

Locals talk of struggles, joys of living at Tahoe



Jerry Johnson, from left, Jack Martin, Carolyn Meiers, Bob Rockwell and moderator Dave Borges. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Tahoe has never been an easy place to make it. But something about the mountains, the lake – it keeps people here.

Four people with deep roots on the South Shore shared their stories Tuesday night with nearly 100 people who gathered at Camp Richardson Lodge. This is one of a series of programs Lake Tahoe Historical Society is putting on.

Jack Martin moved to the area in 1937 and is now in Gardnerville, Jerry Johnson arrived in 1946, Carolyn Meiers in 1953 and Bob Rockwell in 1962.

Martin's parents owned Martin's Lodge where the Raley's center at the Y is. Fishing was always Martin's love. He remembers when the road to Placerville would be closed and they'd go fishing on the lake because the warden wouldn't be coming to town.

Meat came from Barkley Meats. There wasn't always the money to pay for it, so when someone would come calling for cash the Martin boys were told by their mom to be quiet so the person would go away.

Martin said how Harvey Gross asked his dad, Bode Martin, to go in on the land that is now Harveys casino, but his dad said no because he wasn't into gambling.

Jerry Johnson also had a story about Gross. It was about 1946 and Gross could not make his car payment so the vehicle was repossessed.

"Everyone at Tahoe struggled financially," Johnson said. "There were no secure jobs here."

His father-in-law ran Nel's Tahoe Supply. He'd leave a note on the counter saying if you need anything, just add it to your account. And people did.

Electricity often was going out and sometimes for days at a time. During those times Meiers remembers filling the bathtub with water just in case it would be needed.

It wasn't until Rockwell was an adult that he found out why he and his family were regulars at the South Shore Room at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. He knew this wasn't normal because he never saw any of the other "motel kids" there. (His family used to own various motels in town.)

His dad told him it all had to do with a deal he made with a man, who still lives in town. The man worked at the showroom, but had a way with women he wasn't married to. A hotel room

was always available for him in exchange for the unlimited comps.

Meiers remembers being a guest at the South Shore Room too, seeing people like Red Skeleton. Her dad had done all the wiring there.

One of the houses they lived in was behind the old Barton Ranch. Bill Barton, better known as Papa Barton, would come over for fried brains that Meiers said her mom would make. All the while he would be smoking his pipe.

“He was a delightful man, very quiet and very unassuming; unlike Alva, who was a real chatterbox,” Meiers said.

Johnson’s memories date back to when Cave Rock had only one bore, and Kingsbury Grade and Pioneer Trail were gravel roads.

Skiing was a part their lives at one time. It’s just what you did if you lived here. Johnson was the only one at South Tahoe High to letter in basketball and skiing at the same time.

There was Nebelhorn Ski Resort at the top of Echo Summit and White Hill near Spooner Summit. By 1962, Heavenly had three chairlifts and two rope tows. Rockwell remembers lift tickets being \$4 for adults and \$2 for kids.

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Notes:

- DVDs of the November history talk are available at Lake Tahoe Museum.
 - There will be another history talk in the fall.
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Californians split on drought response



Frank Gehrke with the Department of Water Resources measures the water content of snow at Phillips Station earlier this year. Photo/LTN file

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Californians agree their state is parched, but they diverge by region on how supplies dried up and what should be done about the drought.

“There’s clearly a consensus that the state has a serious water shortage,” Field Poll director Mark DiCamillo said of a survey on the subject released Tuesday. “There, however, is no consensus to what got us into this situation.”

Most voters told the Field Poll the state is grappling with a serious water shortage, and nearly two-thirds described the shortfall as “extremely serious.” While recent rains have somewhat replenished snowpack and reservoirs, the current drought remains one of the state’s worst.

[Read the whole story](#)

Tiny bear cub being cared for at LTWC



Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care got custody of this bear cub on April 15. Photos/DanThriftPhotography.com

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is caring for a healthy bear cub after it was first dropped off at the Bear League.

