One final day on the slopes with my dad



The view on Dec. 25 from the top of Happiness Is at Kirkwood. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

KIRKWOOD – It had been a number of years since I spent Christmas with my dad. But that's just what I did yesterday.

Spending a holiday with a parent isn't all that remarkable. Only in this case my dad died in April 2010.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort was always my dad's favorite ski resort. As a kid I remember day trips to the mountain from our home in the Bay Area. The back bowl was his favorite. The wide-open expanse, surrounded in wilderness. He was happy to take lap after lap on the groomers, mostly blues, but he didn't shy away from the blacks.



Don Reed in 1982.

My parents learned to ski when they were in their 40s. Being the youngest of four kids, I benefited the most from this new found sport by being taken on wonderful ski vacations that my two oldest sisters never experienced.

I grew up skiing at Northstar and Squaw. For years every February we rented a house right on the slopes of Squaw with two other families. Those are some of my most cherished childhood memories.

My dad’s last day on skis is still etched into my memory, but in a sad way. It was me, dad and my sister, Pam, at Sierra-at-Tahoe. Dad was having a hard time turning. He couldn’t tell his feet what to do. He kept falling.

Neuropathy won that day. This was one of the lingering effects of chemotherapy. He survived colon cancer, but not unscathed.

Dad had to be taken down in a toboggan by ski patrol.

My dad was a strong, prideful man. To see him in this weakened state was hard. I can only imagine what it did to his pride. It was good Pam was there; dad listened to her. And as a nurse practitioner she could explain to the ski patrol what was going on.

I took some of my dad’s ashes with me to Kirkwood on Sunday. We rode a couple lifts together. He was protected in my inside jacket pocket. We skied a run together off the Sunrise lift.

Then it was time to say goodbye again. A little part of him is at the top of the Happiness Is run.

It was one of the best days I ever had skiing with my dad. And now my last day of skiing with him, while still sad, is mostly happy in knowing that his ashes are part of the mountain that brought so much joy to him while he was alive.

Reid leaves Senate with few regrets

By Gary Martin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON — Harry Reid didn't start the partisan polarization that has stymied Congress in recent years. But he played a central role in sharpening the tone of discourse on Capitol Hill, dividing lawmakers and eroding the collegiality that once was a hallmark of the U.S. Senate.

In that atmosphere, Reid is stepping down from leadership and leaving the chamber with few regrets — and an armful of legislative victories from three decades of serving the Democratic caucus and his home state of Nevada.

His legacy includes the Affordable Care Act, a major Senate rule change on filibusters and success in blocking nuclear waste shipments to Yucca Mountain — to name just a few accomplishments.

At age 77, Reid remains irascible, unrepentant but humbled.

Read the whole story

Ranking the world’s toughest outdoor sports

By Dan Roe, Outside

You have no idea how tough [insert sport] is.

Whether we say it out loud or just repeat it to ourselves, many of us share this sentiment. As American novelist Mary McCarthy once said, “We are the hero of our own story.”

That said, some activities are legitimately harder than others, and in the realm of outdoor sports, a few are in a league of their own. Take rock climbing, for instance, which requires explosive upper-body strength, problem solving, and crux-time focus. Downhill mountain bikers regularly risk shattered bones, while open-water swimmers push themselves to the limit in unforgiving conditions. Nordic skiers force their bodies deep into oxygen debt, and ultrarunners—well, you get the idea.

But how can we quantify which one is actually the toughest? Here’s how: we chose five competitive sports that we feel are tough to learn, can be dangerous to perform, and require a high degree of skill and fitness.

Read the whole story

SLT warm room providing more than shelter

By Kathryn Reed

Homelessness has many faces, many circumstances, many reasons. It has only one definition – having no place to live.

It's expected to be in the single digits at 7:30am on Christmas Day in South Lake Tahoe. That's the hour dozens of homeless people will be turned out onto the street until the warm room reopens tonight at 7.

No one grows up with the goal of living on the streets.

A few of the people seeking aid from the warm room have jobs. They just can't pull together the necessary first and last month's rent, plus deposit. The scarcity of rental housing throughout the basin doesn't help.

Some no longer have the capacity to work. Mental and physical issues plague this population.



Steven Gurek is thankful to have the warm room for shelter. Photo/Kathryn Reed

For others like Steven Wayne Gurek, he is biding his time until after the first of January when his next Social Security check arrives and the price of a flight to Hawaii drops. The 62-year-old wants to return to the islands where he has family.

“Right now the warming room is doing me well,” he said last week while sitting at a bus stop a few feet from the shelter. (In the summer he camps near Fallen Leaf Lake.) The sun was shining and he was taking it all in. His next stop was Christmas Cheer to get some food.

