

High-end firefighting plane stationed in Tahoe



The Super Scooper firefighting aircraft, for now, is calling Lake Tahoe Airport home. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Firefighting capabilities in the Lake Tahoe region have increased to a level not seen before when there wasn't a fire already raging.

"This brings continuous water drops. That's what sets it apart," Kevin Merrill, national amphibious aircraft manager with the U.S. Forest Service, told *Lake Tahoe News* as he walked around the aircraft.

The Super Scooper firefighting aircraft – as it is known – arrived at Lake Tahoe Airport on Monday. The plane is considered a national resource so it could be pulled into service elsewhere at any even given moment. It is the only one in the country.

"It's the perfect aircraft for this unit. It's surrounded by the best water source," Merrill said of Lake Tahoe.

What makes this Bombardier CL415 different than other firefighting aircraft is that it can operate more efficiently. It can scoop up 1,621 gallons of water in 20 seconds and then fly for three hours without refueling.

Other aircraft get water on land, which slows the process. Though those planes can hold up to 3,000 gallons. Helicopters are not as efficient as the Super Scooper either, according to Merrill.

"With severe drought conditions and lots of lightning fires so far, we anticipate this aircraft will greatly assist our ground-based firefighters this season," Cheva Gabor with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It's a bulky looking plane, which goes beyond the two massive turbo prop engines. There are mooring cleats on the nose and it has an anchor.

Being able to fly super slow allows it to skim a water body's surface. The length and depth of a lake are two of the basic factors in determining if it is suitable for the Super Scooper. Fallen Leaf Lake could be used if wind were not a factor.

The 3-year-old plane will not be in Tahoe forever. This is year two of a five-year test project. The Forest Service has a contract with Aeroflite out of Spokane.

Last year it flew about 300 hours and dumped 1.5 million gallons of water. The five-member crew (two pilots, two mechanics, one flight manager) flew in Florida, Oklahoma, Michigan, Washington, Oregon and Southern California in 2014. This year the plane has been in Tennessee, Florida, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Alaska and now Lake Tahoe.

At the end of the five-year contract the Forest Service will evaluate the feasibility of the Super Scooper being used more extensively.

Nev. education ranks worst in child welfare report

By Associated Press

Nevada again ranked poorly in a national child welfare report, coming in dead last when it comes to education.

According to the latest Kids Count Data Book issued by the child advocacy group the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Nevada ranked 47th overall among the 50 states.

The state scored in the bottom five in three of the four categories, including economic well-being, education and health. It ranked 43rd in family and community.

And despite being credited for improvement on many factors, Nevada still had an increase of children living in poverty and in high-poverty areas and with a single-parent family and with parents without secure employment.

A state education spokeswoman says programs have been implemented to address the problems but that the report using 2013 data doesn't reflect them.

Garden tour to focus on drought-resistant flora



Darya Vogt points out various features in her garden.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – *“Gardening is such a surprise.”*

So said one of several people on Monday’s preview of the annual Tahoe in Bloom Garden Tour.

Much of the time they are good surprises. For the six houses that will be featured on the July 25 tour the recent hail storms were an unwanted surprise. Most homeowners lamented how prior to the storms their gardens were in much better shape, leaves didn’t have holes in them and plants didn’t look so downtrodden.

Call them perfectionists because the beauty that spills forth

from this neighborhood off Kingsbury Grade is a sight to behold. Despite most of the yards having grass – and some with quite a bit, the focal point is what can be done without sod.



This field of lavender was planted in October and one day will be filled in.

Robin and David Winter created the most drastic change after removing sod from the side of their house. It's now a lavender field.

"The main thing I wanted to do was save money on water and save water," Robin Winter said. And save they did. In summer 2012 they used 44,000 gallons of water per month. Now usage is 18,000 gallons per month.

Six varieties of lavender are planned. Eventually, the perimeter will have the tallest which will create a fence of sorts around the property. Another variety will be used to make oils for Winter's massage therapy practice.



Karen and Billy Hayes grow a variety of veggies in their back yard.

Billy Hayes has multiple rows of raspberries out front covered with mesh to keep the birds out. These edibles were brought from Cottonwood, where he lived years ago. They are thriving at Tahoe.

More things to eat are being grown in the back yard in raised beds.

Burying bowling balls halfway into the ground created a unique element to borders. Golf clubs and sawed off skis are accent features.

