Essay contest open to high school juniors, seniors

The Democrats of El Dorado County is looking for submissions for the eighth annual Fred Winn Student Essay Contest.

The length of essay must be between 900 to 1,200 words and is due Jan. 18.

This contest is open to public high school juniors and seniors in El Dorado County.

The topic is: “What is the greatest challenge faced by your generation?” Students must explain their answer and how they will personally address challenge.

For more information, call Mel Chapman at (530) 621.0409.

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2 fake car repairmen scam cash from S. Tahoe resident

Two men offering car repair services are being sought by South Lake Tahoe police officers.

On Nov. 17 at about 4pm an 89-year-old resident of South Lake Tahoe was approached by two men in the Safeway parking lot who offered to repair a dent in the car for a cash payment $80 and later additional work for an additional $20. The senior citizen agreed to it and the men followed the senior citizen to his residence.

The men worked on his car in the garage. Officers say the

repair was of very poor quality and may have been a ruse to get inside the man's home or a scam to get some money from him.

The men are described as Hispanic male adults in their 30s. They were driving a white full size SUV with a rear lift gate type of hatch.

The South Lake Tahoe police officers warns citizens of the dangers of allowing strangers into their homes and of getting repair work done by unlicensed and uninsured repairmen. Anyone who comes across a similar situation is asked to contact Sgt. Shannon Laney at the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, (530) 542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ski report: Stormy weather on the slopes



Dress in layers and make sure one of them is a waterproof jacket. It will be a mix of rain and snow today.

Wind will also be a factor. This means lift operations could be affected. Heavenly is starting the day on wind hold. Check the resort's website for updates.

Here is the Nov. 18 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Then and now: Changes to the Y in South Tahoe

As you approached the Y in South Lake Tahoe from Lake Tahoe Airport, the old photo from about 1963 shows the Smuggler Imports and Tahoe Sierra Market and Hotel white buildings at left. Most of that has been replaced by the South Y Center.

Behind the Standard service station (at right) was Rudy and Jeannie Buchanan's new Lakeside Theater, which included a residence upstairs. The theater was razed in the late 1990s and replaced by an Office Depot, the building which now houses CVS.

– Bill Kingman



What the Y area looks like today. Photo/Bill Kingman



Heading east on Highway 50

at the Y in South Lake Tahoe in the early 1960s. Photo/Don Lane

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Venerable jazz house Yoshi’s thrives with musicians like Klugh

By Susan Wood

OAKLAND – Guitarist Earl Klugh played to a sold-out crowd this month at the legendary Yoshi’s – proving why he has been nominated for a dozen Grammy awards.

For 30 years, Klugh has been honing his skills as an artist.

Yoshi’s Oakland, which is celebrating 40 years in business this year, brought out jazz enthusiasts on a recent Saturday night to Jack London Square to hear and see Klugh with his accomplished quartet of musicians. Any one of them could have stolen the show judging from their solo performances.



Earl Klugh plays to a sold-out Yoshi's Oakland on Nov. 3. Photos/ Kathryn Reed

The circular stage and tiered seating added value to an intimate setting. And the sound engineering was astoundingly on the money – an absolute rarity in many large concert arenas or supper clubs.

Klugh must have liked the sound. He started and ended the show smiling.

"This is why people dream of living in such a place," Klugh said early on of a tune inspired by a trip to San Juan, Puerto Rico. The ensemble seemed to instantly transport the captivated audience, who intently watched a pickless Klugh strum his acoustical guitar with ease as if he were providing a master's course demonstration.

For that number, he collaborated with legendary jazz performer George Benson, whom he toured with years ago.

Through the years, Klugh, who started playing guitar at age 10 in Detroit, has collaborated with a number of jazz greats. These include Chris Botti, Peabo Bryson and Kirk Whalum in South Carolina. Next April in Colorado, he'll share the stage

with the king of jazz ballads, Jeffrey Osborne.

At Yoshi's, it was the perfectly in tune ensemble of the quintet that made the show.

