EDC resident launches robo calls for roads



El Dorado County has warnings on View Circle on the South Shore because the roads are so bad. Photo/Susan Wood

By Kathryn Reed

Tony Russo is prepared to unleash another round of robo calls targeting El Dorado County supervisors if they don't start funding roads.

"If the supervisors address the road fund and maintenance issues, I won't do it again. If they don't, I will," the El Dorado Hills resident told *Lake Tahoe News.*

For one day calls were placed to the supervisors' districts telling residents what a horrible job the electeds are doing and that it's time the public made their concerns known.

Russo enlisted the help of Californians Against Wasteful Spending to place the calls. They cost about 5 cents each.

His road on the West Slope has not been touched since he moved

there in 1994.

“When it rains, water pours out of the manholes,” Russo said.

Roads throughout the county are in bad shape. With Tahoe finally having a winter, the freeze-thaw cycle and beating from snowplows has created potholes that can lead to the need for vehicles to be realigned.

Supervisor Sue Novasel at a Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe meeting on April 13 briefly touched on the subject. She told the group the robo calls mainly had to do with another supervisor.

The truth is at the Feb. 23 board meeting **she voted against** using General Fund money for roads even though this has been the norm for years. The chief administrative officer recommended this course of action even though he admitted at the meeting to not having read the budget.

On the flip side, Novasel told her Soroptimist sisters that taking money out of the General Fund is being looked at.

At the April 26 board meeting the supervisors are scheduled to get an update on items that likely won’t be funded for the next fiscal year. Roads are expected to be on the list because that is how CAO Larry Combs wants things and the supervisors follow his recommendations instead of being the ones to set policy like they were elected to do.

Hiking changes our brains for

the better

By Meredith Carey, Conde Nast Traveler

Life isn’t a walk in the park, but according to a handful of recent studies, hiking may make it at least a little easier.

We’ve all experienced how time outdoors can clear your mind and ease stress, but there’s new evidence that taking a hike can do much more: it can change our brains. From lessening negativity to boosting creativity, hiking in fresh air actually boosts brain power and can help certain parts of the brain grow.

The study found that even though the technology helped get backpackers from point A to point B, it actually was so distracting that it lowered their cognitive function.

Read the whole story

Spreading hope for those with mental illness

Publisher’s note: ***This is one of several stories about mental health issues in the Lake Tahoe Basin that will be running through October.***

By Kathryn Reed

Recovery is possible. That is the overriding message from parents of a mentally ill son.

Jeanne Nelson cried in the shower every day for a year

grieving for the loss of the life her son could have had, she struggled with guilt for not knowing sooner and therefore not getting him help sooner.



"I wonder if he had gotten help sooner, if his cognition would be higher," she said.

Nelson and her husband, Alan, are the NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness – representatives on the South Shore.

Their son is doing fine; lives on his own, has a job. He's on medication, with long lasting injectables his solution. It's just not the life he had dreamed about. Adjusting expectations – that's another thing everyone in the family has had to do.

The couple spoke April 13 at Temple Bat Yam in South Lake Tahoe about what they have learned and now what they have to offer others. There was a time when they didn't believe their son had any hope for a normal life. That is why they are quick to share that things can get better – for everyone.

NAMI started in 1979 in New York with two moms with grown children who had mental issues. The grass-roots movement has expanded to every state.

One of the big issues with any mental condition is the stigma. NAMI is helping to break down those barriers. The hope is one day mental issues will be talked about the same way physical conditions are. After all, the brain is an organ just like the heart and no one winces at discussing heart issues.

"Telling someone to snap out of it is like telling someone who is deaf to listen harder," Jeanne Nelson said.

Considering 20 percent of the population is living with a mental health condition, the topic is relevant. One problem, though, according to Jeanne Nelson, is that on average the delay in getting treatment is eight to 10 years after symptoms first arise.

Signs to look for include excessive worrying or fear, mood swings, a high-degree of sadness, confused thinking, avoiding social interaction, cutting and change in sleep patterns.

Types of brain disorders include depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders.

It's also good to know one's family history because mental illness can be hereditary.



