Fundraiser to help South Lake Tahoe artist

South Lake Tahoe Art League is hosting a fund-raising lunch for Peter Darvas on Oct. 18 from 1-5pm at at Tepp's Villa Roma, 3450 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Darvas suffered the loss of his studio and home on Pioneer Trail to fire last month.

Live music will be provided by Patrick Major.

Menu includes poached salmon in wine, chicken Romano, pastas, salads and more.

There will be an original Darvas door prize, raffle prizes, silent auction for remaining paintings and giclees.

Tickets are in $20 advance. Purchase them at the Tahoe Art League, art galleries at Ski Run Marina and Tep's Villa Roma or $25 at the door the day of the event.

For more information, call (530) 448.4107.

Mixed opinions about usefulness of ballot initiatives

By Daniel B. Wood, Christian Science Monitor

LOS ANGELES – Is the initiative process an invaluable tool that holds legislators to account and allows voters to take on

the monied interests that dominate politics? Or has it become a tool of those special interests themselves, confusing voters and making states an ungovernable mess?

Opinions on the ballot initiative process in America vary widely, but California – which has passed more initiatives than any other state except Oregon – has been perhaps the nation's most important laboratory for direct democracy.

In California's experience, both the good and the bad are apparent.

In recent years, many political analysts have come to see the initiative process as broken.

"Originally, the initiative process was to be a safety valve to allow citizens to go around the legislature held in thrall by special interests," says Sherry Jeffe, a senior fellow at the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at USC. "What it has become is another tool of special interests to get what they want by buying it from the public or pressuring the legislature, by just threatening to file an initiative to get them to move."

She says a handful of key initiatives have made governing the state far more difficult:

• Proposition 13, which in 1978 put a cap on the annual increase in property-tax rates, resulted in localities having huge budget shortfalls that must be backfilled by the state.

• Proposition 98 in 1988 required a minimum percentage of the state budget to be spent on K-12 education, tying legislators' hands.

• Proposition 140 in 1990 created term limits on legislators, which forces them to leave just as many are beginning to understand how lawmaking works.

The sheer number of initiatives can also be confusing.

“This is overwhelming to me, and I do this for a living,” says Barbara O’Connor, director emeritus of the Institute for Study of Politics and Media at CSU Sacramento. “But the average Californian doesn’t like government and is not apt to spend time sorting through all the complicated issue pamphlets.”

Yet John Matsusaka, president of the Initiative and Referendum Institute at USC, decided to study the history of 111 initiatives in California since 1912, asking the question: “Have voter initiatives paralyzed the California budget?”

His conclusion: “Contrary to the claims of many pundits, voter initiatives have not constrained the California budget to the extent that fiscal crises are inevitable.”

Michael Shires, a professor of public policy at Pepperdine University, acknowledges that initiatives “have complicated finance” but adds: “They are one of the most important parts of our political system.”

Others agree. “Without the initiative process, we wouldn’t have a redistricting commission, political reform such as lobbyist disclosure, ethics laws, a tough enforcement commission, and a chance to repeal the death penalty,” says Robert Stern, former president of the Center for Governmental Studies.

Hal Dash, a Democratic consultant, can see both sides. “The initiative process has helped to fund schools, housing for veterans, medical research, and other good things,” he says. “But too often initiatives are the end result of the failure of government to do what we all elected them to do – make the tough decisions for the good of all Californians.”

Study: Vegetarians live longer

By Annie Hauser, Huffington Post

Some vegetarians can be awfully superior about the health benefits of their plant-based diet. What they might not know is they have the Adventist Health Study to thank.

In the ’70s and ’80s, a series of studies from Loma Linda University in California, which has tracked tens of thousands of Seventh-day Adventists since 1958, were the first to show that vegetarians live longer than meat eaters.

Not only that, the studies also indicated that the kinds of foods frequently consumed in vegetarian diets – fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes – can reduce a person’s risk for diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes, control body mass index and waist size, and boost brain health.

In 2002, the National Institutes of Health gave Loma Linda a grant to continue the research on Seventh-day Adventists, branding this round of research Adventist Health Study 2.

The study, which is midway to completion and includes 96,000 people from the United States and Canada, presents findings just as dramatic, principal investigator Gary E. Fraser, MD, PhD, said at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ 2012 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo. Vegetarian Adventist men live to an average of 83.3 years and vegetarian women 85.7 years – 9.5 and 6.1 years, respectively, longer than other Californians, Fraser explained.

Here are more findings from the Adventist Health Study 2:

– Vegans are, on average, 30 pounds lighter than meat eaters.

– Vegans are also five units lighter on the BMI scale than meat-eaters.

– Vegetarians and vegans are also less insulin resistant than meat-eaters.

– Lean people are also more likely to exercise regularly, eat plants, and avoid cigarettes than overweight people, suggesting that numerous factors are boosting the overall health of these participants.

