

Idyllic SLT bed and breakfast changes hands

By Kathryn Reed

Cooking for two instead of 20 – that's what Jerry Birdwell is looking forward to. Learning to cook for 20 is something Rachel Carlson is going to have to figure out soon.

Carlson and her husband, Greg, as of March 15 are the owners of the Black Bear Inn in South Lake Tahoe. It will reopen April 14.

It was on March 5, 1999, that Birdwell and Kevin Chandler opened the inn. The couple moved from Texas with no prior bed and breakfast experience. One was a lawyer, the other in the computer industry. What they created was an iconic lodging establishment that this reporter believes served the best breakfast anywhere on the South Shore. The only problem, as it were, was you had to be a guest of the inn in order to dine there.

Just like the original owners, the new ones also come without lodging or kitchen experience.

"I don't think anyone can cook breakfast as well as Jerry did," Carlson said. She said they are researching options for breakfast. Her specialty is baking.



The Black Bear Inn in South Lake Tahoe has new owners.
Photo/LTN

Carlson's background is marketing. Friday will be her last day at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Greg Carlson will continue to work for Kirkwood Mountain Resort in the human resources department.

For now, the changes they plan to make include new linens – all white. The early evening wine and cheese will no longer be offered. The website and logo will be updated soon.

Most of the furnishings are still there – which include antiques and rustic items that in some ways give the Black Bear an old Tahoe feel in an upscale way. The inn has five rooms in the main lodge-type building, with three cabins in the back – one being a duplex.

“One of the things we know that is special about the place is the charm and character. We really want to make sure we keep the heart and soul of the place,” Carlson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But they also want to do more contemporary things like pop up and wine dinners. The plan is to bring chefs in from Reno, Sacramento and the Bay Area, and winemakers from Sonoma and Napa to offer guests and Tahoe residents a culinary treat.

During the Birdwell-Chandler regime, "The Bachelor" was twice filmed at Black Bear Inn. Photo shoots were common. Dinners were a brief offering for guests and locals.

Being community oriented is the Carlsons' goal. They want the Black Bear Inn to not just be for people who are spending the night.

For Chandler and Birdwell, they will now be spending much of their time at their ranch in Sutter Creek that they bought a few years ago. They also plan to buy a cabin in town, so they aren't really leaving Tahoe for good.

For the Carlsons, the Black Bear Inn is now their home and their job.

In many ways the two couples share similar goals for the inn. Birdwell was the co-founder of the Ski Run Business Improvement district that was able to get the sidewalk, lamp posts, curb and gutters in on the street.

The Carlsons want to expand on the vibe to make Ski Run a true destination for locals and tourists.

"I will say that knowing the people on Ski Run who are living and working and planning for the future of the street, and having heard what is in the pipeline, I'm very excited for the future of Ski Run. Big things are ahead," Chandler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The guys hosted multiple political fundraisers and weddings for friends.

Expanding the inn as a wedding venue is a goal of the new owners.

In the end, it's all about the guests. Both couples know that.

"We have guests who got engaged at the inn, and others who chose BBI as their wedding venue. We helped them create life memories, and that is very rewarding," Chandler said. Some of the guests have become friends.

Carlson is already looking forward to meeting the people who are booked for this spring.

"Something we are really excited about is connecting with people from all over the world and sharing our knowledge of the area," Carlson said.

Calif. climate change goals require lifestyle changes

By Liam Dillon, Los Angeles Times

To meet the bold new climate change goals put in place last year, California will work to put millions of electric cars on the road, revolutionize its dairy industry and generate half of all power from solar panels and other renewable sources.

But those efforts will come up short, warn state regulators, without dramatic changes to how Californians live and travel.

The state has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

Californians will have to walk, bike and use mass transit much more frequently than they do now. By 2030, residents will have to travel by foot four times more frequently than they did in 2012, alongside a nine-fold increase in bicycling over the

same time, and a substantial boost in bus and rail ridership, climate officials say.

Read the whole story

Sports betting looking a lot more like Wall Street

By Shelly Hagan, Bloomberg

Your March Madness office pool is like the Charles Schwab of sports betting. Beyond those hastily chosen brackets, there's an entire cottage industry of sports betting that's increasingly resembling Wall Street.

In 2016, total sports wagers in Nevada were \$4.5 billion, according to the Nevada Gaming Control Board.

With that much at stake, gamblers are turning to more sophisticated tools that involve complex data analysis to achieve better odds, real-time wagering during games, fund managers who pool bets and risk management practices.

The result is something akin to day trading.

Read the whole story

LTUSD standing up for immigrant students

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Unified School District is doing everything it can to help families who feel threatened by the federal government's attack on immigrants.

"We are going to follow the law. We all know if a child is going to come to school afraid, they aren't going to learn," board member Larry Reilly said at the March 14 meeting. "We are going to take that (fear) away."

