

CDC: Flu season at epidemic levels

By Cynthia H. Craft, Sacramento Bee

Flu is hitting hard, and even though vaccinations might not target the specific strain of the virus currently going around, experts still urge people to receive the shots.

The nation's top public health agency declared a flu epidemic Tuesday, warning residents to exercise caution in public spaces and use good, basic sanitary habits. And even though it may miss the dominant flu strain this year, experts continued to urge people to get the flu shot, saying that it certainly can't hurt.

Infectious disease experts in the Sacramento region confirmed that influenza activity has been on an uptick here during the past two weeks.

But, as in past years, the flu has hit states east of the Rockies the hardest early on in the season, giving Californians advance notice of just how harsh an outcome to expect.

[Read the whole story](#)

Barton's first baby arrives New Year's Day



Brianda Torres holds Jayden as son Noe and husband Daniel Molina look on. Photo/Provided

Time will tell if Jayden Daniel Molina Torres will always be faster than his older brother. But for now, he holds the speed record in his family – the record for how short of time he kept mom in labor.

Jayden has the distinction of being the first baby born in 2015 at Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe. He arrived at 3:06pm New Year's Day.

"It was so fast," mom Brianda Torres told *Lake Tahoe News* not long after she arrived home Jan. 2. "It was just kind of crazy. It happened so quick."

She was in labor for a little more than six hours. This is in contrast to her first son, who just turned 6 last week, when labor was 32 hours.

Not only was Jayden quick to arrive, but he also came three days before the due date.

The early arrival might have something to do with big brother Noe being more than ready for his sibling to be born. Torres said he was always asking: “When is my baby coming out?”

Jayden weighed in at 7 pounds, 7 ounces and 18 inches. In addition to both boys being born at Barton, so were their parents – Torres and dad Daniel Molina.

Barton Health provided a wagon full of gifts for the family. Local businesses and Barton employees contributed \$1,950 in baby supplies, toys, and gift certificates.

“We were just looking at them,” Torres said. “It’s awesome.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Queen not allowed to sail after NYE incident

By Kathryn Reed

While the Tahoe Queen did not sustain any damage during a mishap New Year’s Eve, it is still grounded by the U.S. Coast Guard.

During an inspection on Jan. 1, Coast Guard investigators from San Francisco found an unrelated mechanical problem that is keeping the paddle-wheeler docked. USCG Ensign Jake Urrutia called it an “unrelated deficiency”, but had no more details.

"I don't know how long that will take before that is lifted," Urrutia told *Lake Tahoe News* of the "no sail" edict.

There are conflicting reports as to whether the boat with more than 200 passengers hit a sandbar or winds disabled it during the annual New Year's Eve cruise. Urrutia said that is what investigators are trying to determine. He told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday morning that investigators don't know why the Queen required the assistance of a tugboat.

At 1:29am Jan. 1 Christi Murphy tweeted this from the boat, "Stuck in the middle of Lake Tahoe on the queen tahoe... Jerks keep lying to us. Boat is stuck in 5 ft deep water with 200 people+kids. Suck."

Coasties were not notified of the incident until about 2:30am Jan. 1, and by that time the vessel was no longer disabled.

Multiple calls to Victor Gomez, tour manager of Aramark's operations on the South Shore, went unreturned. Aramark runs the Queen as well as the M.S. Dixie II, Zephyr Cove Lodge and other operations. Dave Freireich, with corporate offices, also was not available.

With the Queen out of service indefinitely, it means there is no paddle-wheeler operating on the South Shore. This is because the Dixie is undergoing \$1 million worth of renovations and is not expected to be plying the waters of Lake Tahoe until the spring.

The Queen hit a sandbar near Regan Beach on Aug. 4, which necessitated the 257 passengers be ferried to shore by much small vessels. No one was injured in either incident. The August incident is still under investigation by the Coast Guard.

Guest services No. 1 priority for Northstar chief



Beth Howard took over the top leadership position at Northstar just before the ski season started.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Having all the equipment one needs for whatever work conditions might come up isn't unusual for a boss. What's different about this office is the tools are four pairs of skis.

