Learn about the history of the Johnson cut-off

The Gold Rush created a demand for crossings of the seemingly impassable Sierra Nevada range so Americans could reach the gold field. John Calhoun Johnson surveyed and opened the route to traffic in spring 1852.

Learn about this man whose name is on Johnson's cut-off near Echo Summit on Sept. 18 at 7pm.

The full length of the trail will be divulged.

The free event is sponsored by the Lake Tahoe Historical Society is at the lodge at Camp Richardson.

It's California wine month. What are you drinking?

Building a case for high school journalism

By Holly Epstein Ojalvo, New York Times

It's Day 2 of Student Journalism Week here on The Learning

Network. On Monday, Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center (SPLC), explained student journalists' First Amendment rights and the context in which student publications operate.

Today he provides some reasons, in the big picture, school journalism programs are valuable.

By Frank LoMonte

Journalism education is facing a "perfect storm" of peril.

Journalism classes are being crowded out by the urgency to drill students on core standardized-testing subjects. Cash-strapped states and districts are squeezing electives and extracurricular offerings in search of savings; one state, Kansas, nearly stopped financing journalism on the grounds that the profession no longer offers gainful career opportunities. And image-conscious school administrators are removing some of the profession's best teachers in retaliation for student writing that's considered excessively negative or controversial.

In this precarious time, those who study journalism, teach it or just value it must be extra-vigilant and extra-prepared to defend the continued importance of journalism education, even when salaried newsroom jobs are melting away faster than the polar ice caps.

Fortunately, the case is an easy one.

Workplace skills: Name something that an employer – any employer – wants in a young employee. Analytical thinking? Clear writing? Sensitivity to deadlines? This should be starting to sound familiar – because it's the package of skills that journalism conveys uniquely well through hands-on experience. Leadership? Check. Teamwork? Check. It's one of very few school activities that accurately simulates a work environment – because it is a work environment.

Online civility: Imagine that you are a principal whose school is plagued by cyberbullying. You might well find yourself wishing for some magic antidote that would reinforce to students the importance of verifying their facts, correcting their errors, signing their real names to what they publish, entertaining opposing viewpoints and considering the impact of their words on others. This too should be starting to sound familiar – this too is journalism. The values imparted by working in a newsroom are the values that every educator wants every young citizen of the Internet to learn, practice and live.

Accountability of schools: The nonpartisan Brookings Institution reported in December 2009 that just 1.4 percent of the space and airtime in the mainstream media is going toward education coverage. Ever tried walking into a public school in 2011 with a reporter's notebook and a camera? You'd get farther in the Pentagon. If professionals can't bring us ample coverage news of conditions like overcrowded classrooms and ineffective curriculum, who can? Fortunately, there is an army of "embedded journalists" at the ready – the last, best watchdogs for the taxpayers who pay about $590 billion a year to support K-12 education nationally. Adults need candid, uncensored student journalism if they are to have any idea what is going on inside the schools they support.

Ethics: If we've learned nothing else from paying for the party that Wall Street executives threw bundling up risky mortgage loans and selling them as securities, it's that when a small number of influential people act in blind self-interest, everyone suffers. Fortunately, there's an app for that – and yes, it too is journalism. Think of another academic subject that forces young people, on a daily basis, to weigh – and experience – the impact of their decisions on others, and to put the adherence to the truth ahead of personal gain. Geometry? Chemistry? English composition? Nope, nope and nope. By working in journalism – and by being given

the freedom to fail and to learn from their failures – students experience what it means to be a “professional.”

Empowerment: If you are not the homecoming queen or the basketball captain, school can be a place of social isolation and self-doubt. Alienated, disempowered kids are at greatest risk for outcomes ranging from bad (dropping out) to horrible (suicide). But no peg is too square for the newsroom, where the creativity and smarts that mark students for ostracism suddenly become assets. Students who are allowed to make their own editorial judgments – with a light hand of guidance from a well-trained faculty adviser – experience the pride and validation for which teenagers are starved.

