

Douglas County manager candidates down to 7

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Douglas County has narrowed its search for a county manager to seven candidates who spent Aug. 4 in a marathon of panel interviews, culminating in an evening reception for the public at the Carson Valley Inn.

The county received 72 applications for the job vacated in April by Steve Mokrohisky, who left to become county manager in Lane County, Ore.

The field was reduced to the seven now vying for the job based on education, experience and input on the ideal candidate from the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, said Phil McKenney with Peckham & McKenney, an executive search firm in Roseville, which conducted the search for the county.

The job seekers, who come from Arizona, California, Nebraska and Texas as well as Northern and Southern Nevada, are taking a five-hour community tour this morning and spending the afternoon in individual discussion with the commissioners.

All the candidates have experience in either county or city government or both, and some have worked on water infrastructure issues, a subject that came up often at the informal social for the public.

“Water is the issue that keeps us up at night,” Commissioner Greg Lynn said. “Water at the lake is intractable.”

Lynn said the county needs \$12 million to fix the water infrastructure at Lake Tahoe, which has multiple, unconnected delivery systems.

Christine Vuletich, assistant county manager and chief

financial officer for Douglas and a candidate for county manager, said the county will need \$14 million to replace decades-old worn out water lines.

"We're working closely with the state revolving fund to get below market interest rates and looking for grant opportunities," Vuletich told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"There is some aging infrastructure up there and some bold action is needed," said Tim Hacker, the interim director of parks and recreation for Las Vegas and one of the candidates for county manager.

Charlie Cassens, another candidate, said water and sewer rates are part of the issue. Cassens worked for Lower Colorado River Authority in Austin and Otay Municipal Water District in Spring Valley in San Diego County prior to his current position as city manager in Lake Havasu City, Ariz.

"My fundamental philosophy is we are a public service agency here to make things as easy as possible for people who want to get things done," Cassens told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Cassens talked about working to get a \$463 million bond measure passed in his current job to build a waste water treatment facility during his brief speech as part of an introduction made by each candidate.

Jim Nichols, former assistant city manager for Midlands, Texas, who is now living in Henderson, has degrees in civil and environmental engineering, which he said helps him understand the challenges facing Lake Tahoe.

"The lake requires environmental attention and I hope I'd be an asset, assuring the lake is protected and preserved for future generations," Nichols told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Other issues that came up were economic development, tourism and the decline in gaming.

“Gaming has gone down and that’s a challenge for jobs and for revenue for the county,” said Rick Benson, currently county administrative officer for Mariposa County. “It’s a big challenge to fill that void.”

Prior to Mariposa County, Benson worked in Kern County, home of Bakersfield, which he says is diverse area like Douglas County, containing desert, farming and a city.

“It’s always a balancing act, that’s the challenge of a county,” Benson said. “Everybody deserves a full slate of services no matter where they are.”

Mary Lou Brown, city administrator for Grand Island, Neb., said tourism drives the economy at the lake and unites rather than divides the different constituents of the county.

“People in the valley rely on tourism at the lake so they have an interest,” said Brown. “There’s a tie and they care about each other.”

