3 men charged with defrauding Thunder Valley casino owners

By C. Johnson, News 10

SACRAMENTO – Two local men and a developer from San Diego were indicted for allegedly defrauding the United Auburn Indian Community of more than $18 million in connection with the construction of four buildings in Auburn for the tribe.

The United Auburn Indian Community (UAIC) owns the Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln.

Greg Scott Baker, 45, of Newcastle; Darrell Patrick Hinz, 47, of Cameron Park; and Bart Wayne Volen of San Diego and Hawaii, were charged with conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud as well as money laundering, announced the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California.

According to court documents, between October 2006 and December 2007, Volen, the building developer, submitted more than 160 false and/or inflated cost invoices to UAIC for his work.

Baker and Hinz, who were employed by UAIC, were responsible for approving all invoices before they were presented to the tribal council for payment. Federal prosecutors allege the two men conspired with Volen and made provisions so their duplicity regarding the false invoices would go unnoticed. In turn, Volen, according to the indictment, paid off Hinz.

Hinz claimed he worked as a consultant to Volen, submitted false invoices to that in effect, and in turn, received approximately $7.5 million in checks from the developer, the indictment read.

Federal investigators charge Hinz paid off bills for Baker and

bought him a $70,000 car, a backyard pool, a vacation condominum in Lake Tahoe, a trip to Hawaii, a mobile home, and home improvements for his alleged participation in the scheme. The value of the items was more than $1.4 million.

If convicted of the charges, each defendant could received a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison, a $250,000 fine and three-years probation for each count of mail and wire fraud.

S. Tahoe campers headed to Wild Island

Camp Tadaka is having its last fun trip of the summer on Aug. 21 for K-10. Campers will be going to Wild Island in Reno.

Cost is $30 and it includes lunch.

Bring swim stuff, sunscreen, and a water bottle.

Space is limited – (530) 542.6056.

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3 arrests in Douglas County marijuana grow

Three people were arrested in connection with growing marijuana in the James Canyon area of Douglas County.

Rafael Salas-Silva, 28, of Sparks, Martin Urloste-Maciel, 26,

of Pasco, Wash., and Alberto Mendez-Arroyo, 23, of Reno face federal and local charges in connection with allegedly growing more than 4,700 marijuana plants.

The three were arrested Aug. 15.

If convicted, they each face 10 years in prison and up to a $10 million fine.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Negative presidential race has Americans hitting mute button

By Lesley Clark and David Lightman, McClatchy Newspapers

DUBUQUE, Iowa –Americans already hate politics, and the latest ugly spat between the presidential candidates is likely to sour them further.



"We're sick of it," said Donna Stehn, 57, a retired speech pathologist from Peosta, Iowa, who mutes her television when political ads come on. "All this stuff that they're saying, it sounds like a junior high school campaign."

With incendiary rhetoric – from the charge that Mitt Romney's plans for Wall Street would put "y'all back in chains" to the assertion that President Barack Obama's campaign "has disgraced the presidency" – the campaign is knocking on the door of being the ugliest in a generation, and the party

conventions haven’t even been held yet.

It’s unfolding as both sides say the race will be about substance and big issues. Given the stakes, that’s unlikely to happen.

The latest round of fighting “reinforces the view of a lot of people” that politicians too often are squabbling and not doing what they were elected to do, said Dennis Goldford, a politics professor at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Read the whole story

Truckee hotel, TRTA partnering in trail talks

The Cedar House Sport Hotel’s Tahoe Trips and Trails will host a complimentary interactive talk by the Tahoe Rim Trail Association and a variety of guided adventures in Truckee Tahoe and throughout the west.

The Cedar House is the first to join TRTA’s Trailside Inn program. To kick off the partnership, The Cedar House is hosting complimentary refreshments and a virtual hike on the Tahoe Rim Trail presented by TRTA staff members at 5:30pm on Aug. 22.

TRTA’s Mary Bennington and Shannon Skarritt will share stories and information about the Tahoe Rim Trail. In addition to the complimentary trail talk, early this fall author and guide Tim Hauserman will share information from the third edition of his book “Tahoe Rim Trail: The Official Guide for Hikers, Mountain Bikers, and Equestrians.”

For more information, call (530) 548.5010.

Funding to help El Dorado County residents with weatherizing homes

El Dorado County residents can save big on energy bills and keep their homes cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter by taking advantage of free weatherization services available through the El Dorado County Community Services Weatherization Program.

