Calif. braces for large primary turnout

By Phil Willon, Los Angeles Times

California elections officials are anticipating a surge in voter turnout for the June 7 presidential primary election.

More than 600,000 Californians have registered to vote online or updated their registration in just the last three months, and county election agencies may be overwhelmed by the volume of people who show up, Secretary of State Alex Padilla warned Gov. Jerry Brown.

Voter registration application cards are in high demand statewide, he wrote in a letter Monday to the governor. Padilla also wrote that "one campaign" alone recently requested 200,000 registration forms to sign up voters, although he did not specify which candidate's campaign made it.

Read the whole story

The next step in California's drought

By Scott Smith, AP

Some residents of drought-stricken California who let their lawns turn brown and took shorter showers could soon get some relief, while others may continue to feel the pain. In the coming months, state officials will undertake a monumental

task of rewriting conservation orders for a fifth year of drought.

The challenge for state regulators will be treating millions of residents fairly, unlike the El Nino storms that soaked Northern California with considerably more rain and snow this winter than the drier Southern California. Here are some things to know:

A year ago, Gov. Jerry Brown ordered more than 400 cities and water agencies throughout California to save water by 25 percent, compared to use in 2013. In the nine months ending in February, Californians came close, using 23.9 percent less water. The standard was later relaxed, requiring them to use at least 20 percent less water, and now it is set to change again.

One possibility officials propose is taking a regional approach to water conservation. That may mean relaxing, or dropping, emergency drought orders for El Nino-soaked Northern Californians, where much of the wet weather hit and some reservoirs are spilling over the top. Strict rules for residents of drier Southern California may stay in place.

This winter’s El Nino failed to erase four years of exceptional drought. It left a nearly average amount of rain and snow, not enough to help California recover from the previous four dry years. California’s wet season typically ends around April 1, with shrinking chances of significantly more rain and snow.

The State Water Resources Control Board later this month will gather in Sacramento for a public workshop to consider the next steps for conservation. Officials say they’ll take suggestions from the public and work out a plan in May. Changes will likely go into effect in June.

EDC revs up discord with SLT over ambulances

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday ratcheted up the turmoil with South Lake Tahoe.

The supes in closed session discussed what to do about ambulance service on the South Shore. In California it is a county's responsibility to provide that level of medical care.

Interim County Counsel Michael Ciccozzi reported out of closed session on April 5 that the supervisors unanimously authorized retention of outside counsel, and the initiation of litigation against the Cal-Tahoe JPA and South Lake Tahoe if it becomes necessary.

Supervisor Sue Novasel, who represents the basin, was not available for comment.

South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments formed a joint powers authority to bid on the ambulance contract. While the JPA was awarded the latest contract in 2011, for the past two years there has been much discontent. Even so, the city reps on the JPA – Wendy David and Tom Davis – last year voted to extend the contract to 2019 when it could have expired this year.

The agencies are disgruntled about the compensation from the county, and now the **city wants out** of the ambulance business.. Lake Valley would like to run it, but can't afford to.

Discord between the two departments – mainly the electeds – has escalated because South Tahoe pulled firefighters off the

ambulances in favor of only medical personnel. Lake Valley believes a firefighter-paramedic is the better course for ambulance staffing.

Nothing came of the special JPA board meeting last week. April 11 is the next regular meeting.

The normal first step would be for the JPA, which is comprised of two elected officials from each jurisdiction, to come to consensus, and then for the county to get involved.

“What are they litigating is my first question,” Jeff Meston, SLT fire chief, said when *Lake Tahoe News* informed him of the supervisors’ vote. “I’m confused because they are not directly involved at this point.”

Mayor David said the threat of a lawsuit makes a complicated situation even dicier.

Dave Huber, Lake Valley’s longtime rep on the JPA board, was not available for comment.

SLT cracking down on illicit massage

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe wants to go after storefronts that claim to do massage when in fact human trafficking and prostitution may make up the better part of their business.

The police department devised a worksheet listing potential criteria. The department in the past has regulated individual massage therapists and establishments, but stopped doing so in

2009 when the California Massage Therapy Council was created by the state. (This reporter is a certified massage therapist.)

The state issues a license that is good for two years. Therapists must prove they've received 500 hours of training from a certified institution.

Going forward the city will likely mandate therapists show proof of the state certification in order to obtain a business license. All therapists must have a business license even if they are an employee.

