Tahoe City planning 3-day Nordic fest

Alpenglow Sports has teamed up with Tahoe Cross Country to present the inaugural Lake Tahoe Nordic Festival Dec. 14-16.

All events are free and open to the public at Tahoe Cross Country.

The festival will include local Nordic ski and snowshoe community to lead its clinics, groups skis and races, including Olympians Marcus Nash and Glenn Jobe, Far West Nordic Head Coach Ben Grassechi, Tahoe Peak Endurance's Colleen Connors-Pace, Andy Pasternak and Julie Young of Silver Sage Sports Performance, Tim Hauserman of Tahoe Cross Country, Kara LaPoint of NTHS Nordic, and Peter Fain of Atlas Snowshoes.

Local organizations Tahoe Institute for Natural Science and Tahoe Rim Trail Association also lead a Natural History Snowshoe Tour and Snowshoe Hike, respectively.

A full schedule of events is available online.

SLTPD to swear in 2 officers

Two veteran officers will join the South Lake Tahoe Police Department on Monday.

Jason Cheney and Kevin Whalen will be sworn in Nov. 26 at 11am at the department.

Cheney has been a peace officer in California for more 11 years; mostly recently with the Sutter County Sheriff's Department.

Each officer is married and both have two children.

Election loss has Republicans seeking common ground with Democrats

By Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – The drubbing Republicans suffered in California elections this year came as no surprise to many GOP activists, who for years have been advocating a shift in direction to avert irrelevancy.

Now, some longtime party stalwarts are questioning whether it is even worth the effort.

Business groups are taking their agendas to Gov. Jerry Brown and a new crop of centrist Democrats in the Legislature, many of whom were elected with financial backing from traditionally Republican groups.

"For the business community, there is a recognition that the best path forward for the state from a governance perspective is with moderate Democrats," said Rob Stutzman, a Republican consultant who advised the California Chamber of Commerce on a number of legislative races this year.

Although all of the Republicans the chamber backed lost their races, at least seven of the newly elected Democrats in the

Assembly had its backing.

That trend could continue in the coming years if Republicans remain stuck in political oblivion. Charles Munger Jr., the wealthy donor who has long called for his party to take a more moderate tack, said at a post-election forum that diminishing numbers and a damaged brand mean “our role as Republicans for awhile will be to choose the best Democrat.”

California’s GOP leaders have wrestled since the mid-1990s with the problem of adjusting to the shifting state demographics. At that time, Gov. Pete Wilson’s crackdown on illegal immigrants led to Latinos backing Democrats in droves.

Subsequent efforts to recalibrate the GOP’s stance on a number of issues, including immigration and economics, failed because hard-line conservatives refused to budge.

The state party is weaker now than it has ever been, accounting for fewer than 30 percent of registered voters. No statewide elected officials are Republicans, and the party has become almost a nonentity in the Legislature.

Democrats now hold a two-thirds supermajority in the Assembly and Senate, meaning they can pass taxes and place proposals on the statewide ballot without any Republican support.

Some Republicans say that their party must remain true to its conservative roots. Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, recently wrote: “One of the lessons that we should take from this experience is that capitulation on our values and principles is not the answer.”

But others, such as former state Sen. Jim Brulte of Rancho Cucamonga – who has been rumored to be a candidate for state party chairman – said the GOP needed to reach out to new voters, including Latinos and Asians, who now constitute more than one-third of the electorate. Since the mid-1990s, both groups have overwhelmingly supported Democrats.

“Demographics do not have to be destiny,” Brulte said. “But if Republicans don’t do a better job of reaching out to all Californians, they are going to be.”

Brulte said that though there was work to be done at the grass-roots level, the state party’s woes are due, in part, to a national party that has opposed immigration reform and been seen as out of touch on a number of issues important to Californians.

Exit polls showed many of the state’s new voters were more moderate than the hard-line activists who wield considerable clout within the party.

Moderate Republicans have tried to assert themselves.

In 2009, for example, a handful of Republican lawmakers voted for temporary tax hikes backed by Democrats and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to patch a $24-billion hole in the state budget.

But the votes cost both GOP legislative leaders their jobs and led to an attempted recall of another Republican assemblyman.

As conservatives retain their grip on the party, their numbers have continued to drop. Some Republicans say the party would be better off focusing on the Democrats.

“It will be easier,” said longtime Republican consultant Mike Madrid, “to moderate the Democratic Party than to fix the California Republican Party.”

