Owners unaware cat left town with neighbors until call comes from Reno

Devon Hayzlett said her husband thought someone was pulling his leg when he received a message from Washoe County Regional Animal Services that their 2-year-old cat Ponyo had been picked up in Reno on Aug. 27.

The Hayzletts live in the Bay Area; about a four-hour drive from Reno. They had just seen Ponyo the night before and, because Ponyo is the kind of cat that likes to hide away for long periods, were not even aware she was missing, much less in another state.

Regional Animal Services received a call from a security officer at Circus Circus in downtown Reno about 5pm Aug. 27. They were concerned about the well-being of a cat spotted in the valet parking area.

Animal Control Officer Kevin Osborne responded. Because Ponyo was microchipped and had an ID collar with a phone number he was easily able to contact the Hayzletts in Dublin to let them know their cat had been found and was safe, 220 miles from home.

The next morning Devon Hayzlett made the drive over the Sierra to pick up the family cat, still mystified as to how Ponyo made such a long journey in just a day.

The most logical explanation is that Ponyo accidentally and unknowingly hitched a ride with some of the Hayzletts' neighbors and their friends who had gone on a drive to Lake Tahoe and Reno, including a stop at the Circus Circus.

Washoe County Regional Animal Services believes that

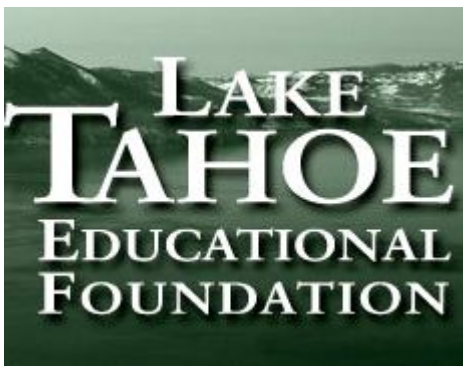
microchipping is your pet's best chance of finding home if it ever becomes lost.

Donation to education group tainted by link to South Lake Tahoe bribery, drug case

Updated: Sept. 6, 2012, 9:30pm.

By Kathryn Reed

The Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation appears to be helping South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman Angela Swanson cover up a donation from Gino DiMatteo.



Nancy Rollston, president of the nonprofit foundation, Swanson and DiMatteo met this summer at least once to discuss a donation by DiMatteo to the group.

At that time DiMatteo operated the medical marijuana collective called City of Angels II. It was also known that the U.S. Attorney General's Office was cracking down on collectives in California. Medical marijuana dispensaries at various times have been a closed session item on City Council agendas, so Swanson has privileged information and more knowledge than the average citizen in South Lake Tahoe about

that segment of the community.

It was well-known that the dispensaries were all under the radar of law enforcement for potential illegal drug activity. Why an education group that helps students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District, that has an FBI agent on its board, would accept his money is not known because their president is withholding information from the media.

And according to Chris Campion, the FBI agent who is on the board and is past president of the foundation, Rollston is the spokesperson for the group.

“The bottom line right now is we are not going to be talking about it. If that changes in the next few days, we will get back in contact with you,” Campion told *Lake Tahoe News*.

DiMatteo is now behind bars in Placerville on charges of bribing a public official (Swanson), possession of marijuana for sale, possession of a controlled substance and possession of ammunition.

A bail hearing the afternoon of Sept. 7 could determine if he will be released as his case goes through the court system.

Swanson has not been charged with any crime, but her name has been used in documents by the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office, the lead agency in the case, stating she is the one who DiMatteo allegedly bribed.

Lake Tahoe News has been told by sources that Swanson had secured one or two $5,000 donations from DiMatteo for the Ed Foundation. Swanson is on the Ed Foundation’s board.

KRNV-TV in Reno reports having a letter from Ed Foundation President Rollston thanking DiMatteo for his donation of $1,128, with a handwritten addendum saying, “Your donation was extremely generous and is greatly appreciated.”

