Live Violence Free looking to ease burdens of the holidays

With the holiday's right around the corner, many local families are finding themselves with few resources as they struggle to rebuild their lives after experiencing violence. They are solely focused on how they will pay rent and provide food and warm clothing for their families.

For the 12th year in a row, Live Violence Free, formerly South Lake Tahoe Women's Center, is organizing an opportunity for community members and businesses to come together to provide happier holidays for local adult and child survivors of violence. Last year the community helped hundreds of individuals who were working with Live Violence Free.

Each family who was adopted expressed gratitude and many mothers cried when they saw the gifts donors had brought for their children.

There are many ways people can help local families who have been working closely with Live Violence Free:

• Adopt a family and receive a wish list completed by the family. There are families of all sizes to accommodate any budget.

• Donate non-perishable groceries or gift cards for pre-cooked holiday meals at local grocery stores so families can enjoy special holiday meals and make happy memories together.

• Make a special end-of-the-year tax deductible donation toward Live Violence Free's Adopt-A-Family program or to support our other comprehensive and trusted programs and services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.

• Call to learn about the many different ways we could put your energy to good work as a volunteer – one hour per week or even one per month would really help.

The deadline to adopt a family is Dec. 1 and the deadline to turn in gifts is Dec. 10 by 4pm.

Live Violence Free is located at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Contact Diana at (530) 544.2118, ext. 7621, or by email at dmezacabrera@liveviolencefree.org for information or to volunteer.

Anti-Sass campaign rooted in loop road

By Kathryn Reed

Rare is the time when a campaign is visibly launched against a candidate. Welcome to South Lake Tahoe.

Signs began cropping up this week against Austin Sass who is running for the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

The man behind the signs is Mike McKeen, an ardent voice in the anti-loop road campaign. He has formally and legally created the committee called Opposition to Loop Road – 2012. This allows the group to post the political signs.

McKeen owns the Powder House property near Stateline that would be taken out under some loop road proposals. The signs

are in this area as well on timeshare properties owned by big backers of Councilman Bruce Grego, who is up for re-election.

McKeen did not respond to an email inquiry from *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, he has posted comments on *LTN*. On Oct. 18 he wrote the following unedited comment, "Only funded Bruce Grego AFTER his vote and clarity with the loop road.. Do NOT need members with with strong financial backing from Nevada interests Park Cattle Co., South Shore Vision (former Gaming Alliance, etc.. We already have Claire and Angela, Sass would make the majority. Council members need to represent South Lake Tahoe residents first – we pay the taxes! Our community is not named "Tahoe South"."

This is what Sass wrote about the loop road in his candidate Q&A for *Lake Tahoe News*: "If someone came to you and said they wanted to buy your house or business and had no money or financing prospects, how much time would you spend with them? For most of us, the answer would be none. That's how I currently think about the loop road. There is no money and there are no funding sources to build now. We can all dream, but it's time to focus on what's real.

"There is no doubt that the TTD (Tahoe Transportation District) threw a bomb into our community without thinking about how people's emotions would flare up and how they would answer everyone's questions. Plain and simple, they messed up. On the other hand, there are a small number of people in our community who are politicizing the issue for their own political and future financial gain. They are just as much at fault in polarizing our community as the TTD was. We also need to remember that this project has been part of the plans in our community for many years and the city knew it was in the works.

"I am open to any ideas that would revitalize any part of the

South Shore. I hope investment comes soon because that should improve the economy, the environment, and our transportation, which is key to achieving connectivity."

In regards to McKeen's signs, Sass told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It's a free country. He can put whatever he wants on a sign within the guidelines of his committee. I will thank him for the free advertising later."

Lecture about maximizing nutrition and exercise

Paula Crenshaw of Barton internal medicine on Nov. 7 is giving a lecture about how to maximize nutrition and exercise for busy lives.

The 6pm talk at Kahle Community Center in Stateline is free.