Journalism training may not guarantee a lucrative job as a magazine editor or a television anchor, but it remains a proven pathway to college and career success. Ask U.S> Attorney Preet Bharara of Manhattan, the “Colbert Report” producer Tom Purcell, the Emmy-winning actress Susan Lucci, the film reviewer Gene Shalit or the top-gun campaign consultant Mark J. Penn, each of whom got started as a high school journalist.

With America facing a well-documented deficit of civic engagement, journalism remains a portal through which students – whether as participants or simply as readers – engage with the larger world outside schoolhouse walls. It’s essential that the doorway remain open and inviting.

Opinion: California is hard

to define

By Victor Davis Hanson

Driving across California is like going from Mississippi to Massachusetts without ever crossing a state line.

Consider the disconnects: California's combined income and sales taxes are among the nation's highest, but the state's deficit is still about $16 billion. It's estimated that more than 2,000 upper-income Californians are leaving per week to flee high taxes and costly regulations, yet California wants to raise taxes even higher; its business climate already ranks near the bottom of most surveys. Its teachers are among the highest paid on average in the nation, but its public school students consistently test near the bottom of the nation in both math and science.

The state's public employees enjoy some of the nation's most generous pensions and benefits, but California's retirement systems are underfunded by about $300 billion. The state's gas taxes – at over 49 cents per gallon – are among the highest in the nation, but its once unmatched freeways, like 101 and 99, for long stretches have degenerated into potholed, clogged nightmares unchanged since the early 1960s.



Victor Davis Hanson

The state wishes to borrow billions of dollars to develop high-speed rail, beginning with a little-traveled link between

Fresno and Corcoran – a corridor already served by money-losing Amtrak. Apparently, coastal residents like the idea of European high-speed rail – as long as noisy and dirty construction does not begin in their backyards.

As gasoline prices soar, California chooses not to develop millions of barrels of untapped oil and even more natural gas off its shores and beneath its interior. Home to bankrupt green companies like Solyndra, California has mandated that a third of all the energy provided by state utilities soon must come from renewable energy sources – largely wind and solar, which presently provide about 11 percent of its electricity and almost none of its transportation fuel.

How to explain the seemingly inexplicable? There is no California, which is a misnomer. There is no such state. Instead there are two radically different cultures and landscapes with little in common, each equally dysfunctional in quite different ways. Apart they are unworldly, together a disaster.

A postmodern narrow coastal corridor runs from San Diego to Berkeley, where the weather is ideal, the gentrified affluent make good money, and values are green and left-wing. This Shangri-La is juxtaposed to a vast impoverished interior, from the southern desert to the northern Central Valley, where life is becoming premodern.

On the coast, blue-chip universities like Cal Tech, Berkeley, Stanford and UCLA in pastoral landscapes train the world's doctors, lawyers, engineers and businesspeople. In the hot interior of blue-collar Sacramento, Turlock, Fresno and Bakersfield, well over half the incoming freshman in the California State University system must take remedial math and science classes.

In postmodern Palo Alto or Santa Monica, a small cottage costs more than $1 million. Two hours away, in premodern and now-

bankrupt Stockton, a bungalow the same size goes for less than $100,000.

In the interior, unemployment in many areas peaks at over 15 percent. The theft of copper wire is reaching epidemic proportions. Thousands of the shrinking middle class flee the interior for the coast or nearby no-income-tax states. To fathom the state's nearly unbelievable statistics – as the state population grew by 10 million from the mid-1980s to 2005, its number of Medicaid recipients increased by 7 million during that period; one-third of the nation's welfare recipients now reside in California – visit the state's hinterlands.

But in the Never-Never Land of Apple, Facebook, Google, Hollywood and the wine country, millions live in an idyllic paradise. Coastal Californians can afford to worry about the state's trivia – as their legislators seek to outlaw foie gras, shut down irrigation projects to save the 3-inch delta smelt, and allow children to have legally recognized multiple parents.

