

TVES 5th-grader lucky to be alive

By Kathryn Reed

Crystal Ann Aguilar is no ordinary 11-year-old.

She was born with a crushed aortic valve and three holes in her heart. Two were repaired within days of her birth. She has spent months at a time in the hospital. For an entire year she was on a feeding tube. Doctors said she would be considered terminal until age 12, at which time the thought was medical advancements would have improved to help her live longer.

She was in a stable period medically until last month.

Fundraisers

1. May 17, 8am-3pm at Bliss Salon, 290 Kingsbury Grade, Stateline. Donations for manicures and pedicures go to Aguilar family for Crystal's medical expenses. Call 775.200.6409 to make appointment.
2. Go Fund Me: <http://www.gofundme.com/sy28rs>

Crystal almost died on the playground at Tahoe Valley Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe.

"Crystal is not to do any running. Her teacher ran her on the track with other students," Todd Aguilar, Crystal's father told *Lake Tahoe News*. "She complained her chest was hurting. The teacher said keep running. She collapsed with a heart attack." This was halfway through the first lap.



Crystal Aguilar

Aguilar says everyone at the school is aware of Crystal's medical condition and her limitations. She usually is allowed to walk while the other kids run.

While she is in the fifth-grade, her skill level is that of a second-grader, her dad said. One of her handicaps is the inability to speak well. Her parents understand her, but not everyone else can.

"She is now back fighting; again trying to stay alive," Aguilar said. "She is back in the same situation as a couple years ago.

"We are going to hold the school accountable for what happened."

The Aguilars have an attorney.

"In terms of privacy and so forth we can't make a comment," Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Crystal was able to return to school May 14.

Geography lesson helps clarify drought

By George Skelton, Los Angeles Times

Many of us could use a refresher course in California geography as we debate how to manage the drought and prepare for an uncertain water future.

For starters, calling the hardest-hit farm region the Central Valley is much too simplistic.

Second, agriculture per se is not the issue – not the culprit guzzler. Rather, it's the location of the agriculture, which gulps 80% of California's developed water. Almonds, for example, make a lot of sense in some areas; a lot less in others.

Too often we try to wrap it all into convenient, simple packages – Central Valley and nut orchards – when more specificity is required to grasp the nub of the problem.

What part of the vast Central Valley? How dry is it and what's being grown there?

Read the whole story

Nev. committee OKs PERS cost-cutting bill

By Associated Press

CARSON CITY – An Assembly committee has passed a bill aimed at

saving the Nevada Public Employees Retirement System \$1 billion every 10 years.

The Assembly Government Affairs Committee voted Friday to pass SB406, which is sponsored by Republican Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson.

The bill got the support of the state teachers' union and other labor groups, who said it was more reasonable than other PERS overhaul bills moving through the Legislature.

It seeks to slightly reduce benefits to new recipients and prevents public workers from collecting benefits after certain felony convictions, among other provisions.

An amendment added Friday extends benefits to survivors of public employees killed on duty in the past two years, including three Las Vegas police officers, a Sparks Middle School teacher and a Nevada Department of Transportation worker.

STPUD cuts sewer connection fee 25%

By Kathryn Reed

By early June anyone building or remodeling in the South Tahoe Public Utility District sewer boundary will see a break on connection fees.

The board this month rolled back the sewer connection fees by 25 percent. This means the fee is now \$3,660 per sewer unit instead of \$4,930.

"The board heard from people in the community and realized it is a significant cost of new construction whether it's a home or business, or business remodel where they are adding sewer capacity. It can be a significant part of the start up," Richard Solbrig, general manager of South Tahoe PUD, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The vote was 4-0 to make the fee change. Board member Jim Jones was absent, but said he would have voted against the proposal.

The loss to the district is expected to be about \$200,000 a year. Paul Hughes, CFO for the district, said the cutbacks will come from the capital improvement budget.

While the change takes effect June 7, it is likely to have a negligible impact on the current budget that goes through June 30. Hughes said it is too soon to know what exactly on the to-do list will be delayed because of the hit to future budgets.

The connection fee will remain this price until the board takes further action. In 2009, the district produced a report saying how much the sewer connection fees should go up. The board had not increased the fee for the last three years.

The district is hoping the change will help stimulate growth in the area, which means there may be no adverse economic impact if there is more development. This would mean new customers.

For big projects this change in the price structure will be a significant savings. Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, which is embarking on a state-of-the-art animal rehabilitation facility in South Lake Tahoe, will save about \$40,000 with the new pricing.

