

Array of lights, decorations bring holidays to life

Updated Nov. 28 4pm: Rebecca Wass' tree was named "best in show" by judges.

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE — Barren open space at dawn became a bevy of activity by noon and when the lights went out Tuesday night the room embodied the essence of the holidays.

Barton Health Foundation's 4th annual Festival of Trees and Lights begins this week. All the trees and other decorations went up Nov. 27.

Judges will be roaming the MontBleu convention center this morning to pick the best of the 12 large, designer trees, along with best school tree, and best Barton wreath and trees. During the festival the public will be able to weigh in by casting a vote in the "people's choice" award. At the Dec. 1 gala the bidding begins for those who want to take a tree and trimmings home.



Laurie Brazil strings lights on one of the designer trees. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Having won “best in show” the last two years, Terri Tepper is hoping to make it three consecutive years with her Adventurous Arch. Instead of a traditional tree she has created an arch out of the faux greenery and added a hanging Advent with table and chairs below it. Each of the candles represents faith, hope, joy and peace.

“I like to think outside the box. I’m not crazy about artificial trees,” Tepper, who owns Flowers by Terri, said as she was setting up her station Tuesday afternoon.

Though the Barton Foundation festival is not religious, Tepper turns to prayer to find her inspiration each year. She wanted to represent a deeper meaning of Christmas with her creation. But, she added, she didn’t want it to be “in your face”. “People who don’t know the Advent will think it’s a hanging candelabra,” Tepper said.

It’s up to the designers how they want to transform their trees. Up early were the Gingerbread Man and Snowsports trees.

Working on her inaugural tree was Rebecca Wass. She took time off from her job to be able to transform the somewhat pliable branches into Santa’s Workshop.

“I want it to be an attention grabber for kids. I believe Christmas is for the kids,” Wass said.

Whimsical and fun is how she described her tree.

Designers who have participated every year include: Barbara Anderson, Barbara Page Interiors; Après Wine Co.; Katie Long, Thran’s; Keri Lanier Smith, Lake Tahoe Holidays; Terri Tepper, Flowers by Terri; and Tina Hoy-Barnwell, Lavish Floral.

New designers this year are: Elizabeth Leonard, Celadon Events; Cynthia Ferris-Bennett, Events Ink; Interior Motives; Kim Warlow, Cork & More; and Rebecca Wass.

Besides looking at all the brightly decorated trees, there is

the Teddy Bear Hospital to visit, letters to Santa to be written, crafts to create, gift buying at Mrs. Claus' Shop, and photos with Santa. Plus, there is entertainment most days.

The first three years of the festival the proceeds went to Barton Health's Community Clinic expansion and renovation. This year the money will be used to turn Barton into a level 3-trauma center. The cost of staff training, equipment and remodel of the emergency room is more than \$200,000.

Paul Fry will be honored Dec. 1 with the spirit of philanthropy award.

Event schedule:

- **Nov. 29:** Senior Stroll and entertainment: 10-11am (Free for seniors 55-plus)

Designer tree public viewing and entertainment: 10am-2pm

- **Nov. 30:** Designer tree public viewing entertainment: 10am-2pm

Family Night: 5-9pm

- **Dec. 1:** Teddy Bear Breakfast: 8:30-9:30am

Designer tree public viewing entertainment: 10am-2pm

The Gala: 5:30pm-midnight

- **Dec. 2:** Designer tree public viewing and entertainment: 10am-2pm

Family movie showing, "The Polar Express": 3pm

Public viewing (\$5 for adults; \$3 for senior citizens (55-plus); \$3 for children (ages 3-12); children 2 and under are free) and Family Night tickets (\$35 for a family of six).

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Tahoe ski, tennis legend George Galante died

By Harry Spencer, Sparks Tribune

Long-time North Lake Tahoe resident George Galante, 69, passed away at Renown Medical Center in Reno on Nov. 21. He was born to Florence and George Galante in 1943 in Newark, N.J. He was the oldest of four children.

He arrived at Incline Village in 1968, after spending time as the coach of the U.S. Ski Team in Jackson Hole, Wyo. It was his intention to try the skiing the Sierra offered at that time and then move on to other locales. But like most people, he fell victim to the scenic wonder of Lake Tahoe and spent the remainder of his life there. During the winter months, he skied and taught skiing every day the mountains had snow.