Detective Jeff Roberson, who gave a presentation to the City Council on April 5, clarified that of the 113 people in town who have a business license for massage, most are providing legitimate, therapeutic massage. And while everyone who calls himself or herself a therapist would have to adhere to the new rules, they are not designed to be onerous.

"I'm concerned about the reputation of our community and the massage industry in our town and throughout California," Teresa Bertrand, owner of Bio Spirit Spa, told the council.

She told the electeds she welcomes more oversight.

This was the sentiment from other therapists who spoke as well.

City staff was careful not to single out any one business, though the ones advertising themselves as Asian massage inevitably were targeted. No one from those establishments spoke Tuesday. However, six owners wrote a letter to the council saying they are legit and would like the city to limit the number of establishments to lessen competition for everyone.

Asian massage is not a modality like Swedish or Thai or deep tissue.

Roberson showed images of some ads for massage in South Lake Tahoe that offer prostitution without using that word.

Some of the new rules under advisement include mandating therapists be fully clothed, that they can’t come in contact with a client’s genitals, and no condoms would be allowed at the business. None of those things would occur at an upstanding massage venue.

Roberson also expressed concern that the women working at the shady places may be doing so under duress, be cycled through from one city to the next, and are not free to leave.

He is a vice specialist and recently received specialized training in going after illicit massage parlors.

City staff will be working to come up with specifics that will be brought back to the council in the form of an ordinance.

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In other action:

· The City Council continues to tweak the vacation home rental ordinance. While no action was taken Tuesday, the subcommittee will be working with those affected by the law to come up with revisions to be voted on in the future.

· The city is going to come up with a policy regarding when opening public comments are televised, and criteria to prevent staff and others from being slandered.

Out-of-towners appreciate South Shore's rebirth



While skiing will inevitably always be Heavenly's main attraction, the resort wants to be a year-round destination just like the rest of the South Shore. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Megan Michelson, Ski

I'm eating a vegan burger, made from scratch with green-chile pinto beans, at an Irish pub across the street from the Heavenly gondola, steps from the border of California and Nevada. I've been skiing all morning and need to refuel, and this place, McP's Taphouse, is a ski-pole's length from Heavenly's groomed paradise.

The pub used to be in a dark, dingy space a few blocks down. And this spot, where I'm enjoying my burger and side of "Irish

fries," smothered in gravy, was a cavernous and depressing hole in the ground a mere 18 months ago.

For over six years, a halted construction project occupied a full city block in prime real estate neighboring the Heavenly village. It was a hollow symbol of the economic downturn, an ever-present blemish on a tourist town trying desperately to give itself a makeover. Locals took to calling it, simply, "the hole."

"That hole in the ground was the shining star for how dysfunctional things were here," says Heavenly's vice president and COO, Pete Sonntag.

Eventually the south side of Lake Tahoe became known as a place where you could stay up all night playing roulette and sleep all day in cheap motels with in-room Jacuzzis. You could wake up hungover, eat bacon and eggs at a casino buffet, then start drinking bloody Marys at the local dive bar. Skiing wasn't on the to-do list for many of the town's visitors.

"There's a sense of optimism now," Heavenly's Sonntag says.

Read the whole story

Nutrition expert coaches Tahoe-ites on eating

By Kathryn Reed

What you put in your body has a direct correlation to how you will function. Fad diets are not necessary. Trans fats are

poison.

These were some of the words of wisdom Bridget McGrath shared at a recent nutrition talk sponsored by Tahoe Regional Young Professionals. McGrath is owner of Elevated Fitness in South Lake Tahoe. Nutrition coaching comes with the gym membership.

“Everyone’s diet is specific to them. Just eat healthy for you,” McGrath said.

She employs the philosophy of using one’s hand size to determine a portion size. For women at each meal, this means a palm size of protein, one fist size of vegetables, and a thumb worth of essential fats. If carbs are on the plate, no more than one cupped handful worth. For men, it’s twice the amount at each serving.

McGrath is a proponent of getting as many nutrients as possible from food and not from vitamin supplements.

“Since vitamins don’t get synthesized that well, you can do more harm than good,” she said.



Bridget McGrath talks about what constitutes a healthy diet. Photo/LTN

She also said it’s better to get calories from food instead of liquids. Alcohol and fruit juices have little if any health benefits.

