term fiscal balance. But here's what I hope we'll see more from the president: a sense of excitement, a sense that if we can just get this grand bargain done, we can really unlock growth again, we can really, as Mohamed El-Erian, the C.E.O. of the bond giant Pimco, puts it, "restore economic dynamism, ensure financial soundness, and overcome political dysfunction," which collectively would have a huge stimulative effect. If everyone has to take their castor oil — the rich more, the middle class some — make them feel that it will enable us all to get stronger. Make them feel that we're embarking on a new journey — not to punish but to solve, not to sock it to the successful but to create more abundance for all. Because the right mix of tax increases, spending cuts and investment incentives will spur more start-ups, lead to more risk-taking, inspire more entrepreneurship and create more jobs. Elections are win-lose, but successful negotiations are always to some degree win-win.

And that brings me back to Chattanooga, where, Mayor Ron

Littlefield says, city elders looked themselves in the eyes 15 years ago and realized that “we were a dilapidated city going the way of the Rust Belt.” But, by coming together to make the city an attractive place to live and getting both parties to agree to invest in a fiber-to-every-home-and-business network in a 600-square-mile area, Chattanooga replaced its belching smokestacks with an Amazon.com fulfillment center, major health care and insurance companies and a beehive of tech start-ups that all thrive on big data and super-high-speed Internet. “We’ve gone from being a slowly declining and deflating urban balloon, to one of the fastest-growing cities in Tennessee,” said Littlefield. The fiber network now attracts companies that “like to see more and more of their employees able to work some of the time at home, which saves on office space and parking,” the mayor said.

How fast is that Chattanooga choo-choo? The majority of Chattanooga homes and businesses get 50 megabits per second, some 100 megabits, a few 250 and those with big needs opt for a full gigabit per second, explained Harold DePriest, the chief executive of EPB, the city’s electric power and telecom provider, which built and operates the network. “The average around the country is 4.5 megabits per second.” So average Internet speed in Chattanooga is 10 times the national average. That doesn’t just mean faster downloads. The fiber grid means 150,000 Chattanooga homes now have smart electric meters to track their energy consumption in real time. More important, said DePriest, on July 5, Chattanooga got hit with an unusual storm that knocked out power to 80,000 homes. Thanks to intelligent power switching on the fiber network, he said, “42,000 homes had their electricity restored in … 2 seconds.” Old days: 17 hours.

That network was fully completed thanks to $111 million in stimulus money. Imagine that we get a grand bargain in Washington that also includes a stimulus of just $20 billion to bring the 200 biggest urban areas in America up to

Chattanooga’s standard. You’d see a “melt-up” in the U.S. economy. We are so close to doing something big and smart. Somebody needs to tell the Congress.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• *Forbes* magazine lists Lake Tahoe as one of the top five places in the world to cross country ski based on scenery.

• At the Nov. 13 board of directors meeting the North Tahoe Public Utility District board thanked Director Frank Mooney for his 25 years of service.

• Snowboarder Jeremy Jones of Truckee is in the running to be National Geographic’s Adventurer of the Year. More details are online.

• On Dec. 3 at 10am at the Capitol, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval will lead the sixth annual Wreaths Across America ceremony honoring the nation’s veterans of military service.

• South Lake Tahoe will host a meeting for area No. 5, which includes Rancho Bijou and Bijou Acres, on Dec. 5 at 6pm at the Senior Center at 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

Forecasters on edge as storms hit Tahoe, Reno

By Kathryn Reed

RENO – Extra personnel have been called in to analyze the vast amount of data flowing into the multitude of computers at the National Weather Service office in Reno.

This storm that is upon Northern California and Nevada is expected to be a doozie, with drenching rains that could cause flooding in the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Reno-Sparks, and points south on Highway 395.

Of most concern to forecasters is how high the Truckee River will rise in Truckee and Sparks. Rivers are expected to crest on Sunday. All tributaries into Lake Tahoe are also being watched, with the Upper Truckee River being the largest one.

While it's quiet inside the confines of the weather bureau on Thursday morning, plenty of work is going on. Each workstation contains several computers. Most have lots of color on the screens – an indication something other than sunshine is on the horizon.

One screen breaks down the predicted snowfall for the Sierra for the next seven days in six-hour increments.

Jon Mittelstadt, meteorologist in charge, points to the satellite data showing the "atmospheric river from Hawaii" that will bring the heavy rain to the region this weekend. "The satellite has a sensor for water vapor," he explains.

It's looking like after the brunt of the storm things will dry out for a few days before more moisture comes in late next week.

But the severity of this storm has Reno forecasters talking to

FEMA, emergency management crews in California and Nevada, departments of transportation, law enforcement as well as hydrological partners.

Four television screens provide "situational awareness" for the team to keep track of various locales – from a loop of Caltrans cameras over Donner Summit to what is going on at Reno-Tahoe International Airport.

The Reno office, which is one of 124 throughout the United States, handles the forecasts along the crest of the Sierra, Tahoe, and all of Washoe County to the Oregon border, and then points south of Reno. Neighboring offices are in Sacramento, Medford, Ore., Hanford, Elko and Las Vegas.