Early that first year, in addition to hiking and biking, he sought out other physical activities and discovered the sport of tennis. At that time, Incline Village was a hotbed for the racket sport. Galante soon was taken under the wing of legendary tennis pro Fred Earl, who worked with him until Galante was able to take his turn as a teaching pro on the courts. A natural athlete, in his early years back East he excelled at ice hockey and race car driving. Of medium height

and a sturdy physique, he gained the highest ranking in karate and was a daily presence at the local gym.

He had a brilliant tennis career competing with many of the most famous names in the sport at that time. He enjoyed one of his most successful tennis seasons this year at the Tahoe Vista area, where his students nicknamed it "Camp George" in his honor. As a teaching pro, during his 44-year career he taught at all of the tennis facilities on the North Shore and served as a pro bono tennis coach at Incline High.

George is best remembered for his wit and humor, which led him to emcee gatherings large and small. Relying on previous experience from back East, he once did a stint as a standup comic at the Tahoe Biltmore where he was also the marketing director. Another facet of his personality led him to a job as maitre'd during the Cal-Neva Lodge's heyday.

One of his favorite haunts at Incline was the Village Ski Loft, where he acted as a rep for manufacturers and participated as a ski expert during annual sales events. He also donated his time as a mentor to members of the Incline High ski team, where he developed many outstanding young skiers.

He had a legion of friends, whom he could call upon to assist him in his special event promotions that he did both locally and regionally. Two major events of which he was most proud of were the Long Beach Grand Prix and the Oakland Raiders "Snow Wars" celebrity ski event.

He is a legend at the Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe Resort, where he is remembered on its Facebook page. A celebration of life is pending and will be announced at a later date.

El Dorado County man missing since early November

By Cathy Locke and Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

David Clement spent the past two years pursuing his dream of creating a computer game for market and was within days of sending it out for testing when he went missing from his Camino home.

John Clement said it appears his 30-year-old son had been on the computer working on graphic designs in the early morning of Nov. 6. He had told his father the night before that he planned to run some errands in the morning and the two talked about getting together later in the day.

But family and friends have not heard from him since then.

John Clement, a former pastor at Camino Community Church, thinks his son went out for a run. He fears that he may have been injured, or possibly attacked by a mountain lion sighted in the area in recent weeks.

When he was unable to reach his son by phone, John Clement went to the house. His son's motorcycle was there, but the weather was bad so his father figured he had gone somewhere with friends.

After a couple more days passed, John Clement again went to the Camino house David shared with a roommate. The roommate hadn't seen David either but assumed they had just been missing one another.

David Clement's new running shoes and a jacket were gone, along with a pistol he usually carried as protection against mountain lions when he ran in the woods. His cellphone and wallet were still at the house.

John Clement tracked his son's computer activities up to about 5am Nov. 6. "I was over here within five hours of him getting up," he said.

El Dorado County sheriff's officials say there is no evidence of foul play.

"We are investigating it as a missing person case," sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Jim Byers said Monday. "We had our search and rescue unit go up last week with cadaver dogs and do an extensive search of the area. We were unable to find anything."

John Clement said his son spent two years in the Army and was discharged in 2001. He pursued acting for a time, serving as an extra in movies, before taking an IT job with the California Highway Patrol – a position he left two years ago.

David Clement had been depressed for a time as he struggled to pay bills while developing the computer game, "but he had worked through that," his father said.

Friend Marty Crossley Jr. of Rancho Cordova said he has known David for about six years and that it is not uncommon for gamers to stay at each others homes when they play into the night.

Crossley said David Clement discussed his game with friends, bouncing ideas off them, and Crossley was among those preparing to "beta test" the game, to identify any flaws and make sure it worked as intended.

Friends say they don't think Clement was suicidal or that he would intentionally go off for an extended period without

notifying family.

“Because it’s been such a long time and he didn’t contact anyone – with the (Thanksgiving) holiday, that’s unlikely,” said friend Erica Scoggins.

Family and friends, on Thanksgiving Day and again on Saturday, searched the area around Camino where David Clement typically ran. John Clement said a search of a broader area is tentatively scheduled for this coming weekend.