But in the less feel-good interior, crippling regulations curb timber, gas and oil, and farm production. For the most part, the rules are mandated by coastal utopians who have little idea where the gas for their imported cars comes from, or how the redwood is cut for their decks, or who grows the ingredients for their Mediterranean lunches of arugula, olive oil and pasta.

On the coast, it's politically incorrect to talk of illegal immigration. In the interior, residents see first-hand the bankrupting effects on schools, courts and health care when millions arrive illegally without English-language fluency or a high school diploma – and send back billions of dollars in remittances to Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The drive from Fresno to Palo Alto takes three hours, but you

might as well be rocketing from Earth to the moon.

Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and a recipient of the 2007 National Humanities Medal.

U.S. Forest Service approach to river restoration as diverse as the bodies of water

By Kathryn Reed

While the goals are the same – to restore the river channel to what it was before man first messed with it, improve habitat and enhance the entire ecosystem – the approach the U.S. Forest Service is taking on two projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin is drastically different.

Cold Creek runs through High Meadow on the South Shore. The terrain allowed for the channel to be rerouted. Grasses are already growing. The water table is rising, despite this being a summer following a minimal snow year. It is peaceful – even with crews still on site.

On the West Shore, Blackwood Creek runs through the canyon of the same name. It's rocky, rugged and looks like a torrential downpour could wipe out everything that stands in its way. There is no way to reroute the channel so other modifications are necessary.



Craig Oehrli with the U.S. Forest Service stands next to a bank in Blackwood Creek that shows the damage that will be repaired. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“The site conditions are dramatically different so the approach has to be different,” Sue Norman, who is overseeing the teams doing the work, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It also means the time it takes to achieve the goals are different, too. In three years, High Meadow may look like construction crews were never there. It may take 10 to 15 years for Blackwood not to look like a “raw, exposed construction site,” Norman said.

While both projects have something to do with water quality, that is not the overriding reason millions of dollars are being spent. If Lake Tahoe and its famously clear water didn’t exist, the work would still happen – assuming there was funding.

“The cumulative affects of land use in here is the driver (to do the work),” Craig Oehrli, who is managing the Blackwood site, says as he walks through the project area.

Ecological restoration is what drives the decision-makers within the Forest Service to go forward with projects of this magnitude.

High Meadows restoration started in 2010. The South Nevada Public Lands Management Act is financing the $2.5 million project. Blackwood Canyon has been undergoing some form of restoration for more than 25 years. The fourth and final phase began in 2010. The entire $10 million project is also funded by SNPLMA.

The bulk of the work on both sites will wrap up this fall, though monitoring will be ongoing to ensure the goals are met. Some minor work may need to be done in the spring.

Restoring the sections of the Upper Truckee River and Angora Creek that the USFS owns are the next projects; they will begin in 2013. The Upper Truckee project is a definite water quality improvement, as it delivers the most amount of sediment to Lake Tahoe. Blackwood is the second highest producer of sediment reaching the lake. However, Blackwood produces more sediment per square foot than the Upper Truckee watershed.

High Meadow

As the landscape changes, so does the animal life. Amphibian creatures are returning to this meadow at 7,843 feet. As the willows take hold, the riparian habitat will change, too.

Birds have begun to forage, deer prints are abundant, six-point bucks have come by and coyotes are everywhere, according to the crew on site.

The channel looks more like it would have had grazing never occurred and the creek not been rerouted to accommodate the needs of the private property owners.

Now the creek will be able to flood the meadow. That hasn’t

happened since the late 1800s. Sediment will be deposited into the meadow instead of going downstream, the meadow will get needed moisture and the stream channel will not erode now that it has a meander to it.

Some pools are maybe 8-feet wide, but most of the channel is no wider than 4 feet. In mid-July water started running through the 3,600 feet of new channel.

“I hope this becomes a big wildflower meadow. It hasn’t had the right water for it for a long time,” Stephanie Heller, project manager, said as she surveyed the landscape. “Where we removed the dead trees the meadow has come back.”

In the staging area logs are stacked and a mound of dirt is piled high. The wood will be used either as slash or chipped when the site is decommissioned. The dirt is from the 2010 excavation. Much of it is going to fill in the north fork.

