

Memorial Day – a time for remembrance, family



American Legion Post 795 chaplain Curt Emrie at the May 26 Happy Homestead Cemetery ceremony. Photos/Lesia Witkowsky

Veterans and family members arrived hours before the Memorial Day ceremony to ensure each gravestone of a veteran was adorned with an American flag.

Dozens gathered at Happy Homestead Cemetery in South Lake Tahoe to remember those who lost their lives fighting for the United States. Music, prayer and words from community members and political figures filled the still morning air. All shared personal stories and memories with the underlying similarity of honoring the men and women who had died.

Others throughout Lake Tahoe celebrated Memorial Day by relaxing or spending time with friends and family on what was

an unusually warm weekend with highs in the 70s. Many took to the water; some were going up the mountain via the Heavenly gondola, while others chose ice cream as a way to stay cool.

No vacancy signs were seen throughout much of the South Shore during the long weekend. It was practically bumper-to-bumper traffic getting out of the basin on Monday via Highway 50.

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– Lesia Witkowsky

Editorial: Pierini for Douglas County sheriff

Publisher's note: Lake Tahoe News convened an editorial panel of six South Shore residents to decide on this endorsement for the June primary.

The two challengers in the Douglas County sheriff's race contend morale is not great within the department and a change in leadership is needed.

If this were true, then we wonder why the Douglas County Sheriff's Protective Association endorsed Sheriff Ron Pierini. The bargaining unit represents deputies, investigators and sergeants in the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.



Ron Pierini

We concur with the bulk of the department's employees that Pierini should continue to be sheriff, a position he was first elected to in 1997. He started with the department in 1976 – having been a captain in Tahoe, undersheriff and now sheriff.

He faces Dave Brady and Michael Gyll in the June 10 primary. The top two vote getters move onto a runoff in November.

Brady and Gyll are outsiders, even though Brady had been a reserve deputy for the department before he declared his candidacy.

While it's not always in the best interest of a department to keep the status quo or to hire within, we also don't believe in the need to change leadership for the sake of change.

Pierini has proven he is capable of weathering many storms. We believe he will continue to do so for the next four years.

The sheriff's department's budget has been cut by \$2 million and 10 positions have been eliminated in the past few years. Despite the cutbacks, the department's arrest to prosecution rate is 38 percent. Nationwide the average is 22 percent.

He was at the helm when 9-year-old Krystal Steadman was kidnapped and killed in 2000 in Stateline. In 1980, he was a captain at the Tahoe substation when Harveys was bombed.

While we don't wish crimes like that to occur, it is reassuring to know someone with that breadth of experience will be directing the troops to find the bad guys.

By the nature of the job Pierini spends the bulk of his time in the valley. But he has a connection to Lake Tahoe that the other two candidates don't. This is another driving reason to keep Pierini in office. He works well with the other leaders at the lake – whether it is peers in other law enforcement agencies, fire personnel, casino executives or other business people.

Brady's financial background is intriguing and something often not seen in the ranks of law enforcement. But his character has been questioned. And already the voters of Douglas County ousted him out of office when he was a commissioner.

Gyll appears enthusiastic, but he presents no new ideas. He lacks the polish and gravitas to take on the top position within the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

We need a sheriff who can reach across the aisle. We need someone who is capable of making tough decisions. We need someone who is a leader in his department as well as the community.

That person is Ron Pierini.

Sorenstam to tee-off at Tahoe celeb golf tourney

By Associated Press

Annika Sorenstam is ready to tee it up again with the guys.

Eleven years to the week since Sorenstam played at Colonial on the PGA Tour, she announced Monday she'll compete in July at the American Century Celebrity golf championship at Lake

Tahoe.

The 43-year-old LPGA hall of famer who has a second home at Incline Village says she'll play from the same tees as the men in the field full of sports legends and entertainers, including defending champion Billy Tolliver, eight-time winner Rick Rhoden and five-time champ Dan Quinn.

Sorenstam, the mother of two, says she hasn't played a lot of golf since she retired five years ago, but she's working on her game now to try to win the 54-hole tourney at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Study: Being stressed at work is the norm

By Patricia Sabatini, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Feeling frazzled at work? So is your annoying co-worker.

A recent survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Everest College found 80 percent of Americans feel stressed by at least one thing on the job.

Workers in the Northeast were the most in need of a chill pill, with 86 percent feeling stressed compared with a low of 75 percent in the West.