The little girl, about 2 months old and weighing 5.4 pounds, was discovered by Ann Bryant of the Bear League on April 15. The bear was in one of the cages she keeps out front of the West Shore-based animal group's offices. No note, no contact info – nothing was left with her.

Officials hope someone will call to say where the cub was found. Speculation is she was a twin or triplet, so if the mother was killed, it's possible other cubs are wandering around.



She is small, but healthy.

"She is healthy. She is not emaciated. She's a little dehydrated, but not enough to be worried about," Tom Millham with LTWC told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She has a little rash, which veterinarian Kevin Willitts took samples of, as well as some blood. Those have been sent to the lab for testing.

This is the second smallest cub LTWC has received. The smallest weighed in at 4.5 pounds. It, too, arrived on April 15 – but that was about seven years ago.

The South Shore animal rehab center usually doesn't see bears until June.

And normally the center has a lull in between bears because January and February is the usual time to release the animals back into the wild. But because there was no snow this year that didn't happen.

Instead, the three bears LTWC has rehabbed will be released by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife on April 23. They came from Truckee, Meeks Bay and Heavenly. At this time

it is not known where they will be released.

S. Tahoe nips annual pot shop event in the bud

By Kathryn Reed

One day Julian Marley might write a song about South Lake Tahoe, or maybe Reno, since that is where he will end up playing on Sunday.

Marley, son of the legendary Bob Marley, along with the Uprising Band were slated to be the headliner of the 4th annual TWC Cannabis Cup on April 20. The South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday quashed that idea.

Cody Bass, who runs Tahoe Wellness Cooperative, appealed the city's denial for a special activity permit. Bass has had such a permit for the last three years to put on a one-day event in the parking lot in the portion of Bijou Center that his landlord owns.

As with most events, his has grown over the years. This year it was to include Marley playing in the parking lot to anyone over 18 who paid for a ticket, and the cannabis cup that would have been inside the collective and for members only.

The City Council on a 5-0 vote after about two hours of discussing the matter said no way. That was staff's recommendation.

"It's a bummer for us," Bass told *Lake Tahoe News* after the decision. "It's mind blowing to me that in the end they didn't make it happen."

For permits like this on private property the applicant needs to apply no less than two weeks in advance. Bass did that. He also said the city never presented him with any complaints from the prior year.

What the city took issue with is that the original permit filed on April 4 did not resemble the promotional material that was being circulated for the event. This raised concerns about parking, noise and disturbance to neighboring businesses, as well as possible traffic issues along Highway 50.

“He was informed it violated the dispensary permit,” Hilary Roverud, with the city’s planning department, told the council.

Bass said the cannabis cup is allowed under state and local law because only people with medical marijuana cards are allowed to participate. He also pointed out how a number of cities in the state allow these and in some ways are partners by having them on city owned property.

Bass submitted another proposal that eliminated the cannabis cup and only had the music portion. Staff denied this as well, primarily citing that without consent from the adjacent property owner to allow parking that there was no plan in place to accommodate people. Security and transportation were other concerns of the city’s.

Bass said he could make it all work.

Collectively the council believed Bass should have been working with the city sooner. He repeatedly said he worked within the city’s guidelines.

The city offered to help him to move the event to Bijou Community Park, but Bass did not want to go there. He said it wouldn’t work for the stage and didn’t want to be the test case for such an event of this magnitude there.

It's estimated about 1,300 would have attended the concert.

Bass asked the city to allow him to use Lakeview Commons, saying the concert would be open to everyone for free. The city said no; it did not want to have to revise its rules about the use of that venue at this late date.

Bass told *Lake Tahoe News* the concert will go on. Now it will be at the Knitting Factory in Reno on Sunday.

As for what will happen in the future, Bass predicts with Nevada getting into the medical marijuana business and Reno allowing 11 shops, that a cannabis cup will be in the Biggest Little City's future and South Lake Tahoe will let this opportunity go up in smoke.