"I'm ready for any type of condition," Beth Howard says.

But she doesn't always put on her gray uniform when she hits

the slopes – that would be a giveaway to employees that upper management is around. As vice president and general manager of Northstar ski resort, she wants to be able to check on things incognito. This allows her to experience things as the guest does.

Howard is on the mountain at least four days a week, every Saturday and all holidays. The 51-year-old assumed the top position at Northstar this fall. She took over for Bill Rock who is now at Park City.

“Beth was chosen for this position because she has strong leadership skills, deep business knowledge and an ability to get things done. In her career at Vail Resorts she has had great success overseeing our entire food and beverage operation for all of our mountain resorts driving a strong financial performance, delivering a high quality product and service and has been instrumental in developing and putting in place many innovative programs, products and approaches,” Blaise Carrig, president of Vail Resorts Mountain Division, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “She easily works her way through difficult challenges with a very positive and can do approach. And she has consistently demonstrated an ability to lead other strong leaders and foster teamwork.”

Since 2010, she was vice president of mountain dining and clubs for Vail Resorts, the parent company of the ski resort. That job had her overseeing the dining operations at the company’s more than 100 restaurants and eight private mountain and golf clubs.

“This job is much more hands on,” Howard said while sitting in her spacious office in the heart of Northstar Village.

The corporate gig was much more removed from the day-to-day operations, while this job has her interacting more with guests. And it is guest services that Howard plans to focus on.



The 42-year-old ski resort has more than 2,400 acres of skiable terrain.

“I’d like to see Northstar as the best in guest services in the industry,” Howard told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We can always be better. We are fine-tuning how we can execute our guest services.”

She is taking note of every component of guest services – from the interaction with bus drivers on trips to and from the parking lot, to lifties, to food quality, to what the resort looks like. No detail is too small for her to pay attention to when it comes to guest services.

Howard doesn’t want Northstar to be compared to other resorts. Often it is referred to as the Beaver Creek of California. She wants Northstar to stand on its own.

But she is intimately familiar with the inner workings of Beaver Creek because she was in charge of that Colorado resort’s mountain dining from 1993-2008.



Summer operations, like the bike park, are also Beth Howard's responsibility.

Howard doesn't let it faze her that she is in a male-dominated profession; it's not something she has focused on and clearly not something that has held her back. She's been in the ski business for 30 years.

It is men who founded most U.S. ski resorts and subsequently hired other men to operate them. Many of them came out of the 10th Mountain Division after World War II. Slowly hiring practices have changed, but a woman in a ski management position is still rare.

"I think that now it is not an industry bias but more reflective on the culture of individual resorts and resort companies – whether they are supportive of women in these roles and also create and foster workplaces that are unbiased and gender neutral," Carrig said. "This has been an ongoing focus at Vail Resorts, where we have two woman running very large resorts (Northstar and Breckenridge), two woman are directors of mountain operations (Vail and Canyons), two women ski patrol directors (Vail and Beaver Creek). And, my successor for president of the Mountain Division is Pat Campbell, which will put a woman at the helm of the largest ski operation in the North America, if not the world."

But a career in the ski business is not what Howard dreamed of as a farm girl in Iowa. In many ways it's a fluke she ended up in Colorado for the last three decades.

She was attending the University of Northern Iowa when she saw a posting for an internship with Vail Associates – the predecessor to Vail Resorts. This was 1985. The business major wrote to the Colorado-based company requesting a six-week internship. She had never heard of the company until then.

"When I saw Colorado and those mountains I knew that's where I wanted to be," Howard said.

Until this fall, she had never left.

For now, her husband and son are still in Colorado. They will be moving to Truckee when the school year is over.

"I'm living my dream," Howard said of her new job, new town and new mountain.

Backers: Plastic bag ban referendum has enough signatures

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Extending the fight over California's ban on single-use plastic bags, manufacturers and other opponents of the law on Monday submitted what they said were enough signatures for a referendum that would dispose of the ban before it can take effect.