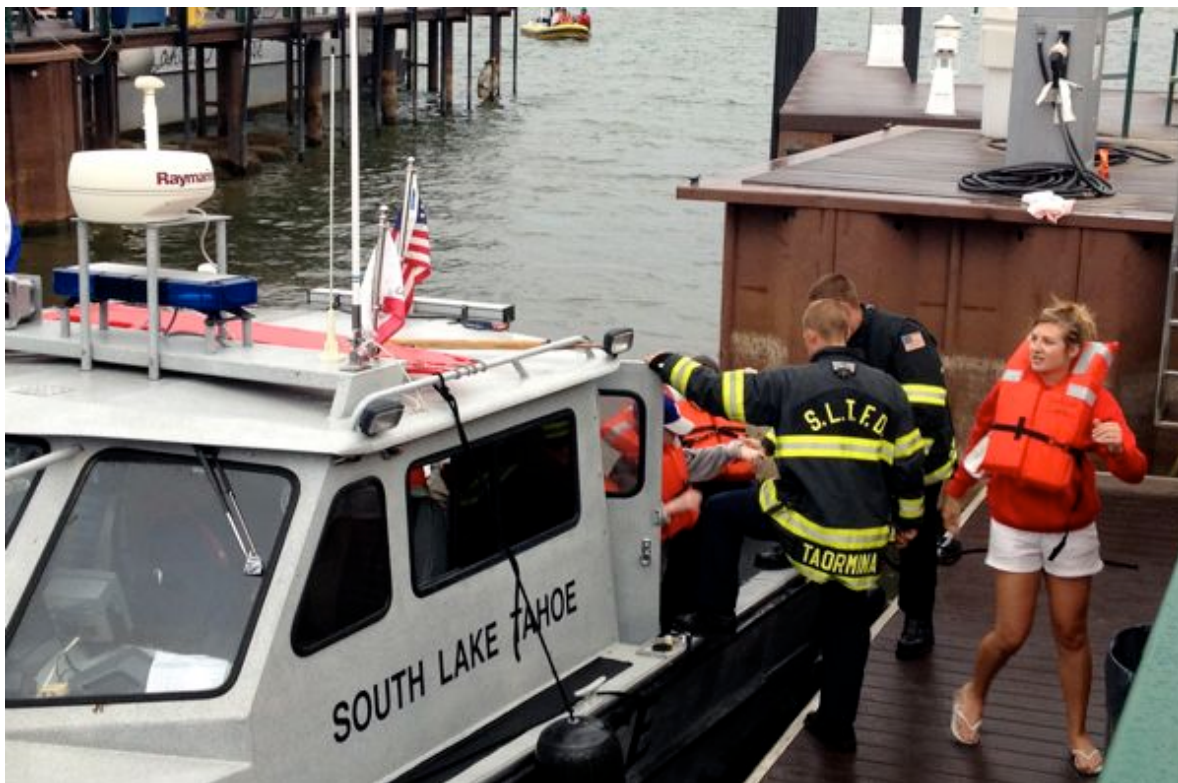
Curtis Calder, currently city manager in Elko, said he’s impressed with Douglas County’s many planning documents which map out a path forward.

“It allows leadership, staff and elected officials, to focus on the highest priorities,” he said, referring to the county’s Economic Vitality Plan and master plan. “Douglas County has a lot of diversity, that’s its strength.”

The seven candidates are scheduled to return Aug. 18 for formal, public interviews with the Board of Commissioners, which is set to announce its selection on Sept. 4.

The goal is to have a new county manager in place in October.

Tahoe Queen runs aground with 257 on board



Passengers get off a rescue boat at Ski Run Marina after the Tahoe Queen ran aground Aug. 4. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

About 300 people had to be shuttled from the Tahoe Queen to shore in rescue boats on Monday afternoon.

The paddle-wheeler was about 30 minutes into its 90-minute voyage Aug. 4 when it hit a sandbar off Regan Beach in South Lake Tahoe. Fire officials estimated it to be about 600 yards from shore.

No injuries have been reported. There were 257 passengers on board and then the crew.

“It’s premature to speculate how this happened,” Dave Freirich, spokesman for Aramark, told *Lake Tahoe News*. Aramark

runs the Tahoe Queen out of Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

A passenger told *Lake Tahoe News* that the captain said he should have been about 8 feet farther out to miss the sand. Lake Tahoe's water level is dropping every day as year-three of the drought continues.

Two boats tried to dislodge the Queen, but to no avail. One was the Paradise. It was able to take about 70 people back to the marina, but never went out again.



The Tahoe Queen is about 600 yards from Regan Beach.

Most people were ferried to shore by either El Dorado County sheriff's, South Lake Tahoe police or fire, U.S. Coast Guard, Vessel Assist or Tahoe Douglas fire boats. Many of them are small and can only take a half dozen people at a time.