N. Nevada casinos see a resurrection of sorts

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

RENO – The signs of decay linger on Virginia Street, the main casino corridor in “The Biggest Little City in the World.”

Pawn shops and cut-rate motels line up alongside the high-end hotel towers. The strip is still pocked with shuttered casinos, victims of the recession and burgeoning competition from Northern California's Indian tribes.



Reno casinos are seeing an uptick in business and are reinvesting in their product. Photo/LTN file

But signs of comeback – slow and steady – are evident as well. Construction crews are turning the old Fitzgeralds casino, closed since 2008, into the outdoor-themed Whitney Peak Hotel. A small slot-machine parlor called Siri's Casino soon will open next door.

In nearby Sparks, the Grand Sierra Resort is pouring \$30 million into new amenities, including a chic \$15 million nightclub. The new owners of the venerable John Ascuaga's Nugget are spending \$50 million on a honky-tonk entertainment venue, a new sports-betting operation and other upgrades. Closer to the California border, Boomtown Casino is putting \$20 million into an overhaul.

Even among casino executives, the optimism is growing. Many say they think Reno has withstood the worst that the California tribes can dish out. With the overall economy improving, combined casino revenue in Washoe County, including the North Shore of Lake Tahoe, rose almost 4 percent last year. That was the first increase since 2006.

Ken Adams, a Reno gambling consultant, said California's casinos remain a potent threat to Northern Nevada. That's especially true at Tahoe, which is more at the mercy of the weather than Reno and has taken a bigger hit in recent years.

In the main casino corridor at the South Shore, gambling revenue has fallen one-third in the past decade and, unlike Reno, hasn't bottomed out yet. Hotel occupancy at the South Shore, on both sides of the state line, also has dropped by one-third since 2003, although overnight stays have improved slightly the past two years.

Read the whole story

Novasel: 'Economic vitality is the most important issue'



Sue Novasel

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News* asked the six El Dorado County supervisor candidates a series of questions. All are the same except for one that is specific to each candidate. The responses are being run in the order they were received by LTN. One candidate chose not to answer the questions.

Name: Sue Novasel

Age: 58

Occupation: Business owner – Tahoe Dream Events (wedding and event planning), wedding and event coordinator

Education: High school – graduate of Salinas High School – Salinas; AA degree from Lake Tahoe Community College; bachelor degree – University of Nevada, Reno. Other certifications: A+ Certified (IT) and public notary.

What elected, civic, nonprofit boards or groups are or have you been affiliated with and in what capacity?: Current: 11 years – school board member (president in 2008; clerk for three years) – Lake Tahoe Unified School District; president – Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe; vice president – Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care; secretary – South Lake Tahoe Wedding & Honeymoon Association; board member – Tahoe Chamber of Commerce; board member – Barton Foundation Community Advisory Committee.

Past: Chair – Meyers Community Roundtable Committee; member – Meyers Community Plan Team; member of the 56 Acre (Lakeview Commons) Community Advisory Committee and TRPA's Pathway 2007; president – Lake Tahoe Community College Foundation; president – South Tahoe Swim Team; president – Temple Bat Yam Board of Directors

Traffic is horrible on Fridays and Sundays throughout the county. Will you commit to not voting for any big subdivisions unless there is a plan to widen Highway 50? Why or why not?: No. Traffic affected by "big subdivisions" is commuter traffic Monday through Friday, not weekend traffic. In fact, HOV lanes that have been built to address commuter traffic are to some extent a Friday afternoon benefit for South Lake Tahoe weekend traffic, as our tourism customers will generally have two or more persons in their car, and qualify to use them. On Sundays, the traffic flow on Highway 50 west of Placerville seems to move reasonably well.