Through the Weatherization Program, qualified low-income property owners and renters can receive up to $3,055 in improvements to the home. Weatherization technicians check the home to see where improvements can be made; services are tailored to each home and designed for maximum cost savings. Technicians can provide shade screens, fix broken glass, install fans in ceilings and insulation in attics, repair or replace water heaters, and repair or replace heating units and air conditioners.”

The Weatherization Program also has emergency heating and cooling funding to assist eligible households with the emergency repair, replacement and new installation of certain heating/cooling appliances and water heating appliances.

Households must meet program eligibility guidelines and specific income criteria to qualify for services. To learn more about the Weatherization Program and its requirements

For more information, call (530) 621.6150 in Placerville, or (530) 573.3490 in South Lake Tahoe.

DUI patrols to be in force through Labor Day weekend

If you drink and drive in El Dorado County, beware because the El Dorado County Avoid the 6 DUI Task Force is joining with law enforcement throughout the state for the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign now through Sept. 3.

A DUI-driver's license checkpoint will be conducted in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 17. Here is the schedule for the enforcement.

In 2010, 791 people died in California in crashes in which a driver or motorcycle rider was at or above the legal limit. The group with the highest percentage of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes was ages 21-24.

"On average there is one alcohol impaired driving-related fatality every 51 minutes across America. But this tragic loss of life can be reduced if we get impaired drivers off our roadways," South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Laney said in a press release. "Research has shown that high-visibility enforcement like the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign reduces alcohol-impaired driving fatalities by as much as 20 percent. By joining this statewide effort, we will make El Dorado County's roadways safer for everyone throughout the Labor Day period."

Vodka stories could be worth 2 tickets to cocktail event

Ten bartenders will compete next month for the best drink of the night as a fundraiser for Barton Health Foundation.

Lake Tahoe News is giving away two tickets to the Sept. 13, 5:30-8pm event at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

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



A concoction from 2011. Photo/LTN

Jesse Kalin volunteers as the entertainment and Dreu Murin volunteers as the emcee. Tahoe Blue Vodka is the vodka

sponsor.

Participating bars-restaurants are Cantina, Capisce, Edgewood, Embassy, Heavenly, Lakeside, LewMarNels, Naked Fish, Riva and Steamers.

To win the tickets, you must either submit a recipe (via a comment) using vodka or tell us about your favorite vodka drink. The other criterion is that you must be part of *Lake Tahoe News'* special NEWS team. To be a team member, fill out the paid subscriber form. The winner must be willing to have their full name published. Winners will be announced the week of the event.

To get you thirsty, here is the first cocktail entry from Sue Wood.

Sue's Twist on a French Martini

2 ounces vodka

½ ounce Chambord raspberry liqueur

3 ounces pineapple juice

Splash of club soda

Mix all the ingredients over ice. Serve on a hot Tahoe day.

Kerry challenging people to

be part of Tahoe’s solution

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It could have been the state of the city address, but in actuality was a call to action to the women in the room to get more involved and be part of the change to make South Lake Tahoe the city it can be.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry spoke to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 15 about getting rid of the roadblocks that plague progress.

When asked if any of them had attended the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit, not a single hand went up.



Nancy Kerry

She pointed out how at the summit the politicians all talked about what is wrong with Lake Tahoe and not what is right – and how no solutions were presented. Kerry wants the conversation to be about what is working, focus more on whatever that is, stop planning and start doing.

“I think the conversation, the dialogue and the change begin within each of us, and primarily among women. It is our nature to find solutions, agreement and get things done,” Kerry told the women’s organization during their lunch at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe.

To get there, Kerry said it is time to find what binds the people and agencies in Tahoe. Then focus on those similarities

and find consensus.

“Capital investors don’t want to invest in a community that doesn’t know what it wants,” Kerry said.

Other locations like Livermore and Monterey – places the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce led so called community leaders to this summer to demonstrate progress – have control over their own destiny. They don’t have the regional oversight that Tahoe has; which is really state and federal regulators dictating what can and cannot be done.

Pooled leadership is unique to Tahoe.

That is why consensus needs to be found because the city and five counties that make up the Lake Tahoe Basin must bow to others and not do what they envision without others giving their stamp of approval.

Kerry spoke of the 11,000 hotel rooms in the city and how that number far exceeds the room night demand. This in turns means the average daily rate stays low. That in turn means less hotel tax revenue for the city. She pointed out, though, that while people complain about the casinos for myriad reasons, it is Embassy Suites and Marriott in the city limits with the highest ADR on the South Shore.

Kerry also explained how those hotels were environmentally sound projects – not just economic boosters for town.

She said it’s disappointing the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s Regional Plan update doesn’t go far enough to help the dilapidated motels that often rent rooms on a weekly or monthly basis to be able to evolve into something more than what they are.