The discussion will focus on: Food vs. vitamin pills? Research shows why food nutrients are better than supplements. What foods have the greatest nutrient value? Become a savvy consumer. Organic? When and why to buy organic foods. No time to get fit? Get the most benefit from exercise in less time.

Combat pilot relives Vietnam War so others may learn

By Kathryn Reed

Leaving college to enlist in the Army. Wanting a change, a new direction, to be a bit defiant and get off the track his parents had laid out. It can happen to any 22-year-old.

The difference is this was 1967. The Vietnam War was raging. Young American men, boys really, were dying every day. The country was divided.

No one thought about supporting the soldiers and not the conflict. Forty-five years ago they were one and the same.



South Lake Tahoe resident Gary Jones looks through a yearbook from infantry training. Photos/Kathryn Reed

This was when protests were the norm on college campuses. It was a time when more people were drafted into the military

than willingly walked into a recruiting office.

Gary Jones admits his desire to join the Army and go to flight school was part rebellion. After all, the junior at UC San Diego wasn't in danger of being drafted.

Today, his life is what is taught in history classes.

This South Lake Tahoe resident has donated memorabilia to the local library that will be on display all month in honor of Nov. 11 being Veterans Day.

While Jones wants to tell his story, the 66-year-old's voice quivers a bit as he relives his last mission over enemy territory. The one that sent him to a hospital in Japan for three months, the one that left him with diminished muscle mass, the one that is the root of his post traumatic distress.

He was with a unit in Cu Chi, a village near the Cambodian border. His job as a light observation helicopter pilot was to fly low to find trails. After a while, Jones could tell how old the trail was, the equipment that had been on it as well as the number of people. He describes it as being like an Indian trail guide.

While a Cobra flew above to be the main firepower, gun battles could not be avoided.

"I took AK47 fire up my right side," Jones tells *Lake Tahoe News*. It went through the seat, into his thigh, off his armored chest plate, bounced off his elbow and exited through his bicep.

"It blew me off the controls," Jones said. "My gunman grabbed the controls and we started to climb."

But this just made the helicopter an easier target. Jones was able to set the chopper in a rice paddy. He looked out and it appeared to be raining. In a way it was – it was raining bullets around the three Americans.

“I could move my arm and leg. Blood was everywhere in the cockpit,” Jones said. “I was starting to go into shock. I was saying goofy stuff on the radio.”

Medics arrived and he was airlifted out. In Japan, men just like him – those wounded in combat – surrounded Jones. There was a certain camaraderie. It was not until he was back in the States that the survivor’s guilt settled in.

He had been writing what he called graphic, truthful letters home. Those stopped just before he was shot. He finished them as he recuperated, which was a cathartic experience.

On the table in his South Lake Tahoe home, a few feet away from where he is sitting, is his Purple Heart medal as well as the Distinguished Flying Cross.

His dress uniform has all the ribbons he earned while serving from December 1967 to March 1971.

It was in 1975 that he moved to Tahoe with his wife. He started as a probation officer. Two years later he joined the Nevada National Guard. In 2002, he retired from the guard. Jones had retired from the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office the preceding year after having been an investigator since 1981.

Sometimes he misses flying and the sense of family the military lifestyle provides.

But Vietnam is never that far away. He is wearing a shirt that says Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association, Life Member. A model of the helicopter he flew is on a bookshelf. When the traveling Vietnam Wall was in Carson City last weekend he was there. He has the etchings of names of boys he went to high school with, of men he served with and soldiers he witnessed die.

“It’s important to talk about it,” Jones says of his

experience as well as what people today in the military are going through.

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Grant money available to help replace shake roofs in South Tahoe

The hazardous wood roof replacement grant program that is designed to encourage homeowners with hazardous wood roofs to replace them with a full Class A Assembly, non-combustible, non-wood roof is now available to people living in South Lake Tahoe.