Heavy traffic that generally occurs Fridays and Sundays is

mainly through Placerville, from the Y to Meyers (especially during chain-up requirements and holidays), the Sierra-at-Tahoe intersection, and at the end of passing lanes in the American River Canyon. Those areas are not likely to be widened, but it is possible that the traffic could be alleviated by exploring operational changes. For example, stoplights in Placerville might be changed during the weekend so as to be timed with the direction traffic is flowing – east on Friday, west on Sunday. A designated chain-up lane and rest area in Meyers is a need that we addressed in the Meyers Community Plan that I hope will be accomplished in the future. This would allow travelers to move to the side of the road, creating better local access. Also, a traffic alert system (similar to those in large cities) installed throughout the city of South Lake Tahoe, Meyers and along the West Slope could warn motorists of impending traffic jams, helping to mitigate the log-jam of cars waiting for hours during peak periods and after serious accidents.

As to approval or not of a subdivision proposal, the responsible thing to do is to look at each individual situation as opposed to a blanket yes or no position. For examples: Will the new development bring needed housing to El Dorado County? Will it increase our local government revenues without raising taxes? Will it attract large employers in clean industries that will provide more local jobs? Will it increase retail opportunities for residents? Each proposal should be studied for its overall impact to our county.

What is your position on a proposed November initiative to control growth?: Fundamentally, I oppose ballot box planning, as it is counterproductive to consensus-based setting of community direction. It is far better to work together identifying problems, goals, and objectives and work out a plan that solves as many of them as possible, as what we have done in Meyers.

It is my understanding that there are possibly four proposed

November initiatives which affect the West Slope of our county. If the measures are approved by county voters, there is little doubt that protracted litigation will ensue. If the last two decades of El Dorado County history are any guide, it will take many years to resolve and at considerable county legal expense. The county doesn't have millions of dollars for court fights. The Board of Supervisors is the agency tasked with developing, adopting and implementing the General Plan. That's one of their most important jobs, and I look forward to working with all stakeholders in guiding the future of the county. TRPA will still govern virtually all planning matters within the Tahoe Basin, with opportunities that the District V supervisor can directly affect since the county has a seat on TRPA's Governing Board.

What are your thoughts of making Lake Tahoe its own county?:

It is not economically or politically feasible. The concept was briefly studied around 1980. At that time, it was seen as marginally feasible, based on the El Dorado County portion of Lake Tahoe being a city-county, and getting unique city-county revenues, like San Francisco. In the years since, more Proposition 13 type statewide initiatives, plus diminished population, have made the economic prospects worse. Politically, it would have to be approved by majorities both here and on the West Slope, which I consider unlikely.

What entities would you not take money from?: I will not accept campaign contributions from any organization or business whose integrity is questionable, or anyone whose activities bring harm to District V or our quality of life, or threaten the safety and well-being of our children, neighborhoods, schools, or businesses. I expect to receive support from a wide variety of individuals and entities. Anyone providing financial support must understand that supporting my candidacy does not mean having the expectation of getting my vote on an issue.

What would you do to boost the economy?: The environmental

restoration incentives developed by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in its new Regional Plan must be encouraged and made to work. We should improve our recreational business relationships with West Slope recreation providers. The City-County Recreation Master Plan currently in the planning process must also be implemented, but would need voter approval to do so. We should continue support for the El Dorado County and Tahoe chambers of commerce. The newly organized El Dorado County Community Development Agency must be successful in removing barriers and facilitating business formation and expansion.

What is the No. 1 issue facing District 5 and how do you propose to resolve it?: Economic vitality is the most important issue. TRPA's new Regional Plan update includes incentives and processes that can spur businesses to redevelop run-down properties or add new businesses to our communities while improving our environment. In addition, a huge issue in all of District V is the fire risk resulting from poor forest health. We must be sure we are organized for rapid response by CalFire, the U.S. Forest Service, and local fire agencies so that effective coordinated action by all can occur the instant a fire starts. Effective early action is critical to minimize the damage that occurs. Fire agencies did significant reorganization as a result of the Angora Fire. In addition, many regulatory obstacles to improved forest health and defensible space were removed or reduced as a result of the Angora Fire. We must be sure they stay that way.