The average three-bedroom, two-bath home has three sewer connections. This is because the kitchen is considered a connection. For that type of house it will be a savings of

\$1,270.

Commercial structures are calculated differently. It depends what the business is. For instance, a restaurant requires more sewer units than an office building. For restaurants it's based on the number of seats.

Solbrig said the sewer connection was changed because in doing comparisons the district was higher than other agencies, whereas the water connection fee is less than many other areas.

Gaming, tech and solar team up to promote policy changes

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

In response to a bevy of controversial energy issues emerging in the state, a coalition of gaming, tech and energy companies will align to promote more consumer choice in what's shaping up to be a long battle against the state's dominant power company, NV Energy.

The Nevada Coalition to Protect Ratepayers includes Switch, Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas Sands, SolarCity and Sunrun. The group's formation follows weeks of debate about a disputed rooftop solar policy that reduces power bills for ratepayers and a 2001 law that allows large companies to generate and purchase power without the utility.

The crux of the coalition's concerns reside in the Legislature and highlights myriad frustrations that energy-reform advocates have had this session. The companies, which include

some of the state's largest employers and emerging industries, have been pushing for policy changes they say will benefit homeowners and employers. But their efforts have come with little success, as well as opposition from NV Energy.

Read the whole story

Cyclists use cameras to document reckless driving

By Emanuella Grinberg, CNN

Cyclist Alan Crocker regrets flipping off the driver of the blue pickup that buzzed past him on a recent Saturday morning in Rome, Ga.

He's not proud of it, and he'll never do it again – especially now that he knows how unpredictable the response might be.

Crocker was wearing a helmet camera that recorded the driver getting out of his vehicle and knocking him over on his bike. He showed the footage to the Floyd County police officer who responded to his 911 call. According to a police report, the footage convinced the officer that the driver was “the aggressor,” refuting his claim that Crocker provoked him by kicking his car.

It's National Bike to Work Week, but bike-friendly roads are still hard to come by in many states, according to rankings released Monday by the League of American Bicyclists. The uneasy relationship between drivers and cyclists can also keep would-be riders off the road.

It's rare for drivers to respond to bicyclists with

intentional acts of aggression. But with more bicycles and cars sharing the road, some cyclists are arming themselves with helmet or mounted cameras for the worst-case scenarios.

Read the whole story

Lahontan seeks ideas to combat climate change

By Kathryn Reed

Climate change is going to bring bigger floods, warmer waters, less snow and more rain to the Lake Tahoe Basin, according to scientists.

And then what?

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is asking that and other questions.

“We have tools. But the big question is what tools don’t we have to deal with climate change?” Patty Kouyoumdjian, executive officer of Lahontan, posed to her board at a May 14 workshop.

She said in 2005 when California began to seriously look at what could be done to combat climate change officials thought there was plenty of time to find solutions. That’s not the case. The problem is here. The Round Fire near Mammoth in February destroyed 40 houses. It was the snow line that stopped it. A reality of climate change is that wildfires won’t be seasonal, but instead will be year-round.

More floods means structures will be threatened or damaged, and wetlands will be overrun with water. Water quality ultimately will be impacted. That is why Lahontan is involved. The California agency deals strictly with water issues.

As Lake Tahoe and other bodies of water continue to warm, assuming predictions come true, there will be more harmful algal blooms, an increase in invasive species and a stressed aquatic system.

With less snow comes a drying of wells, unhealthy forests and less recharge.

The state has tasked the regional water boards with needing to come up with ways to deal with climate change. Lahontan had two public workshops in the last year, the board workshop on Thursday and staff will now devise a draft report that is expected to be completed this summer, with the final done by the end of the year.

Out of the 100 comments submitted at the public workshops came 400 ideas. The four main themes were protecting resources and providing resiliency; improving water supply and water quality; communicating, collaborating, and streamlining processes; and other considerations and opportunities.

The board (Kimberly Cox was absent) is most interested in looking into having the whole jurisdiction comply with stream environmental zones – better known as floodplains and wetlands outside the basin – in the same manner Lake Tahoe and Truckee are mandated to.

Protecting the groundwater supply – aka the aquifer – also is a top concern.

“We don’t want to lose aquifer capacity. We need to protect the groundwater recharge,” board member Amy Horne said.

With flooding usually being short term, that was less of a

concern for her.

“Maybe stormwater needs to be looked at as an asset instead of a pollutant,” board member Eric Sandel said. “We need the water. Just because it may have something in it we don’t like we can deal with that later.”