Eighty of the 280 acres on this parcel have been restored.

The Forest Service acquired the land in 2001. It is estimated the grazing started in the 1880s and diversion of Cold Creek was in the 1890s. This watershed was also logged during the Comstock.

While the Forest Service is able to do the work it wants, there are 700 acres of private land touching this project area – including part of the road that leads to the meadow.

Blackwood

While heavy equipment is needed to move large boulders into what will be a wild river when the water table rises, and rain and snow descend, the workers are more like surgeons than contractors. They are applying the prescription needed to heal this swath of land that was damaged by previous generations.

Rock was mined from the river to build roads for the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley. Trees were logged with

machinery in the 1950s and 1960s.

Photos dating to the 1930s help the Forest Service understand how the land and water functioned before the harvest of rock and wood began.

“There is no proof they ran a bulldozer upstream, but it an unnaturally straight channel,” Oehrli says he scampers through the rock terrain. He is almost giddy as he explains the work being done and how it will create not only a healthier river, but also an ecosystem that will thrive.

By the time the job is completed 20 acres of floodplain in this canyon between Homewood and Tahoe City will have been restored.

The crew is raising the floodplain. The floor of the river is 8 to 9 feet below the bank’s edge. It should be 3 to 4 feet.

The water is about 10 feet underground. It’s normal for Blackwood to go dry in August. It did so in July this year and still had water in September 2011.

“This is as dynamic of an area as we have in Lake Tahoe for a river process,” Oehrli said.

To keep that dynamic nature, large wood structures are being erected to resemble what would have naturally occurred. Oehrli had to point out the work because it looks so natural.

Farther up he stands next to an eroded bank that is taller than he is. Before the season is out it will have a human-made logjam against it to prevent erosion.

In 2008 and 2009 the Forest Service erected 13 rock-log flow deflection structures and 28 log-based floodplain roughness structures.

An erosion analysis was done that determined a 500-foot area was contributing 20 percent of the sediment problem. In all,

3,500 feet of the river has been rebuilt.

Oehrli takes a rock and without much effort it dissolves. This volcanic material is throughout the streambed.

“With a little water and weathering it melts in place,” Oehrli explains. More sediment.

So much is going on this watershed that it doubles as a classroom. College instructors have brought their students to the area to learn about this ecosystem.

Changing the slope will slow down the energy and dissipate the water. It will mean reducing the sediment flowing into Lake Tahoe, especially after the California Tahoe Conservancy finishes its project that links the river to the lake.

Near where the log structure is in place it looks like a riverbed. A year ago the water was 5-feet deep where people were standing last week. Cottonwoods are beginning to sprout. And while the river has exposed herself here, she meanders in a gentle flow.

These are the changes the Forest Service was seeking when in it first went to work on Blackwood Creek.

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Incline residents discuss ways not to encourage problem

bears

By Alyx Sacks, KRNV-TV

The Nevada Department of Wildlife had to euthanize four bears this year in Incline Village and all of those cases started with bears getting into people's garbage.

Community members want to find out how to stop that from happening.

One point that was made loud and clear in a bear subcommittee meeting Monday is it's time Nevadans become more "bear smart."

"The vast majority of Nevadans, 74 percent to 20 percent wants the state to prioritize solving conflict between bears and humans non lethally," bear committee member Kathryn Bricker says.

Community members and NDOW bear subcommittee members say they want to find ways to stop problems with bears before they start.

"It should be addressed before there's a problem not wait till there's a problem to help with a solution," Lake Tahoe resident Leann Dyer says.

One solution, being smarter with trash.

Right now residents in Incline Village are not required to have a bear container.

Only after complaints does the county step in and ask a container to be used and if they have to impose a fine.

NDOW subcommittee Chairman David McNinch says they called the meeting to learn and see what has worked in other communities as far as keeping bears out of the garbage and away from homes.

“Maybe we don’t have to reinvent the wheel maybe there’s some things that are being done in other places we can take advantage of and implement here in this community and that might make the difference,” Chairman McNinch says.