Some areas of various yards are more manicured than others. While most have sections that look wild and a bit unkempt, it's that natural setting with native or adapted native plants that oozes Tahoe. No need to go on a hike – these yards have plenty of wildflowers.

Drought-tolerant plants are everywhere. Some are ground cover, while others are waist high and make for a kaleidoscope of color.

Paths meander through the colorful flora. Yard art is popular

in most places – whether it's birdhouses, an old two-seater chairlift swing from Stagecoach and ski boots planted with flowers, or a fire hydrant with recirculating water.



Big blue

Sitting areas abound to be able to enjoy these natural works of art.

All houses are within walking distance to each other. The tour, sponsored by the UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe, will have a master gardener at each house who will be able to answer questions in addition to the homeowner.

At three of the houses will be specific presentation stations. They are:

- Fill your yard with perennials that reseed – how to make it happen in Tahoe.
- Toss that lawn and plant water-wise Tahoe friendly perennials.
- Square foot vegetable gardening and attracting Mason bees.



Rose campion

Notes:

- Tahoe in Bloom Garden Tour is July 25 from 9am-2pm.
- Tickets are \$20. They are available at Nel's Garden Center, Aspen Hollow Garden Center, Tahoe Outdoor Living, and Sun Basin Nursery.

Calif. climate change bill could set global example

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

When Gov. Jerry Brown visits the Vatican this week for an international conference, he'll be carrying a resolution from state lawmakers supporting Pope Francis' recent encyclical on climate change.

He's hoping the Legislature will send an even stronger message later this year by passing new environmental rules aimed at helping California slash greenhouse-gas emissions over the

next few decades.

Approval of the legislation, intended to enact goals outlined by the governor this year, would bolster Brown's calls for global action on climate change with a display of regulatory muscle in his own state.

Oil companies have ramped up opposition, and utilities are angling for changes in the bill that would make it easier for them to fulfill requirements to produce renewable energy. But so far, no one has been able to stop the legislation, which has passed the state Senate and is advancing in the Assembly.

Read the whole story

Nevada higher ed chancellor criticized

By Bethany Barnes, Las Vegas Review-Journal

As the state looks to improve education as a way to create new industry and jobs, some academics and lawmakers are asking a difficult question: Is Dan Klaich the right person to lead the state's higher education system?

The chancellor has been at the center of recent controversies involving the Nevada System of Higher Education, the latest of which has prompted an investigation. Rick Trachok, chairman of the Nevada Board of Regents, announced last week that he hired a consultant to look into concerns about Klaich's handling of a consultant's report.

The *Review-Journal* has reported that Klaich commissioned an out-of-state consultant to review the College of Southern

Nevada and recommend a way for his office to continue governing the state's four community colleges. But emails among Klaich, the consultants and other state higher education officials, obtained through the state's public record law, show the chancellor didn't like the consultant's criticism of his operation and demanded a rewrite.

Read the whole story

Imagine Dragons slay Lake Tahoe audience



Imagine Dragons' lead singer Dan Reynolds at Harveys on July 18. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Kids imagine slaying dragons. So why not have them

join the fun with the band that slays the demons of the dull and mundane?

High energy was what Saturday night's Imagine Dragons show at Harveys was all about. It was almost sold-out, with a twist on the attendance – more kids than usual.

One of them, Ashlyn Collins of Reno, was grinning from ear to ear before the show started. The 9-year-old had planned attending this concert six months ago. Her favorite is "The River," one of the band's sparse slow melodies.

"The minute she heard they were playing, she said: 'Mommy, mommy, mommy, we have to go'," her mother Kristi Collins said. "She heard them in the elevator today and almost lost it."

Then, the keyboards' slow buildup magnified the stage, and the mother said: "Oh, my God. Here we go."

The indie, alternative rock band kicked off the night with its hit "It's Time," another fave of Ashlyn's.



Ben McKee, left, of South Lake Tahoe is the bassist for the Las Vegas-based band led by vocalist Dan Reynolds.

The kid attraction may have to do with the contemporary hit band's latest popularity on the Billboard charts. Or, it could be its high-energy play on stage. During the blockbuster hit "Radioactive," the core four members of the rock band – three of them named Dan – were all simultaneously playing various drums. Drummer Daniel Platzman looked as though he would need a massage after every banging performance, especially for "Radioactive."

The performance might have the attendance believe they were radioactive. This was the last song of the night. The audience waited in anticipation, but oddly the band never returned for

an encore.