Other officers on the Ed Foundation board are Pradip Patel-

vice president, Jerry Bindel-treasurer (he could not be reached at his office after 5pm Sept. 6), Debra McHugh-secretary, and Campion-past president.

The other board members are Tyler Cannon, Greg Bergner, Paige Cefalu, Jana DiGrande, Bill Kingman, Jen David, Lee Anne Stigers-Genasci, Christina Proctor, Joe Marzocco, Brain Hogan, Coleen Shade, Diane Rosner, Julie Lucksinger, Cookie Rork, and Tom Davis.

Campion said he would not comment on whether the donation from DiMatteo raised red flags because who made the donation or how it was handled.

City Councilman Davis said, “I have not been active in the Ed Foundation for some time. I have no knowledge of [any] donation whatsoever. Period.”

Rollston said, “I have no response or comment to any of your questions.”

There is question whether information about the foundation’s donors are public record.

Swanson said at this time she is not commenting further about anything related to the case.

Even if all of the money DiMatteo gave the Ed Foundation ended up in the appropriate bank account, Swanson had a duty to report the transaction to the California Fair Political Practices Commission. She also had an obligation to report it to the City Council to disclose an entity she was involved with was benefiting from someone who the city was doing business with. Neither of these things occurred.

It is not known if she consulted City Attorney Patrick Enright.

Lake Tahoe News asked Enright if he gave Swanson any advice about anything involving the case. He said, “I can’t comment

at this time while the investigation is going on.”

However, *Lake Tahoe News* has learned Enright is the one who recommended Swanson hire the attorney she has retained out of Sacramento.

Boy Scouts seek South Shore members

Lake Tahoe Pack 592 Boy Scouts & Cub is looking for members.

The purpose of the Boy Scouts of America is to provide an educational program for boys and young adults to build character, to train in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and to develop personal fitness.

On Sept. 11 at 6pm register to become a Boy Scout at St. Theresa Grace Hall, 1041 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, call Steve Smith at (775) 901.2212.

Tahoe resident turns cane into defensive device for seniors

By Eamon McNiff, 20/20

Relying on a cane was once considered a sign of an aging, weakened body. But today, some seniors are finding empowerment through their canes: They're using them as weapons of self-defense through a fighting technique known as "cane fu."

"You can carry it anywhere you want. It's a medical device, so it's always with you," cane fu creator Mark Shuey Jr. told "20/20's" Chris Cuomo. "If you carry a knife, you've got to take it out of the sheath. If you carry a gun, you have to take it out of the holster. [With] a cane, you're already locked and loaded."

(Watch the full story on two hours of "20/20" Friday.)

Shuey is a 65-year-old martial arts expert and world champion living in Lake Tahoe. He is trained in all manners of fighting techniques, including weapons, but hadn't applied those skills to a cane until he saw first-hand 10 years ago how the device was being neglected.

The Nevada resident noticed his elderly father refusing to use his cane because of the stigma it created. Around that time, he learned that several elderly people near his brother's house in Palm Springs, Fla., were robbed while carrying their canes.

"I got this epiphany to go out there and let people know what a cane really can do. It can help them," Shuey said.

With that, Shuey developed a specialized martial arts program with seniors in mind.

Read the whole story

Study touts new measures for teacher effectiveness

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – As Nevada policymakers work to ensure that ineffective teachers are removed from classrooms around the state, a report released this week provides evidence to support the use of test scores to measure how much individual teachers contribute to pupil achievement.

Using quantitative measures to evaluate teachers, known as value-added modeling (VAM), remains controversial, said Marcus Winters, a senior fellow with the Manhattan Institute's Center for State and Local Leadership.

But in his report called Transforming Tenure: Using Value-Added Modeling to Identify Ineffective Teachers, Winters said his analysis using data from Florida public schools shows that a VAM score in a teacher's third year in the classroom is a good predictor of that teacher's success in the fifth year of teaching after receiving tenure.

"VAM is not a perfect measure of teacher quality because, like any statistical test, it is subject to random measurement errors," Winters said in his report. "So it should not be regarded as the 'magic bullet' solution to the problem of evaluating teacher performance.