One Soroptimist asked about South Lake Tahoe becoming a pot capital. To this Kerry pointed out when she took office earlier this summer there were three marijuana collectives,

now there is one.

“Fifteen thousand people have (medical marijuana) cards. It’s ridiculous to think that many people are sick,” Kerry said. She said the city would be keeping an eye on the remaining collective to ensure it follows the rules.

When it comes to any kind of smoking on city property, that could be resolved Aug. 21 at the City Council meeting. On the agenda will be an emergency ordinance to ban smoking of all kinds in city parks.

Another controversial item the council is expected to vote on – which was an item brought up at Wednesday’s meeting – is SnowGlobe, the three-day music festival that reverberated through the Al Tahoe area and beyond in December. Promoters are asking to bring it back Dec. 29-31. (One of the Soroptimist didn’t even know what SnowGlobe was.)

“I’ll be there at the plug. It’s easier than taking 400 phone calls,” Kerry said in case the music goes past 10pm and is louder than allowed. Those were problems with last year’s event.

TRCD takes the mystery out of gardening in Tahoe

By Courtney Walker

Gardening can be difficult in Tahoe. We have a short growing season, a lot of snow and a lack of water during the summer months. But creating a beautiful garden in Tahoe is possible, and it can help conserve our precious resources.

Many Lake Tahoe residents and second homeowners are confused by all of the environmental restrictions placed on property owners. How can you possibly complete your BMPs, do your defensible space and save money on your water bill, all while having a beautiful garden? You can do all of this and more by using conservation landscaping techniques. Conservation landscaping preserves and protects our natural resources using sustainable gardening and landscaping techniques. It promotes wildlife habitat, erosion control, water conservation, healthy soil, clean air and water – including Lake Tahoe.



Conservation garden tour on Aug. 19 to provide tips for Tahoe residents. Photo/Provided

Choosing conservation landscaping practices will enhance the look and functionality of your property while not taxing our

environment. Landscapes that integrate these practices are also typically more cost efficient and require less maintenance and fertilizers.

1. Go native: Native species thrive in Tahoe's climate. They prefer drier conditions in the summer and being buried in snow during the winter. By using native and Tahoe adapted plants, your landscape will use much less water than other vegetation like turf.

2. Do the drip: Micro-irrigation is water efficient because it delivers water directly to plants' root zone, minimizing water loss due to runoff, wind, overspray and evaporation.

3. Save your soil: By installing your best management practices (BMPs), you protect your soil from water and wind erosion and keep it out of Lake Tahoe. Up to a ton of soil can be lost in one year on an average Tahoe property without BMPs installed

4. Create space: Creating defensible space around your property will make it more fire resistant. This can be achieved through proper plant selection and creating a mosaic landscape of vegetation, rock and mulch, which breaks up a fire's ability to move across the landscape.

5. Invite in the wild: Use a variety of native plants and features to attract our local hummingbirds, butterflies and bees.

6. Grow your dinner: Even though not all fruits and vegetables can handle our short growing season, there are plenty of edibles that can – including herbs and cool season vegetables.

The Tahoe RCD provides many grant-funded resources to assist you with your conservation garden through conservation landscaping services available to California Lake Tahoe Basin homeowners. Our staff provides one-one-one, site specific advice to help homeowners meet their individual goals. While

landscape design is not included with this service, homeowners will be able to learn about project planning and site analysis, soil preparation, irrigation considerations and proper plant selection and care. For additional resources or to request an on-site visit, please visit our website or call (530) 543.1501, ext. 113.

Want to see some examples in person? Join us for the 5th annual Conservation Landscape Tour on Aug. 19 from 1–5pm. Come enjoy and explore nine beautiful gardens in Tahoma area that highlight Tahoe conservation techniques, from lakefront gardens to beautiful, fire-safe landscapes. The tour highlights native and adapted plant selection, water conservation techniques, defensible space methods, BMP demonstrations, edible gardening and wildlife enhancement features.

As you explore the gardens, feel free to ask garden stewards and homeowners questions related to the conservation landscapes and plant identification.

Last year’s event brought together more than 150 Tahoe residents to enjoy a delightful summer afternoon learning about conservation practices and touring beautiful gardens.

There is no fee for this year’s tour, but donations are graciously accepted. Pick up your tour map between 1–3pm from Marie Sluchack Community Park on the corner of Pine and Wilson in Tahoma. The gardens are nearby and we encourage carpooling and walking. Please leave your pets at home.

For more information, contact me at (530) 543.1501, ext. 118 or go online.

Courtney Walker is the conservation planner for Tahoe Resource Conservation District.