– Pesco-vegetarians and semi-vegetarians who limit animal products, but still eat meat once a week or so, have "intermediate protection" against lifestyle diseases.

Perhaps the most staggering finding? Obesity cuts an African American's life span by 6.2 percent, and across races, the protective qualities of fat in seniors was not seen. (Previous studies have found past about age 85, people who are obese have a lower risk of dying than normal-weight peers.)

The study population is 25 percent African American and half vegetarian. The reason why researchers have such an interest in the Seventh-day Adventist population, they say, is that the religion promotes vegetarianism and discourages drinking, smoking, and drug use. For example, health pioneer and breakfast cereal inventor John Harvey Kellogg is one of the church's most famous founding members.

North Lake Tahoe firefighters to begin control burns

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is gearing up to

begin prescribed burning sometime this coming week depending on weather conditions and local as well as regional resource availability.

The fire district wants to assure residents that if any one of several conditions that must be met in order to conduct a controlled burn is not within prescription, the district will not move forward with the projected burn.

For folks who are smoke sensitive, it is recommended to shut all doors and windows and remain inside as much as possible until any lingering smoke has dissipated.

For more information, call (775)831-0351, ext. 0.

Mutt Strut – A day for dogs to play with their people

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe went to the dogs Sunday during the 8th annual Mutt Strut.

It wasn’t just South Shore residents participating in the fundraiser – some came from Squaw, others from the Bay Area, even San Diego. And a few foreign languages could be heard, too.



Bindi would like more than one treat. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Starting at Regan Beach on Oct. 14, the canine brigade strutted by the water dog park, to Lakeview Commons, down Highway 50 and finally ended at the beach at Timber Cove. Along the way the two-legged walkers gathered a poker hand for a chance to win prizes.

Sydney is wearing a Placer County Search and Rescue vest. While she is retired, she really thinks she is just working part time. Her owners – Chris Caltran and Kiki Campbell – are also there with Skyy. Skyy was enjoying the waters of Lake Tahoe as much or more than the walk.

Karen Frates goes back and forth between letting Snap, her Chihuahua, walk and carrying him. A 1½-mile walk (and that's just one way) is a little much for this little guy.

Once at Timber Cove it's time for the games. Dogs could see who could eat a hot dog the fastest. Then people and their dogs walked to the music and when it stopped the dogs had to sit. The last dog to sit was eliminated.

Lorenzo and Beauregard tied as winners.

Animal Coalition of Tahoe puts on the event. Ninety percent of the proceeds go for spay and neuter services, while 10 percent benefit the animal shelter in Meyers.

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Student drug use in DCSD increasing

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – The percentage of Douglas County School District students testing positive for drugs mirrors the national school district average of between 2 and 3 percent. DCSD was at 2.3 percent for the 2011-12 school year.

Of the 15 positive tests – and that could be one student testing positive more than once as was the case at Whittell High – all had marijuana in their system.

The data was released to the board at last week's meeting.

All students participating in athletics or extracurricular activities are randomly tested. If someone refuses to be tested, that is considered a positive test and the student endures the same consequences. Consequences include being removed from the activity for the rest of the season, participating in a drug counseling program through Tahoe Youth & Family Services, and being subjected to follow-up drug tests.

The tests are looking for use of alcohol, amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines (valium), cocaine, marijuana, methadone, expanded opiates like codeine, hydrocodone and oxycodone, phencyclidine, and propoxyphene (darvon).

The district has been mixing up the add-on tests. Not everyone gets all of those because of the expense. The additional drugs the district may test for are ecstacy, nicotine, ETG alcohol, anabolic steroids and spice.

Of the 776 tests administered last school year, there were 15 positive results and three who refused to take the test. Five the positives were from Whittell, with one student testing positive twice. Nine were from Douglas High, and one from Carson Valley Middle School.

In the 2010-11 school year, 1.3 percent of DCSD students tested positive or eight kids and in 2009-10, the first year of the program, 3 percent or 17 students tested positive.

In other action:

• No one has offered to buy the old Kingsbury Middle School. It will continue to be on the market, with the board evaluating that strategy every quarter when it meets at the lake.

• The district collectively passed the federally mandated Adequate Yearly Progress. However, the district will no longer be subjected to AYP under No Child Left Behind because it will be working under the Nevada School Performance Framework.

Nevada panel wants more money for probation, parole

By Ed Vogel, Las Vegas Review-Journal
CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval should increase funding for the state Division of Parole and Probation in the budget he prepares for the Legislature to consider next year, a commission of legislators, judges, police and the attorney general decided Wednesday.

The Commission on the Administration of Justice proposed changes to boot camps and sentencing programs that could lead to more people receiving parole, rather prison time. But members fear the changes would increase parole costs and would not be funded in the governor's budget.