Supervisors meet only once a year in Lake Tahoe. Do you believe this is fair representation? Why or why not?: I am convinced that once per year is all that is feasible, as the board also has to meet once per year in the other four districts (except for District III, where the county office is located). In addition, much of the county board business requires work with employees and should be conducted where the county's main offices are located for feasibility.

Having said that, the duty of the District V supervisor is to be sure the maximum benefit for fair representation is achieved when a meeting is held in other districts. For our district, that includes joint meetings with the City Council where the city and county both present their major issues and discuss items where joint effort is needed. They should also take tours of city and county projects and major issue areas. Meeting with representatives of Tahoe basin agencies such as the school and utility districts, Tahoe Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, and Lake Valley Fire District, their achievements, issues, and challenges can be understood by the entire Board of Supervisors.

Would you have voted for Red Hawk to be built and to divert Caltrans funds for interchanges? Those decisions are still negatively impacting the South Shore. Is there anything you would do to change the status quo?: To clarify, the Board of Supervisors never voted "for" Red Hawk, they voted to end the litigation that continued to obstruct it. By that point, state legislation and voter approved initiatives had created a situation where the construction of Red Hawk could not ultimately be stopped. In exchange for no longer obstructing it, the county received annual revenues to offset the facility's impact upon county services. If by "status quo", you mean the distribution and uses of funds that the county receives, then, yes, I believe there is a need to evaluate the extent to which District 5 benefits from those funds and whether District V is receiving benefits that were intended and/or promised under the agreements.

Would you support having more tax dollars from the county coming to the South Shore? Currently, more dollars leave the basin than come back.: I want to be sure that District V is getting its fair share and will fight to be sure it happens. However, I don't know of any study or analysis showing that more dollars leave the basin than come back, and have doubts that this is correct. For example, the basin, with about 20

percent of the county population, has its own set of secondary offices for more general fund departments than any other district, plus is the only district having its own juvenile hall and jail facilities. Those facilities are located in the basin because they are needed so that basin residents have equal access to county services.

To address getting the facts on this issue, my first step would be to appoint a committee of knowledgeable local citizen volunteers to do a study of the county portion of taxes collected and compare them with the costs of the general fund services they fund.

The county and the city of South Lake Tahoe have a long history of not getting along. How would you propose to improve the relationship?: The two principal facets of the relationship are (1) staff to staff and (2) board to City Council. To improve staff relationships, I would have the principal counterpart positions – county chief administrative officer and city manager, county counsel and city attorney – meet after I have facilitated development of a discussion agenda, then meet on a regular basis thereafter.

To improve the elected officials relationship, I would meet periodically with the mayor, and with the mayor's knowledge and approval, other members of the City Council.

These meetings would be in addition to being sure that my office did a very good job of setting up the annual "Board meets in South Lake Tahoe" meeting, as discussed previously. This would include setting joint meetings between City Council and county supervisors, taking tours of city and county projects with emphasis on major project areas, and meeting with representatives of other Tahoe basin agencies such as the TRPA, Tahoe Conservancy, Tahoe chambers, U.S. Forest Service and Lake Valley Fire District.

What is your vision for Meyers and how will you make it a

reality?: I have lived in Meyers (Christmas Valley) for over 30 years. As a member of the original Meyers Community Plan team, I helped develop a plan for the future of Meyers. After nearly four years of work on the plan, we succeeded in having the power lines lining Highway 50 buried, thereby improving the scenic corridor of the area. We worked on other ideas to improve the corridor that included: adding a chain-up/rest area to help relieve Sunday congestion; creating a new "Welcome to Meyers" sign to give travelers a sense of arrival; using an incentive program to create new town centers; and adding design elements to give our community a rustic, alpine appearance.