Saxophonist and flautist Nelson Rangell took the performance to a whole new level when he whistled an entire tune – hitting a high C with the precision of an instrument. The song was extremely romantic. While one man yelled "crazy," the rest of the audience roared and gave him a standing ovation. Rangell also played the flute like a cascading waterfall.

All the band members had their chance to shine. Drummer Ron Otis showed the beautiful delicacies of the syncopated jazz beat.

David Lee on keyboards took the audience on a journey from sentimental keystrokes to an amplified mini rap number.

Bassist Al Turner plucked and pounded at his guitar, turning the usual backup instrument into a solo act. The groovy rhythm instantly got the audience nodding and rocking in their chairs.



Yoshi's Oakland is an ideal venue for listening to the likes of jazz great Earl Klugh and his four friends.

When they weren't on their feet or swaying to the beat, the audience members kicked back to take in the tenderness of the

sound. One woman was so relaxed, she placed her elbows on top of the counter as if Klugh played a personal concert for her.

From Puerto Rico to South Africa, it was world beat meets jazz from the Klugh-led musicians. Klugh has played all over the world, becoming the acoustical king of “cool jazz.”

“This is a beautiful piece of music,” Klugh said to open the song “Sonora.” He sat down with his guitar as if resting in the desert. Like a jazz music station, Klugh’s concert was less talk, more music – much tender and sentimental like his well-known “Living Inside Your Love.” His rendition of “Alfie” brought a collective hush over the nightclub. (The show was worth the $35 price tag for Saturday night and definitely $25 for Sunday.)

In its four decades of sharing superior jazz acts, Yoshi’s has hosted a lineup of great performers – most recently David Sanborn, often Spyro Gyra and occasionally the sultry sound of Diana Krall.

Photos on the wall between the nightclub and the restaurant provide a glimpse of the long, storied past.

Yoshi’s began in 1972 as a small, North Berkeley sushi bar owned by a trio of struggling students. Its founder Yoshie Akiba, who was orphaned in World War II, came to the United States to study fine arts and dance. She opened the Yoshi’s Japanese Restaurant with two of her best friends – journalist, carpenter Kaz Kajimura and painter, Japanese cook Hirojuki Hori.

After two moves resulting in its 17,000-square-foot location that took the seating from 25 to 220, Yoshi’s brought on club artistic director Peter Williams to orchestrate the mix of world, neo-soul, blues, jazz and Afro-Cuban acts. Then, along came Executive Chef Shotaro “Sho” Kamio, who greatly expanded the Japanese menu.

Like the ensembles playing in the nightclub, a diner could be satisfied with a combination of items sprinkled across the eclectic menu. (Highly recommended for two are the panko fried organic Brussels sprouts with spicy miso aioli; veggie sushi rolls with wasabi; and grilled rosemary wagyu beef skewers that melt in your mouth. Bypass the classic tofu dish.)

If not for the inevitable aftermath, a diner may want to spend the entire night glued to the cocktail menu with its varied assortment of libations. (In a minute I would reorder the Ginger and Jazz libation, which includes ginger liqueur, vodka and lemon.)

Letter: Reflecting on Armistice Day

To the community,

Veterans Day was once upon a time Armistice Day, which became Veterans Day in 1954. When World War II started for the United States, two of my Crawford uncles were in the Army at Hickam Field when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. They survived the war. Another Crawford uncle was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. A Crawford cousin, a gunner on a B17, was killed in combat. My wife’s father joined the Seabees and was with the Marines when they island hopped across the Pacific.



Bill Crawford

So, on the recent Veterans Day, I wrote:

After

the eleventh month

the eleventh day

the eleventh hour,

we’re still producing

weapons and wars

and veterans galore,

dead or alive.

For armistice lost

we should mourn.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

California moves forward with health care exchange

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

Since the waning days of former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration, California has pushed to become the earliest adopter of President Obama's health care plan.

But it wasn't until Obama's re-election this month that state officials were fully confident their plans would take flight.

They first had to survive a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June and wait to find out whether a new Republican administration in Washington would reverse the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

"The answer is clear," said Peter V. Lee, head of the state's new marketplace for subsidized health insurance. "A year from now, California will be expanding its coverage to millions of Californians."