Jeanne Nelson on April 13 talks about mental illness. Photo/LTN

Even after a diagnosis it can still be difficult to get help. Psychiatrists are in short supply throughout the country. In-patient treatment programs – especially in rural areas like Lake Tahoe – don't exist.

Many who are in jail are there with some sort of mental illness. Help for them varies from facility to facility. Substance abuse and mental health often go hand-in-hand.

Jeanne Nelson said there is a tremendous difference between

what happens in California and Nevada.

“There’s less oversight in Nevada. It has the worst mental health care in the nation,” she said.

The *Reno Gazette-Journal* this year exposed some of the squalid conditions of clients in Northern Nevada that has gotten the state’s attention.

The couple said it’s important for the advocates of those with mental issues to be vocal, file grievances when necessary and document everything. And while health care officials cannot share information about a patient who is 18 or older without that person’s permission, it is perfectly fine to provide doctors with insight about the patient that might help with a diagnosis or care.

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Notes:

· NAMI support group meetings are the second Tuesday of the month from 6-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library.

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4 Tahoe bear cubs get human help



These Stateline cubs will be cared for in Reno before being returned to the wild.
Photo/Nevada Department of Wildlife

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Four bear cubs orphaned near Stateline will have a chance to grow up near Reno, at least until next winter.

That’s according to the Nevada Department of Wildlife which rescued the cubs last week after discovering their mother died, apparently of natural causes.

The cubs had been living under a walkway since their birth in January, according to a homeowner who reported the family of bears on her property.

Read the whole story

Tahoe scrap wood transformed into ukuleles



Friends are turning old wood into much sought after musical instruments. Photo/TyDe Music

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Devin Price and Tyler Joersz craft a ukulele, they don’t see it as just making an instrument.

They see it as breathing life back into nature.

On a warm spring morning in their company studio, they admire one of the ukuleles in the works. The front of it is made from wood collected from a weathered Lake Tahoe pier. The back, from a friend’s cabin. The instrument bears signs of its past life, a pinch of lichen embedded in the wood, a faint bird poop stain and a rusty nail hole.

Price, 34, and Joersz, 31, are the co-founders of TyDe Music,

a custom ukulele company that creates ukuleles inspired by the natural surroundings of their home base in Kings Beach.

Read the whole story

Passport – a trip through EDC wine country



Vineyards in El Dorado County are coming alive. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – Wine has often been described as its own food

group, and yet, most people will agree that all wine tastes better with food.

This theory was put to the test last weekend during the annual El Dorado County Passport event. (The two-weekend shindig continues this Saturday and Sunday.)

“It’s like the Super Bowl of wine weekends,” Tiya Grabowski told *Lake Tahoe News*. The Citrus Heights woman has been going to Passport for about 20 years.

For her friend Shelly Celio of Georgetown it was the food pairings that impressed her this year. A fun time with friends, while enjoying good wine close to home keeps her coming back.



El Dorado County is celebrating the 25th anniversary of Passport. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Now in its 25th year, Passport has gone through various iterations. There was a time about 10 years when it was more of a crazy party, with buses and limos clogging the parking lots, people seeming to be more interested in freebies and getting drunk than experiencing a tasting. It was a bit of a cultish type event, with a waiting list. The recession changed that.

The deals on wine fluctuate from year-to-year, as well as winery-to-winery. But a definite trend this year is on the

food and wine. Some wineries have a few edibles to go with the flight of wines, while others have individual bites for specific wines.



Busby uses Chardonnay in its mac and cheese. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Passport started as a way for wineries to unload excess bottles before the next vintage was released. El Dorado was one of the first regions to put on such an event. In the beginning it was conducted earlier in the year as a way to get people to come to the region in the off-season. Snow, even in the foothills, started to keep people away so the dates kept being pushed back to where now it's the second and third weekends of April.

John MacCready of Sierra Vista is one of the few winemakers who has participated in Passport every year. This Placerville winery is the second oldest in the county, with the first grapes planted in 1974. (Boeger is the oldest, having started in 1972.)

"For us, it's a money-maker," MacCready told *Lake Tahoe News*.

MacCready was a pioneer when it came to planting Rhone varietals in the region. Since then many wineries have followed suit.

He’s noticed less of a party atmosphere through the years, especially with people coming with a designated driver.