The new Meyers plan is similar to our original plan. But there is still work to be done on the plan – there are differences that need to be discussed and either approved by our community or changed. Meetings need to include all stakeholders and be properly noticed so that the Meyers community can have a proper voice in planning the future of their community. The most important part of planning is implementation. I will make sure that the new Meyers Area Plan, along with all community plans throughout District V, have the ability to be implemented properly by having county staff available and willing to help our residents create the vision that they see for their communities.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: My varied experiences and over 35 years as a basin resident have given me a broad-ranging set of connections with community residents, and broad-ranging understanding of community issues. They have taught me that good decisions result from reaching out to get information from those affected; listening carefully more than talking; seeking win-win outcomes; and achieving the greatest good for those I represent. I will increase citizen involvement in decisions by increasing local community meetings and improving communication throughout all portions of District V. I have a demonstrated strong work

ethic and the high energy demanded of a county supervisor. If elected, I will be your full time supervisor, fighting to be sure District V receives its fair share of county benefits based on the needs of its citizens, not proportionate finances.

You have been absent more than any Lake Tahoe Unified School District board member and that board meets once or twice a month. How can the public believe you will show up every day as a county supervisor?:

In 2013, I missed three out of 20 meetings, while two other board members missed two, another one, and the other none. Already scheduled to miss one meeting while being out of town for two weeks, another special meeting was called when the district staff realized that actions to ensure the construction season staying on schedule had not been agendaized for the meeting I was at. A poll of board members was taken, and while only three members could attend the special meeting, it was enough for a quorum – thereby causing me to miss two meetings. The other meeting I missed in 2013 was when I had the flu. I am a hard worker and have a serious work ethic. As county supervisor, I pledge to attend as many meetings as possible.

What do you do for fun?: I ski, hike, swim, mountain bike, kayak, golf and try to stay fit by going to the gym as much as possible. As a family, we travel and go to the beach on a warm summer afternoons. I also get a great deal of enjoyment out of giving back to our community by volunteering, especially at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Center where I help care for injured and orphaned wild animals and birds.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not know:

Many people don't know that I was an Olympic torch runner when it came through town in 1984 (on its way to the Summer Games in Los Angeles). I was the student representative to Lake Tahoe Community College's board of trustees at the time and they asked me to represent the college by running the torch for the school. It was such a great honor that I decided to

donate the torch back to the college and it still resides in their gym today.

Lake Tahoe – an all-day playground



David Turner and Chris Hernandez bike, golf, ski and wake surf – all on April 14 at Lake Tahoe.
Photos/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe is well known for mountain biking, golfing, skiing and water sports.

What it isn't well known for is being able to do all four sports in the same day. But then, what place is?

Two longtime South Shore locals could now be the poster men for all things outdoors at Lake Tahoe.

"We were thinking there are not too many places in the world, if any, you can do all those sports in one day," David Turner told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The 42-year-old South Lake Tahoe resident with his 35-year-old brother-in-law Chris Hernandez of South Lake Tahoe started Monday by riding Coral Loop when it was about 40 degrees out. Then they played 18 holes at Lake Tahoe Golf Course, skied the face at Heavenly Mountain Resort still in their golf shirts, and then went wake surfing on Lake Tahoe.

"The coldest part of the day was climbing up Coral Loop. My hands were freezing compared to the lake at 57 degrees," Hernandez told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The duo had been thinking about this quad-fecta for several weeks. It had to be just the right day to get in all four sports. Plus, time was running out as ski season is only going to last about another week in Tahoe.

April 14 became that special day.

For much of their outing they were the only ones re-creating – which added a special twist. No one else was mountain biking at that time or on the lake.

Because they were on a time schedule, they were playing golf as fast as they could. This meant passing some people.

The face was only open in the afternoon, so they had to time it just right. The three laps got them 4,800 vertical feet.

Then it was time to get into wetsuits for the wake surfing. This is like wakeboarding, but without bindings. Plus, the surfer is close enough to the boat to have a conversation with those on board.

“It was like an ice bath,” Hernandez said of the lake water. “It made our legs feel better. We were pretty toasted on the face. It was such a long mogul, bumped out run. Our legs were just noodles.” Plus, they had already had an active morning besides skiing.