Lake Valley Fire Protection District in cooperation with the California Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has money for eligible houses in the El Dorado County portion of Tahoe, Lake Valley, Meeks Bay, South Lake Tahoe and Fallen Leaf fire protection districts.

This grant provides eligible participating homeowners with a 70 percent reimbursement, with a maximum reimbursement of $6,000 for the cost of replacing an eligible wood roof.

For more info, call (530) 577.2447.

DiMatteo faces federal drug charges; bribery investigation involving Swanson still alive

By Kathryn Reed

Gino DiMatteo, the man accused of bribing South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman Angela Swanson, is back behind bars. This time he faces federal drug charges.

While the state drug charges have been dropped, the federal charges are more serious if only because of the venue. Plus, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office in a press release said, "… the investigation into certain South Lake Tahoe city officials as to their dealings with DiMatteo is ongoing."



Gino DiMatteo

DiMatteo was arrested Nov. 2 in Placerville where he was scheduled to appear in El Dorado County Superior Court on a hearing related to the state charges.

His criminal attorney, Rob Woelfel, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I'm pleased that all of the California charges have been dropped

and it is disappointing that law enforcement is trying to direct this into a federal forum to deny my client a medical marijuana defense."

DiMatteo, who used to run the City of Angels II medical marijuana dispensary in South Lake Tahoe, was first arrested Aug. 31 on a slew of drug charges as well as bribing a public official. Now he operates Push Fitness, which Friday night still had its lights on.

In moving the case to U.S. District Court, it raises the seriousness of the allegations against Dimatteo. For one, the feds don't recognize any form of marijuana being legal. This is in direct contrast to the state of California which allows the sale and use of medical marijuana.

The exact charges DiMatteo faces have not been released and the federal complaint is sealed.

Swanson has never been charged or detained. However, she has been questioned and her electronic devices taken as evidence. It has come out that she solicited a donation from DiMatteo for the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, on whose board she sits, at the same time she was voting to allow DiMatteo to move his pot club to a different location in town. She maintains her innocence. DiMatteo was known to give quite a bit to charity, so this donation would not have been out of the ordinary. And Swanson's votes have consistently been in favor of medical marijuana, so the time of the donation and vote may look bad, but are not out of character for either individual.

Swanson did not return a phone call Friday.

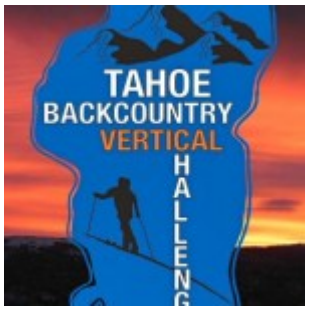
A twist often not seen in cases like this is in the press release from the district attorney there are quotes from DiMatteo criticizing Long: "I – I really think that Ted Long's only agenda is political. And I think it's his intention to no, you know, not represent me properly and just use my – my –

I don’t know how to say it. You now, what’s happening to me – to advance himself and his own agenda.”

Ted Long was not available for comment. He had been DiMatteo’s civil attorney, but had spoken out about the criminal case.

Backcountry skiing can raise money for Sierra Avalanche Center

The 2012-13 Tahoe Backcountry Vertical Challenge continues its third year as Lake Tahoe’s communitywide fundraising initiative to benefit the Sierra Avalanche Center, a vital yet underfunded resource for the Tahoe backcountry community.



Participants may register for free online to log human-powered, backcountry vertical travel. When the cumulative goal of 15 million vertical feet of human-powered uphill travel is reached, Alpenglow Sports will make a $3,000 donation to the Sierra Avalanche Center.

This is the opportunity for local backcountry enthusiasts to give back to the Sierra Avalanche Center at zero cost. Every single foot of uphill travel matters. No number is too small. The event is designed to motivate, inspire, and bond the Tahoe backcountry community around a key resource for all methods of backcountry travel and recreation.

The event will run from Nov. 15, 2012, through April 30, 2013, and data will be recorded online.

