STHS using questionable anti-drug program

Even though the California Department of Education in 2005 warned districts against using Narconon as a viable drug prevention curriculum, the group is still in schools – including South Tahoe High School.

“Yes, Narconon has sent a guest presenter to the Health Seminar class at STHS. They share curriculum with the students to have them avoid drug use and abuse,” STHS Principal Ivone Larson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said the curriculum includes:

• The difference between taking a drug for a necessary reason and taking a drug for a recreational reason.

• The dangers of drugs (overdose, addiction).

• Goal setting.

• The presenters’ “story” all have been past addicts who have recovered at the Narconon facilities.

• The process of addiction.

• The affects of drugs on the nervous system.

• The affects on driving.

The state’s issue with Narconon is that it was developed by the late L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Church of Scientology and Dianetics.

The state Department of Education has not changed its stance since first writing on Feb. 24, 2005, “Narconon’s drug prevention program does not reflect accurate, widely-accepted medical and scientific evidence.”

Larson said, “They are on the list of Health Seminar presenters because they share their story of drug abuse and how it has affected their lives. We continue to use a variety of resources to address current topics in the Health Seminar class that meet the needs of all our students.”

Narconon presenters at STHS are not allowed to not leave a phone number for students call, hand out any information, recruit, discuss their program’s steps or the philosophy behind it, Larson said.

Melody Easton, South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition coordinator, said, “I don’t know enough about this to comment.”

Narconon has an office in South Lake Tahoe, though it is not regularly staffed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Laws to track Calif.’s biggest water users ignored

By Katharine Mieszkowski, Center for Investigative Journalism

The last time California endured a drought, legislators set their sights on the state’s heaviest water users: farmers.

The state designed laws to push agricultural water districts to closely track their water flow and make the largest districts charge farmers based on how much they use. The economic theory is simple: If you aren’t paying for how much water you actually use, you have little incentive to try to consume less.

But those rules are widely being ignored as they come into effect in the midst of one of the state's most severe droughts on record.

All but the smallest agricultural water districts were required to track and report to the state how much water they deliver to customers as the result of a 2007 law. Only 20 percent – 48 of 242 districts – have filed those reports, according to California Department of Water Resources data. They were due 10 months ago.



Shasta Dam is an integral component of California's water system. Photo/LTN file

Under a 2009 law, the 55 largest agricultural water districts also are required to more precisely measure how much water each farmer is using. They're then required to charge farmers – at least in part – on that basis.

The state doesn't know how many suppliers are meeting this requirement or are even taking steps toward doing so, because almost half of them have failed to turn in the relevant reports, records show.

Charging for water based on use had been common in some agricultural areas where water is scarce, like the San Joaquin Valley. But now, it's mandatory for large districts throughout California. These water management plans, which spell out how the districts will make the changes, were due at the end of

2012. Districts face few consequences for failing to comply.

By contrast, most residential water customers in California, whose use is metered, have long seen how much water they use reflected in the bills they receive.

“Throughout the state, people should be paying for water based on how much they use, and that will drive conservation,” said Peter Brostrom, program manager of water use efficiency for the Department of Water Resources.

Agriculture, which accounts for some 80 percent of the water that’s used in the state, has met the new rules with skepticism and indifference, as growers cope with the drought.

The Tulelake Irrigation District in Siskiyou and Modoc counties is not following the new rules. Earl Danosky, the district’s manager, said he has no plans to charge farmers for how much water they use individually. The district currently charges a flat per-acre fee once a year.

“I don’t believe it would save one drop of water,” Danosky said. He said he believes farmers there already are careful with the water they use out of necessity. “Too much water will damage the crop.”

Danosky said he didn’t realize he was supposed to be turning the reports in to the state. The district serves hundreds of family farms, which grow potatoes, onions, alfalfa and mint near the state’s northern border with Oregon.

Down in the Sacramento Valley, Reclamation District 108 is on track to meet the state’s new requirements. Still, farmers there doubt the changes will inspire much water conservation in their area.

“It’s a one size fits all for the state, and for us, it didn’t fit,” said Fritz Durst, the district’s board president, who grows rice, sunflowers, alfalfa and corn. “There’s probably

areas where it would give people incentives to use less water, but with the way we manage our water here, there is no benefit."

Water flows from the district's system of canals through farm gates and into ditches next to the farmers' fields, where it is used for irrigation. Rice especially relies on a lot of water. Growers flood the fields, allowing plants to sit in four inches of water. Water that drains off the fields is reused on other fields, accounting for about 40 percent of the total water the district delivers.

Local farmers voted to install a $2 million system to measure how much water comes out of these canals. Now, changing the district's pricing to meet the regulations will require another vote. District officials hope to have the new pricing in place by the start of irrigation in spring 2016.

If Durst's water bill goes way up, he said he likely won't use less water. He said he'll probably just grow a specialty rice that will fetch more on the market.

Districts' failure to comply with the requirements troubles environmentalists who promote conservation as one tool for taking on the state's water woes.