Overall, long commutes and low pay tied as the No. 1 workplace stressors, closely followed by unreasonable workloads. Annoying coworkers ranked third.

Next came poor work-life balance, working in a job that is not a chosen career, lack of advancement and fear of being fired

or laid off.

Read the whole story

Aquatic invasive species hard to keep in check

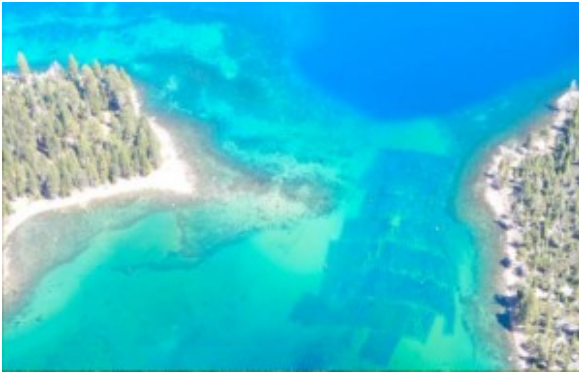
By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Aquatic invasive species are never going to disappear completely, but it is possible to manage them and possibly keep some from reaching Lake Tahoe area waterways.

That was the message Thursday during a talk from various experts at the Tahoe Environmental Research Center at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

Eurasian milfoil has been here for years – predominately in the Tahoe Keys. New Zealand mud snails are also in Lake Tahoe. What aren't here are Quagga and zebra mussels. Those are two of the major threats to any body of water because they have yet to be eradicated from waters they've invaded.

With Lake Tahoe seeing about 15,000 boats a year, and that number on the rise, inspecting every boat that enters the lake is the only way to keep nonnative species away. In 2013, about 4,000 boats were decontaminated before entering Lake Tahoe.



Mats, on the right, have been used in Emerald Bay to suffocate clams. Photo/LTN

Tahoe Resource Conservation District does the inspections in the basin. More Tahoe-only boats are coming through, which means they are not going to another body of water. This then reduces the threat of Tahoe being contaminated.

The mussels can threaten water in-take locations, ruin the ecological diversity and potentially have an economic impact if they take hold because people will not re-create where they are.

The Thursday forum on the North Shore featured speakers from TRCD, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Trout Unlimited, California State Parks, Tahoe Keys, and League to Save Lake Tahoe.

One of the problems is that funding is running out to maintain the prevention programs that are in place. It costs about \$1.5 million a year for the Lake Tahoe prevention program. Half is from fees, the other comes half from the federal government via the land sales in Southern Nevada. Those dollars are about exhausted.

The overwhelming message is that people accessing any lake need to be aware of the vessel they are using or gear.

The latter is important because it is anglers who are most prone to transport the New Zealand mud snails via what they

are wearing. They are so tiny and asexual that it just takes one to make many. They were first documented in the Truckee River in 2013, but likely had been there for a few years.

They can live up to 24 days without water and 50 days in damp conditions, according to Dave Lass with Trout Unlimited.

The mouth of Emerald Bay had a huge Asian clam problem a few years ago. Mats were laid down as a way to suffocate them. It worked.

Dan Swan with State Parks showed dramatic photos of what Emerald Bay looked like in 2010 compared to 2013. The first year the waters were murky, brown, full of milfoil and looked almost like any California lake. Three years later the water was nearly pristine, the lake bottom could be seen and the invasive weeds were gone.

"We didn't find a single milfoil at the end of last year," Swan told the nearly 80 people in attendance.

Milfoil is a massive problem for the Tahoe Keys on the South Shore. The homeowners association has four harvesters that essentially mow the prolific weed. Harry Dotson with the Keys said 12,000 cubic yards of milfoil were harvested last year.

The development of the Keys turned what was the most sensitive marsh area in the Lake Tahoe Basin into a shallow warm water system. This in turn allowed for nonnative fish to thrive.

Patrick Stone with TRPA said last year killing these fish with electronic currents took out more than 50,000 nonnatives, mostly large mouth bass and blue gills.

The message to the public is the way they can help is to become a Tahoe Keeper if they are using a non-motorized watercraft, be part of the League's Eyes on Lake Tahoe program, and to make sure all boats are cleaned, drained and dry before entering any body of water.