Still, the two are ready for more. If conditions align themselves just so in another year, they are thinking of adding a fifth sport. But what sport, well, they aren’t saying.

U.N. panel: Climate change adjustments must be fast

By Nell Greenfieldboyce, NPR

A new report from the United Nations’ panel on climate change says major action is needed, and fast, if policymakers want to limit global warming to acceptable levels.

There’s an international target to control climate change: keeping the global temperature rise to just 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels – that’s 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change now says it’s technically possible to meet that goal. But doing so will

require rapid, large-scale shifts in energy production and use.

Greenhouse gas emissions will have to drop 40 to 70 percent by 2050 – and then drop even more, to nearly zero by the end of this century – the report says.

The trouble is, emissions have actually been increasing. The panel notes that emissions grew more quickly between 2000 and 2010 than in each of the previous three decades.

Read the whole story

Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep transported to their historical range

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Bighorn sheep are skilled mountain climbers. But one group recently made it over the Sierra Nevada crest in record time.

As part of an ongoing effort to return endangered Sierra Nevada bighorns to more of their historical range, state and federal wildlife workers captured 14 of the animals in the Inyo National Forest and transported them by helicopter to the Big Arroyo area of Sequoia National Park on the range's west side.

The four rams and 10 ewes, all but one of which was pregnant, were moved in late March to a part of the Sierra that bighorns have not occupied for more than a century.

Veil removed from human trafficking issue in Tahoe

By Lesia Witkowsky

Human trafficking isn't something that just happens in other places. It's an issue in Lake Tahoe.

Dylan Sullivan spoke about human trafficking as it relates to South Lake Tahoe at the Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra meeting April 10. She dispelled many misconceptions of human trafficking and stressed the importance of addressing the issue in El Dorado County.

"Because it's a painful thing to talk about we want to put our heads in the sand and pretend it's not happening," Sullivan said. "But it's happening in this town. We as a group need to say out loud, 'We know this is happening and it's unacceptable.'"



Dylan Sullivan talks about human trafficking on April 10. Photo/Lesia Witkowsky

Sullivan is a commissioner for El Dorado County Superior Court, where she hears family law, Child Protective Services, unlawful detainers, traffic, and restraining order cases.

She explained that runaway children are often the biggest victims of human trafficking in El Dorado County because of their vulnerability. They come from homes where they have either been sexually or physically assaulted, or both. Those children have a need for someone to care about them, and human traffickers try to fill that void similar to the way gangs recruit new members. According to Sullivan, the average age for runways involved in human trafficking is 12 to 14.

"We remember being 12, 13 and 14 and thinking that we understood everything in life. And we know 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds, and we look at them and see how innocent they are.... It is not acceptable for us to not get up and do something about a 12-year-old being prostituted," Sullivan said.

She offered advice on how to improve the situation locally by explaining that when a community gets behind a child, that child has the means to become successful. Instead of treating victims of human trafficking as criminals, they should be looked at as people who need the services of a dependency court and not the punishment of a delinquency court.

"I was an at-risk youth," Sullivan said. "I was a child that had serious issues in my household and I knew at a very young age that I had to take personal responsibility to change my situation. I thought long and hard about how I knew that because I want to be able to follow it up and give it to kids that I see are in crisis."

A missing person's report along with a warrant should be filed when a runaway goes missing so when police pick him up, he will be treated like a dependent and not a delinquent. Sullivan said El Dorado County is leading the state in this issue.

Sullivan also listed a number of actions that individuals can take to help victims of human trafficking. These include being informed, being prepared to help and reporting any suspicious activity to legal authorities.

“It’s something that we all need to hear,” Susan Baker, a Soroptimist member and former head of Mt. Tallac High School said about Sullivan’s presentation. “This issue is alive and well in our community and it’s going to take our community to address this. It can’t be just law enforcement, or just CPS, or just the courts. As a community we have to really be aware.”