McGrath also stressed how essential fats are necessary. This includes things like nuts and avocadoes.

“If you are on a super low fat diet, you are angry all of the time,” McGrath said.

Food affects more than just one’s weight – nutrients tie into cognitive ability, strength, how internal organs are working and more.

Processed foods are some of the worst things people consume. She had nothing good to say about anything that comes out of a cardboard box, adding that the box is “more nutritious than what it contains.”

Sugar is one of the big issues with processed foods. More than 25 grams of sugar per day is toxic for the body, McGrath said.

It’s not that McGrath said people should never splurge on “bad” foods or drink alcohol, but it all needs to be in moderation. The “bad” items should also be consumed after the good and not on their own because it’s easier for the body to break everything down together.

Warning about summer vacation rental scams

By ABC News

Many people are back home and back to work after spring break, and some are already planning a summer vacation. Authorities are now warning, however, there are some bait-and-switch rental scams that could ruin your next vacation and your wallet.

Vacation spots across the country are being affected by scammers including the South Lake Tahoe-area where authorities say scammers have already struck 30 times this year.

“What they’re doing is they’re having you take that money and deposit it in a legitimate bank account,” investigator Dave Stevenson of the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office told ABC News. “However, it’s a fraudulent bank account in the sense that the people then close it after they get their money and then they’re gone.”

Read the whole story

For tech elite a second home is the norm

By Richard Scheinin, Mercury News

CARMEL — The minute Diane Flynn leaves her Menlo Park driveway, the vacation begins. She listens to TED Talks and music, calls her daughters, and arrives in about two hours at Santa Lucia Preserve, driving up, up and up the twisting roadway, passing through stands of valley oak and coastal redwood as the vistas open up in front of her — pristine green canyons, rolling for miles — before she finally pulls into the driveway of her second home.

Santa Lucia Preserve is a gated community that doubles as a wilderness preserve on 20,000 acres adjacent to Carmel Valley and Pebble Beach. With custom homes selling for between $3.6 million and $11.8 million, it also is one of the many getaways — from the Central Coast up through Napa Valley, Sonoma County and Lake Tahoe — that lure affluent Silicon Valley families

looking for summers and weekends away from the brutal work routines of the tech economy.

The National Association of Realtors reports record sales of vacation and second homes across the U.S.: roughly 21 percent of all homes sold in 2014 fell into that category. In California, where real estate prices are through the roof, second homes accounted for only 5.3 percent of all home sales in 2015, according to the California Association of Realtors. That still translates into substantial numbers in Northern California: more than $1 billion in residential home sales last year in North Lake Tahoe alone.

Read the whole story

Age not a detractor for 90-year-old SLT resident



Ken Myron does not let age dictate what he does. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

Skiing isn’t necessarily for the young, just the young at heart. And at 90 years old, South Lake Tahoe resident Ken Myron still qualifies.

Though we had never met in person, when I saw the small-framed man at the bottom of Heavenly’s tram with bright orange skis and a patch on his jacket reading “90+ Ski Club,” I knew I had found my ski buddy for the day.

On the ride up, Myron explained that he didn’t even take up skiing until he moved to Lake Tahoe from San Diego in 1989. He was 64.

“My wife thought I was crazy,” he recalled. But that didn’t stop him.

At the age of 73 he skied Gunbarrel 20 times nonstop. At 75,

he skied more than a million vertical feet at Sierra, an accomplishment for which, as only the third person to do it that season, he was awarded a free plane ticket to anywhere in the U.S. He continued to rack up about 40 ski days a year until, at 87, injuries started to put a damper on his ski time.

“I think anything he does, he does according to his personality,” said Vince Lancey, a friend and ski partner of Myron for more than 25 years. “He does it to the Nth degree. Just 110 percent.”

We picked a sunny spring day to explore the mountain together, taking several hours to do what I like to call the Heavenly lift tour. Making our way from California to Nevada, we skied Powderbowl, Canyon, Sky, Comet, Dipper and back again.

Myron was happy to act as tour guide, leading us down mostly groomers. He stopped skiing trees and bumps 13 years ago, he explained, after going blind in his right eye. That seemed like a good idea to me, and I was more than happy to stick to the main runs.

On the lift rides, Myron shared stories about his life, his family, skiing and weight lifting. All are obvious passions of his.