The law Reilly referenced is Plyler v. Doe, the 1984 U.S. Supreme Court decision that said public schools must enroll all eligible students regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. State and federal laws prohibit schools from disclosing student information to law enforcement without the consent of a parent or guardian.

The resolution that was unanimously approved Tuesday night does not change any policy. It essentially put an exclamation point on the matter.

To underline the district's beliefs even more, board President Barbara Bannar read the entire resolution into the record. Normally resolution titles are all that are verbalized.

The staff report said, "This resolution is intended to make clear to staff, students, and their families that all students have a right to attend school regardless of their immigration status, and aims to make families and students feel safe at school, so that they continue to come to school."

Cindy Martinez, principal of Bijou Community School, said, "The needs for families are very unique and very diverse."

She said some have received letters for possible removal from the United States. Then there are the attorneys who have called families saying they will help, which scares people more and could just be a scam. Rumors are flying; two weeks ago people were chattering about agents from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) coming to town.

People are confused and scared.

Martinez's goal is make Bijou be as comforting of a refuge as it can be. Working one-on-one with people has been the best, she said.

Bijou is the main focus because it has the largest concentration of Hispanic families who could be affected by any roundup by the feds.

The Family Resource Center has also been a big help to provide information to concerned residents. That agency is working in concert with the school district.

Calif.'s 'gig economy' could be hit by ACA repeal

By Sammy Caiola, Sacramento Bee

On a recent Friday at Old Soul Coffee Roasters in Sacramento, actor Ian Hopps hunched over his laptop as he edited a flier for an upcoming performance with the Davis Shakespeare Ensemble. He had just come off a shift from the East Sacramento restaurant where he waits tables and was killing time before his curtain call for "The Tempest" later that evening.

The 26-year-old lives paycheck to paycheck as a freelance actor/part-time server and doesn't get health benefits through either position, he said. After turning 26 and becoming ineligible for his parents' insurance, he enrolled in a Medi-Cal plan, made available only after the Affordable Care Act became the law of the land in 2010.

With private insurance out of his price range, Hopps said he was relieved to have an accessible option and not have to "bite the bullet" of taking on a full-time job for benefits. As Medi-Cal and other federal health programs face an uncertain future, part-time and self-employed workers such as Hopps wonder how they'll pursue their careers, and stay covered, if the law is repealed.

More than any other state, California embraced former President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, expanding eligibility for the low-income Medicaid program to childless adults and creating the Covered California exchange, which offers subsidized plans to people who can't afford private insurance. About 3.7 million people have enrolled in Medicaid since the health law was implemented, and 1.3 million now have plans through Covered California.

Read the whole story

How is Burning Man affecting the Black Rock Desert?

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Black Rock Desert is due for an environmental checkup – one that specifically determines whether Burning Man is having

an impact on the land – though it may be a while before the desert gets a diagnosis.

The most recent environmental assessment that addressed Burning Man's impact, conducted in 2011, set the parameters for how the event should be conducted for the past five years. The 343-page document, however, expired last year. It could be another two or more years before Burning Man and the Bureau of Land Management are able to complete another assessment.

The BLM, which oversees the Black Rock Desert and issues an annual multi-million dollar recreational permit for Burning Man, has been conducting assessments since 1991, Burning Man's second year in the desert. At the time, less than 300 people took part.

Read the whole story

Nevada dam in race against Sierra snowmelt

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The view from Lahontan dam looking west features a shimmering desert lake framed in the distance by the snowy Sierra Nevada.

The warm, late winter sun above and low roar of water surging through the dam below makes the quiet deck of the 102-year-old structure seem like a nice place for a hammock and an afternoon nap.

But there's no time to rest for Mark Solinsky or anyone else responsible for operating the dam and downstream infrastructure.

That's because they're in a race to prevent snowmelt from the glimmering Sierra Nevada from topping spillways at the rim of the desert reservoir.

Read the whole story

SLT Knights Inn-Whole Foods project resurrected

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe officials are expected to sign a deal Tuesday that would raze the dilapidated Knights Inn motel that fronts Highway 50, and replace it with a Whole Foods 365 and other retail establishments.

On Monday morning, Pradip Patel, who owns the Knights Inn, signed an agreement to sell his property to the city of South Lake Tahoe for \$5.935 million. The appraisal came in on March 10 for that amount.

The City Council will have a special meeting March 14 at 4pm to accept the deal.

The goal is to dramatically enhance this highly visible area of the city. By June the 110-room motel and other associated structures are expected to be demolished. Construction could begin in late summer on the new buildings, with people potentially able to shop at the grocery store by spring 2019.

The store will be at least 25,000-square-feet. The Austin, Texas-based chain has been gradually opening more of these smaller concept stores. "The stores will feature a simple, affordable and convenient shopping experience that offers the

high quality standards that Whole Foods Market pioneered," Whole Foods said in a press release.

The company entered into a lease agreement in November for the South Lake Tahoe store. Details have not been disclosed.