However, police and fire officials were not notified about the grounding until people from the boat started calling 911 because they had been sitting on the sandbar for a couple hours, according to Fire Chief Jeff Meston.

"We didn't get any information," Carolyn O'Brien told *Lake Tahoe News*. The Lincoln woman was on the Queen for the first time with her husband and two sons.

All they were told is they were stuck. Then the Queen staff tried to give them a \$17 bill for sodas. They refused to pay it. No food or beverages were offered to passengers.

"We were on board for 3½ hours before anything really happened," Fred O'Callaghan said in terms of rescue boats arriving. The Cambridge, England, resident was on board with his wife and two kids.

The couple said most people on board were well behaved and that only a few seemed to be panicky.

One woman getting off at Ski Run screamed as she had to get out of the small boat. But a South Tahoe firefighter wrapped his arms around her to make sure she was safe and didn't fall into the water.

It had been a rough ride. The temperature was dropping, the wind blowing at about 15 mph, sprinkles falling and the white caps bouncing boats along.

Freirich, with the boat company, said the Queen would be staying the night off shore.

"I can't say for certain someone will be staying with the boat, but it will be monitored. It's grounded pretty good," Freirich said.

He didn't know if the boat will be inspected in the lake, towed to Ski Run once it's dislodged or if damages would be assessed at the marina.

No agreement on what to do after a fire

By Scott Smith, AP

GROVELAND, Calif. — Nearly a year since a historic wildfire charred a huge swath of California's High Sierra, debate rages over what to do with millions of dead trees left in its wake: truck them to lumber mills or let nature to take its course?

One side argues that the blackened dead trees and new growth beneath them already sprouting to life create vital habitat for dwindling birds such as spotted owls and black-backed woodpeckers. Others say time is running out on a golden opportunity to salvage timber to pay for replanting and restoring the forest.

It's a classic standoff between environmentalists and supporters of the timber industry, which contends dead trees and brush pose a new fire hazard.

The U.S. Forest Service is expected to unveil its final decision in the coming weeks on how much of the land burned by the wildfire, known as the Rim Fire, can be logged.

"It's not always possible to please everybody," said Robert Bonnie, the U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture's Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment. He oversees the Forest Service.

Bonnie declined to say how many trees the Forest Service will allow loggers to haul away in the plan being drafted, but he said the goal is to balance the forest's health with the needs of the local community.

"We try and do our best with the science we have," he said.

The blaze ignited on Aug. 17, 2013, when a hunter lost control

of his campfire. For two months, flames raced across 400 square miles of the Stanislaus National Forest, Yosemite National Park's backcountry and private timber land. It ranks as California's third-largest wildfire and the largest in the Sierra Nevada's recorded history.

Loggers have already begun removing a small portion of dead trees along roads so motorists aren't hurt by falling timber. A much more aggressive logging project is under consideration, targeting nearly 50 square miles of forest land.

Environmentalists said they are alarmed by the prospect of logging.

"For us, post-fire logging is the last and worst thing you should ever do in a forest," said Chad Hanson, a forest ecologist and founder of the John Muir Project, an environmentalist group. "The scientific community is so strongly against this."

Intense fires create snag forests that are three times as rare as living, old-growth forests, he said. Wood-boring beetles lay eggs in the dead trees, spawning larvae that become food for the woodpeckers. Flowering plants and shrubs sprouting on the forest floor attract small, flying insects for bats and other animals that the spotted owl swoops in to eat, Hanson said.

Bird species have come back strongly in the burned areas that could be logged, Hanson said. In a recent visit, he pointed to conifer seedlings two to three inches tall sprouting up as a result of the fire. He worries that heavy logging tractors dragging out dead trees will destroy the seedlings.

Hanson questioned the Forest Service's motives for proposing logging.

"When they call it a recovery effort, they're talking a recovery of revenue, not a recovery of the forest," he said.