John MacCready of Sierra Vista pours a rare Cabernet release. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Sierra Vista hired Allez out of Diamond Springs to cater the event. The creamy wild mushroom sauté was outstanding. It paired nicely with the 2013 Roussanne. While the wild boar Bourgogne on mashed root vegetables was a hit, especially in conjunction with the 2012 Syrah, the mushrooms on the mash was also delectable. (The boar came from Nevada.)

“The food has been just as much of an experience as the wine,” Jeanne Garman of Sacramento said while sampling the fare at Sierra Vista. This was her first Passport.

At Narrow Gate Vineyards, owner Teena Hildebrand noticed more people from the Bay Area and Sacramento were participating in Passport than locals.

This is the Placerville winery’s 10th year to be part of the

event. Being able to introduce people to wine, what it's all about and the intricacies of it are what appeals to her. Plus, Passport is great exposure for Narrow Gate.

She makes all the food to pair with the wine that her winemaker husband, Frank, produces. The ginger garlic stir fry was good with the Chardonnay, but even better with the Viognier. The house smoked pork Panini went well with the Cabernet and Syrah. A veggie Panini is also available, and paired well with the bold reds.



More than 2,000 acres in El Dorado County are planted with wine grapes. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Elliot Graham of Busby Cellars was putting a different twist on food and wine pairings as he poured some Chardonnay into the mac and cheese he was serving to guests.

This is the 10th year he and his wife, Sherrie, have

participated in Passport. He admits there was a time when the event was overwhelming. Participants coming in smaller batches is better for a winery their size.

In the past they paired individual varietals with specific food, now it's a variety of food to go with their array of wines.

Carrie Bendick with Holly's Hill told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It's nice to do something as a group. It helps distinguish the region, which people are still discovering."

The El Dorado Winery Association puts on Passport. This year 24 of its more than 30 member wineries are participating. In all, El Dorado County has about 70 wineries.

One thing that distinguishes this area is the elevation – with some vines planted at 3,500 feet. The county is home to more than 50 varietals. While Zinfandel has always been a stalwart favorite, Barbera has created quite a following in the last few years.

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Notes:

· For more information about Passport or to buy tickets for this weekend, go **online**.

Murillo finalist for SoCal college presidency job

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College President Kindred Murillo is a finalist for the presidency job at Santa Barbara City College.

The announcement came Thursday during the Southern California college's board meeting.



Kindred Murillo

"Santa Barbara has a lot of the same characteristics as Lake Tahoe Community College. There is a strong sense of academic excellence, which is what I like," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In January she announced she would be leaving the South Lake Tahoe college some time between June 2016 and February 2017. The 61-year-old has been at the helm of LTCC since July 2011.

She is one of five finalists for the Santa Barbara position. Board interviews are later this month.

Santa Barbara has 15,000 full time equivalent students, while LTCC has 1,800.

If Murillo were to get the job, she would be taking over for Lori Gaskin who is retiring after having that job for four years. Gaskin spent 17 years at LTCC as a dean of Instruction, then the vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services.

Murillo is looking at other jobs as well.

"I think the issue for me is I'm kind of picky where I work. I

like to be in a place that is a good fit," Murillo said. "The ones I've applied for are good for my skill set."

She did not disclose where else she has sent her resume.

As for leaving LTCC, she said it is a grieving process. Health reasons necessitate she moves out of Tahoe.

Snow gives Vail Resorts reason to celebrate



Northstar, with more than 400 inches of snow this season, has been busy. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Lake Tahoe News

Vail Resorts today said its ski mountain division is doing

much better than a year ago.

The figures released April 14 from the Broomfield, Colo.-based company do not include the urban ski areas of Afton Alps, Mt. Brighton and Wilmot Mountain.

Results released Thursday:

· Season-to-date total lift ticket revenue is up 19.3 percent compared to the prior year season-to-date period.

· Season-to-date ancillary spending increased compared to the prior year, with dining revenue up 16 percent, ski school revenue 10.1 percent, and U.S. resort store locations 11.5 percent.

· Season-to-date total skier visits increased 13.4 percent compared to the prior year season-to-date period.