This is an example of the architecture Whole Foods uses. Rendering/Provided Funding details:

- \$4 million from Halferty to the city for the developable portions of the Knights Inn property
- \$1.1 million from Halferty to the city for the southwest corner
- \$800,000 from Placer County to the city for TAUs
- \$800,000 from CTC to the city to study the upper watershed for restoration
- \$3 million from CTC money is possible on March 16.
- \$750,000 for demolition to be paid from the city's reserves. This could be recovered by selling the remaining 42 TAUs and the

*residential unit which
together should net
\$650,000.*

Environmentally, it's possible thousands of pounds of sediment will no longer reach Lake Tahoe each year. The entire 850-acre Bijou Park Creek Watershed will be studied for potential restoration.

The California Environmental Quality Act document regarding the project should be released in a matter of weeks, with completion in the next few months.

Analysis of the upper watershed area will be phase 2 of the project. That should be completed in 18 to 24 months. Improvement projects will be phase 3.

The city will sell the developable rights from Knights Inn to Halferty Development of Southern California. This is the company that is in escrow to buy the southwest corner at Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard that is adjacent to the Knights Inn property.

The two properties will be linked by a bridge. They will share parking. Parking is also available at the garage on Ski Run.

The structure on the corner will be single-story with various storefronts-restaurants of about 5,000-square-feet in size.

The city will retain what is described as a mote-like section where the environmental improvements are planned. A creek used to run in this area, but was paved over years ago. The plan is to bring it to the surface again.

All of this water that runs through the property is why the motel would flood each year. About 20 percent of the rooms have been damaged this winter.

This project has been on the books for years. It had fallen

off the tracks for various reasons, but now all the parties are on board. Besides Patel and the city, this includes the California Tahoe Conservancy and Placer County.

Patel did not return a phone call.



The area in green represents the property the city is buying from Pradip Patel, while the gold is the “southwest corner” at Ski Run and Highway 50. Map/South Lake Tahoe

CTC is involved because it could be a major funding partner, plus it has neighboring properties that would be impacted by the environmental improvements. That state agency’s board meets Thursday. Money could be allocated then; which city officials will be advocating for. If funding is not forthcoming, some of these environmental improvements may not be realized.

Patrick Wright, CTC executive director, told *Lake Tahoe News* he would have answers to questions at the March 16 meeting.

Placer County at a meeting in April is expected to OK the purchase the 64 tourist accommodation units for \$800,000.

Placer needs these TAUs for a lodging property in its jurisdiction.

“This project should demonstrate why it is so difficult to redevelop projects that both benefit the environment and the economy,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Regulations are so complex that it has taken government four years to solve its own issues.”

She said it is near impossible for developers to navigate their way through the maze of regulations in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This is why few choose to do business here. Kerry praised Halferty for staying in the game this long.

The roller coaster ride this project has been on clearly proves the system is broken even though in the end the paperwork will be signed for the project to be developed.

March Madness raises sports betting issues

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

March Madness is upon us, another time of the year when people who almost never set foot inside a race and sports book become sports experts and serious gamblers.

It was only a month ago that twice-a-year bettors showed their expertise on Super Bowl Sunday.

How significant is March Madness? It's big enough that both proponents and opponents of gambling point to it as an important symbol of their respective causes.

Wet winter creates issues at toxic mine site

By Kathryn Reed

Crews are diligently working at the Leviathan Mine superfund site in Alpine County to ensure contaminants don't reach nearby waterways.

"We are doing our best to prevent a discharge, but it is touch and go," said Scott Ferguson who is in charge of overseeing the regulatory and compliance aspects of the site. Last week he gave an update to the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board directors about what is going on with this project.

The ice and slush on the ponds make work difficult. Several feet of snow still remain. Just accessing the area is problematic, let alone working in those conditions to treat the acid mine drainage. The work is labor intensive.

This is only the fourth year for spring treatment operations at the mine site. The other years were in 2005, 2006 and 2011. And this year was unique in that the work started a month sooner than those three years because the abundance of rain and snow this winter.

The threat is that all of the moisture and the spring runoff could lead to toxins leaving the immediate area and polluting waterways downstream. Leviathan Creek, Bryant Creek and the East Fork Carson River are all nearby. The mine is five miles east of Markleeville and six miles west of Topaz Lake.

The last time there was a discharge was in 2006.

Leviathan has not been an operating mine since the 1960s. The previous 100 years it was a sulfur mine. In 2000 it was deemed a superfund site. Various lawsuits, with the last **settlement agreement** coming in 2015, has Lahontan and ARCO working together to find a final resolution for cleaning up the site. This whole process, though, will take decades and may never be completely resolved.

Nonetheless, the goal for now is to treat as much of the discharge as possible.

Removed from the site since 1999 have been:

- 405,000 pounds of aluminum
- 5,500 pounds arsenic
- 590,000 pounds iron
- 6,400 pounds nickel.

In 2016, 163 tons of sludge were trucked to Beatty, Nev., and 5.7 million gallons of acid mine discharge were treated.