It turns out lead singer Dan Reynolds was getting over a cold and knew he couldn't hit the high notes for his two planned encores.

In between, the men cranked out number after number of high energy tunes that prompted many in attendance to fist pump, dance and jump around – basically mimicking front-man Reynolds' style.

The music was so electrifying with hot lights, Daniel Wayne Sermon's hot guitar, Platzman's throbbing drums and pulsating bass from South Lake Tahoe's own Ben McKee that the sounds made the air vibrate.

The Las Vegas-based group – named the “biggest breakthrough band of 2013” by Billboard magazine is known for its up and down tempos. This performance with many songs off its “Smoke and Mirrors” album proved to keep that tradition.

“Shots,” “Gold,” “I'm so sorry” and “Friction” kept people standing – though the latter number felt like a song that screams at you if you're not paying attention.



It was nearly a full house at the July 19 concert.

There weren't many slow moments in the dozen-song set, with the exception of Reynolds opening up to the audience about his struggle with depression. The song "Release" depicts that challenge, with lyrics: "I've let me down" and "heaven talks but not to me."

"For many years, I've struggled with depression. Many people do. I'm here today to stop you from not doing the things you love and are passionate about," he told the captive audience. "Pursue your dreams. This isn't the end all."

From that, "Release" started with a sweet, sentimental-sounding guitar, a testament to how Sermon can mix up the night with hard-driving electric strings and sometimes a mandolin as with "It's Time."

Reynolds and Sermon worked off each other's energy, with both Mormons throwing in occasional religious overtones. Take their mega hit "Demons," which launched the audience off the chairs and singing.

This was ideal for Reynolds, who fought off a cold during the performance and even told bassist McKee with his signature deep voice that he should sing lead for the evening.

"I'll be using you a lot," Reynolds quipped to the audience early on in the show.

Reynolds engaged the concert-goers on occasion, with Tahoe-specific banter about the American Century Championship staged here for the week. He admitted to pulling for San Francisco 49er quarterback Steve Young, a fellow Mormon.

But it was Justin Timberlake, aka J.T. – a new attendee of the celebrity golf event, who occupied much of the banter.

Reynolds dedicated lyrics like "I keep coming up short" to celebrity participants who are not doing well.

"That song is for you J.T.," he said, but later recanted that

Timberlake may be doing fairly well. “And who doesn’t like J.T.?” (Timberlake finished the tournament tied for 34)

The unpredictability of Reynolds was present on stage, leading the audience in a yoga stretch at one point and in another a toast to embracing who you are – a common theme in Imagine Dragons lyrics.

“Can you drink to that Tahoe?” Reynolds bellowed.

Imagine Dragons has won an American Music Award for favorite alternative artist, a Grammy for best rock performance, five Billboard Music Awards and a World Music Award.

The Harveys Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with Americana band Train on Tuesday, followed by country great Kenny Chesney on the following night.

Mulder takes home ACC trophy for first time



“I kept telling my caddie, ‘Keep me in the moment,’ because I kept thinking ahead a little bit. I couldn’t think straight. On 18 I thought I had to two-putt to win. When I missed that putt, I was so angry at myself,” Mark Mulder told NBC. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Former Major League Baseball pitcher Mark Mulder threw a curve into the final round of the American Century Championship Sunday by winning the golf tournament for the first time.

With family in tow, Mulder won with 82 points (5-under 67 on

Sunday's final round) by edging out ex-Los Angeles Dodger Eric Gagne by one point and Jacksonville Jaguar kicker Josh Scobee by three.

Upon the last putt on the 18th hole, Mulder threw his arms up and his wife and three children soon joined him. They've been a steady presence throughout the tournament. Then, he held up the trophy and the crowd cheered.

"It feels amazing. I'm not going to lie. It's something I think about all year long I guess, leading up to this," Mulder said during the press conference where his son Xander joined him. It was like a Golden State Warriors Steph Curry post-game moment.



Mark Mulder for the first time hoists the ACC trophy.
Photo/Susan Wood

Mulder practices through the year in Flagstaff where he feels the higher altitude will help his golf game here at Lake Tahoe. His odds here were 8:1, making it "a regret" he didn't bet.

The ex-ball player appeared poised, dedicated and humble.

"It's great to see a first-timer win," NBC Sports spokesman Gary Quinn said, walking out of the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course clubhouse.

When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* whether he can relax now that's he's won despite admitting numerous times to feeling nervous, Mulder laughed and shook his head.