California submitted its formal application to the federal government this week to run its own health care marketplace, newly dubbed Covered California. Such entities – called exchanges – are the linchpin of Obama's plan because they will deliver subsidized health care to the uninsured and influence the rest of the market starting in 2014.

California is seeking more than $700 million over two years from the federal government to run the state program.

Covered California will serve households earning up to four times the federal poverty level, equal to $92,200 for a family of four in 2012. The federal government will also expand Medicaid – Medi-Cal in California – to residents below 138 percent of the federal poverty guideline, including childless

adults who did not have access before.

While Obama's win may have cleared the last political hurdle, it didn't make the state's logistical task easier.

"Clearly the things that could have interfered with the implementation have been resolved," said California Health and Human Services Secretary Diana S. Dooley, who chairs the board overseeing Covered California. "That's not to say, however, that it's smooth sailing. This is still a very, very heavy lift. The timeline is extraordinarily ambitious."

California has taken a hands-on approach to how it manages its health care exchange, said Micah Weinberg, a health care expert and senior policy adviser with the business group Bay Area Council.

In a short time frame, the state is building a new enrollment system that must communicate with existing county programs that currently provide health care to low-income residents.

Covered California also wants tight control over which health plans and insurers can sell subsidized coverage to residents. Weinberg said other states have taken a more relaxed approach in which any plan can participate if it meets minimum standards.

"That decision has certain virtues, but more hands-on means more time and more difficulty," Weinberg said.

Covered California expects to begin enrollment by Oct. 1, 2013, and will have six months to sign up its initial class of subscribers. It expects to have between 150,000 and 430,000 enrollees by Jan. 1, 2014. A year later, it anticipates between 490,000 and 1.4 million subscribers.

Between now and next October, Covered California and its contractor, Accenture, must build a statewide Web-based enrollment system. The health exchange must also negotiate

with more than 30 health plans to design coverage and pricing in 19 separate regions of California.

One of the biggest challenges will be persuading the uninsured to sign up, particularly the healthy subscribers necessary to ensure that the program is financially viable. Lee said Covered California will devote much of its energy and resources to connecting with residents through paid advertising and community outreach.

The state health exchange previously hired Ogilvy Public Relations for $900,000 to work on an outreach plan. The Bee reported in July that ideas ranged from having First Lady Michelle Obama lead a California summit to asking television writers in Hollywood to draft story lines featuring subsidized health care options, the latter of which drew objections from GOP congressmen.

Despite the flak, Lee said Covered California isn't backing away from those ideas: "We want it talked about at the dinner table, in front of the TV, in barber shops."

Health insurers are concerned that the federal law limits their ability to charge significantly lower rates for young people than for older adults. Patrick Johnston of the California Association of Health Plans says older adults typically have health care costs five to seven times higher than young enrollees.

Johnston said health insurers are asking the Obama administration to allow greater discounts for young subscribers. Otherwise, he fears, healthy young adults will avoid signing up.

"What Congress did was take (pricing) out of math and science and move it into politics," Johnston said. "It's good for older people. But the effect will not only be on younger people, but the stability of the pool. It's a concern."

As recently as several weeks ago, Gov. Jerry Brown worried that Obama's overhaul might not survive the election. The governor vetoed bills that would have enshrined some of the most popular federal components in state law.

Obama's plan requires health insurers to cover people regardless of condition and prohibits higher premiums based on illness. That pencils out for insurers only if healthy people are mandated to buy coverage, as the federal plan requires under threat of financial penalty.

Brown feared that Obama-plan critic Mitt Romney might eliminate the mandate if elected president, leaving California insurers required under Senate Bill 961 and Assembly Bill 1461 to cover sick patients while healthy residents could avoid buying coverage.

While much of the health care action will take place at Covered California, the Legislature must still make several major decisions in a special legislative session in January.

Sen. Ed Hernandez, D-West Covina, chairman of the Senate Health Committee, said lawmakers must revisit the legislation that Brown vetoed to require insurers to cover all individuals regardless of medical condition and define how premiums are set.

He said the Legislature also has to consider how to extend Medi-Cal benefits to more people and whether to create an alternative basic health plan for low-income residents.