He still remembers his first day skiing. He went to Kirkwood with two of his sons who promptly took him up Chair 11 and over to a black diamond run with the theory that he was a good water-skier, so he would surely be good at this, too. The elder Myron stubbornly removed his skis and walked most of the way down. However, he was not deterred. Once at the bottom, he got on an easier chair where he met a very nice, and experienced, 6-year-old (he’d been skiing since he was 3 and was quite confident in his abilities). The boy became Myron’s first ski instructor. They met up each morning for the next four days. He would follow the boy around the mountain,

attempting to emulate his every move.

This style of learning became a habit for Myron. Even today he likes to pick out good skiers on the hill and follow them, trying to ski how they ski. He is especially keen on following ski patrollers.

Lancey said they would frequently watch skilled skiers from the chairlift and analyze their techniques. Both being beginners at the same time, Myron and Lancey were constantly looking to improve their skills, often taking turns following each other down whatever line their partner chose.

“He is fearless. Still is that way,” Lancey said. “What he attempts to do even now is amazing to me.”

Lancey attributes some of his own skiing abilities to following his fearless friend around the mountain.

Myron still displays that same old fearlessness and drive to improve. Twice during our ski day, he found himself on the snow. He just got back up again, brushed off the snow, laughed and kept on going.

“I didn’t plan on going on my butt,” he said on the final chair ride of the afternoon. “But it reminded me: don’t lean back, gotta lean forward.”

He’s had some dramatic crashes over the years, suffering a couple of concussions and partially tearing his ACL. Once he was hit from the side and completely knocked out at Sierra, only to wake up later in the hospital with a $43,000 bill and a story about a helicopter.



Staying active is important is important to Ken Myron. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

But he has more good stories than bad. Like the time he was getting on the chair at Sierra and a “little cutie” rode up on her snowboard and gave him a high-five. He asked if she would like to ski with an “old guy” (he was maybe in his 70s at the time). The pair took a run after which she said to him with an air of surprise, “You ski fast!” After another run she invited him to join her in the halfpipe, an offer which he graciously declined, and the two parted ways. That “little cutie” was a young Jamie Anderson.

Myron has acquired plenty of ski buddies over the years, some close to his own age, others younger. He sometimes skis with his daughter, Sandy, who also lives in South Lake, or his three sons or grandchildren when they come to visit. He also spends plenty of time skiing on his own, enjoying the fresh air, the scenery and the general physical exertion of the sport.

“Being active has kept me alive,” he said.

And skiing is only part of his workout regime. In the summer,

you'll find him swinging away at Bijou Golf Course. He also lifts weights at Sierra Athletic club three to four times a week, and is adamant that it's an important part of a healthy lifestyle for anyone. He could leg press 950 pounds until he was 78, and can still curl 70 pounds "no problem."

He often takes his wife, Irene, to the gym with him, too. The couple will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary this May. She has been with him from their native Canada, down to Southern California and up to Tahoe. They still reside in the house their sons built for them 20 years ago.

His sons, daughter and grandchildren are the only thing Myron likes to talk about more than sports and fitness. He exudes a genuine pride in his family and their respective accomplishments, careers and successes.

We ended our day on the mountain as many ski buddies do: rehashing the day's adventures and telling stories over pizza and sodas, agreeing to do it again soon.

"I don't think I've ever known anyone quite like him," Lancey said.

Neither have I.

Opening of baseball season offers variety of wagers

By Case Keefer, Las Vegas Sun

There's no rest for sports books this time of the year, as the major events keep piling up. A day before the conclusion of the NCAA Tournament on April 4 is Major League Baseball's

Opening Day, creating action from early morning to late night at betting windows. To get a sense of the upcoming baseball season from a gambling perspective, here’s a glance at the three most popular ways to wager in the preseason.

The Chicago Cubs sit alone at the top of betting boards in odds to win the World Series, including at a price of 9-to-2 at the Westgate Superbook. That standing should make fans cringe as much as celebrate.

If anything, the betting market anointing Chicago the favorite may hint at its 108-year championship drought extending.

Only one preseason Las Vegas favorite in the past 15 years, the 2009 New York Yankees, has lived up to expectations with a title. The six champions that followed the Yankees all came into the season somewhere from 20-to-1 to 30-to-1.

Read the whole story