Gurek said he used to work for Camp Richardson and Sierra-at-Tahoe doing maintenance. He doesn’t explain what keeps him from working now. His bright blue eyes are those of a man with good memories. His rough, dark skin, though, is weathered, telling a different story.

This is the second year the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless has operated a warm room. And like last year, the building is on a seasonal lease. The nonprofit would welcome a more permanent facility, even if it still operated seasonally.

In winter 2015-16, the room was open 102 nights, with an average of 18 guests per night. In that time 107 people took shelter for a cumulative 1,820 bed nights.

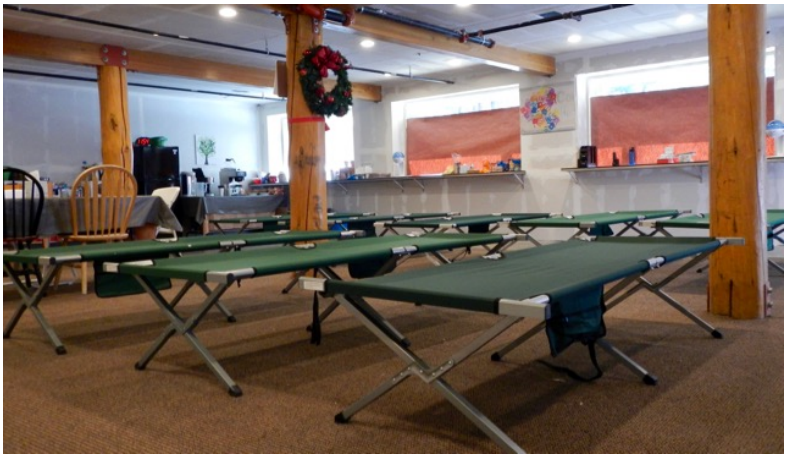
The 30 cots are available on a first come, first serve basis. In the 10 days the shelter has been open this season people have already had to be turned away.

Some of the same people from last year have shown up this year. There are also new faces.

The men and women sleep in separate areas. Mostly it’s men in their 40s and 50s; the women tend to be in their late 20s through 40s. One night three adult women from the same family stayed at the warm room.

Families, though, are not permitted. If applicable, they may be entitled to a voucher for a week’s stay in a local hotel. No one under 17 may stay at the warm room. No pets, either.

Everyone gets a Red Cross cot and blanket. Personal belongings are stored in a locked area. Clothing is available, as are travel size toiletries.



The eight cots for women are in what is also the kitchen area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Many came in soaked when it was raining so hard earlier this month. Some changed into donated clothing. The boot warmers were put into action. This tool is also used before they leave in the morning – a boost of warmth.

In the kitchen area are some basic foods like Cup of Noodles, trail mix, oatmeal, coffee and tea.

This is truly communal living. It's dry and warm. But then there's the snoring, people talking in their sleep, tossing and turning, or getting up to use one of the two bathrooms. Lights are off at 10pm. Lights are on at 6am. There is no TV. No shower. (Vouchers to use the city's recreation center are available and may be redeemed when no children are present.) Games are available, with Scrabble, Chess and Yahtzee the poplar ones. Some people read. Others come in and immediately go to sleep.

There is nothing about the warm room that feels like home. It's not supposed to. It really is what it says it is – a warm room.

"We are stricter this year on rules," Nicole Zaborsky, THC board member, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Last year we allowed smoke breaks that were free flowing. Now there is one, which is monitored."



Guests on Christmas Eve were waiting more than 30 minutes for the warm room to open. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Still, it's not just a free place to sleep out of the elements that these men and women receive. Last season 32 social work appointments were scheduled for guests, along with 28 case management follow-up appointments.

This help last year led to five people finding stable housing. One person was even reunited with their mom. Another handful had found a place to live but were not able to keep it.

"Although the warm room will technically close at 7:30am, most mornings we will really be open until 8:30am to offer enrichment programming for our guests," Scott Weavil with the Homeless Coalition told *Lake Tahoe News.* "We plan to have two drug and alcohol groups a week, one Narcotics Anonymous group, one Alcoholics Anonymous group, one litter cleanup, as well as yoga and other enrichment activities. So, most days, services will be offered at the location until 8:30am. The police department suggested that we remain open later, and the stars aligned for us to make that possible."

Only Kindness, a group in Placerville, will be sending people to the warm room starting in January. They can help with securing free cell phones, work on more stable housing and coordinate with county services.

It takes a small army to make the warm room function. One

hundred volunteers were trained last year; they put in 1,600 hours. Another 88 people have been trained this year, with an additional training planned for Jan. 9.

A variety of jobs are available, but the most important one is listening to the guests without judgment.