Earmark ban not a problem for Nevada

By Amber Phillips, Las Vegas Sun

In Congress, the smoke-filled, back-room deal trading is gone. So is the more benign equivalent, the earmark.

Nevada's delegation is split about whether that's a good thing and one bill that passed Congress this week shows why.

Nevada lawmakers managed to get a major \$280 million flood management project for the Reno and Sparks area authorized as one of 34 projects in a water infrastructure bill Congress approved this week.

The process took a lot more work in today's post-earmark era, where members of Congress can no longer quietly slip pet projects into legislation without consulting anyone. Nevada's share of the water bill, for example, took a decade of lobbying from the most powerful person in the Senate, Nevada's Harry Reid.

Read the whole story

Report: Climate change will lead to less nutritional food

By Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times

Climate change threatens to undermine not only how much food can be grown but also the quality of that food as altered weather patterns lead to a less desirable harvest, according to a study.

Crops grown by many of the nation's farmers have a lower nutritional content than they once did, according to the report by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Research indicates that higher carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have reduced the protein content in wheat, for example. And the International Rice Research Institute has warned that the quality of rice available to consumers will decrease as temperatures rise, the report noted.

The U.S. should embrace research into animal biology and plant management with the kind of enthusiasm it did space exploration in the 1960s, the council said, warning that the consequences of inaction could be severe.

Read the whole story

A walk in the woods without a defined end point



AJ and Cody with Red Lake Peak in the background.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – Sometimes it's not about where you go, but who you are with and being in the moment. Such was the case earlier this month on a hike out of Hope Valley.

A fresh dusting of snow covered the parking lot at Pickett's Junction, as well as along the trail. The temperature was so cold at the start Rosemary and I both guessed the other was going to cancel.

Nope. We just bundled up and looked a bit like we were on a winter excursion. Such is Tahoe in May – unpredictable.

While the original intent was to hike to Burnside Lake, we opted to set a time instead. We said two hours.

For runners out there, this is plenty of time to make it to the lake. Bri, Rosemary's daughter, made it to Burnside and back to the car in the two hours. Her 13-plus miles also included a few detours off the main route.

We, too, were lured off trail. There are a multitude of U.S. Forest Service roads. Even the main trail we are on is really a road. This road in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is closed about a quarter mile from the parking area in the winter – or when conditions are still wet and muddy.

The topo map – which we didn't have with us – shows Burnside Lake pretty much a straight line from the highway. In reality there are turns in the main trail with a ton of off-shoot options. Don't take them if you want to make it to the lake.



Remnants of the Burnside Fire from a few years ago are still visible.

I had my four-legged daughter, AJ, and Rosemary had her four-legged grandson, Cody. It was Mother's Day, after all. And this was AJ's first real hike since hiking in the Carson Valley that ended with several stitches after she splayed her hindquarters on something sharp.

She was running wild, like this could have been her first romp in the woods. With being part greyhound, I'm sure she is faster than California Chrome. At least it looked that way as I watched a sleek blonde streak through the forest.

The part of the trail we did was for the most part a gradual uphill climb. It's a dirt road – plenty wide for all of us when the dogs chose to join us.

It didn't matter that we didn't reach the lake. The beauty captivated us – as did our conversation. Sometimes a hike in the woods is more about friendship and what is right there than what is at the end of the trail.

One of our forays off the main road led us to a wonderful meadow with a spectacular view of Red Lake Peak. At 10,061 feet, it's hard not to notice it at various points.

The first people, outside of native Americans, to have talked of hiking the peak were John C. Fremont and Charles Preuss. They did so in February 1844. It was from Red Lake Peak that Fremont first saw Lake Tahoe.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Turn left in Meyers past the bug station onto Highway 89. At the T go straight into the parking lot. Start walking.

Report: Kids being medicated

at alarming rate

By Alan Schwarzmay, New York Times

ATLANTA – More than 10,000 American toddlers 2 or 3 years old are being medicated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder outside established pediatric guidelines, according to data presented last week by an official at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report, which found that toddlers covered by Medicaid are particularly prone to be put on medication such as Ritalin and Adderall, is among the first efforts to gauge the diagnosis of A.D.H.D. in children below age 4. Doctors at the Georgia Mental Health Forum at the Carter Center in Atlanta, where the data was presented, as well as several outside experts strongly criticized the use of medication in so many children that young.