California lawmakers set to take pay cut

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

California elected officials from governor to legislator will see their pay cut by thousands of dollars next month under decisions made by appointees of former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Effective Dec. 3, Gov. Jerry Brown's pay will drop to $165,288. Legislators will be paid $90,526, legislative leaders $104,105. Salaries for constitutional officers from attorney general to secretary of state will range from $143,571 to $123,965.

But Brown's administration will soon control a majority of seats on the salary-setting commission as two seats become vacant Dec. 31, ensuring that his appointees will fill four of the seven positions. The turnover could change attitudes on a commission that moved aggressively in recent years to cut pay and perks for state elected officials.

Charles Murray, a Schwarzenegger appointee on the commission, said he expects labor unions to gain clout with Brown's two pending appointments – and for the seven-member panel to start raising officials' salaries once California's budget deficit ends.

"Everything is going to swing the other way," he said.

The panel, created by a voter-passed initiative in 1990, voted to make the pay cut in May. At the time Brown said, "I'd run for governor whether it was a paid job or not."

Next month's reductions slash $8,699 from Brown's annual salary. Legislators will lose $4,765, legislative leaders

$5,479. Constitutional officers from attorney general to secretary of state will see drops ranging from $7,556 to $6,525.

Aaron Read, a longtime Capitol lobbyist, said the cut creates unfairly low salaries that could discourage the “best and brightest” candidates from seeking office in a state of nearly 40 million people that has one of the world’s largest economies.

Read contends the pay cut was meant as a slap at officeholders while state government was wrestling with billions in red ink and service cuts.

“It was clear that it was punitive,” Read said. “I think the commission should be disbanded. I think it’s done a grave disservice to the state.”

Murray countered that elected officials need to share in fiscal sacrifice. “In tough times you have to do tough things,” he said.

Kris Vosburg, executive director of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, said “average folks would say they’re still overpaid.”

The pay cut of 5 percent next month is in addition to an 18 percent reduction in officeholder salaries and fringe benefits in 2009, and elimination of the Legislature’s car-lease program in late 2011.

Brown’s restructuring of the board began last year, when he appointed labor union business manager Tom Dalzell to the panel and designated him as chairman, adding a voice of restraint to a board that has sharply cut compensation.

Dalzell votes only if the panel is deadlocked, however, and it was not when it voted on May 31. Four of five Schwarzenegger appointees, joined by one Brown appointee, agreed to slash

elected officials' pay by 5 percent when the new legislative session begins.

Dalzell, before the vote, noted that supporters' argument for reducing elected officials' pay was that state workers were about to take a similar cut. Ultimately, workers' hours were reduced 5 percent temporarily through a monthly furlough day, but their rate of pay was not changed.

"I want to maintain my impartiality as chairman, but I think the commission acted on assumptions that did not play out," Dalzell said recently.

Dalzell, a leader of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1245, said he would be willing to consider restoring some of the previous cuts once the state's budget outlook brightens. State law bars the panel from raising pay in years of deficit.

Peak salaries for elected officials, in 2008, ranged from $212,179 for governor to $116,208 for legislators.

Key legislative aides, many of whom received a pay hike this year, routinely earn substantially higher salaries than the officeholders they serve.

Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez's chief of staff receives $190,000 a year, for example, while the Democratic legislative leader makes $109,584 now and will see that fall to $104,105 on Dec. 3.

Democrat Ken Cooley must quit his job as a senator's legislative director to represent Sacramento County in the Assembly. His pay will drop from $108,792 as an aide to $90,526 as a legislator.

"I knew I was taking a pay cut – that's OK," said Cooley, who also must resign his $6,000-per-year job as Rancho Cordova councilman. "My wife is a church bookkeeper. We live within

our means. And I believe in public service."

Assemblyman Jeff Gorell, R-Camarillo, said the 5 percent cut "is not going to be easy," but "we've adjusted our income to it."

"Frankly, I think it sends the right message when we're making cuts to vital state programs," he said.

Pérez and Senate President Darrell Steinberg declined to comment on the pay cut.

Sabrina Lockhart, spokeswoman for Assembly Republican leader Connie Conway, said the "commission was created to take salary-making out of the hands of legislators and she'll accept whatever decision they make."

Even with the new 5 percent cut, California lawmakers' $90,526 salary will lead the nation in base pay, followed by Pennsylvania, $82,026 and New York, $79,500, according to a 2012 survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The two East Coast states arguably rank highest in total compensation, however, because legislators there can qualify for pension and retirement medical benefits, while California lawmakers cannot.