The guests also have jobs – from helping with cleaning to making the coffee. They understand the efforts being made to make their lives a little more comfortable. Thank yous and gratitude are the norm. They are not taking this warm room for granted. To them, it's a present they get to "unwrap" every night.

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Notes:

· Address – 2179 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

· More info is available **online**.

· The Jan. 9 training is from 7-8:30pm at Unity at the Lake. RSVP **online**.

Truckers rely on pusher to get over Donner Summit

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

With drought-defying snowstorms romping through the Sierra on a weekly basis, truckers once again are discovering how tough Interstate 80's Donner Pass can be.

Commercial trucks carrying 80,000-pound loads are losing

traction in the snow, officials say, even with tire chains on, getting stuck in heavy summit traffic, blocking lanes and threatening to close the highway.

That, officials say, is where the pusher truck comes in.

Read the whole story

Plan to unload federal land in Nev. will return

By Benjamin Stillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Backers of a plan to force the federal government to cede control of millions of acres of land in Nevada are refreshing their proposal.

And they're starting with an effort to convince a skeptical public it's possible to take nearly 7.3 million acres from the Bureau of Land Management without disrupting hunting, off-highway riding or sticking Nevada taxpayers with bigger bills for fighting massive rangeland wildfires.

The plan has a better shot at survival if it manages to make it to the desk of incoming Republican President Donald Trump than it would have under a Democratic president.

Read the whole story

Reveling in the cosmos on a dark winter night



Tony Berendsen, center, leads a star tour at Northstar on Dec. 21. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Traipsing through the snow was otherworldly in a way that wasn't expected.

It became a star tour that required a bit of an imagination. Such are the hazards when Mother Nature decides to the mar the night sky with clouds.

But along the way the clouds parted just long enough for Tony Berendsen to point out the star Capella, which was 42 light years from where we were standing. It is actually four stars within the constellation Auriga.

“Constellations are beautiful. They are humanity in space,” Berendsen said.

His passion shines through as he imparts nuggets of knowledge about the universe. Each stop was punctuated by the recital of one of his poems that was inspired by the cosmos. Berendsen was definitely able to stir the imagination enough to get people to start thinking about looking up more when it is dark and to wonder about what else is out there and what it will be like one day on Earth when our sun (which is a star) burns out

Berendsen is an award-winning amateur astronomer residing in Reno who writes the Star Guide astronomy articles for *Lake Tahoe News*. He is president of the Northern Nevada Science Coalition and a past president of the Astronomical Society of Nevada.



Snowshoeing through the dark woods of Northstar to learn about the stars. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

On the winter solstice on Wednesday he led a group of novice star gazers into the woods from the Nordic center at Northstar and finished at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe. Normally the night wraps up with guests being able to view the myriad stars and planets through high-powered telescopes lined up at the Ritz. The clouds were not cooperating.

Instead of being able to be led by Sirius, which is the brightest star this time of year, headlamps were our beacon.

This is the eighth year Berendsen has put on guided the tours at the Truckee resorts, though he has been doing star tours for 15 years. He also guides summer programs.

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Notes:

· Future stargazing snowshoe tours will be on Dec. 28, Jan. 14 and Feb.11.

· Tours are approximately 2-2½ hours.

· Cost is $63 for ages 13 and older, and $45 for ages 10-12. Snowshoe rentals are available for $21 per person.

· Make reservations **online**.

· For information, go **online**.

Tribal liaison is a bridge to the USFS



Grace Newell has been a bridge between the U.S. Forest Service and local Indian tribes. Photo/Jeremy Spoon

By Erica Hupp

When asked to describe her job, Grace Newell said with pride, “I serve as a bridge between the tribes and the U.S. Forest Service. And it’s a two-way bridge; that’s very important.”

Newell is the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, stationed at the supervisor’s office in Sparks. She goes on to explain that she communicates the agency’s mission to the Nevada tribes and relates their perspective to the Forest’s leaders.

As a Paiute Shoshone tribal member, Newell grew up on Lone Pine Reservation in the Eastern Sierra. She now lives in Truckee. Though certainly not required for the job, she said that her heritage has helped her establish positive working relationships.

“It’s a welcome change for the tribes. They feel comfortable having a fellow Native American as their liaison,” said

Newell. “However, it can also be awkward at times. I work for the agency, not vice versa.”

Her career began with an academic scholarship to Dartmouth College, where she studied history. After graduation in 1978, she continued working for the university as the director of its Native American Program. She recruited academic Native American students from across the Western United States.

After her father passed away in 1983, Newell returned home to Lone Pine to be with her family. She took a summer job with the Sequoia National Forest as a wildland firefighter on the Horseshoe Meadow Hotshots, the first fire crew composed primarily of tribal members. She was one of only two women in the group.