Numerous cities, like South Lake Tahoe, and counties in California prohibit or charge for single-use plastic bags, and a bid to extend the policy statewide fueled one of the fiercest fights of the 2014 legislative session. Soon after Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 270, an industry-backed organization called the American Progressive Bag Alliance announced the referendum drive.

Working under a narrow 90-day window – referendums have less time to qualify than other ballot initiatives – referendum

backers said they had accumulated more than 800,000 signatures, many more than the 504,760 needed to qualify. Some of those signatures could be invalid, however, and now counties must conduct random samples to determine if enough of them are legitimate.

“We are pleased to have reached this important milestone in the effort to repeal a terrible piece of job-killing legislation and look forward to giving California voters a chance to make their voice heard at the ballot box in 2016,” American Progressive Bag Alliance executive director Lee Califf said in a statement.

[Read the whole story](#)

Hundreds ring in 2015 at Heavenly Village



An icy welcome to 2015 in South Lake Tahoe.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

With power tools in hand, a couple sculptors turned a block of ice into 2015 New Year artwork.

As one whacked away at the 4, the other chiseled the 5. The crowd erupted as the finished piece signaled the celebration of a new year was about to get into high gear.

That block of ice was symbolic of the night – icy cold. But the bitter cold temperatures were not about to keep away the throngs of New Year's Eve revelers who showed up at Heavenly Village to ring in 2015.

Now in its fourth year, Heavenly Holidays is a free event put on by Heavenly Mountain Resort and Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.



Wes Quave entertains hundreds of people New Year's Eve. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Musicians are performing on a stage close to the size of SnowGlobe, with fire dancers and other acts filling in. Wes Quave was the main draw; singing mostly covers of other artists much to the delight of those in the crowd who were dancing and singing.

"We all were dancing when we got here," Andreina Jeffery, 21, of Clovis told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She was in town with her parents, two siblings and both sets of grandparents. They had researched interesting things to do on New Year's Eve and chose South Lake Tahoe.

It's hard to find another place that has a gondola car decked out with lights that descends from the mountain as a symbol of the New Year. This is a definite family event – with the age span ranging from those who needed to be carried to those who needed assistance walking.



The decorated Heavenly gondola is illuminated by the fireworks. Photo/Denise Haerr

With the celebration culminating at 9pm, it also makes it easier to stay up for everything.

Two-year-old Shailee Palmer was taken by the ladies on stilts. She couldn't stop staring at them.

Steve Haerr of South Lake Tahoe was enjoying the festivities with a group of friends for the third year. The energy of the event is what he likes most.



Shailee Palmer, 2, of Chico is mesmerized by the

super tall woman.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Laura and Gwyn Amason of Bakersfield have been coming to Tahoe for 14 years – before kids were part of the group dynamic. The youngsters were looking forward to the fireworks, which were shot off from the top of the parking garage just after the gondola came down. They like having something family-friendly to do on New Year's Eve, knowing the adults can always venture to the casinos.

A variety of things are going on all at once throughout the village – from free photos, to face painting (with some boys opting for tattoo looking art on their arms), to fireworks. Ice sculptures are throughout the village.



Warmth is found at the fire pit at Gunbarrel restaurant.

Restaurants were doing a brisk business, with many people sitting by fire pits drinking something to warm their insides. Despite the mercury being in the teens, people were also lining up at Cold Stone Creamery. Next door at Heavens Little Cafe it was hot drinks that were in high demand.

For those who were a little under dressed, Shirt Off My Back was selling gloves, hoodies and beanies. It was also one of the shops that allowed people to take refuge from the cold.

Even after the fireworks finale the music kept going, the vibe of the New Year was electric and freezing at the same time,

even though technically 2015 was still three hours away.

2 SnowGlobers found unconscious at Hard Rock



The low tonight at the SnowGlobe music festival is expected to be 1 degree. Photo Copyright 2014 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Two SnowGlobe attendees were found unconscious and suffering from hypothermia Tuesday night near a dumpster at Lake Tahoe Hard Rock.