As extra incentive, podium prizes will be awarded for the top three men and women. Throughout the challenge any skier or rider who registers data is also eligible for a free bi-monthly raffle. Title sponsors include Dynafit and Black Diamond, with additional help from Scarpa, G3, Marmot, Suunto, Clif Bar and Smith Optics.

If you would like more information about this event, call (530) 583.6917 or email brendan@alpenglowsports.com

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Businessmen banking on 2 states legalizing pot

By Tony Dokoupil, Newsweek

Full dark in downtown Denver, and inside one of the twinkling high-rises that make the skyline, drug dealers are putting money into envelopes. They're trying to be discreet. No one signed the security logbook in the lobby. All assume the room could be bugged. But if your image of the drug trade involves armed gangs or young men in parked cars, these dealers offer a surreal counterpoint. There's a finance veteran, two children of the Ivy League, multiple lawyers, and the son of a police chief. At their side is a Pulitzer Prize–winning communications consultant, two state lobbyists, and a nationally known political operative. And the guest of honor: a state senator who likes the look of those envelopes being stuffed.

“What’s the maximum contribution?” one of the dealers asks. “Do you take cash?” wonders another. A third man breaks into a smile. “You better,” he says, eyebrows dancing, “because the banks don’t like doing business with us.” Laughter fills the room as the envelopes are passed forward and slipped into a briefcase. “Huge thank you, everyone,” the politician says, guiding the conversation back to the next legislative session and the kinds of legal changes this group would like to see. Here again, it’s not what you’d expect: there’s talk of a youth drug-abuse-prevention program and a bill to define “drugged” driving. When the politician finally rises to leave, after more than an hour, the dealers, in their pressed shirts and suit jackets, clap heartily. The average participant looks to be about 35, white and male, and on good terms with a barber. “Thank you,” the politician says, bowing slightly. “Thank you for what you do.”

What they do is sell marijuana. And not on street corners. Colorado is the developed world’s only regulated for-profit cannabis market, and sales—to the 100,000 residents who have a thumbs up from their M.D.s—are closing in on $200 million this year, a sum that generates tens of millions of dollars in local, state, and federal taxes. (Yes, the IRS taxes marijuana operations, even as the Justice Department attempts to shut them down.) Colorado is not the world’s only experiment in free-market pot, but it’s the most sophisticated, pushing beyond the Netherlands’ confusing ban on wholesale and California’s hazy nonprofit status. Denver’s former city attorney has called it California “on steroids.”

While the cannabis market remains illegal under federal law, attitudes are changing quickly, and it’s that fact that the Colorado growers are banking on. The number of regular pot users is up by 3 million in the past five years, and the rate of high-school experimentation is at a 30-year high. When a kid first lights up at about age 16, it’s usually not with a cigarette. Twelve states now treat a personal stash like a

minor traffic offense, 17 allow medical marijuana, and this Election Day, if current polls hold, voters in Washington State and Colorado will vote to legalize marijuana—not for medical purposes but, as Rolling Stone recently enthused, "for getting-high purposes."

That would close out a 40-year fight launched by boomers and carried through by a big tent of talented reformers, growing bigger all the time. "Weed is the new gay," says Ted Trimpa, a Democratic strategist who helped engineer Colorado's flip from red state to blue. He's now focused on marijuana reform. But what I saw in Colorado was something altogether new: self-described "social entrepreneurs," the Sergey Brins and Mark Zuckerbergs of the Green Rush. They could have done almost anything with their lives—"my brother is a physician" is the kind of thing one hears from them—but they chose to enter the pot business because they see it as a boom market, miracle cure, and social movement decades in the making and suddenly, thrillingly, near.