Anyone with information regarding David Clement’s whereabouts is asked to call the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office Dispatch Center at (530) 621.6600. Friends also have set up of a Facebook page to assist in the search: www.facebook.com/HelpFindDavidClement.

Sex offender arrested in Truckee

Registered sex offender Gustavo Ramirez, 20, of Truckee was arrested on charges related to not telling police officers where he was actually living.

Officers said when Ramirez first registered he gave a false address. The reality, officers said, is Ramirez was living closer to a day care facility than he was legally allowed.

He was booked into jail Nov. 21 on charges of failing to register and violating his probation.

Expect significant smoke from East Shore pile burning

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews may conduct prescribed fire operations on the East Shore near Secret Harbor on Nov. 28.

The project is approximately 100 acres and consists of piles of vegetation and woody materials remaining after fuels reduction efforts aimed at reducing wildfire risk.

The Forest Service is considering staffing a prescribed fire information station during this project. If weather conditions are favorable and fuels management staff decides to proceed with the operation, additional details regarding hours and location will follow.

Because of the project size, Lake Tahoe residents and visitors may see a significant amount of smoke rising from the project area. Smoke will be visible on Highway 28. Forest Service prescribed fire managers expect good dispersion of smoke based on predicted weather.

The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed.

To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Tour of California not coming close to Tahoe in 2013

None of the 12 cities on the 2013 Amgen Tour of California is in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

New this year is the course will go from south to north. Cyclists will travel approximately 750 miles from May 12-19.

The official race start will begin and finish in Escondido. The next day, Stage 2 will take riders through the hot desert terrain from Murrieta to Greater Palm Springs. For Stage 3, the race will return to Palmdale for a stage start and then travel approximately 100 miles west to Santa Clarita. The city, which hosted the race in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011, will also serve as the start of Stage 4. From there, the cyclists will ride north toward Santa Barbara, which last hosted the race in 2008, for the Stage 4 finish.

The race will remain in Santa Barbara for the start of Stage 5, with Avila Beach being the Stage 5 finish. San Jose will play host to Stage 6 and the Individual Time Trial, marking the eighth consecutive year the race has visited the city. San Jose is the only city to participate in all eight editions of the race.

Stage 7 will start in Livermore and head to Mt. Diablo for an intense mountaintop finish. The eighth and final stage of the 2013 Amgen Tour of California will start in San Francisco and finish in Santa Rosa, which played host to the official race start last year.

Free environmental workshop for educators

Project Learning Tree is an award-winning environmental education program designed for educators working with youth from pre-K to grade 12.

A workshop on Dec. 5 is designed to certify adults as a project learning tree educator. The seminar is from 10am-4pm at the Parasol Community Non-Profit Center, Trepp Room, 948 Incline Way, Incline Village.

The workshop is free.

For more information or to register, contact Joy Barney (530) 543.2685 or jbarney@fs.fed.us.

Ski, snowboard equipment designed with women in mind

By Karissa Bell, Wired

Adrienne Schneider, a former racer and member of Salomon's women's ski team, now runs women's clinics and coaches master's programs for men and women.

She sees the advent of rockered skis as one of the most

exciting advancements in the industry, particularly for women. Unlike other cambered skis where the contact points are located at the tip and tail, a fully rocker design positions the contact points almost completely underfoot. Schneider says this makes for a more forgiving ski that's much easier to coax into turns – especially for women, who tend to not be as strong as guys, who are more able to “muscle through” turns.

“Rocker technology is going to make more women want to ski,” she says. “Turning is a lot easier, they are more playful and friendly. They are like little Ferraris.”

Schneider says ski manufacturers have come a long way in making skis lighter and more optimized for the way women ski.

“Ten years ago, it was not a good experience to have a women's ski,” she says. “They were junk, but now they are much more forgiving.”

Sarah Allen, a lifelong skier who now does marketing for a few Colorado resorts, says she has seen women's lines improve by leaps and bounds during her 20-plus years in the sport. Though women's gear is still not as plentiful as the men's selection, women have a far wider range of equipment to choose from than ever before.

And, Allen says, we've thankfully moved on from the days when manufacturers just added pink graphics to their men's models and called it a women's ski. “Women and men ski completely differently,” she says. “They're creating gear more customized to the way we ski.”