“The security at Hard Rock did a great job knowing what was going on around the property. They found her by a dumpster and the kid had crawled up on one of the vehicles. Both were unconscious when they were found,” Eric Guevin, spokesman for

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They are very lucky to be alive. If they had not been found, for certain they would be demised."

He said they had been imbibing alcohol, drugs or both. They were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital.

Temperatures were in the teens most of Dec. 30, dropping below zero with the wind chill.

Guevin said when the two were revived they told paramedics they had been at SnowGlobe, the three-day music festival at the ball fields adjacent to Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe. They also had the wristband all concertgoers must wear and were dressed as though they had been there, Guevin added.

They were found about 9pm.

(Earlier in the evening a Hard Rock security officer was taken to Barton for a non-work related medical emergency.)

Two years ago 19-year-old Alyssa Byrne of Petaluma died of hypothermia after leaving SnowGlobe. Her body was found in a snowbank off Pioneer Trail near Al Tahoe Boulevard.

Members of her family are at this year's three-day concert, which ends tonight. They are promoting the Always Buddy Program. The slogan is: "I promise to never let myself or anyone I love leave an unfamiliar place without a buddy system."

Guevin also stressed the importance of friends staying together and letting people know when you will be returning so if you are overdue, authorities can be notified.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* there have been minor violations involving drugs and alcohol at the concert, but nothing significant.

Concert promoters went from a staff of 70 security officers to more than 100 this year. Part of the reason is to be better prepared for any situation, but also because more people are attending. The first year about 9,000 people showed up each night, while this year the projection was for 15,000 attendees each of the three nights.

The city received two noise complaints the first night and four the next. The loud thumping of the bass is the problem.

One person near the venue told *Lake Tahoe News*, "The sustained noise/bass just wears on you. If I had this noise issue with a neighbor, I could contact the police and have the noise level reduced."

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* the decibel level is within the range of what the contract calls for.

Lack of snow has the sound traveling farther and the wind also carries it.

The city has made a concerted effort to make sure people are dressing appropriately. In years past lots of flesh could be seen, while this year people are more bundled up to handle the bitter cold. Lodging properties have been diligently telling concertgoers to dress for the elements.

"Start warm, stay warm" is the message on electronic signs that have been strategically placed in town.

This year's event is over at 1am Jan. 1, with fireworks being the finale.

Pamela Shaw-Miller

1961-2014



Pamela Shaw-Miller

An amazingly gifted and creative artist-designer has left this earth after inspiring all with her wisdom, courage and love.

Pamela Shaw-Miller died Dec. 11, 2014. She was 53.

A resident of South Lake Tahoe and formerly of Glendale, her family and many friends will miss her greatly. She died at home after being diagnosed with lung cancer, not associated with smoking, in August.

Beautiful Pam was inquisitive from childhood, with a creative and artistic mind and above-average intellect. She was born Pamela Louise Shaw at Glendale Memorial Hospital on April 12, 1961, to Jim and Lili Shaw.

After two months they moved from Highland Park and lived in Glassell Park where she attended Toland Way Elementary School from age 4. She bypassed a grade upon moving to Glendale in 1972 where she attended Wilson Jr. High, and graduated from Glendale High in 1977 at barely age 16.

During this time Pam became an accomplished classical pianist and always loved music and dance. The Beatles were a favorite group; she could sing all the lyrics and had a beautiful

singing voice.

An early lover of old movies, her favorite entertainer was Fred Astaire, whom she later met. As a mature youngster she enjoyed many fantastic world-class rock concerts, and visits to Las Vegas where she would see and meet many entertainers through then celebrity-friend Connie Stevens.

Pam briefly relocated with friends to Colorado following school, but subsequently returned to Los Angeles. After working a variety of jobs and considering a career in sound engineering/recording, she married Howard Phillippe. Together they ran a commercial painting business for several years, until Pam took a career change to manage several retail stores (in Glendale, Beverly Hills, Oxnard, and Bay area) and later dissolved the marriage.