The national forests are not wildlife preserves, countered Steve Brink of the California Forestry Association, who represents the timber industry. National forests are set aside for many uses, including timber production, he said.

Selling the trees will pay for restoring the forest, creating jobs in a region of California where logging once flourished, Brink said. Removing the burned trees will allow for the forests to be reopened more quickly for public use, he said, noting that the natural regeneration could take a century or two and, in the meantime, shrub brush would dominate.

The dead trees will fall across each other on top of the shrubs, creating prime fire conditions, said Brink, taking a position that environmentalists say has no scientific foundation.

The dead trees can be logged for about two years after a fire and then they disintegrate, losing value as timber, Brink said. He fears that environmentalists will file lawsuits to run out the clock if the Forest Service's decision doesn't suit them, he said.

In July, wildlife advocates sued the Forest Service, arguing that officials have failed to protect spotted owls and black-backed woodpeckers from logging of burned trees in other parts of the Sierra.

"They know if they can stall the process, the brush wins, deterioration will take over – and they win," Brink said.

Parts of Yosemite National Park backcountry that burned in the Rim Fire reopened in April with a warning that visitors should be careful of falling trees. The trees that fell across roads were removed, but logging is not allowed in the park, Yosemite spokesman Scott Gediman said.

Craig Pedro, the administrator of Tuolumne County, said he is worried about logging trucks flooding the roads and causing

traffic hazards. But community leaders are united behind anything that brings the forest back to life sooner rather than later, Pedro said.

The local economy depends on people coming to fish in the streams, hunt deer and pick mushrooms, he said, adding that much of the forest is still closed with no end in sight.

Drought conditions can spread Valley fever

By Sammy Caiola, Sacramento Bee

Don Hopkins, a former Davis police officer and professional ballroom dancer, is having some trouble staying on his feet.

Hopkins, 67, is still physically drained from an early May trip to Mercy Hospital at Folsom, where doctors pumped him with pneumonia antibiotics for more than a week before accurately diagnosing his Valley fever.

As Hopkins' temperature soared and he began to hallucinate, his wife, Lizette, insisted the doctors test for the disease, which is historically more prevalent in the southern Central Valley. Though Hopkins' test results would surprise many in the Sacramento region, experts say the fever is not constrained to the south state and can be carried to other regions via travelers and drought conditions.

"When doctors see somebody with what they think is pneumonia, they immediately give them antibiotic," said Hopkins, who lives in the El Dorado County foothills. "Often the patient gets worse and the doctors don't think about Valley fever. It

can basically disable a person for the rest of their life.”

Valley fever is caused by a species of fungus called coccidioides, which lives in the soil in Southern California, Arizona, Mexico and parts of Central America and can be brought to the surface by construction, agricultural work and other activities that disrupt the terrain, said Dr. George Thompson, director of the Coccidioidomycosis Serology Lab at the UC Davis Medical Center.

Read the whole story

Lady Gaga brings spectacle, self-expression to Tahoe



Lady Gaga in one of her less elaborate outfits.
Photos/Kim Wyatt

By Kim Wyatt

STATELINE – Entering the Lake Tahoe Outdoor Arena at Harveys on Aug. 2, I was greeted by statuesque geishas, wigs in every color of the rainbow, and a phalanx of tutus, tails and spiked brassieres—clearly this wasn't a Creedence concert. At Lady Gaga's Tahoe debut, a diverse gender-bending crowd posed and pranced for 3½ hours, the aisles between the rows acting as catwalks, with audacious self-expression at every turn.

"Who needs opening acts with a pre-concert show like this?" said my friend Jan.

Lady Gaga's "ArtRave: The Artpop Ball" is her latest tour for her third album "Artpop," released last year. Although most of Gaga's set was from "Artpop," songs from her previous releases like "Born This Way," added gravitas to the evening. Fourteen dancers added a charged, racy element, and her five-piece band provided solid musicianship – the sum was a visual and sound explosion.



Self-expression was the story of the night Aug. 2 at Harveys.

Was it art? Not sure. But it was a lot of fun.