"Everything surrounds funding probation in a reasonable way," said Phil Kohn, a commission member and the Clark County public defender. "Some of these things will cost money but may save in the long run. We can all agree the Division of Parole and Probation has to be adequately funded, or the whole system breaks down."

But state Sen. Greg Brower, R-Reno, thinks he has a better idea. He said later he is drafting a bill to do away with parole completely. Instead, offenders would serve determined-length sentences. A former U.S. attorney, Brower said the federal correctional system does not have parole.

He noted that Phillip Garrido had been sentenced to a 50-year sentence in Nevada before he kidnapped 11-year-old Jaycee Lee Dugard in South Lake Tahoe in 1991. Largely through parole system failures, Dugard was not discovered for 18 years. The California Legislature made a $20 million settlement to Dugard.

"If Garrido had served even half of the 50-year sentence, he

would have been in prison (at the time Dugard was kidnapped)," Brower said.

The Division of Parole and Probation is authorized to hire 432 employees and has 401 people on the job. The commission Wednesday did not give a figure on how much in extra funding Sandoval should request.

Sandoval proposed in the legislative session last year to reduce state spending on the agency – which had been funded at $40 million a year – to $32 million. Legislators later restored the funding to about $39 million. But even the $40 million had been deemed too low by some. A legislative audit in 2008 determined that 31 percent of parolees were not visited by their parole officers twice a month as recommended.

Although the state may be short in funds, commission members voted to propose that the Division of Parole and Probation must provide pre-sentence reports to courts by 21 days before sentencing. In 3,700 cases over the past year, district judges delayed sentencing in part because they wanted more time to review reports that were not submitted in a timely manner.

Commissioners also recommended that the Legislature re-establish a 90-day safe keeper evaluation program under which some inmates would be evaluated and might be released to non-prison programs by judges.

Assemblyman Richard McArthur, R-Las Vegas, repeatedly questioned how the commission could support increasing parole and correctional programs when the state does not have money to fund them adequately now.

"We are just setting ourselves up for failure," said McArthur, who was defeated in a state Senate primary race in June. "I am not sure why we are drafting this letter. We are supposed to make policy decisions, not fiscal ones."

But Assemblyman William Horne, D-Las Vegas, said the

commission should not reject parole and inmate sentencing changes just because it assumes they won't be funded.

"Let's face it, not everything this commission or another subcommittee recommends is fundable," Brower responded.

Horne, the commission chairman, noted the commission had been rebuffed by a past governor when it recommended higher funding for Parole and Probation.

"The administration budget was woefully short of the target," said Horne, who did not name the governor, although he likely was talking about Sandoval's predecessor, Jim Gibbons. "The director's hands were tied by the budget the governor submitted for his department."

Also Wednesday, commissioners took no action on a proposal to establish an independent office to conduct coroner's inquests. The proposal grew out of controversial officer-involved shootings in Clark County.

Firm on track to begin gold mining in Amador County

By Mark Anderson, Sacramento Business Journal

Sutter Gold Mining Inc. says it is on track to begin gold mining and gold production before the end of the year.

Construction has progressed on above-ground buildings and site work, and the company has made progress in expanding its underground shafts. The company anticipates its first gold pour in December, said Bob Hutmacher, chief financial officer.

Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Sutter Gold is developing its Lincoln Mine Project just outside of Sutter Creek in Amador County.

The modern gold mine is in what was the historically the most productive gold district of California's Mother Lode.

The exterior of the mine's mill building has been completed and the equipment is being installed. A shop and staff building is progressing.

Other site work is also nearing completion, and the mine is hiring employees. It will eventually employ about 100 people. The site now is a flurry of construction contractors and crew, Hutmacher said.

The company has also added two more access tunnels to the mine's main shaft, the Stringbean Alley Decline.

The main decline is a modern mine, large enough for heavy trucks to pass each other.

While the mine is on track to begin production this year, it will only begin full production in the first half of next year.

Vietnam traveling memorial to stop in Carson City

The traveling Vietnam War Memorial will be in Carson City Oct. 25-28.

The wall will be at Mills Park on Highway 50.

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 388 is putting on a parade Oct. 27 at 10am. A barbecue from 1-3pm will be at the Vietnam Remembrance Compound. Cost is $15 at the door.

For more information, call Rick Arnold at (775) 720.3907.

Then and now: Evolution of Beacon at Camp Rich



Until about 1984, this single-story cinder-block building, left, built in the 1950s housed a metal-roofed boat storage and rentals barn at one end and a soda fountain at the other end, complete with a jukebox.

Today, below, it is the Beacon Bar and Grill at Camp Richardson.

– Bill Kingman



The Camp Rich area by the Beacon has long been a favorite of locals and tourists. Photos/Bill Kingman