"I'm going to sleep so well tonight. To be honest with you, the last couple of nights I didn't sleep (so) terribly. I just didn't sleep that great. And people don't understand, this isn't what I or any of the other guys (do for a living). So you put me on the mound in front of 100,000 people, and I could (not) care less. You put me in front of a couple thousand people, and it's a different animal. I see guys make fun of PGA Tour players when they hit a bad shot. People don't understand how stressful this is and how difficult this is," he told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's taken me a few years to kind of understand what it takes to win this. I played with ex-winners or previous winners in previous years, been paired with them. I've seen what it takes. So I think that's all a part of that preparation for today I guess."

Mulder had a point about the stress level of so many people staring at such a close distance. It seemed the whole spectator crowd had gathered at the 18th hole to watch Mulder, Scobee and Gagne duke it out. A hush came over the crowd, which was more subdued Sunday than the day before at the afternoon hour.



Josh Scobee took third after leading after Day 2.
Photo/Susan Wood

Saturday afternoon featured a sombrero worn by Scobee's caddie, a foot race between a sponsor and one-time center fielder Kenny Lofton and a mass autograph session that took almost an hour for entertainer Justin Timberlake to move off the course.

Mulder admitted Saturday at the end of the round that he "didn't start out great but ended strong." He just tried to stay consistent. Multiple winner actor Jack Wagner even gave a tip to his fellow leaders Mulder, Scobee and Gagne – focus on the putting, and in particular, the 4-footers.

Mulder had a 35-footer on hole 12 Sunday and way overextended with the ball ending up at the bottom of the green. He still pulled off a bogey, a rally that proved instrumental in his success.

Despite the occasional snafus and distractions associated with this golf tournament, Sunday was all about the business in hand. And Mulder had the upper hand. Even the crowd seemed to appreciate his family ties watching most every move.

When they weren't watching the leaders, Florida friends Margo Roca and Sharon Popa took in their favorite part of the event – the scenery. They've attended three times.

"We like the scenery on this walk. We don't have this in Florida. To see the beach on one side and the mountains on the other, it's gorgeous," Roca said.

Calif. studying health

effects of artificial turf

By Melody Gutierrez, San Francisco Chronicle

SACRAMENTO – California officials have authorized spending \$2.9 million to study the health effects of using recycled tire pieces on artificial turf fields, hoping to put to rest a simmering debate over their safety.

But even as the health effects are studied, the state will dole out millions of dollars in subsidies to schools and cities so that they can install public playgrounds and fields using the materials in question.

“I think it’s irresponsible,” said Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, who authored legislation that would have stopped the grant program while the state conducted the study.

Hill’s bill was killed amid fierce lobbying from well-funded opponents in the tire recycling industry as well as labor interests. The groups spent nearly \$300,000 for lobbying on Hill’s bill and other legislation during the first three months of the year, according to filings with the secretary of state.

Read the whole story

Big dreams take big money for ski racers



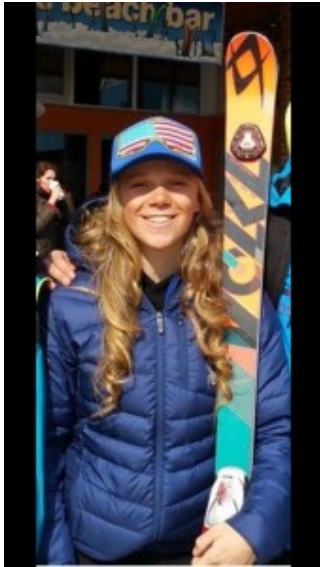
Cheyenne Brown at the Junior Championships at Mt. Bachelor in Oregon. Photos/Provided

By Jessie Marchesseau

Anyone who has spent at least a few days on the slopes can tell you that skiing is an expensive pastime. But the cost of a weekend ski trip pales in comparison to the expense of being a ski racer.

Each season, racers and their families fork out thousands of dollars to get a shot at a podium. They pay for ski passes, coaching and training, race entry fees and gear, including multiple pairs of skis, boots, goggles, helmets and race suits. Then there are the travel costs to get to each race, about 20 per season, such as gas or airfare, hotels (most races last two to four days) and food while on the road.

Long-time Squaw Valley Ski Team coach Lee Schmidt said it's not unrealistic for families to spend upward of \$50,000 on a season of ski racing. Some help is available through scholarships, sponsors and donations, but he admitted nearly all of the members of the U.S. Ski Team come from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds.