"Unless these districts start taking this seriously, it's going to be their customers that suffer," said Claire O'Connor, agricultural water policy analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The Department of Water Resources has had to rely on letters and workshops to try to cajole districts into complying. There's no penalty for agricultural districts that don't report how much water they're delivering to farms.

Large districts that haven't submitted their water management plans to the state have lost access to $472 million in state grants to encourage conservation and improve water management.

But once they turn in their plans, they are eligible for funds again.

That money could be used to help farmers in their districts install more efficient irrigation systems, for instance.

A third party could sue districts for not fulfilling the requirements, but there’s little talk of this being in the works.

Farmers aren’t the only ones whose water use came under the legislative microscope during the last drought. The state is now trying to achieve a 20 percent reduction in urban per-capita water use by the end of 2020, based on the same law that targeted large agricultural districts.

Wild Tahoe Weekend all about native species

U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will host the fourth Wild Tahoe Weekend on June 7-8 at Taylor Creek Visitor Center.

The weekend event consists of the Lake Tahoe Bird Festival on that Saturday and the Native Species Festival on Sunday.

Lake Tahoe Bird Festival, a family event, is free from 10am-3:30pm. The event includes guided bird walks along the Rainbow Trail every hour until 1:30pm, a bird art contest for all ages, information on migratory birds and spotting scope use, and a presentation by master falconer Marie Gaspari Crawford that includes live birds of prey.

Art submissions (photography, sculptures, drawing, paintings,

etc.) for the bird art contest may be submitted to Rena Escobedo at rescobedo@fs.fed.us before June 4.

For a schedule of activities, go online.

Native Species Festival on that Sunday is from 10am-4pm.

Walks led by field professionals and local students will teach people about native Tahoe yellow cress, quaking aspen trees, and local wildlife. The event will also feature a nature walk for dog owners. Students will present a program called, “What is a Swale?” at the amphitheater in the afternoon.

For more information, contact Jean Norman at 530.543.2694.

Harrison Ave. night work allows contractor to catch up

Campground by the Lake guests were not enjoying peaceful nights of sleep this week because of work on Harrison Avenue.

“The contractor had not planned on working any nights at all, but the delay caused by finding underground tanks, combined with losing four days due to weather, they decided to work Wednesday and Thursday nights to cut and grade Harrison,” Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe assistant director of public works, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “At this time, there is no more night work on the immediate schedule.”

Sierra Nevada Construction unexpectedly found an old heating tank and two gas tanks under buildings. Any lingering contents have been pumped out and the tanks filled with concrete.

The multi-million dollar Harrison Avenue project includes

improving water quality in the area, repaving the streets, making some roads one way, adding a parking lot across from Sno-Flake drive-in, and improving the overall look of the area.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Thunderbird is out of commission until $250,000 is raised to repair the historic boat's twin Allison aircraft engines.

• The marine GPS class on June 28 will cover a brief treatment of GPS theory, how to set up a GPS unit, three waypoints (create, edit, navigate), hands on operation, and what not to do. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is putting on the class at Lake Tahoe Community college from 9am-1pm. Cost is $59.To register, call 530.541.4660, ext. 717.

• MontBleu casino in Stateline gave $18,116 to the Tahoe Fund through the donation program called Green Bucks where guests add a dollar donation onto their room nights.

• On June 2 at 8pm Lake Tahoe Community College is hosting the Soccer Class Showcase on the community ball field. Many of the students trying out will be on the intercollegiate mens and women's soccer teams. Student activities organization will be serving free hot dogs to spectators.

• UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe plant sale is June 7,

9am-2pm at Lake Tahoe Community College Demonstration Garden, 1 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe. Perennials and organic, non-GMO vegetables will be sold Cash or checks only. Bring old pots to recycle.

Lake Tahoe Airport on course to remain open without return of commercial service

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Airport is not going to have commercial air service any time soon, if ever. Lake Tahoe Airport is not going to stop being an airport. Lake Tahoe Airport could be more than it is.

Those were the major points delivered Thursday night at a meeting about the master plan for the South Lake Tahoe airport.

Michael Hotaling with the consulting firm putting together the master plan for the city and FAA on May 29 went over issues that were brought up from the February meeting – which centered on making it more than a general aviation facility and closing it down.

Hotaling said to have commercial flights it would require a subsidy. Mammoth subsidizes its airport by $2.5 million a year. City Manager Nancy Kerry said she has been asking people at meetings if they think that is a wise use of city funds – assuming the city had that kind of cash – and the overwhelming

response is “no”. The same outcome came Thursday night.



Lake Tahoe Airport is not apt to see commercial service any time soon. Photo/LTN file

When the airport had commercial service in the past there were subsidies as well as marketing support for some of the airlines.

The city is already spending $300,000 a year from the general fund to support the airport. This is down from a high of $600,000.

But the city is in no position to cough up money to support this type of enterprise when the few “extra” dollars it thought it would see this fiscal year are evaporating because of the dismal winter and potential loss of parking revenue.

“It doesn’t make sense for only city residents to fund this airport,” Kerry said.

