LTN reader wins tickets to Soroptimist wine tasting

Toogee Sielsch is the winner of two tickets to the Nov. 2 Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe annual wine tasting event.



Thanks for sharing your wine story with *LTN* readers.

Tickets are $65 each and may be purchased from any SISLT member or online. The event often sells out, so tickets may not be available at Harrah's Lake Tahoe that night. Wine starts flowing at 6pm.

Sielsch is one of the hundreds of members of *Lake Tahoe News'* NEWS Team. Members can win all sorts of things. The wine tickets are an example of the give-aways. Before that we gave away two tickets to a Giants game – which happened to be the game where they clinched their division. Fill out the subscriber form to be part of the NEWS Team.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Here are the Caltrans roadwork schedules for the week – Sierra, El Dorado-Tahoe.

• North Lake Tahoe Chamber/CVB/Resort Association's 2012 Winter Expo is Nov. 15 from 4-8pm at Olympic Valley Lodge, 1909 Chamonix Place in Olympic Valley.

• According to the website CareerBliss, Reno is the worst place in the U.S. to find a job.

• Chase International has appointed Jacqueline Daniels regional sales manager of its West Shore offices. Daniels, who has been working as a broker associate in the Tahoe City office, will now oversee brokerage operations in the Truckee, Squaw Valley and Tahoe City offices.

• According to the Tahoe Pipe Club, the Tahoe Keys has more than 40 storm drain pipes that discharge toxins into Lake Tahoe. Here is a video the group has provided:

http://youtu.be/YMz3OoGK8lI

Safety tips for kids going trick-or-treating

Ghosts, vampires and scary monsters aren't the only things to be wary of when you are out trick-or-treating on Oct. 31, accidents and unfortunate mishaps increase dramatically on Halloween.

To help keep children safe while out trick-or-treating, and avoid potential hazards, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office recommends parents follow the basic precautions below. Some are commonly known child safety tips, while others focus on the possibility of victimization on an evening when thousands of children may be walking in unfamiliar neighborhoods.

The sheriff’s office urges parents to communicate with their children about prevention and detection of potential dangerous situations throughout the entire year. Have a plan for what your child should do if they become separated. Discuss with your child before heading out.

Always trick-or- treat with an adult. Don’t allow a child to go outside alone;

Accompany children to the door of every house they approach;

Stay outside. Never enter a home or apartment without adult supervision;

Children should not approach any vehicle, occupied or not;

Remain visible. Wear bright clothing or use reflective strips on costumes. Carry a glow stick or flashlight;

Obey all traffic and pedestrian regulations. Look in all directions before crossing, walk on sidewalks, and obey traffic signals and stop signs. Always walk; never run across streets or lawns.

With all the extra pedestrian traffic on Halloween, drivers are reminded to be extra cautious at all times by eliminating distractions

Children should be warned to never approach a house that is not well lighted and does not have a porch light or outside light on

Do not go onto properties that are marked “Keep Out”, “No Trespassing”, and “No Solicitors Allowed.”

Never eat any treat until it is thoroughly checked by an adult. Dispose of anything that seems to have been tampered with, has been opened, or isn’t wrapped.

Children should immediately report to their parents and/or law

enforcement if they see or experience anything suspicious. Instruct children to shout for help and make a scene if anyone tries to grab them or force them into involuntary situations.

Opinion: Placer County departments among the best in state

By Jennifer Montgomery

One of the best ways to get a clear picture of the Placer County budget is to sit through workshops held each August by the Board of Supervisors.

They are long and exhausting, but illuminating.

Each department gives a presentation loaded with facts and figures to let the Board of Supervisors know what it has been up to and its goals for the coming year. What I find particularly enlightening are the accounts of new initiatives, projects, accomplishments and challenges that accompany the statistics.



Jennifer Montgomery

This year’s workshops on Aug. 16-17 were exceptionally interesting.

Two themes came up again and again:

· Departments are continuing to do more with less, because the demand for many services is on the rise, but staffing is down; and

· Succession planning is a priority for departments that have many key employees who are near, at, or beyond retirement age.

I left the workshops deeply impressed by the department presentations and the commitment of County employees at all levels to serve the public to the best of our abilities.

Challenges remain for Placer County. We continue to grapple with difficult budget issues in such areas as library services and fire protection. The state’s mandated Public Safety Realignment initiative has resulted in early release of some jail inmates in order to make way for the increased influx of new prisoners. We have deferred necessary work, especially on infrastructure, and we struggle to catch up.