Snowboards: Better boots, new bindings

Amanda Cooper fell in love with snowboarding at an early age. When she started competing during her high school years, there weren't many other women in the sport.

“There were some events when I would actually end up competing

against guys because there weren't enough girls," she says.

Cooper thinks some of the most drastic improvements she's seen have been in snowboarding boots.

"When I first started riding, it was hard to find boots that really fit very well." She says she would do all kinds of funny things to get a good fit, like tear apart the boot liners and stuff her boots with inserts and footbeds. She laughs about it now, but it was frustrating at the time.

"Definitely, the women's boots have come a long way. They've been able to make boots that are really solid and form-fitting and have the support and still allow for flexibility."

She cites improvements like rear-entry bindings and the Boa system – a boot closure mechanism that uses steel cables and a crank knob instead of laces or clamps – as innovations that make it easier for beginners to hit the slopes.

"The Boa system is really good for new riders too, because it gives a lot of reinforcement and security and a custom fit."

Rae Jamison is a self-described ski bum who lived in Denver and Jackson Hole before coming out to California, where she feeds her snowboarding habit in the mountains of Lake Tahoe. When it comes to gear, Jamison has a special appreciation for the fashion side of things.

"It's about standing out," she says, speaking of her preference for less-mainstream companies like No Mist. "It's a small brand," she says. "If someone has that on, they're in. It shows they didn't just go to the store down the street from the mountain."

Get out of the park

Both Cooper in California and Allen in Colorado will say they've recently seen a significant increase in snowboarders and skiers heading into the backcountry.

If you look at the culture of a decade ago, Allen says, parks were huge – riders flocked to halfpipes, boxes, and other man-made terrain features. “Now, you’re seeing the pendulum swing back to where people are taking everything back to the backcountry,” she says, “kind of like taking it back to where skiing used to be where you just found a mountain and you skied it or snowboarded it.”

This shift is also reflected in the recent changes in gear, particularly on the ski side, according to Allen. AT (Alpine-Touring) bindings are becoming more popular and readily available. AT bindings are a cross between traditional alpine bindings used for downhill skiing and those used for telemark or cross-country. This gives skiers the flexibility to have their heels free for “skinning” up hills, as with a traditional cross country or telemark ski, and the ability to lock them down again, alpine-style, when descending.

In snowboarding, splitboards have gained momentum in recent years. Splitboards are often used by snowboarders who need versatility in backcountry conditions. They come apart like skis and have bindings that can be converted for skinning up hill and then reattached for riding on the descent.

Cooper says she sees this trend as a broader reflection of snowboarders and skiers wanting to take their respective sports back to their roots. Particularly in snowboarding, which began as a renegade sport – snowboarders’ only choice for access to the best terrain often was to take split boards onto the mountains or to head out into the backcountry.

“I feel like that’s a very natural and soulful thing,” says Cooper. “You’re connecting back with nature and you’re experiencing what snowboarding is really all about – going fast and experiencing the feeling and joy of being able to cruise at high speeds.”

Rain, snow to blanket Tahoe for several days

Wet. That's going to be the dominant word to describe the weather starting Wednesday and lasting through the weekend.

Rain is expected at lake level to begin with.

"A more significant set of storms is shaping up for Thursday night into the weekend. These storms will likely tap moisture from the Central Pacific and confidence is high that it will bring a prolonged period of heavy precipitation to the Sierra and adjacent areas of Eastern California and far Western Nevada," the National Weather Service in Reno said. "These storms will likely have high snow levels (above 7,500 feet) therefore significant snowfall will likely be relegated to only the highest elevations of the Sierra. Heavy rains in lower elevations may create some minor rises in streams, but flooding is not expected."

Winds will pick up on Friday and blow into Saturday.

Mountain passes are bound to require chains or snow tires. For road conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

These will be warm storms that will be passing through the basin, with highs expected to be in the mid-40s and lows in the mid-30s.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Reforming California: Easier said than done

By Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – For the last couple of years, some of the state's most influential business titans and elder statesmen have taken time off to grapple with the mess in Sacramento.