California legislative salaries pale in comparison to judges and to many city managers, college presidents, auditors and district attorneys.

Storms provide water for

Yosemite falls to flow again

By Dana M. Nichols, Stockton Record

SAN ANDREAS – After an unusually long stretch with no water, Yosemite National Park's beloved waterfalls are flowing again, the park announced Monday.

Blame the record dry summer and a fairly dry winter last year for Yosemite Falls drying up in July, several months earlier than usual.

Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls as well as Bridalveil and other waterfalls are flowing again just before Thanksgiving, thanks to storms that dumped almost 2 inches of rain over the weekend, park officials said.

"After such a dry period, seeing the waterfalls flowing again is spectacular," Yosemite National Park Superintendent Don Neubacher said.

The park recorded one of its driest years on record, and the driest winter since 2007.

Park staff said the recent storms also brought the first significant snowfall of the season at altitudes higher than 8,000 feet. Park scientists said the storm helped saturate extremely dry soils.

The flow of the Merced River, measured at the Happy Isles Gauging Station, had dipped below 4 cubic feet per second in October.

Such a low level is rare. The storm system over the weekend has not yet done much to boost Merced River flows.

Still, it did dump enough snow to make back country travel difficult. Tioga Road and Glacier Point Road within the park remain closed.

Unsettled weather is expected the rest of the week, with a chance for more rain and snow.

Red Hawk Casino stabbing victim identified

By Melody Gutierrez, Sacramento Bee

Police have identified the man stabbed to death Wednesday night at Red Hawk Casino as 19-year-old Gene Mcarn.

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office reported that deputies were dispatched to the Shingle Springs casino about 10:30pm Nov. 21 following an alleged stabbing.

Mcarn was transported by friends to Marshall Medical Center in Placerville, where he was pronounced dead.

After interviewing witnesses and analyzing the crime scene, the heriff's office reported in a news release that detectives are looking for a man named Estaphen Juarez as a person of interest in the incident.

A bit of history about how Black Friday came to be

By John Tozzi, Bloomberg Businessweek

A century ago "Black Friday" referred to the market crash of

Sept. 24, 1869, which was caused by two financiers' failed attempt to corner the gold market. Today we know Black Friday as the country's busiest shopping day, falling right after Thanksgiving. How did that happen?

One popular but false explanation is that the name marks the day retailers end an 11-month stretch of red ink and harvest profits for the first time all year. Others say it refers to the dark day thousands of retail workers will spend greeting shoppers, stocking shelves, folding garments and ringing registers.

In fact, factory owners in the 1950s coined Black Friday to lament the high number of workers who didn't show up for work, as linguist Ben Zimmer pointed out last year. The connection between Black Friday, crowds and shopping came in the early 1960s from some Philadelphia cops, he explained. They used the phrase to describe the mad traffic downtown on the day holiday shoppers converged with football fans arriving for the Army-Navy game, traditionally played in Philly on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

The name Black Friday, picked up by the press, presented a branding problem from the start. Zimmer quotes a 1961 story from Public Relations News that called the label "hardly a stimulus for good business," and notes city spinmeister Abe Rosen's efforts to replace it with the anodyne "Big Friday." The Philadelphia newspapers refused, and Black Friday stuck.

It's not exactly clear when, in the decades since, retailers across the country embraced the name. By the time they did, it came with the reassuring myth that Black Friday was the day they turned a profit to be "in the black." (A quick look at retailers' quarterly earnings should put that canard to rest.) The retail industry shed any queasiness it had about the Black Friday brand in recent years, as big-box stores and shopping malls embraced "doorbuster" sales that got shoppers to line up for discounts before opening time.

Although Black Friday has long been called the busiest shopping day of the year, that's only become true in the past decade, according to data from retail analyst ShopperTrak. Before 2004, holiday shopping generally peaked on the Saturday before Christmas, the International Council of Shopping Centers reported. But after enough years of retailers and reporters and shoppers repeating that Black Friday was the busiest day, the myth eventually became true.

More recently, the hoopla has spread throughout the week. Cyber Monday was invented in 2005 by the National Retail Federation's digital division in an attempt to promote online shopping when office workers get back to their desks after the holiday; it was not the highest-volume day for e-commerce sales. In 2010, American Express made up Small Business Saturday, with promotions and rebates aimed at getting gift seekers to swipe their AmEx cards at local merchants' shops. Note to retailers: Three days of Thanksgiving week remain unbranded. Or four, if Thanksgiving itself is not off limits.