"This is our Facebook," says one of my hosts, Norton Arbelaez, the owner of two dispensaries and a commercial grow. "This is the same kind of environment, the same kind of setting, and the same kind of people." He was a founding member of the Medical Marijuana Industry Group (MMIG), a powerful young lobby that's buried the age of drum-circle activism and instead strives to partner with law enforcement and politicians. It was their board meeting in the high-rise downtown, a weekly gathering two blocks from the Capitol dome. And it is their goal to dress legal pot in a style as conservative as their own.

Read the whole story

Polar Express rolling into Carson City for holiday season

Carson City is getting a big present this upcoming holiday season with the return of the Polar Express train that will roll through the frosty Northern Nevada landscape on 15 dates throughout November and December.

For the second year, the Virginia & Truckee Railroad is one of the officially licensed Polar Express Train Ride events nationwide this holiday season. This historic 100-year train, complete with decorated passenger cars and Christmas music, leaves the Carson City Eastgate Depot and travels nearly two miles before staging at Santa's mythical North Pole retreat.

The Polar Express train rides are based on the holiday feature film from Warner Bros. Pictures and the beloved children's book, by Chris Van Allsburg, about a doubting young boy who takes an extraordinary train ride to the North Pole on Christmas Eve.

Set to the sounds of the motion picture soundtrack, pajama clad passengers will relive the magic of the story as this nighttime train whisks families away for an unforgettable ride to the North Pole.

Tickets include keepsake silver bell, hot chocolate, cookies, entertainment and reading of the Polar Express. The Polar Express departs Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 5pm, 6:30pm and 8pm, from Nov. 23 to Dec. 23. Times are subject to change.

Tickets are $27 for children ages 2-12 and $34 for 13 and older. To book tickets in advance, call (775) 687.7410.

Labor leaders back Raley's employees

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Heading into eleventh-hour contract negotiations with Raley's, unionized grocery workers got public support Thursday from Sacramento's most powerful labor leaders.

A rally in front of the federal building in downtown Sacramento turned into a rousing send-off for union negotiator Jacques Loveall, president of Local 8 of the United Food and Commercial Workers.

The UFCW already had the backing of unions that Raley's would need to keep its doors open, such as the Teamsters. Now it has the support of a slew of unions outside the grocery industry, with leaders saying their members wouldn't cross picket lines.

"We will not shop at Raley's," said Yvonne Walker of Local 1000 of the Service Employees International Union, which represents thousands of state workers.

Given Sacramento's mostly pro-union sympathies – and the choices available to shoppers in a crowded supermarket field – a strike could leave Raley's isolated. Raley's vows to keep as many stores open as possible in a walkout.

Before leaving for negotiations in San Francisco, Loveall said the UFCW would bargain around the clock to get a fair deal. "It's not too late," he told the crowd of about 200. "There are two days to bargain."

Raley's had threatened to unilaterally impose the terms of its "last and final" contract offer Thursday, which includes wage

concessions. That would have likely triggered a strike.

The West Sacramento grocer has put that on hold until midnight Saturday and agreed to resume bargaining instead.

Talks ended late Thursday and were scheduled to resume today.

If there’s no deal by Saturday night, and Raley’s imposes the contract terms, a strike could begin the next morning.

Raley’s says it needs to reduce labor costs to compete with nonunion stores. The UFCW agreed to concessions with another struggling grocer, Save Mart Supermarkets, in September.

Loveall expressed hope for a deal with Raley’s. “We’re within striking distance” on most issues, he said in an interview.

But there’s a big sticking point: retiree health care. Raley’s wants to eliminate coverage for retirees who are eligible for Medicare, as it has done already for nonunion retirees.

Loveall’s response: “Not on our watch.”

Raley’s argues that retiree health care shouldn’t be an issue this week. The company is threatening to impose only the wage portion of its “last and final” offer, said John Segale, a spokesman for the West Sacramento grocer.

The union filed an unfair labor charge Thursday with the National Labor Relations Board, accusing Raley’s of bargaining in bad faith. If upheld, Loveall said, the filing could make it harder for Raley’s to hire replacement workers, as it has threatened.

Segale called the charge “frivolous.”