It is clear, however, that departments and staff are doing a great job making the best of a tough situation.

Several departments reported being recognized for outstanding public service.

The Veterans Services Office is regarded as one of the best in

the state at assisting veterans. It ranks fifth in California in terms of total revenue collected on behalf of veterans, falling only behind counties such as Los Angeles and San Diego that have much larger populations.

Child Support Services is among the top 10 programs in California for cost-effectiveness. For every dollar it spends, it collects $3.35 on behalf of families. The statewide average is $2.29.

Human Services, a division of the Health and Human Services Department, was recognized by state officials recently for having the best-performing call center in the state for helping its clients quickly and effectively.

During the budget workshops, departments reported on a long list of projects and initiatives that are under way or soon will be.

Construction of the county's new jail in Roseville is almost complete, the Foresthill Bridge is well on its way to a federally mandated retrofit and planning and design work on a new regional sewer system has begun.

Facility Services is getting ready to expand the popular 220-acre Hidden Falls Regional Park across 980 acres of county-owned land located west of the park. The expansion will provide more access to the waterfalls, new picnic areas and 23 miles of additional trails for the public to enjoy.

Public Works plans to start work next year on the final phase of the Auburn Folsom Road widening project. When it is done, the road will be a four-lane thoroughfare from Douglas Boulevard to the Sacramento County line.

Public Works is continuing on frontage and scenic improvements along Highway 49 in North Auburn.

Progress also was reported by Public Works on a project that

is very important in Eastern Placer County: the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project. The department is putting the finishing touches on the project's funding plan and hopes to break ground on the first phase next summer.

Public Works is working on a small project that promises to be a big help to bus riders who frequent Placer County Transit. It is a smart-phone application that will allow riders to determine in real time where buses are at and how soon they should arrive at the stops were riders are waiting.

Several departments reported on their success handling increased workloads with fewer staff.

The Assessor's Office, for instance, is working hard to deal with an unprecedented number of properties being evaluated for reductions in appraised values. The Placer County Library is facing tough budget issues because its property tax revenue is down significantly, but is finding innovative ways to better serve the public. On Oct. 1, several branches shifted operating hours to 10am-6pm some days in response to requests from patrons.

During the workshops, I was also impressed by the efforts of the Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, District Attorney's Office and Health and Human Services to handle public safety realignment, a state-mandated program that is shifting responsibility for many adult parolees and lower-risk offenders from the state to counties.

Realignment has created unprecedented challenges for counties but the response of our public safety departments has been outstanding. They are finding ways to deal with realignment that are cost-effective and achieve our highest priority: protecting public safety.

The decision made years ago to build a new jail in Roseville will give Placer County extra flexibility in handling adult offenders who in the past would have been the state's

responsibility.

That decision illustrates the importance of two themes that will be the focus of the last installment of my state-of-the-county series: the county's commitment to long-range planning and the critical role planning initiatives will play in the years to come.

Jennifer Montgomery is chairwoman of the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

South Tahoe tightens controls on contract agreements

By Kathryn Reed

A botched lease has South Lake Tahoe doing business differently.

"We have so many ad hoc policies that we want to wrap all the contracts under one policy and then each can have nuances," City Manager Nancy Kerry explained.

While the changes occur at staff level, the protocols will be brought to the City Council in November or December so the five are aware of what is going on – or at least what is supposed to happen. Assistant City Attorney Nira Feeley is tasked with coordinating how the new contracts will read and be handled by the city.

"It's so this will never happen again," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The “this” is the original contract the city had with Unity at the Lake. It has nothing to do with the lessee, but everything to do with the contract.

All this came to light in July when the council found out a five-year contract had been entered into with Unity to rent a city owned building at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd. This was the first the electeds had heard of it. Shortly thereafter, Stan Sherer, director of Community Development, was no longer employed with the city.

The agreement had to come back to the councilmembers this fall because in July they agreed to have Unity pay $1,700 month in rent, with the understanding this had been taking place since October 2011. But the reality is Unity and Sherer had a verbal agreement that Unity would make upgrades to the facility in exchange for rent. Unity thought rent payments would begin June 1.

Receipts and the work itself proved Unity had done substantial upgrades to this building where a preschool used to operate. And while it’s not unusual for tenant improvements to be used as a form of rent, it should be in writing and higher-ups should be informed.

In the future, contracts like this will require the signature of someone above the pay grade of department head.