Prior to the show, rumors circulated about Gaga's appearance poolside earlier in the day, ticket prices reaching hundreds of dollars and the enormous number of freight trucks that

transport her stage. Some compared set lists, and even noted that opening band Babymetal had changed the order of their set – these were Gaga’s hardcore fans, coined “Little Monsters,” but there were plenty of others feeling the love.

Babymetal kicked off the show, priming the crowd. Although I didn’t understand a word they were singing, the ponytailed Japanese girl group was adorably raucous while making a hash of their songs. With manga and kabuki stylings, the cheerful metal band was feast for the eyes if not the ears.

DJ Lady Starlight leveled out the vibe with a techno beat, which went on a little too long, long enough to make me feel as though I had two competing hearts, or had possibly turned into a puma. Wearing a loose Laura Ashley-style dress, Starlight too defied expectations – you can be anything you want to be at a Lady Gaga concert, even a middle-aged lady in a grandma dress.

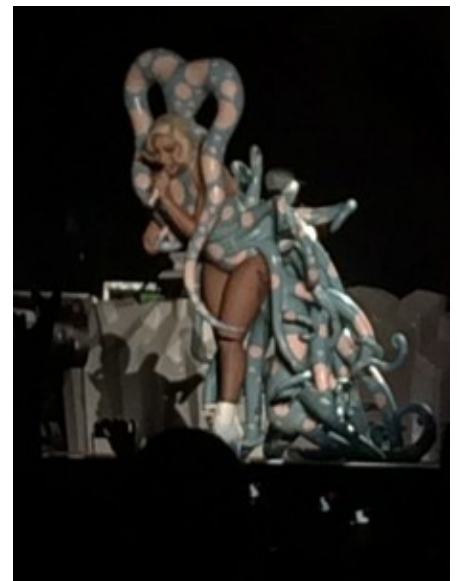
Finally, Lady Gaga took the stage in a gold-sequined butterfly leotard anchored by a huge Jeff Koons blue gazing ball on her chest, and held our attention for just more than 90 minutes. Seven costume changes and 20 songs later, the show ended abruptly with the lovely final track from ArtPop “Gypsy.”

In turns cool, frenetic or psychedelic, the cave-like set looked like the bar from Star Wars if it were made from a Frosty ice cream machine, just slightly hallucinatory, and Gaga occasionally played a piano tucked in what looked like a giant bed of crystals.

Costume changes set the tone for the songs to follow, with Gaga going from high fashion to Harajuku. Hardly anyone sat during the first third of the set. Songs mostly from “ArtPop,” and the Barbarella-esque swagger during “Venus” blew the roof off. Those dancing in the audience stopped to watch the spectacle of Gaga strapping a Gibson Flying V over her clamshell bra and little else. Here, her voice first rose

above the spectacle, clear and strong and true. This was followed by “Partynauseous”— the back-up dancers in Dr. Seussian spaceship getups – and Gaga sauntering out in an enormous polka-dotted squid bustle to play a seahorse-shaped keytar. (Have I seen that before? No.)

Although an extremely polished and clearly expensive show – the lighting and video was fantastic – there was a disconnect after Gaga took the piano with the chanteusey “Dope,” leading into her hit “Born This Way.”



Lady Gaga did not disappoint with her multiple costume changes.

“Stay with me little monsters,” Gaga said, as if she knew.

Until then, the crowd was on its feet. The solemnity of Gaga’s speech about social justice turned into a request to help fund the Born This Way Foundation, “to foster a more accepting society, where differences are embraced and individuality is celebrated.” Many stopped to text donations, and then paused for Gaga’s extended piano play. The concert lost steam again after that. Soon after came, ironically, the most lackluster number of the evening, “Sexxx Dreams,” a rehash of tired sex

tropes, in latex, no less.