"However, the method is reliable enough to be part of a sensible policy of tenure reform – one that replaces

‘automatic’ tenure with rigorous evaluation of new candidates and periodic reexamination of those who have already received tenure,” he said.

Winters, an assistant professor at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, discussed his report in a telephone conference Wednesday with the news media.

“The idea is by looking at student test scores and by matching students to their teachers, we can identify which are the effective teachers – which are the teachers that are having a positive effect on student learning as measured by their test score growth – and which teachers are just not doing as well,” he said.

The findings show that the value-added analysis is a good predictor of future teacher performance, Winters said.

“What this means is that value-added is potentially a useful tool for identifying a teacher’s future performance, which is what we really want out of an evaluation system,” he said. “And on top of that, I show that value-added is actually a far better predictor of a teacher’s future performance than is a measure that is commonly used by the current system, which is obtainment of a master’s degree.”

The analysis comes as Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval is pushing for improved teacher accountability as a way to improve student achievement. Sandoval was successful in getting a number of reforms passed in the 2011 legislative session, including a requirement that student achievement data must be at least half of, but not the sole factor, in evaluating teachers.

Lawmakers also supported the creation of the Teachers and Leaders Council of Nevada, which is charged with making recommendations by December of this year to the state Board of Education for the creation of a statewide performance evaluation system for teachers and administrators.

The Board of Education has until June 1, 2013, to adopt regulations establishing the performance evaluation system, which then must be implemented in the state's 17 school districts by the 2013-14 school year.

Overall teacher performance will be ranked as highly effective, effective, minimally effective or ineffective.

The 2011 legislative changes also require an additional probationary period for teachers and administrators who receive unsatisfactory evaluations.

Sandoval is expected to pursue further education reforms in the upcoming legislative session, including ending social promotion of students.

Tennessee was the first state to develop and use value-added models, according to the Data Quality Campaign.

Cruise benefits Tahoe Arts Project

The Sept. 20 sunset cruise on the Safari Rose benefits Tahoe Arts Project.

The event is from 6-8pm. The boat leaves from Tahoe Keys Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

The $65 tickets include wine and appetizers.

For more information, call (530) 542.3632.

Yosemite hantavirus warning affects travelers outside U.S.

By Laura Bly, USA Today

U.S. officials have warned travelers from 39 other countries, most in the European Union, that those who stayed in certain Yosemite National Park tent cabins earlier this summer may have been exposed to a rare but deadly mouse-borne hantavirus, a park service epidemiologist told *Reuters* Tuesday.

Of the 10,000 people thought to be at risk of contracting hantavirus pulmonary syndrome from their stays in Yosemite between June and August, some 2,500 live outside the United States, Dr. David Wong told *Reuters* in an interview.

Wong said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services officials notified 39 countries over the weekend, most of them in the European Union, that their residents may have been exposed to the deadly virus.

The lung disease has so far killed two men and sickened four other people, all U.S. citizens, prompting the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to issue a health alert.

Officials are concerned that more Yosemite visitors could develop the lung disease in the next month or so. Most of the victims identified so far were believed to have been infected while staying in one of 91 “Signature” tent-style cabins in the park’s popular Curry Village camping area.

There is no cure for the disease, but early detection through

blood tests greatly increases survival rates.

“I want people to know about this so they take it seriously,” Wong said. “We’re doing our due diligence to share the information.”

Last week, park officials shut down the insulated “Signature” tent cabins after finding deer mice, which carry the disease and can burrow through holes the size of pencil erasers, infesting the double walls.

Officials are continuing to investigate additional possible cases of the disease, which has killed 64 Californians and about 590 Americans since it was identified in 1993, Wong said.

Early symptoms include headache, fever, muscle aches, shortness of breath and coughing. The virus may incubate for up to six weeks after exposure and can lead to severe breathing difficulties and death.

Experts say hantavirus, which kills 36 percent of those it infects, has never been known to be transmitted between humans.