South Tahoe has a handful of contractual-type agreements – such as concessionaire, facilities rental, professional services, and public works. A template will be used so all the basic criteria are covered in each contract, with additions made as needed.

“Nobody should write their own agreements. It should all go to the City Attorneys Office. And now it will,” Kerry said.

Going forward each contract will have a checklist with it that will stay with the file. It is a type of checks-and-balances

that is designed to streamline the process, protect the city and ensure everything is done above board. It will also include whether the contract needs to go to council.

“This is so five years from now someone will know why the agreement was signed,” Kerry said.

Another problem with the Unity agreement is that utilities were being paid by the city. It should have been just like the ice rink agreement – the lessee pays the utilities. The city and Unity compromised, with the church group paying utilities beginning January 2014.

The sign is another issue. It doesn’t meet city code. Work is still being done to make it conform. But the city could be on hook because Sherer approved the sign without a permit and had city staff install it.

Supreme Court to hear 2 cases involving K9s and drug arrests

By Jonathan Stempel, Reuters

Two dogs, a chocolate Labrador retriever named Franky and a German shepherd named Aldo, should have their day at the U.S.

Supreme Court.

The court is scheduled on Wednesday to hear Florida's appeal of two decisions by that state's highest court that found the detection of drugs by trained police dogs had violated the constitutional ban on unreasonable searches and seizures under the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

These arguments involve distinctly different issues: whether a dog can sniff outside a home without a warrant, and how qualified a dog must be to do a legitimate sniff.

They give the Supreme Court a chance to extend, or limit, prior decisions giving police a long leash to use dogs, including for suitcases at airports and cars stopped at checkpoints.

"If the court vindicates the ability of police to use dogs without probable cause, and that a sniff outside a car justifies searching that car, it could enhance their ability to use dogs for law enforcement," said Richard Garnett, a University of Notre Dame law professor and clerk for former Chief Justice William Rehnquist.

Like others in law enforcement, Florida maintains that dog "alerts" are not searches because they uncover illegal activities that deserve no privacy protection.

The retired Justice David Souter mocked that idea in a dissent from a 2005 pro-sniff decision, saying it supposes that a trained canine becomes an "infallible dog" that never errs.

At least 23 U.S. states joined each of Florida's appeals, calling drug-detecting dogs "essential weapons" at the forefront of efforts to stop illegal drug production and sales.

The Supreme Court is often their ally in search cases, typically siding with the police.

Sanctity of the home

One of Wednesday's cases, Florida v. Jardines, concerns a December 5, 2006, search outside Joelis Jardines' home near Miami.

A "crime stopper" had tipped police that marijuana was growing inside. Relying on that tip, a detective, joined by Franky, approached. Trained to find the strongest odor, Franky went to the front door, sniffed the base, and sat down.

That was the alert his handlers were looking for. After obtaining a search warrant, police found marijuana plants inside the home. Jardines was arrested for possessing more than 25 pounds of marijuana, and stealing the electricity to grow it.

In voiding the search, Florida's highest court called Franky's sniff an "unreasonable government intrusion into the sanctity of the home." There, it said, the expectation of privacy was much greater than in a car or an airport.

The court also likened Franky to the heat-sensing thermal imagers that the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 2001 decision that cut across ideological lines, said could not without a warrant be used outside a home to detect marijuana growing inside.

Where the government uses a device "not in general public use" to uncover details about a home, "the surveillance is a 'search' and is presumptively unreasonable without a warrant," Justice Antonin Scalia then wrote for a 5-4 majority.

"Jardines is a line-drawing case: the question is can police use the dog at the front door," said Orin Kerr, a law professor at George Washington University and former clerk to Justice Anthony Kennedy. "If a warrant were needed, police would never use the dog at a house, because then they could just go inside."

Telltale nerves

Wednesday's other case, Florida v. Harris, involves a search not of a house, but of Clayton Harris' pickup.

An officer pulled over Harris near Bristol, Florida, in the state's panhandle, on June 24, 2006, after seeing that the truck had an expired tag. An open beer can lay in the cup holder.

Nervous, shaking and breathing rapidly, Harris would not let the officer search his truck. Out came Aldo, who was led around the truck for a "free air sniff."

Near the driver's door handle, Aldo gave his alert, becoming excited and then sitting down. The officer then searched the truck's interior, and found 200 pseudoephedrine pills and 8,000 matches, which are ingredients for methamphetamine.