She would like El Dorado and Douglas counties to have a financial stake because they benefit from people flying in.

The Federal Aviation Administration would have the ultimate say over whether the airport closes. And even it said “yes”, the city would have to repay the nearly $20 million in grants it has received from the federal agency.

Going forward, Hotaling said, the city needs to consider options for the airport beyond current uses.

“The niche could be catering to folks who already are coming here,” he said. This would involve enhancing the facilities in some manner – making it a destination of sorts.

More than a dozen of the nearly 80 people at the meeting had a question or comment.

Transportation beyond air service was a concern of several people. Some remarks had to do with how people get to other parts of Tahoe once they fly in. Others questioned the environmental impact of air service in terms of how will people get around once they are in Tahoe.

It was brought up how there is no bus service to the airport.

An air shuttle service between South Lake Tahoe and Sacramento and Reno was also broached. Kerry said this idea has been talked about but has not gotten off the ground.

One person suggested there be pilots’ quarters over hangars, as well as having the drive-up market stop at the airport and then be shuttled to their final destination.

Reducing the runway in some form – like shortening it – was an idea.

Sherry Miller, airport manager, said if that were to occur, then the airport would be less viable and the FAA may not approve doing this. Concerns are whether large firefighting aircraft would then be able to land, as well as safety concerns because of the air density involved during the summer.

“They don’t like airports to limit their use,” Miller said of the FAA.

The airport runways’ width have been reduce from 150 feet to

100 feet in recent years. This has allowed the city to bank stream environmental zone credits. But no one has come calling for them, so that commodity isn't much of a revenue stream or incentive to get rid of more coverage.

More information about the airport master plan may be found online.

Letter: Freel Perk deserves congratulations

To the community,

As a Meyers' resident, I'd like to congratulate Barbara Gerland and her family on Freel Perk's one-year anniversary this June. Barbara and her three children have put together a warm and eco-friendly shop at 3141 Highway 50.

They serve locally-brewed, fair trade coffees and teas from the Alpen Sierra Roasting Company in Minden, real fruit smoothies, pastries and bagels (from Don's Cakes by the Lake), English muffins (from Truckee Sourdough), and pastries (from Sugar Pine Bakery).

Barbara and family are committed to supporting local businesses as well as keeping the environment clean and healthy. Above all, Freel Perk has quickly become a gathering place for community people. On any given day, you'll see informal meetings of local paramedics, PTA members, and groups of moms with their kids.

I always look forward to a morning cup of coffee and having the Perk just down the road makes it even more enjoyable.

Congratulations to Barbara and family!

John Sutherland, Meyers

No fine for sewage spill at Tahoe Keys Marina

No fines will be levied against the owners of the Tahoe Keys Marina in regards to a sewage spill earlier this month.

“It is not clear if negligence or vandalism occurred,” Lauri Kemper with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said her agency, along with El Dorado County Health Department and South Tahoe Public Utility District will continue to work with the marina and Fresh Ketch restaurant owners to make sure the “sewage collection system at the site is properly designed, operated and maintained in accordance with all regulations.”

The water board had also been investigating complaints about fuel spills at the South Lake Tahoe marina.

“There is inconsistency in the evidence and the water board does not have sufficient information to warrant further action at this time,” Kemper said.

Kemper said if people have information about a possible spill or illegal discharges, including photographs, they should email Lauri.Kemper@waterboards.ca.gov or scott.ferguson@waterboards.ca.gov or file a complaint on the

CalEPA website.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: College presidents getting rich, students in debt

By Tyler Kingkade, Huffington Post

It pays to be a public college president, and it seems only to be getting better for them.

The number of chief executives at state colleges and universities earning at least $1 million more than doubled in fiscal year 2013, according to an analysis by the Chronicle of Higher Education published last week. Topping the list once again is E. Gordon Gee, from his tenure as head of Ohio State University, where he made $6 million in total compensation.

Texas A&M's R. Bowen Loftin took home $1.6 million in FY 2013, and North Dakota University system President Hamid Shirvani made $1.3 million.

But this year, a separate study released by the Institute for Policy Studies, is also noting the colleges with millionaire presidents are the same ones where students are more indebted and where adjuncts are more heavily relied upon.

Read the whole story

Free 2-day tennis clinic for Tahoe kids

Douglas County is offering two days of free tennis instruction for children 8 and older.

Veteran instructors Rob Wheatley and Hersh Herschman will lead youngsters through a variety of drills that are designed to introduce them to the sport as well as refine skills of those who are more experienced.

There will be a limited number of rackets available for those who need one. Come dressed to play – which means athletic wear and non-marking shoes. Be sure to bring water and sunscreen.

The clinics are June 14-15 from 11:30am-1pm at the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club on Warrior Way. Children may participate one or both days. Arrive 15 minutes before the start time. This is open to all youth in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Pizza will be delivered courtesy of Coyote Grill in Round Hill and the Northern California section of the U.S. Tennis Association will provide goodies for each participant.

Space is limited and preregistration is required. Call 775.586-7271 to register or for more information.