Historic Claremont Hotel a modern-day marvel

By Susan Wood

BERKELEY – Many would say the Claremont Hotel Club and Spa ages like a fine wine.

It breathes comfort, brings on total relaxation, embraces the good life and evolves through a rich history that permeates every inch of the 279-room, 22-acre estate that turns 100 in 2015.

Just driving into the parking lot of the grand estate can instantly transport a guest into a world where the big desire is to park the car until one is sadly leaving. Hoteliers take note: this is the difference between crash-pad lodging and an experience.

When not relaxing in the room taking in that spectacular view complete with the Bay and Golden Gate bridges, a guest can easily lounge, dine, play tennis (or even ping-pong), swim laps and enjoy any one of the multitude of treatments available in the 20,000-square-foot spa.



The Claremont Hotel successfully blends comfort, activities and excellent

cuisine. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Many hotels bank much of their annual revenue in the summer. But the Claremont is entering the fall during the Cal football season and with much anticipation of a successful holiday season. For the former, any given fall weekend may bring out other university colors along with those from UC Berkeley – situated about a mile away. For the latter, winter holiday events marking the hotel's grand guest experience and local community outreach peaks at Thanksgiving and continues through Christmas. For this, it takes a company crew to string lights and decorate the sprawling place.

Of course, the Claremont isn't just any hotel. Legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright called the resort "one of the few hotels in the world with warmth, character and charm." A guest gets that from the initial walk into the lobby marked by high ceilings and a grand piano and ongoing strolls down the hallways lined with historic photos.

It holds a coveted AAA 4-Diamond rating.

And, there's the history – with a day-to-day countdown to its 100th anniversary posted on its website.

"I'm sure they'll do something big," Cathy of the concierge department said, adding the milestone should also be "interesting."

How the hotel marks its centennial celebration will be up to the sales department and the ownership group Paulson & Co., who placed the iconic hotel on the market for $80 million through Winthrop Realty Trust. The investors bought the hotel in 2011 after former owner, Morgan Stanley, filed for bankruptcy.

The change in ownership is something the staffers have gotten used to about every decade, concierge Sandy said. They all work to put out a great product, regardless of who owns the

place.

Big and interesting changes are customary characterizations for the Claremont from its early beginnings.

Rush for gold ignites golden history

A Kansas farmer named Bill Thornburg struck it rich during the Gold Rush days in California and brought his wife and daughter west with the promise of building an English castle with horse stables on the 13,000 acres he bought in the East Bay. After his wife died and his daughter moved to England, Thornburg sold the castle to the Ballard family. But on a dry, windy day in July 1901, the castle burned to the ground. (That wasn't the first time the property would see a devastating fire. But when the destructive Oakland Hills Fire raged through the neighborhood in 1991, the hotel majestically stood tall and untouched. And according to longtime employee Sue, a Meritage bartender, the hotel got donations "from all over" to help out the victims – many of who evacuated to the hotel.)

In the early 1900s, a realty syndicate led by San Francisco lawyer Frank C. Havens, Francis M. "Borax" Smith of the Twenty Mule Team fame, and local developer John H. Spring bought the property from the Ballards and used its railroad experience with the idea of erecting a hotel resort with a train running through the property. (The rail ran through today's tennis courts.)

One night, a checker game with high stakes between the owners put the hotel into Haven's hands. He modeled a new Elizabethan chateau after another he owned in downtown Oakland called the Key Route Inn. It was demolished in 1913.

After the repeal of prohibition, a state law banned the Claremont from selling alcohol because it was assumed the hotel sat within one mile from the Cal campus. But in 1936, an enterprising student with the help of her friends actually measured the distance and found that the Claremont was located

more than a mile away – by only a few feet. The Claremont celebrated by opening the Terrace bar, which is now part of the Paragon restaurant and bar, and awarded the student free drinks for life.

In the 1930s, guests started flocking to the hotel bought by staffer Claude Gillum for $250,000 to partake in the resort's offerings such as the swimming pool patio complex and live music from the likes of some of the greats of the Big Band era – Tommy Dorsey, Louie Armstrong and Count Basie.