Pam met husband Alan at a party in Hollywood. They married in 1987, moved from the big city to Humboldt County, and obtained their degrees from Humboldt State University in 1992; both with top honors.

This North Coast area further nurtured Pam's life-long love of the ocean. Many new friends were made during this period and Pam's artistic talents were developed, producing many novel and unique art works (drawings, paintings, sculptures), leather masks, and fabric creations. Later Pam would use her artistic and business talents in support of her various entrepreneurial and community activities.

Following university and a move to South Lake Tahoe, Pam became self-employed in interior decorating and art-related businesses. She also became very interested in gardening and this continued to the end of her life.

Pam was politically active and environmentally conscious, and spent many days hiking with friends in the Sierra high country, taking nature walks by Lake Tahoe, and developing photography skills.

She belonged to the local chapter of the National League of American Pen Women. She conducted volunteer fundraising for the local Humane Society and loved animals of all types, especially her two cats, Buddy and Lloyd. Pam held no religious beliefs, but served for many years as treasurer for the Lake Tahoe Unitarian Universalist fellowship until it disbanded.

Pam's substantial group of close friends attests to her giving nature and kind heart. Pam's passing is truly a great loss to us all; she was often the social glue and instigator. She believed in keeping old friends and collecting new ones. Pam loved to laugh and entertain friends, celebrate special events, and make people feel special. She loved quality things, good food and drink, great music, beautiful surroundings, and people. If she were here, she would say, "That thing you've been putting off ... just do it!"

Dad James Shaw preceded her in death.

Pam is survived by her husband Alan Miller, mom Lillian Shaw, and sister Carla Shaw.

There will be a celebration of life in Glendale on Jan. 3. Call 818.244.0093 for details. There will be a celebration of life in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 18. Call 530.542.0243 for details.

Donations to your local humane society or the Caring Bridge website are suggested in lieu of flowers.

Trail angels help keep hikers going on PCT

By Chris Erskine, Los Angeles Times

By any measure, the Pacific Crest Trail is a beastly thing, an angry anaconda that slithers up the entire length of California and all the way to Canada, some 2,650 rugged miles. That's approximately 6 million steps – some of them glorious, many of them merciless.

But along the way, mercy is at hand.

Near the southern trail head, Sandy and Barney Mann open up their five-bedroom San Diego home to up to 60 hikers a night. They even pick them up from the airport and ferry them and their gear to the starting point an hour east.

Up the trail, in Agua Dulce, Donna and Jeff Saufley not only provide a night's rest to more than 1,000 hikers a season, they offer food and shelter to their dogs, horses and the occasional llama.

East of the Bay Area, Hank Magnuski functions as a sort of outdoors concierge, erecting a pop-up cafe to provide hot coffee and fresh fruit topped by whipped cream to hikers coming off a particularly grueling 300-mile stretch.

They are all part of a small network of outdoor Samaritans called "trail angels."

Read the whole story

Gas prices to rise in Calif. in 2015

By Josh Richman, San Jose Mercury News

After months of seeing gas prices sink ever lower, Californians will ring in 2015 by paying more at the pump as a result of the state's landmark greenhouse-gas emissions law.

But how much more we'll pay, and whether it's worth it, remains bitterly debated among oil companies, some state lawmakers and environmentalists.

Starting Thursday, gasoline and diesel producers will be subject to the state's cap-and-trade system, forcing them either to supply lower-carbon fuels – which are more expensive to produce – or to buy pollution permits for the greenhouse gases created when the fuel is burned. In the short term, at least, that will mean higher prices at the pump.

Opposition groups backed by the oil industry have claimed prices will rise 16 to 76 cents per gallon, although that's admittedly based on an underlying price of about \$4 per gallon – far higher than recent prices. A UC Berkeley energy and economics expert says the increase will be more like 9 or 10 cents per gallon, which supporters say isn't so high a price to pay for the environmental good it will do.

Read the whole story