The finale “Gypsy,” showcased Gaga’s vocals, piano, and songwriting skills. Although we had just witnessed a spectacle, here she stripped it down and her Little Monsters fist pumped until the end

Despite a few glitches, one thing was clear: People are desperate to be their true selves, and Gaga has created a family. There was a sincerity to this crowd that is sweet and surprising. They aren’t just dressing up; they are laying it all on the line. But here, everyone agrees you look fabulous.

In the end, Lady Gaga’s legacy will be not only her songwriting and catchy tunes – it will be those who have found sanctuary in her words, and under her sequined wing. And about “ArtRave: The Artpop Ball” – is it an attempt to merge high and low, art and pop? Is the tour just an expensive rave? Or freedom of expression that’s a bargain at any price?

Who cares? Let’s dance!

World Cup Soccer good for Nev. sportsbooks

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

In another sign that the American public is embracing soccer more than ever, the Nevada gaming industry appears to have cashed in on this year’s World Cup at a record level.

It’s difficult to say with certainty that betting on soccer hit a record this year, because the Nevada Gaming Control Board doesn’t break down revenue for the sport specifically,

but the category that includes soccer was up. That category is labeled “other” and includes such sports as boxing and auto racing.

But data from 1994 through last month show that “other” revenue in June is usually higher during years when the World Cup is held. And it’s grown tremendously.

In June 1994, when the United States hosted the tournament, Nevada reported \$1.05 million in “other” sports betting revenue. Last month, that figure was \$5.9 million – the highest “other” June since 1997, when heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson was disqualified for biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield’s ear during an infamous fight in Las Vegas.

Read the whole story

McClintock: People always know where I stand

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON – Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, now has a law to his name.

It’s pretty modest. But when President Obama recently signed a McClintock bill transferring federal land to an Indian tribe in California’s El Dorado County, it was a milestone of sorts.

The one-page bill transferring 40.8 acres to the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians marked McClintock’s reaching the White House finish line. More often, the 58-year-old conservative is a voice in opposition, decrying a government gone bad. It’s a distinctive approach, strictly principled and

at times, some say, uncompromising.

“I think you’ll find colleagues that like me, and colleagues that don’t like me,” McClintock said in an interview, “but they’ll always know where I stand.”

Presently in his sixth year in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing a sprawling and mountainous district that spans 10 California counties, McClintock does sometimes stand apart. He belongs to the House majority. He’s also a natural dissenter, shaped by years in the legislative minority.

The resulting tension is between governance and ideals, between deal-making and holding firm. It’s a balancing act, for which McClintock gets both praise and criticism.

“There’s no question that he’s a conservative,” said Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif. “And when he gets engaged and really tackles an issue, there’s no one better than him. I think he’s a good member.”

Critics, including some within his own party, counter that McClintock sticks to his guns to the detriment of legislating.

Read the whole story

9/11 museum weaves stories of sorrow, survival



9/11 Memorial pools are on the footprint of the Twin Towers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

NEW YORK – Voices overlap. Memories of Sept. 11, 2001, echo through the chamber. The chaos, the uncertainty, the fear, the loss.

“Regardless of where you were, you were there at that moment,” says one person.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum that opened in May is a collection of stories from that day going forward of the carnage, the rescue, the rebuilding – and of those responsible for the destruction.

Hearing what people experienced is so much more powerful than just reading the volumes of material provided.

Visual reminders of that day are everywhere. Steel tridents salvaged from the facade of the North Tower loom overhead as visitors descend into the museum.

The first overlook is almost like being at a construction

site. In the center is the Last Column. This was the final steel beam removed from Ground Zero after the nine months of excavation ended. It weighs 58 tons and is 36-feet tall. Then there is the slurry wall.

It wasn't just buildings that collapsed that September morning, but thousands of lives were lost and even more were changed forever. The museum, most of which is 70 feet below ground, will be a lasting testament to this country's ability to overcome such a tragedy.

In hushed tones masses of people are wandering through the multilevel museum. At times it is overwhelming – the words, the images, the artifacts. Graphic details are not spared.