Heritage lives on

To this day, guests and visitors can take in live music with a full food menu at the Paragon Bar.

Guests may also venture off the property to celebrate another landmark milestone. Yoshi's jazz club marks 40 years in Oakland this year with a long list of great acts from saxophonist David Sanborn to acoustical guitarist Earl Klugh. It's easiest to just grab a taxi to travel the five miles to the Embarcadero West. (Note: Pass on the Coit Limousine service as at least one of their drivers had never heard of Yoshi's and insisted on getting assistance from us on how to get there.)

If you don't want to venture out, the Paragon may be just the ticket for late-night activity. On one recent Saturday night, a band with a big steel drum sound rocked a full house. Earlier that day, the bar's terrace was filled with many enjoying the sunshine with a libation and one of the best views in the Bay Area. (Hats off go to the Cal student who circumvented the alcohol ban because the warm November afternoon screamed for a glass of white wine with appetizers.)

Eat, drink and take in the view

One of the great things about the Claremont is you never have to leave the property if you are hungry.

Paragon and Meritage are very different experiences, but what they have in common is gorgeous views of San Francisco. With that iconic skyline, it would be hard to find someone who ever gets tired of looking at it. Plus, there's the Golden Gate Bridge and boats of all sizes – from those with sails to mammoth salties – plying the waters of the bay.

Paragon offers outside seating, while Meritage has a bank of tables along the window with booths behind those that also offer stunning views.

Not wanting to ruin our appetite for dinner, we chose three starters at Paragon to be our lunch. And it's such a nice change to find at least three vegetarian items instead of the customary single (if that) option Tahoe restaurants provide.

The mushroom cigars ($12) look a bit like a cigar, so they are aptly named. But the flavor is nothing like a cigar – which was a good thing. They are served with a spicy truffle aioli. The garlic fries ($7) are tasty, but the problem was with how they were served. The cone container ensured all the garlic was at the bottom instead of distributed evenly on the fries. While they are called Gilroy garlic fries, if you are expecting what is served at AT&T Park, you will be a bit disappointed. The butternut squash ragout ($7) was a great surprise and something neither of us had had before, but would like to again.

On the other side of the hotel is the more formal restaurant, Meritage. But this does not mean one has to have dressy clothes – it is still California, after all, where casual is customary for dinner.

Instead of filling up on a basket of bread, the server brings you a choice of wheat, olive or baguette. More can be had if one piece is not enough, but not having it all on the table meant not testing our willpower and not having any go to waste.

Main courses come in appetizer and entrée sizes. We each opted for the appetizer size just in case we would want dessert. That decision paid off.

The meat eater had the pan-seared Scottish salmon ($13) and barely put her fork down in between bites it was so good.

The vegetarian had the forest mushroom ravioli ($12). It was good, but nothing to rave about.

We were both impressed with the different salads we had to start with – the Champagne poached pear salad ($13) and the special baby greens ($13). It was the dressing that made the dish of greens so good.

Our waiter, Cesar, made a good call in having us try two desserts. Baked fall was the special of the night. It was a bit like a baked Alaska except sweet potato is used instead of ice cream. But what we like the most was the pumpkin curry cheesecake. This is what we would have again – say, at sunset with an aperitif.

Recreational options help burn those calories

Still without getting in a car, guests and club members have ways of working off the desire to lounge, eat and drink.

The pool patio within the Claremont Club entry – where the hit movie “Mrs. Doubtfire” was filmed – comes with three swimming pools and a hot tub. In two pools, much of the emphasis is placed on lap swimming. Afterward, more than 100 padded chaise lounges surround the pools so one can make a day of it. Kids even have their own shallow pool that comes with a unique beach-like sloped entry.

A massive gym with six elliptical machines and five treadmills in one room facing the pool area keep your mind off being inside as the patio calls sun worshipers. The Bay View Cafe is open with a pool patio menu of burgers and sides. In the

summer, a bar is set up on the patio.

For those itching to get out and stretch, urban walks and a hike up the steep Claremont Canyon start on the club side of the property leading down the street near a Peet's coffeeshop along Claremont Avenue.