The River Forecast Center in Sacramento handles all of the rivers.

Inexact science

It's necessary to staff the weather office 24 hours a day, seven days a week because things are always changing. Predictions can be made based on what the data says, but Mother Nature has a mind of her own.

"If you get past five or six days, you can't have confidence in the forecast," Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News.*

A winter weather advisory is in affect above 7,500 feet for Friday from 4am to 4pm. Six to 12 inches could fall at that level. It's expected to be heavy, wet snow – making driving even more precarious. A flood watch remains in effect from Saturday afternoon through Sunday morning for the Lake Tahoe Basin, eastern Alpine County and the Reno-Carson City-Minden area. A period of heavy rain with high snow levels will occur Saturday evening through Sunday. Rainfall amounts Saturday through Sunday morning of 3 to 5 inches are possible in the Lake Tahoe Basin, with isolated amounts up to 7 inches along Highway 89. Areas at greatest risk for flooding are small creeks and streams along and west of Highway 395 from Lassen County, south through the Reno-Tahoe-Carson City area and into northern Mono County. Mud and rockslides are possible in areas of steep terrain and near recent wildfire burn areas. – *National Weather*

Mittelstadt knows weather guys get a bad rap when they say one thing and another occurs.

Service, Reno

One problem with being in the West is no one is in the Pacific Ocean feeding data to those on shore about what the storms are like. Satellites help, but they can only do so much. Ship reports come in, but they don't have data from the upper air.

Reno is all about seven-day forecasts. Of the 24 employees in that office, 15 are forecasters.

In his 20 years with the Weather Service, Mittelstadt has seen tremendous improvement with forecasts. Technology, including the Internet, has helped with that.

He said people are always working on ways to improve forecasting and improving computer models.

"Things happen in very small scales," Mittelstadt said. He pointed to how there may be a forecast for 6 to 12 inches of snow, but one area gets 2 feet. Being able to nail down more precise data to have predicted that 2 feet of snow is what weather gurus would like to be able to do.

More than the daily weather

During the summer fire weather is the big deal. Wind, heat and humidity are the big factors forecasters study. They partner with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation.



It's going to be a long

weekend for forecasters at the National Weather Service in Reno. Photos/Kathryn Reed

On big fires, a forecaster goes to the site.

Aviation forecasting – focusing on the ceiling and wind – is something pilots tap into. Forecasts are done for South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Mammoth and Reno airports. In January, the Reno bureau will provide data for Carson City, too.

Throughout the world weather balloons are launched twice a day, at the same time. The hydrogen balloon starts off about the size of a mini van and then gets bigger as the atmospheric pressure decreases. Eventually it bursts. A parachute is deployed that gently guides the instrument to land.

The data being collected is transmitted to the nearest computer center.

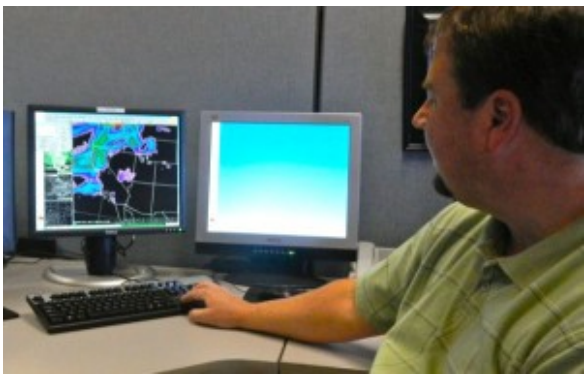
During Hurricane Sandy this fall every station in the United States launched the balloons four times a day to gather more timely information.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Washington deals more with climate concerns and long-term forecasting. Reno handles the weather and water – not the climate.

While the forecast from Washington is locally for a dry, warm winter, Mittelstadt said, "… it's not a strong signal, so it could go either way."

Storm precautions being taken

Randy Kelly with Liberty Utilities, which services the California side of the basin-Truckee-Alpine County, said, "We are definitely paying close attention to this storm."



Meteorologist Jon Mittelstadt looks at data Nov. 29 showing the approaching storms.

His crews have been talking with emergency personnel from NV Energy in Reno and plan to keep in touch today “to see how everyone is doing and who needs help.”

A tree branch falling onto a line Thursday caused about 150 customers near the Y in South Lake Tahoe to be without power.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler has reached out to officials in El Dorado County Emergency Management Office.

The city has 10 free sand bags per household available behind Fire Station 3 located at 2101 Lake Tahoe Blvd. (near the Y) and at Bijou Community Park near disc golf hole No. 1. Residents must fill the bags.

Sandbags are available at the Truckee Fire Protection District Station 92, 11479 Donner Pass Road.