Former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Condoleezza Rice, Google Inc. Chairman Eric Schmidt, Los Angeles philanthropist Eli Broad and other heavyweights have all attended an effort known as the Think Long Committee for California, which is focused on squaring away the years of mismanagement from Sacramento and conflicting mandates from citizen initiatives.

They haven't gotten very far.

Nor has a similar effort launched by U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and others before he departed California for the Obama administration. A push by Bay Area business leaders to launch a constitutional convention to deal with the state's vexing policy problems sputtered and died.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger had some very big names working on blowing up the boxes of government – almost all of which are still intact.

It's a decades-old pattern in California. The state plunges into financial crisis, Wall Street sounds an alarm about reckless management, celebrity thinkers spend countless hours hashing out solutions, only to see them pushed aside when special interests push back or tax receipts start to pick up.

Now, with billions of dollars of new taxes that voters approved in November, the urgency is easing again.

"These reform efforts have been going on for a long, long time," said Bill Leonard, a former GOP lawmaker from the Inland Empire who served for decades.

Leonard was the member of a bipartisan commission drafted by the governor and legislative leaders to find ways to revise the state Constitution to avoid future budget crises – in 1996.

"I can't remember a single one of our recommendations being enacted," he said. "We didn't even get the courtesy of a hearing."

The big names at Think Long, which also include former Gov. Gray Davis and former Assembly Speakers Willie Brown and Bob Hertzberg, have yet to propose any laws for their plans to overhaul the state tax code. But billionaire Nicolas Berggruen, the group's leader, struck out on his own to help bankroll a less ambitious measure on the ballot this year.

It was badly beaten.

Proposition 31, a medley of changes to state budget rules drafted by the group Panetta helped form, California Forward, got panned by environmental organizations, unions and the state Democratic Party. Tea party activists, meanwhile, warned that it was part of a global conspiracy – rooted at the United Nations – to take away personal liberties.

In the weeks before election day, with polls showing the measure destined for defeat, Gov. Jerry Brown expressed skepticism about outside groups swooping in with big, far-reaching packages to make state government function smoothly.

"There is no quick, easy big fix," he said. "It is incremental. Step by step ... government, like everything else

living, evolves.”

Joe Mathews, coauthor of “California Crackup: How Reform Broke the Golden State and How We Can Fix It,” also predicted change will be slow going.

“These guys are rich and impatient and want to do everything in the next election cycle,” he said. “They are nuts. Change doesn’t happen that way. You have to seed the politics of the state to have actual deliberation and debate. They want to push a button and get it fixed.”

Berggruen said Think Long adopted its name because its members are in it for the long haul, not the next election cycle. He’s pledged to spend at least \$20 million to push his group’s plans for rewriting the tax code, reshaping the initiative system and rebooting the relationship between state and local government.

An international man-about-town and intellectual who lives out of luxury hotels in the world’s great cities, Berggruen has launched movements to reshape governance on three continents. He said he was drawn to this state because “if California can reform, it shows democracy can reform.”

Berggruen, sometimes known as the “homeless billionaire,” said Think Long’s efforts have been delayed but not derailed. The group, which initially wanted to bring a package before voters this year, put its plans on hold when Brown decided to go to voters seeking billions of dollars in new taxes.

“We thought with two tax measures on the ballot, it would be difficult to win,” he said. “Anything that is complex in front of voters, even if well intended, will have difficulty.”

Although some efforts to reshape government have been successful, they have been narrowly focused. Voters have approved measures to ease term limits, allow lawmakers to pass a budget with a simple majority vote and put the job of

mapping political districts in the hands of an independent commission, all of which proponents argue result in a more adept, responsive Legislature.

It is generally agreed among economists and budget analysts, however, that bolder action is needed.

“Our larger, underlying problems are as acute as they have ever been,” said Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, noting that state government’s overreliance on income taxes from a small group of wealthy earners will continue to result in cash shortages with even slight dips in the economy.

Newsom still supports a constitutional convention, in which a large group of citizens would draft far-reaching changes to the state Constitution for voters to consider. The last effort fizzled, he said, because too many power brokers were too threatened by it.

But change doesn’t have to take the form of such a convention, Newsom said – it just needs to take form.

“How many times have we promoted and been promised reforms but fallen short?” he said.