Harris pleaded no contest, but he got a reprieve. The Florida Supreme Court said the state did not show Aldo's reliability as a drug detector with evidence of his training, certification and performance, and his handler's experience.

By comparison, Franky had no such problems, according to court papers. At the time of Jardines' search, he had made 399 positive alerts. The result: seizures of roughly one ton of marijuana and 34 pounds of cocaine and heroin.

"The state's 'credentials alone' canine-reliability test is based on an over generalized assertion – that all trained or certified drug-detection dogs are reliable in the field," a group of 34 law professors said in a brief supporting Harris.

Regardless of how the court rules in both cases, police will go on using dogs for drug detection. The questions are when, and how.

Decisions in both cases are expected by the end of June.

The cases are Florida v. Jardines, U.S. Supreme Court, No. 11-564; and Florida v. Harris, U.S. Supreme Court, No. 11-817.

Eating tacos helps CASA El Dorado

Chevy's in South Lake Tahoe is helping raise money for CASA El Dorado on Oct. 30 from 5-8pm.

A $10 donation to CASA includes access to the Chevy's Taco Bar.

Alexis Dascoulias Foley has tickets in advance. Call (530) 573.3072.

Sandoval, lawmakers disagree on access to budget data

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A dispute has emerged between Gov. Brian Sandoval and the Legislature over what information in the initial state agency request budget should be made available to legislative staff and the public.

At a meeting of the Legislature's Interim Finance Committee last week, state Budget Director Jeff Mohlenkamp was asked about what is considered by legislative staff to be a

departure from past practice regarding the budget information provided to legislative fiscal staff and the public.

The 2013-15 budget information conveyed to the Legislature on Oct. 15 does not include “items for special consideration” requested by state agencies. These items are budget requests from agencies that Sandoval will consider including in his final spending plan, but that have not yet been approved for inclusion by Sandoval.

Sandoval’s budget won’t be made public until mid-January.

Rick Combs, director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, said this information has been provided to legislative staff historically as specified in state law. It has also been made available to the public.

An example of an item of special consideration is the expansion of the Medicaid program to a new group of Nevadans as provided for in the federal Affordable Care Act. Sandoval has not made a decision on whether to expand Medicaid to this new group of Nevada residents.

Because of this apparently new interpretation by Sandoval, the Medicaid expansion information has not been provided to the Legislature’s fiscal staff and so is not available to the public either.

“The part that is of concern to us there is twofold,” Combs told the committee. “Your staff doesn’t have access to the information. The other concern is that information that is provided to us on Oct. 15 is supposed to be open for public dissemination at that point.

“Now if you, or a member of the public, asks us for anything that was in an item for special consideration, we don’t have it,” he said. “Even though we feel the statute requires that that to be available to you or a member of the public that ask for it.”

Combs said his staff has asked for the information but has not received a response from Mohlenkamp.

IFC Chairwoman and Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, D-Sparks, asked Mohlenkamp for an explanation.

Mohlenkamp said a decision has not been made yet on whether to provide the information to legislative staff, and that the budget information transmitted to lawmakers has fulfilled the statutory obligation to lawmakers.

“We’re still considering whether we will be able to provide access to LCB fiscal,” he said. “That decision hasn’t been made. I’ve been in coordination with the governor’s office on this and I’m hopeful that we will be able to give a firm and final response in the near future. But right now that decision hasn’t been made.”

Mohlenkamp said there are all kinds of agency requests beyond Sandoval’s flat-budget guidelines that may not end up as part of the budget, and so should not be subject to speculation.

Sen. Ben Kieckhefer, R-Reno, expressed concern, saying that if Sandoval decides not to propose expanding Medicaid to the new eligible population, then the budget data collected to provide background on this item of special consideration might never be provided to lawmakers or the public.

Kieckhefer said he would have a problem if that information was never made public.

Mohlenkamp said the Sandoval administration has not yet decided whether that information would be made public at some point.

USFS burning on West Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will continue prescribed fire operations in the Timberland area of the West Shore on Oct. 29.

Crews anticipate burning three acres over the next several days, conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. 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.

Truckee’s Coldstream area to be subject of meeting

There will be a meeting Oct. 30 at 6pm about the Coldstream Specific Plan in Truckee.

The meeting will be at the council chambers, 10283 Truckee Airport Road, Truckee.

The purpose is to discuss the plan and environmental impact report, which have been scaled down from the original plan.

For more information, call (530) 582.2922.