In Placer County, sand bags are available at: North Tahoe Fire Station 52, 288 North Shore Blvd., Kings Beach; Placer County Department of Public Works Corporation Yard, 2501 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City; Old Squaw Valley Fire Station, 1810 Squaw Valley Road, Olympic Valley; Northstar Community Services District Corporation Yard, 50 Trimont Lane; and North Tahoe Fire Station 53, 5425 West Lake Blvd., Homewood.

Washoe County School District has activated the district flood emergency plan.

Follow the Reno National Weather Service office online.

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This video from Kings Beach on Nov. 28 proves some people enjoy wild weather:

Renowned guitarist to play in South Lake Tahoe

Marten Falk, one of Sweden’s most internationally active guitarists, will be in South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 30.

His three solo recordings on the dB Productions label have been met with fantastic reviews around the world.

Falk will be at Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra (930 Julie Lane, South Lake Tahoe) at 7pm Friday.

Tickets are $15 at the door.

Markleeville taking a day to celebrate holiday season

Markleeville is putting on a free holiday event Dec. 2 from 10am to about 3pm or when it gets cold.

The town comes alive with the Christmas spirit with decorations, music, local vendors offering their hand crafted Christmas items.

Santa will be in his favorite chair next to the fireplace at the Wolf Creek Restaurant.

There will be a choir singing on the courthouse lawn starting at 1pm before they stroll around town.

Santa will stroll down to the library about 2pm to help with the storytelling, cookie decorating and wishes from the little ones.

The museum will be open and free for the day.

The restaurants in town will be open with special deals.

Hard Rock helping raise money for Sugar Pine Foundation

The Sugar Pine Foundation is having a fundraiser Dec. 6 at the Hard Rock Cafe inside Harvey’s in Stateline.

Festivities will start at 6pm with dinner and live commentary on the Sugar Pine Foundation film.

There will be a silent auction, limited edition Hard Rock Sugar Pine pins for sale, and drink specials. Thick as Thieves plays from 9-11pm.

Lone South Tahoe pot club threatened with closure

By Kathryn Reed

Even though Tahoe Wellness Collective sought permits in October to renovate the facility to deal with the marijuana odor issue, South Lake Tahoe this week threatened the dispensary with closure.

Cody Bass, who runs the medical marijuana dispensary, said he has the contractors lined up and permits in hand. Bass told *Lake Tahoe News* he expects to have the remodel done by the end of the year.

What has the city upset is people continue to complain about the smell and this has been ongoing since TWC opened four years ago. While permits have not been required that entire time, now that they are all the rules must be followed – which includes running an odorless operation.

The notice given this week says Bass has 10 days to comply or he will be shutdown. He intends to appeal that notice. This buys him time to stay open and fix the problem until the council schedules a hearing. Ultimately it is up the the City Council now.

City Manager Nancy Kerry said she plans to meet with Bass on Friday.

Added to all of this is Bass was pulled over by a California Highway Patrol officer in October in Colusa County and subsequently arrested with allegedly 1.5 ounces of pot on him. The charges were possession of marijuana or hashish,

possession for sale and driving with a suspended license.

If Bass were convicted of a felony, he could lose his permit to operated the dispensary per city regulations. Bass told *Lake Tahoe News* he does not believe a felony conviction is in his future.

Study: Bounce house injuries on the rise

By Michael Muskal, Los Angeles Times

Although they have become a popular staple at children's parties, inflatable bounce houses can be dangerous and are associated with a 15-fold increase in the number of injuries from 1995 to 2010, according to a study published in a scientific journal.

Writing in the journal Pediatrics, a group of researchers examined records from the federal National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, operated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. They looked at patients 17 years old and younger who were treated for injuries from inflatable bounce houses from 1990 to 2010.

"The number and rate of pediatric inflatable bouncer–related injuries have increased rapidly in recent years," they wrote. "This increase, along with similarities to trampoline-related injuries, underscores the need for guidelines for safer bouncer usage and improvements in bouncer design to prevent these injuries among children."

The study was co-authored by Meghan C. Thompson, Thiphalak Chounthirath, Dr. Huiyun Xiang and Dr. Gary A. Smith. All are affiliated with the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Smith is the director.

Overall, an estimated 64,657 were treated 1990 to 2010, the researchers found. The numbers suggest 31 children a day in 2010 were treated in emergency rooms for broken bones, sprains and cuts from injuries in bounce-house accidents. That is the equivalent of one injured child every 46 minutes, they said.

Part of the problem is that the bounce houses have become increasingly more popular for parties and that means the number of injuries from children bouncing off of walls, floors and one another has risen. There were fewer than 1,000 injuries in 1995 but almost 11,000 by 2010.

"From 1995 to 2010, there was a statistically significant 15-fold increase in the number and rate of these injuries, with an average annual rate of 5.28 injuries per 100,000 U.S. children," the authors said in the abstract of their findings. "The increase was more rapid during recent years, with the annual injury number and rate more than doubling between 2008 and 2010."

Bounce houses can be rented for home or recreation center use. According to the findings, 43.7 percent of the injuries occurred at a recreation facility while 37.5 percent took place at a home.

A majority of injured patients, 54.6 percent, were male and the average age was 7.5 years old.