The board recognized that whatever solutions are put on the table that there could be political, financial and jurisdictional constraints. It was stressed that working with other agencies as well as the public is going to be imperative to accomplishing many of the goals. A large part of this has to do with Lahontan not having the ability to dictate land use policy.

Board member Peter Pumphrey stressed the need to be “nimble” so whatever is ultimately decided as the focus can be altered as science evolves and other changes take place.

Borrowing from the total maximum daily load requirements when it comes to adaptive management was suggested.

Former senator seeks protection from bear advocates

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A former Nevada lawmaker who claims harassment by bear advocates at his Lake Tahoe home has filed a request for a protective order with Washoe County authorities.

William O'Donnell, who served as a Republican state senator representing Las Vegas from 1987 to 2001 and previously as a state assemblyman, filed a request Tuesday at the Incline Village Justice Court seeking an order for "protection against stalking, aggravated stalking or harassment" by members of the Bear League, including founder Ann Bryant.

O'Donnell contends members of the nonprofit bear advocacy group interfered with efforts by the Nevada Department of Wildlife to capture a bear that had damaged his Incline Village vacation home. It is the second such case to wind up in local courts in the past year involving claims that people seeking help from Nevada wildlife officials regarding problem-causing black bears were subjected to harassment by bear advocates.

Read the whole story

Brown's budget good news for education

By Jessica Calefati and Josh Richman, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO— Gov. Jerry Brown released a revised state budget proposal Thursday that sinks billions in better-than-expected tax revenues into California's public schools and some tax relief for the state's poorest families. But it still didn't satisfy Democratic lawmakers who want to mend the state's shredded social safety net.

The budget also includes a deal with University of California President Janet Napolitano, who had demanded more than the \$120 million increase for her system in Brown's January budget

to stave off 5 percent tuition hikes in each of the next five years.

Tuition will remain flat for the next two years, in exchange for the state paying down some of the university's long-term pension liabilities, Brown said.

The governor is also proposing creating a state Earned Income Tax Credit that's expected to help close to one million of the state's poorest working families. It will cost \$380 million the first year and provide credits of up to \$2,653 annually.

The state's public schools will receive the bulk of the rest under Proposition 98, the statewide ballot measure passed in 1988 that establishes a minimum annual funding level for K-12 schools and community colleges. And another chunk of change must be saved for a rainy day under a constitutional amendment voters approved in November.

The budget is "definitely on the rebound" after years of being mired in red ink, Brown said Thursday, and is focused on "the fundamentals of what government is supposed to do, health and education."

Read the whole story

Concussions not just a concern for pro athletes

By Kathryn Reed

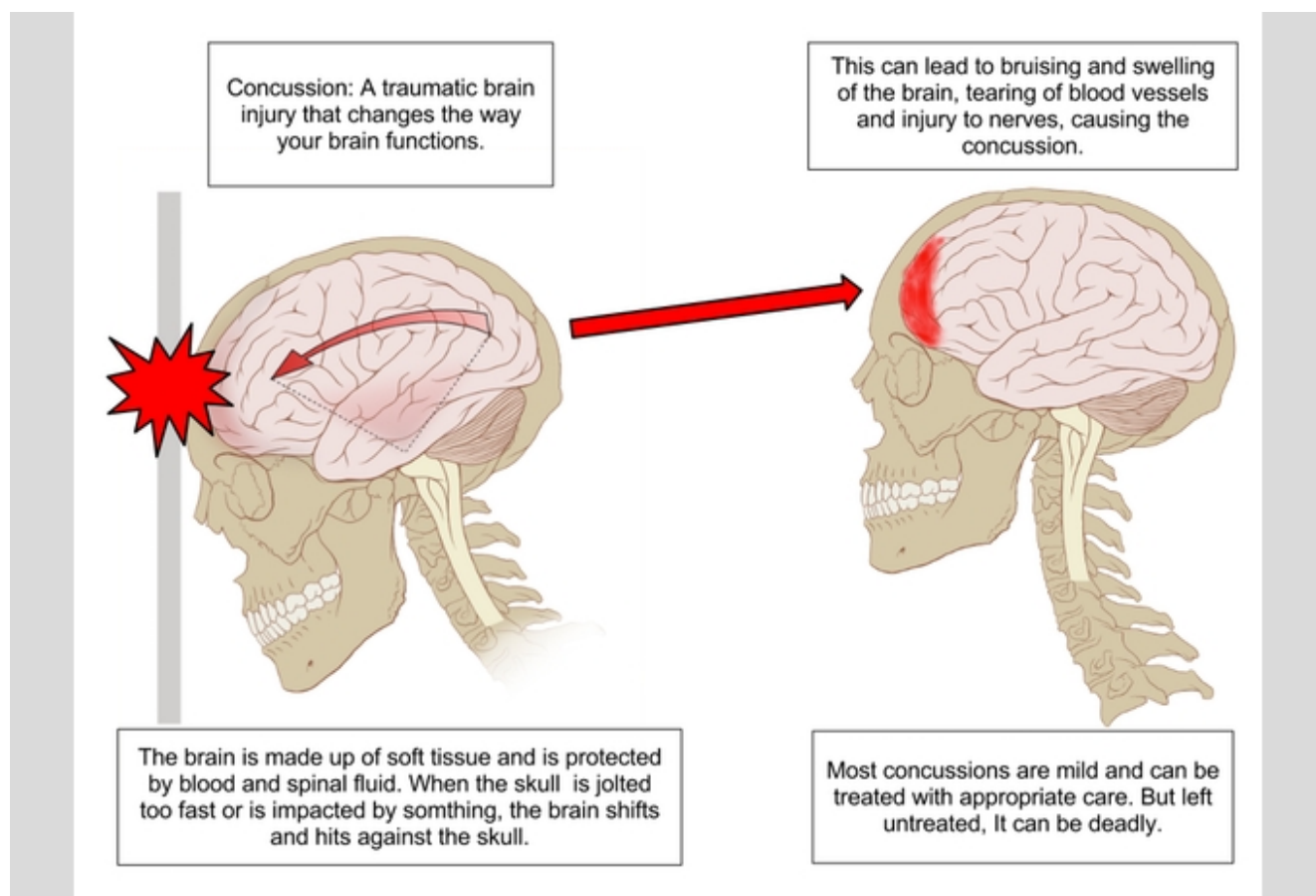
It's not just professional sports teams paying more attention to athletes with concussions. It's a big deal in the Tahoe-Truckee area, too.