Some states have a one dump system thus resolving the problem of trash near the home.

Others require bear containers.

During the meeting, one college student even volunteered the idea of college students walking around neighborhoods just to spread bear smart information so people can learn about the right precautions.

All ideas to stop the number of complaints, incidents and ways people can be a part of the solution by adjusting habits.

“It’s not a bear problem it’s a human problem we need to co-exist with the bears,” Dyer says.

Chairman McNich says the discussion was a good start and he hopes to have more meetings like this in the future.

S. Tahoe woman remains behind bars after DUI arrest involving cyclist

Christine Whalen, the South Lake Tahoe woman accused of severely injuring a cyclist while driving under the influence, remains behind bars.

The 53-year-old was being held at the El Dorado County jail in

Tahoe on $203,000 bail.

She faces charges of driving under the influence resulting in bodily injury, hit and run involving bodily injury, evading a police officer and property damage.

Her next court appearance is scheduled for Oct. 4.

Whalen was driving on Highway 89 near 12th Street in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 21 when her vehicle struck Adam Rose, 38, of South Lake Tahoe. Rose was on his bicycle.

This is a letter Rose's mother sent to *Lake Tahoe News* that gives details about his recovery since being released from the hospital.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Dogs help keep microbes from taking over beaches

By Naomi Lubick, Science

If you spent time at the beach this summer, you probably encountered seagulls screeching overhead and eating trash. You probably also encountered their poop.

Seagull droppings can carry disease-causing microbes like Escherichia coli and Enterococcus, which can contaminate beaches and water. Now scientists have found a way to fight back: Release the hounds.

In a new study, researchers show that unleashing dogs keeps the seagulls away—and the water at the beach free of microbes.

Beach managers have been fighting seagulls for decades. The more birds, the more microbes, and the more likely the beach will meet the guidelines for closing, as advised by the Environmental Protection Agency.

In a recent study, researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture tried reducing gull populations on Chicago beaches by "oiling" their nests – spraying oil on the eggs to prevent the birds from hatching. That tactic had some short-term success, but its long-term benefits are unclear. Chicago beach managers have also used dogs to chase away gulls, which anecdotal evidence suggests has helped reduce the microbe counts and thus the number of beach closures.

To more definitively connect the gulls' dog-inspired dispersal to microbe concentrations, a team of researchers led by Reagan Reed Converse, an environmental microbiologist at EPA in Chapel Hill, N.C., examined water quality at North Beach in Racine, Wis.

During the summer, managers regularly "groom" the beach, located on the shores of western Lake Michigan about 100 kilometers north of Chicago, by turning over the sand, which buries any microbes left from bird poop. North Beach's managers have also worked to remove other sources of pollution, such as sewage runoff, leaving the gulls as the primary source of contaminants in the water.

Read the whole story

Winning vodka comment means 2 tickets to cocktail contest

Bob Fleischer is going to the Sept. 13 Cocktail Contest put on by the Barton Health Foundation.



This was his winning entry, “A long time ago I did some experimenting with vodka drinks for two huge punch bowls at a family affair. It was a toss-up as to which was better,of the two recipes I came up with. One had a lot of fresh grapefruit juice; but the one below was the favorite: 1 part each vodka, orange juice, and cherry brandy.”

The Sept. 13 event is from 5:30-8pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe. Ten bartenders will compete for the best drink of the night.

If you didn’t win, tickets are $25 each in advance or $30 at the door.

Motorcyclist dies after being hit by SUV in Meeks Bay

A motorcyclist from Ben Lomond died Sept. 10 in Meeks Bay after being struck by an unlicensed driver.

John McCabe, 52, was on his Yamaha going south on Highway 89 when Maria Cabrera, 35, of Tahoe City made a left from Mountain Drive in front of McCabe, according to the California Highway Patrol. She was attempting to go north on the highway.

McCabe died at the scene.

Cabrera, who was driving a Dodge Durango, was arrested on charges of being an unlicensed driver. Officers do not believe alcohol was a factor.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report