And, of course, it's not. Black Friday has been creeping earlier, from dawn to midnight to Thursday evening. Walmart opened its doors on Thanksgiving Day at 8pm this year, two hours earlier than last year. Perhaps the earlier hour is an attempt to avoid the sometimes unruly crowds that door-buster sales attract. Last year, a Walmart shopper in Southern California reportedly pepper-sprayed fellow customers to reach coveted merchandise. But even that's not Black Friday's darkest moment: In 2008, Jdimytai Damour, a 34-year-old Queens man who took a seasonal job at a Walmart in Valley Stream, N.Y, was killed when a predawn Black Friday mob broke the glass doors and trampled him to death.

Long before such deadly excess, some activists seized the symbolism of Black Friday to make people think twice about consumer culture. Since the 1990s, the day after Thanksgiving has also been dubbed Buy Nothing Day, an idea championed by Adbusters magazine and, lately, the Occupy movement. The

thought of getting masses of consumers to stay home on what has become the biggest shopping day of the year may sound like a pipe dream. But Black Friday only holds its current place in our culture through miracles of marketing, spin and rebranding. Those celebrating Buy Nothing Day, at least, don't have to explain the name.

Ski report: More terrain keeps opening up

Time to get out and ski off all those extra helpings of Thanksgiving dinner.

Mt. Rose, Boreal, Sugar Bowl and Northstar have top to bottom skiing.

Here is the Nov. 23 ski report.

— Curtis Fong

Tips for how to keep the

holiday pounds off

By Mandy Kendall

So, another Thanksgiving has come and gone but there may be more than turkey leftovers. It is estimated that the average person will eat at least twice their usual calorie intake on Thanksgiving, gaining about 1 pound in extra weight. Although that might not sound like very much, unfortunately we generally never tend to lose that pound and year after year they all add up.

Christmas is still more than a month away, but the supermarkets and commercials will do their best to make us feel like we are already headlong into the next holiday season. We will be constantly tempted by beautifully packaged foods and candies, so it could be easy to get carried away and let the holiday spirit encourage us to indulge more than we should over the next few days, or weeks, with leftovers and all the holiday fare stocking the shelves and enticing us.



Mandy Kendall

So, here are some *Qwik-e* tips to help reduce the gains.

Recruit some help – Ask friends and family to support you in your quest to eat healthily over the holidays by not bringing you tempting food or party dishes.

Avoid white carbs as much as possible – Refined white flour, that tends to make up the majority of white carbohydrate type

foods like bread and pasta, etc., tends to have more calories than nutrition. Instead, aim for most of your plate to contain mostly nutrition-dense foods. (Pretty much any food that has not been processed in any way.)

Hydrate – Thirst is often mistaken for hunger, so drink some water before reaching for a snack. A large glass of water a few minutes before a meal will also help you not overeat.

Rehydrate – Our systems may well have leftovers of their own, including unhealthily high salt levels from holiday indulgences. Flushing the body with plenty of water will help counterbalance the remnants of salt left in our system. (And don't forget that high levels of salt can cause water retention; making you feel bloated.) Alcohol levels may well have been exceeded, too, so give your liver a rest and have a few days without alcohol.

Cleanse – After the carb, fat and sugar overload, your body might be in need of something a little lighter. Try a few days of vegetables, fruits and maybe a few whole grains to help clean your system out.

Keep on track – Let's face it, we are all likely to have overindulged at least a little over the holiday season. Don't beat yourself up. You're only human after all. Just get back on track and plan to keep up with good healthy habits even during the holiday season. You don't have to wait until Jan. 1 to get that new gym membership or start a new healthy regime. Make a deal with a buddy to hold each other accountable and have some fun keeping in shape.

Until the next time … wishing you all happy and healthy holidays.

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.

Money from Tahoe license plates to fund projects in Nevada

The Nevada Division of State Lands is offering grants for projects that will preserve and restore the natural environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Approximately $350,000 generated from the purchase of Nevada Lake Tahoe license plates will be available to public agencies seeking funding. Proposals which include the implementation of capital improvement projects that further the attainment of the TRPA Environmental Thresholds will be prioritized in this funding cycle.

Applications are due Jan. 31 at 5pm, 901 South Stewart St., Ste. 5003, Carson City.

Those receiving funding will be notified in May.

For more information, call (775) 684.2717.