Berkeley is a town full of its own rich history and now thriving neighborhood microcosms down well-known streets – Shattuck, College, Telegraph and University. Walking, window shopping, eating and drinking is embraced on the weekend. (Note: a stop at the university student hangout, Kips, is suggested for a pint of microbrew and nachos made with homemade tortilla chips and topped with homemade salsa.)

Back at the Claremont Club, tennis enthusiasts may immerse themselves in the club's court clinics, then book a massage to work through the workout.

Pain is part of the pleasure

"Ed*grrrrrrrrr*!"

At random times Kae would make this outburst – mostly walking uphill on our urban walk. But she smiled at the same time.

Edgar was the name of the tennis instructor from the day before. A day later, the glutes were being reminded of how he ran her all over the court.

Dripping sweat and with a beet-red face, she was smiling with a wild-eyed look walking off the court. It had been more than a decade since receiving any sort of private tennis instruction. Kae said the hour clinic was worth every penny. ($90)

She seemed to drool looking at the many courts – some lighted – from our room. If only tennis were a year-round sport in Tahoe.

Two days after Edgar inflicted pain upon Kae's muscles, it was time for Ron to do something about it. With 17 years of experience massaging guests at the Claremont, Ron is the atypical resort therapist. He actually listened to Kae's request to have her keyboarding-tennis dominant arm be tended to. (So often resort massage therapists treat guests like they are on an assembly line instead of the unique body that is on their table.)

As good as Ron was – especially being able to stop Kae from her Ed*grrrrrrrrr*! rant – the $145 for 50 minutes (not even a full hour) was a bit spendy. (So the recommendation is to spend a bit of time enjoying the spa and steam room.) One doesn't have to be a hotel guest to enjoy Edgar's workout.

Many Berkeley residents use the Claremont Club. And one nearby couple who are club members said they even stayed at the hotel when they got their house painted. They bring their small dog, as the Claremont is pet friendly. (Recommended: inquire about crating rules with the hotel.) The hotel takes in many local residents as guests for special occasions ranging from weddings and anniversaries to birthdays and holiday gatherings. (Guests who married at the Claremont decades ago and saved their bill are invited to commemorate their wedding anniversary with room rates comparable to those paid 50 years ago.)

For now, best available rates for bay view rooms (highly recommended) start at $263 per night over the weekend in December. There are discounts amounting to 15 percent off in the fall and "home for the holidays" packages. If money is not an issue, rent the "bell tower" suite for $2,500 a night.

Kathryn Reed contributed to this article.

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Doggie mani-pedi helps Christmas Cheer

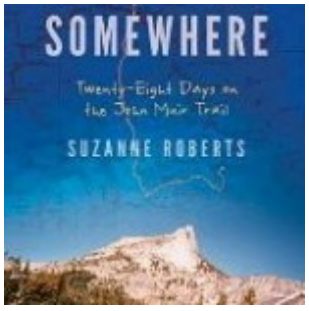
Alpine Animal Hospital's 22nd annual Holiday Cheer Nail Trim Promotion" to benefit Christmas Cheer is Dec. 1-31.

Last year the event raised more than $2,000 for Christmas Cheer.

From 4-6pm Monday-Friday through December, Alpine Animal Hospital will donate all proceeds from the Holiday Cheer Nail Trim Promotion to Christmas 'Cheer.

For more info, call (530) 541.4040.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Suzanne Roberts' book "Almost Somewhere" has won the National Outdoor Book Award for best Outdoor Literature. Roberts teaches at Lake Tahoe Community College and Sierra Nevada College.

• It's that time of your year to get your holiday pet photo. Santa Paws will be in town Dec. 1 from 11am-4pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center. This website has more info.

• Weidinger Public Relations based in Stateline was recognized for superior professional achievement and performance at the recent Sierra Nevada Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America annual Silver Spikes program, winning awards for three campaigns.

• Lou Green is retiring Dec. 5 as El Dorado County counsel.

• Here are Caltrans' roadwork schedules for the coming week for Sierra and El Dorado-Tahoe.