CEO Rob Katz in a statement said, “Our momentum throughout the year continued across each of our Western geographies with strong visitation from destination and local guests throughout the spring. The season’s results highlight the experience we provide guests at each of our resorts due to the engagement of our employees and the investments we have made at each of the mountains and the success of our more sophisticated marketing efforts to drive season pass sales and overall destination visitation.”

He credited the stronger than expected results for March 7-April 10 to conditions being good in Tahoe and Colorado. Ample snow has fallen this season in the Lake Tahoe area, where Vail owns Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood. This is a huge change from the previous three winters.

The abundance of snow is also helping spur people to buy 2016-17 season passes.

“To date, we have seen very strong overall results with significant continued growth on top of the record results we

saw last spring and good momentum across all of our critical geographies," Katz said of pass sales for next season.

Calif. agencies eager to rebuild Kings Beach pier



Rebuilding Kings Beach pier would ideally ensure it could be used by boaters even during a drought. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Providing more recreation access is the overriding reason to improve and extend the pier at Kings Beach, according to the landowners.

While State Parks and California Tahoe Conservancy are about to embark on the environmental process for this project, tied into it is creating an updated general plan for the Kings Beach State Recreation Area.

This 14-acre swath of lakefront last had a general plan written in 1980. That document only covers 7 acres, was 12

pages, with 1½ pages devoted to the environmental impact report. Today's EIRs are usually at least an inch thick.

The general plan will include policies for the site. The event center is not part of the discussion other than how parking affects it. The building is owned by North Tahoe Public Utility District, however parking is on state property.

Where the pier will be rebuilt is still to be determined. Four main issues to be looked at in the environmental documents include fish habitat, scenic impacts, littoral processes and safety.

The depth and length of the pier will be dependent on where it is located and the orientation.

The plan is to have a portion be fixed on single pilings that will be attached to a floating pier. Three action alternatives are expected to be studied in the EIR/EIS that Ascent Environmental will put together.

State reps gave a presentation April 13 to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Advisory Planning Commission. The TRPA will have a say in the environmental impact statement and pier project, but not the general plan.

Lighting was one concern. The answer: only navigational lights will be on the pier.

Parking was another issue that was broached. State Parks technically closes the parking area at sunset. However, because this is used more like a community park, that policy may change.

The existing boat ramp has not been operational for years, mostly because of the water level. It's future is also being considered.

Sue Rae Irelan with the CTC pointed out how the last time the ramp was open the town of Kings Beach looked much different.

Boat trailers were parked on Highway 28. Now the highway has been improved, roundabouts added and trailer parking wouldn't fit in.

Dredging was brought up. And while it's possible to do so, the amount of sand that moves in and out of this section of the lake was called "dynamic" and therefore would require continual dredging.

One APC member asked about water transit. This would require a special use permit by State Parks and additional environmental review, along with more land side issues addressed.

"It would be a huge mistake to go through the process without considering a water transit option," Steve Teshara, APC board chairman, said. As a planning consultant for the Truckee North Tahoe Transportation Management Association, he was instrumental in crafting a letter to the state agencies about water borne transit – even if it's a shuttle and not the proposed lakewide ferry.

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Notes:

· The deadline to comment on the notice of preparation is April 15.

· More information is available **online**.

· The draft environmental documents should be released in early 2017, with the final completed in summer 2017.

Water woes divide Calif. into haves, have nots

By Tori Richards, U.S. News & World Report

LOS ANGELES – People have long predicted that California could eventually collapse into the ocean following a mega earthquake. Now, an eerily similar true-life scenario is playing out – but it's thanks to the weather.

The Gold Rush State has sunk more than 45 feet since 1935 – something the U.S. government calls the "largest human alteration of the earth's surface." But earthquakes aren't the cause. It's happening because of excessive groundwater mining brought on by drought, and geologists say all the rain in the world won't reverse cave-ins of dirt and rock in underground aquifers.

California is entering its fifth year of drought, with the past two years being the warmest on record. Several recent storms have dumped much needed water, but it's barely made a dent. It will take several years of rain to bring the state out of its crisis mode regardless of how many spring showers occur. If the state gets the intense rain storms that Californians pray for, they will produce floods as the water has nowhere to go. But if the drought continues, things will just get worse.

Read the whole story