Cheyenne Brown
is on quest to
make the U.S.
Ski Team.

Regardless, a big pocketbook is not necessarily a requirement to be a successful ski racer. Take Cheyenne Brown of Soda Springs for example. At 15, Brown has only been ski racing for four seasons, but has racked up some pretty good finishes as a member of the Squaw Valley Ski Team. Last season she was one of six girls in her age group from the entire western region to qualify for the National Championships in Sugarloaf, Maine. At the Junior Olympics, Brown was the highest placing girl from the western region. This year she has set her sights on a spot at the Junior World Championships.

"She's very dedicated. She sets very high goals and can reach those goals," Schmidt, who has coached Brown for the last two seasons, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He said she is a good example and a leader for the other girls on the team, both on and off the slopes.

Brown was born into a skiing family; she was on skis before her first birthday. Her grandparents, Norm and Karen Saylor, were the former owners of Donner Ski Ranch. Her brother was a racer for a while, as was her mother. Now the family runs a ski shop in addition to a firewood business and a shirt

printing company.

"We're all blue collar. We work hard," Cheyenne's father, Mitch Brown said of his family. "You do what you can do, and Cheyenne helps out a lot."

He estimated they spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000 on ski racing last season.

So why does a self-proclaimed lower middle class family dedicate so much of their income to making sure Cheyenne gets to ski race?

"For the love of the sport, you know," he said. "You love it; your kids love it. And we wish we would have had the opportunity to do the same thing."

So even though it's expensive, they make it work. And Cheyenne is a big part of it. When she's not skiing, working out in the gym or doing her schoolwork she is often working. She attends a charter school to better accommodate her racing schedule. Cheyenne is a busser and hostess at Village Pizzeria, runs the child care at a local gym, coaches softball, acts as a scorekeeper for the men's softball league, takes babysitting jobs and works at all three of the family businesses.

After eight-hour days training on the ski slopes, Cheyenne will stop into the ski shop in the evenings to help out. She works alongside her mother, Mitzie, designing and printing T-shirts and sports jerseys. And when it comes to the firewood business, Cheyenne can run the backhoe, the loader and the saw.



Competitive ski racing is in Cheyenne Brown's blood.

"She knows that the money we earn goes into the ski racing fund," her father said. "She's not afraid of hard work."

Nonetheless, she could still use a little help. Cheyenne applies for ski racing scholarships each year and has received aid from entities such as the Squaw Valley Ski Team and Lake Tahoe Ski Club Foundation. She gets discounts on gear from her sponsors including Völkl skis, Bollé goggles, Briko helmets and Olympic Bootworks, but they don't offer up any cash. She also accepts donations on websites she has set up with organizations such as Make A Champ and Go Fund Me.

Cheyenne has every intention of taking her ski career all the way to the U.S. Ski Team like her friend and mentor Resi Stiegler, and that means dedicating summer months to skiing as well. She has attended off-season camps in the past at places such as Mt. Hood, Mt. Bachelor and Mammoth, but this year she has made an even bigger commitment. Starting at the end of July, she will be spending almost a month training alongside big name skiers and coaches in New Zealand.

“It’s very hard here in Tahoe to get better if there’s no snow,” she said. And though a ski trip to New Zealand may seem like an unnecessary expense to some, Cheyenne said that’s not entirely true, not if you want to really take your skiing to the next level, and she does.

Cheyenne doesn’t mind giving up her summer to skiing. She would be happy if it were winter year-round. Skiing is where her heart is.

“I truly, genuinely love everything about skiing and ski racing I love the adrenaline of going fast and arcing the perfect turn,” she said. “I don’t even know what it is. It’s my passion, I can’t even explain it.”

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Notes:

To help Cheyenne pursue her ski racing dreams, donations are being accepted here and at this website.

Calif. gas prices surge to highest in nation

By Jessica Rogness, Vacaville Reporter

The price at the California gas pump continues to be the most expensive in the nation.

Wednesday's average gas price in California was \$3.86 per gallon of unleaded gasoline, according to AAA Northern California. The average per gallon on Tuesday was \$3.80.

On Tuesday, AAA Northern California spokeswoman Cynthia Harris noted that Tuesday's price was a 36 cents jump in one week, and 6 cents higher since last month's AAA Northern California gas survey on July 10.

By comparison, Wednesday's national average price for regular unleaded gasoline was \$2.78 per gallon.

Read the whole story