The American Academy of Pediatrics standard practice guidelines for A.D.H.D. do not even address the diagnosis in children 3 and younger – let alone the use of such stimulant medications, because their safety and effectiveness have barely been explored in that age group. “It’s absolutely shocking, and it shouldn’t be happening,” said Anita Zervigon-Hakes, a children’s mental health consultant to the Carter Center. “People are just feeling around in the dark. We obviously don’t have our act together for little children.”

Read the whole story

Camp teaches kids grief is a part of life

By Susan Wood

Steven Gerling shrugs at the thought of being a role model to young children so early in life – age 16. He's modest. He's responsible. He's sensitive. And he's ahead of his time – for reasons that have made him grow beyond his years.

He's lost four grandparents, all whom he was close to, in less than five years. With the first loss of his grandpa Jim in 2010 and grandma Mary in the same month of the following year (both on his father's side), he ended up at Camp Sunrise with his siblings.

The free camp sponsored by Barton Home Health and Hospice is like no other. It's set in the beauty of Glenbrook's spiritual retreat Galilee every spring, a time of renewal. It's specifically designed for ages 7 to 14.

Were there highs and lows?



Melissa Barcus with son Steven Gerling. Photo/Susan Wood

"My high was the whole experience – the fun activities, even the crying. It was a good thing to let it all out," he told

Lake Tahoe News. "There were no lows."

To this day, tears well up when he thinks of the special relationships he had with his grandparents.

Regrets are few, but memorable, as is the case with most cases of grief. The teen had wished he had spent more time with his grandmother.

This is one example of the honesty that comes out at Camp Sunrise.

"My first thought was (my kids) don't need this. How depressing. But then I thought they don't necessarily want to talk to me about everything. They came back different, like they grew. It's made our relationship stronger. We've always been one unit, but it does make you closer," mom Melissa Barcus said of her four children – Steven, Jason, Michael and Sydney.

The family of five eats dinner together every night (with no cellular phones at the table), and they often go for walks after the meal. She specifically held back and let them approach her after the camp experience because she "didn't want to invade their privacy."

All of a sudden, the floodgates opened and the children opened up like never before.

"I think it's one of the best things that's happened to my kids," she said.

Upon his return, Gerling gripped his mom a little tighter during their usual hugs.

The teen started out as a participant in 2010. He got so much out of it that he asked Barton camp organizer Tina Bruess how many years he could attend. When he maxed out at age 14, that didn't stop him. He chose to volunteer last year. He'll do the same for this year's camp slated from June 13-15. And he's

still dealing with loss having lost two more grandparents in the last two years.

As anyone who has suffered from a loss of a loved one knows, you find kin in the fellowship of those who have experienced it. Children going through grief offer a different dimension of dealing with this life lesson.

"It's especially hard for children. They know grandma and grandpa as big people. Then, their physical presence is very different," Bruess said, while sitting to reminisce with Gerling and Barcus. "We let kids know it's a safe place to cry, but they can always be a kid."

One of Bruess's fondest memories is how Gerling tucked in his little sister, Sydney, every night to check on her and give her a hug and a kiss.

Neither Bruess nor Barcus was surprised by the behavior.

"He knows what it feels like to have a loss and the younger kids feel like he's cool and has made it through (the experience)," Bruess said, recalling how many of the younger children climbed all over Gerling for comfort and support.

"For Steven, it's natural for him," Barcus said, turning to her son. "You're a protector."

Such is the dynamic of the varied ages and roles at the camp. Parents join their children for part of the last day, after the participants have completed some heartfelt exercises on their own.

Gerling preferred the "memory" rocks the children placed in a labyrinth, a spiritual ring of hope. They also make "power sticks," in which the children dress up a piece of wood with materials that symbolize the loss or a characteristic about the bereaved.

"Their power sticks are still hanging in their bedrooms,"

Barcus said of her children's receptiveness to the exercise.

Each year, Gerling's power stick has a different look.

To that, Bruess indicated: "Grief evolves."

No one knows better than the hospice services coordinator. She has staged many bereavement events and activities. This reporter participated in a moving tribute to a sister's memory that Barton Hospice put on last Christmas season. The health care department also goes to South Tahoe High School to do focus groups on grief. Camp Sunrise is Barton Hospice's premier event.

"Camp Sunrise provides a supportive space for grieving children to explore and express their feelings of grief," said Rebecca Phillipsen, licensed social worker and camp co-director.

For more information, call 530.543.5614.