“At that time, there were very few women in wildland firefighting,” Newell said. “So I was breaking through barriers.”

That summer job turned into a lifelong career. “I fell in love with the Forest Service and never left,” she said.

For many years she served in a variety of wildland fire positions in California and Nevada, including helitack crew, fire engine operator, rappel crew, hand crew captain, fuels specialist, and fire management officer.

“Early in my career I was advised to get a wide range of experience in order to move up in the agency,” said Newell.

Nearing the mandatory firefighter retirement age of 57, Grace decided to take on a new role so that she could keep working. “Fifty-seven just seemed too young to retire,” she said. So in 2012 she started to work in Sparks as the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Newell said her most memorable experience from her current role has been representing tribal perspectives during the

development of bi-state sage-grouse management policies.

“The tribal voice really needed to be heard,” she said. The policies were designed to manage sage-grouse habitat, where pinyon trees had encroached upon sagebrush ecosystems, rendering them uninhabitable for the birds. However, the tribes viewed the issue differently.

“To them, the pinyon represents the tree of life,” said Newell. “It’s a food source as well as a cultural center for family gatherings. To the tribes, the tree goes where it needs to. There’s no such thing as encroachment.”

Newell’s efforts helped managers reach a compromise to restore the sage-grouse’s habitat while still respecting tribal views and needs.

Now 61, Grace said she is finally ready to retire and looks back on her career with satisfaction. “I feel proud of the work I’ve done,” she said. “I think I’ve played a role in helping the Forest Service, the land, and the tribes.”

Erica Hupp works for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Calif. forests failing to regrow after intense wildfires

By Bob Berwyn, Inside Climate News

There are warning signs that some forests in the Western U.S. may have a hard time recovering from the large and intense wildfires that have become more common as the climate warms.

After studying 14 burned areas across 10 national forests in California, scientists from UC Davis and the U.S. Forest Service said recent fires have killed so many mature, seed-producing trees across such large areas that the forests can't re-seed themselves. And because of increasingly warm temperatures, burned areas are quickly overgrown by shrubs, which can prevent trees from taking root.

Historically, severe fires were uncommon in the forests covered by the study, largely made up of yellow pines and mixed conifers, but extended drought and heatwaves have exacerbated fire conditions across the West. The changing climate is also seen as a factor in recent wildfires in the Southeast, which is also mired in drought.

Read the whole story

STHS grads tapping into craft beer craze

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe planners this month approved the change in operation permit as well as issued the building permit for the old Ace Hardware store near the Y to be turned into a brewery.

"The proposal includes a mill and grain storage room, two ADA accessible restrooms, office space, a cold box, multiple brewing storage tanks, bar and table seating, as well as an outdoor patio/seating area," Hilary Roverude, deputy director of Development Services, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Chris and Nicole Smith, who graduated from South Tahoe High

School in 2006, moved back to the area about a year ago with designs to open a brewery. They expect the doors to South Lake Brewing Company to open in February, maybe March.



The old Ace store is being gutted and transformed into a brewery. Photo/Provided

A few things that will set them apart from the other breweries in the area include having the most square-feet (6,000) and largest capacity (10-barrel brewhouse).

Each barrel is the equivalent of 31 gallons of beer. A barrel is two kegs. Two batches of beer are needed to fill their fermenters, which is 40 kegs worth of beer.

“My favorite beers to brew are hoppy ales that are not too bitter,” Chris Smith told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We like to do easy drinking English ales and lagers in the German style.”

They plan to open with six taps, but have the ability to grow to 16. They are leaving room in the building if more tanks need to be added. The name so far are Angora IPA, Marlette Blonde, Barrett Brown and Emigrant Saison.

Food will be secondary to the beer. Packaged snacks will be for sale. However, the brewery will allow outside food to be

brought in. The building has room to add a kitchen down the road if that seems appropriate.

Chris Smith is responsible for the beers, Nicole Smith handles the finances and the front of the house.

Right now the interior is being transformed into the brewery. The building on Lake Tahoe Boulevard has sat empty since Ace left in January 2011.

“We wanted to be on the west side of town. We didn’t want to go any farther than Ski Run,” said Smith, who grew up in Meyers. The goal is to add a bit of community feel to the Y area; to give people another reason be on that side of town.

Once the brewery has been operating for a bit the plan is to bottle the beer to sell and to have different ones available at other restaurants. Growlers will be the first way for people to take home South Lake Brewing Company beers. Membership is already possible in the Bär Society – the growler club – via the brewery’s **website**. (Bär is German for bear.)

The couple also plans to work closely with the community in terms of giving back via hosting fundraisers or bringing beer to an event.