The shell of Ladder Company 3's truck shows that first responders had no idea they were entering their tomb as they ascended the stairs of the North Tower. All 11 died when the tower collapsed.

Video shows people jumping from the burning towers. Quotes are on a wall.

"You felt compelled to watch out of respect to them. They were ending their life without a choice and to turn away from them would have been wrong."

Louisa Griffith-Jones, Lower Manhattan resident

The personal items can give visitors goose bumps. They make the human carnage real, whether it's items from a wallet, shoes or glasses.

Then there are the handmade postings of people missing. Most died. And some of those remains are behind a wall within the museum.

A room with walls of photos of those who died is chilling. It's possible to find out more about them so they aren't just a name or face.

The 9/11 Memorial, which is outside, opened on the 10-year anniversary of the attack. The two pools, each with 30-foot waterfalls, are on the footprint of the Twin Towers.

Etched into the side are the names of the nearly 3,000 people who died, as well as those killed in the 1993 World Trade Center attack. One says, "Rahma Salie and her unborn child." Roses have been left next to names.

Nearby is the Survivor Tree. It was salvaged from the ruins, a testament to how resilient New York is.

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Lazy summer days are time to recharge

By Cindy Krischer Goodman, Miami Herald

As the temperature rises and the day lengthens, summer slowdown creeps into almost every workplace. But this summer, a growing number of professionals are strategically using the downtime to rebalance.

Experts estimate that when vacation mindset seeps into offices during summer, productivity slips by as much as 20 percent. Rather than give in, some professionals are tackling to-do lists, researching new projects and brainstorming fresh ideas – activities that get ignored during busier times.

Duree Ross looks at the sluggish season as a time to rethink processes at work and home. After she sent her two children to sleep-away camp last week, she took a deep breath and began strategizing how she will break out time from her daily life –

chauffeuring kids, spending time with her her husband – to build her Fort Lauderdale public relations/events firm.

“My husband and I are going to Colorado and we are going to spend time together like before we had kids. We haven’t had that in 11 years,” she said. When she returns, Ross will focus her attention on aspects of her business that usually get ignored during busier times, such as updating her bio and website, and retooling marketing materials. “This is an opportunity to refresh in all aspects of my life.”

Some professionals are using summer months to sharpen skills. Barrett Wolf, director of office leasing at Turnberry Associates in Aventura, has hired a business coach and enrolled in Florida International University’s Summer of Well-being course to work on his mental strength – activities he can’t fit in during the rest of the year. “Normally, I’m 24/7. I’m using the slower months of summer to create a vision in my head for what I want for fall,” he said.

A former professional tennis player, Wolf now leases office buildings, restaurant space and aviation hangars. He is meeting twice a week with his performance coach to mentally prepare for stressful situations ahead, such as bringing a complicated negotiation to a positive conclusion. “With my new skills, I will be able to attack every scenario head on.”

Miami business coach Marlene Green says summer is for big-picture thinking about moving forward in your career and personal life. It’s a natural fit, she finds. “The heat alone makes you slow down and take inventory.”

Read the whole story

Nevadans defy party in vote to deport Dreamers

By Amber Phillips, Las Vegas Sun

Facing a contested re-election bid that is increasingly being framed around immigration, Rep. Joe Heck voted against a Republican bid to require the president to deport immigrants brought into the country illegally.

Heck was one of 11 House Republicans, including Rep. Mark Amodei of Northern Nevada, to defy their party in a much-politicized 216-192 vote to end President Obama's program that defers deportations of some of those immigrants, known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

There was confusion among House Republicans and Democrats about whether the law would allow immigrants whose deportations were waived to stay in the program.

The vote won't see the light of the day in the Democratic-controlled Senate. Instead, it allowed Republican leaders to garner enough support from their ultra-conservative members to pass emergency funds aimed at stemming the crisis of migrants on the border.

But while the vote helped conservative Republicans, it put moderates like Heck, a two-term incumbent representing Henderson and Boulder City, in an interesting spot.

Read the whole story