Four of those known to be infected at Yosemite this summer slept in the insulated tent cabins. One slept elsewhere in Curry Village, located in a valley beneath the iconic Half Dome rock formation, and the sixth case remains under investigation.

One man from Northern California and another from Pennsylvania died, while three victims have recovered and a fourth remains hospitalized, the state Department of Public Health said.

Nearly 4 million people visit Yosemite each year, attracted to the park’s dramatic scenery and hiking trails. Roughly 70 percent of those visitors congregate in Yosemite Valley, where Curry Village is located.

Hantavirus is carried in viral particles inhaled from rodent feces and urine. People also can be infected by eating contaminated food, touching contaminated surfaces or being bitten by infected rodents.

Hantavirus previously infected two Yosemite visitors, one in 2000 and another in 2010, but at higher elevations. U.S. officials have warned travelers from 39 other countries, most in the European Union, that those who stayed in certain Yosemite National Park tent cabins earlier this summer may have been exposed to a rare but deadly mouse-borne hantavirus, a park service epidemiologist told Reuters Tuesday.

Of the 10,000 people the federal Centers for Disease Control estimate could be at risk of contracting hantavirus pulmonary syndrome from their stays in Yosemite between June 10 and August 24, some 2,500 live outside the USA, said Dr. David Wong.

Britain's Health Protection Agency said in a statement Monday that officials were "providing health advice and information … about the ongoing situation in the U.S." to about 100 people believed to have traveled to the national park between June 10 and Aug. 24.

Yosemite officials have sent emails and letters to 3,100 people who reserved any of the 91 signature tent cabins during that timeframe, urging them or anyone in their party to seek immediate medical attention if they start to show the initial flu-like symptoms of the disease, *Associated Press* reports.

Read the whole story

Meet and greet with Live Violence Free executive director

Live Violence Free, formerly the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center, is opening its doors for the community to meet Executive Director Frank Blakeney.

Community members will have the chance to not only chat with Blakeney, but to meet other staff members and learn about the programs and services offered.

The event is Sept. 20 form 5-7pm, 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

Opinion: Brown is wrong to expand tribal gaming

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Sept. 2, 2012, Sacramento Bee.***

Gov. Jerry Brown waited until Friday's deadline to announce his support for two controversial off-reservation casinos that are likely to usher in a troubling new Indian gambling boom in California.

It's unfortunate that Brown blessed these two bad deals initially approved by the Obama administration's Interior Department. The first allows the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians to build a casino along Highway 99 in Madera County,

40 miles from their existing reservation near Yosemite. The second allows the Enterprise Rancheria of the Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe to build its casino near Oroville, 50 miles from its historic tribal lands. The governor approved that casino even though residents of Yuba County signaled in a 2005 advisory vote that they did not want it.

Both casinos were opposed by established gambling tribes, who argue they will not generate new revenue but take profits from existing casinos. The most troubling aspect of Brown's decision is that it adds pressure to approve off- reservation casinos for other tribes.

When voters approved Proposition 1A a dozen years ago, they were promised gambling would be contained on existing Indian lands and that the expansion authorized by the initiative would be modest.

That's turned out to be a lie. Today, California has more than 60 Indian casinos, some of them quite massive. Gambling tribes rake in close to $7 billion annually, more gambling revenue than in any other state in the nation.

Read the whole story

Environment-art come together to benefit youth literacy

Bona Fide Books presents a day dedicated to the environment at Sagehen Creek Field Station near Truckee with Three Ways to Look at a Landscape, a benefit for youth literacy and leadership program Adventure Risk Challenge.

Using hands-on and creative methods, participants will be taught tree, plant, and wildlife identification keys and then translate that knowledge into artistic responses to the land.

Presenters include Janet Smith (poet), Sue Kloss (biology instructor), and Michelle Murdock (artist). Each session begins with a talk, followed by time in the woods and then an exercise or experiential piece to encourage engagement with nature and self through drawing, writing, observing and/or taking field notes.

The Sept. 23 event is $60, which includes lunch. For more information and to sign up, contact (530) 573.1513 or editor@bonafidebooks.com. Space is limited.