One of the problems is there is no diagnostic tool for medical professionals to use to test if someone sustained a concussion or if they have fully recovered.

That is why South Shore athletes are being given a cognitive impact test prior to competing in order to get a baseline. Then medical experts can use that data to compare it to information ascertained after an injury has occurred.

“It shows how their brain is functioning at that moment,” Chris Proctor, director of the Tahoe Center for Orthopedics, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s a computer test. It tests reactions, memory and goes through key factors.”

Barton tests athletes at South Tahoe, Whittell and Douglas high schools.



Source: *Concussion mechanics.svg*

Football remains the sport with the most number of concussions

for athletes Barton Health practitioners see. In winter, concussions are mostly from skiing and snowboarding. Throughout the United States it is women's soccer and field hockey players who receive the most concussions.

Proctor doesn't believe there are more concussions, but instead there is better awareness of the condition.

"We have the idea if a kid hits his head, we assume it is a concussion until we prove it's not," Proctor said.

He said a handful of years ago parents would shop around to get a medical clearance for their son or daughter. Knowledge of the potential lingering effects of concussions as well as Second Impact Syndrome (SIS) has parents putting their children's health before their athletic careers. It was SIS that killed South Lake Tahoe resident Ryan Shreve. Ryan Shreve Head Injury Awareness Foundation was created in the 1997 South Tahoe High School graduate's name in hopes of limiting the number of deaths like his.

Pop Warner in Marin County is part of a three-year pilot program that has sensors on kids' helmets that alerts adults the player may have sustained a concussion.

The fear of concussions is being attributed to a 10 percent drop in Pop Warner participation nationwide between 2010 and 2012, according to ESPN.

Because there is no neurologist on staff at Barton Memorial Hospital, the orthopedists are handling concussions. With the hospital recently becoming a trauma center, the emergency room and orthopedic specialists are working together more closely so all concussion patients – athletes or others – are receiving the same care.

At the Institute for Rural Health Research, a subsidiary of Tahoe Forest Hospital, scientists are trying to develop a device to diagnose concussions. In 2014, the Gene Upshaw

Memorial Fund donated \$180,557 to this cause. The memorial fund has donated a total of \$323,544 specifically for traumatic brain injury research at the Truckee facility.

(Upshaw was a National Football League hall of famer and former NFL Players Association executive director who died of pancreatic cancer in 2008 at Tahoe Forest Hospital. Upshaw's wife, Terri, and sons Justin and Daniel established the fund because of the care he received at the hospital.)

Researchers there have been working for a few years to create a low cost, compact, portable unit that will be able to determine injury severity within 10 minutes.