

Nevada food exports hit a record

Nevada's food and agricultural exports have surged by 17 percent in the last two years.

Food and agriculture products are Nevada's ninth largest export category followed by precious metals and stones. The top four markets for Nevada food and agriculture products in 2013 were Canada, China, Mexico and Japan.

The majority of these exports – 94.8 percent – comprise 10 product categories that include cereals, flour and starches, beverages and spirits, grains and seed, fruits and vegetables, trees, plants and sugar-based products.

Export sales in 2012 were \$117.4 million, while 2013 exports were \$137 million.

"This is great news for Nevada's food and agriculture industries," Jim Barbee, director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture, said in a statement. "We look forward to further growth and increased job creation throughout the sector."

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, for every \$181,000 in export sales, one job is created and pays 17 percent better than a job not associated with exporting. In Nevada, that means 756 high end jobs were created in 2013 due to the state's food and agriculture exports.

State exports in 2013 for all industries totaled \$8.7 billion, down from \$10.26 billion in 2012. The largest decrease was seen in precious metals and stones, which could be explained by a drop in the price of gold.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nevadans least likely in U.S. to say teachers are well-respected

By Paul Takahashi, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada has a relatively low percentage of residents who say their teachers are well-respected, according to a Gallup poll released last week.

The public opinion company conducted telephone surveys with at least 600 adults in every state between June and December 2013, asking them whether they believed teachers in their city are well-respected.

The majority of Nevadans – 62 percent – said they believe their teachers are well-respected. However, that percentage was the lowest in the nation.

Read the whole story

Trove of trails to explore above Genoa



Plenty of views abound around nearly every bend of the Genoa Loop Trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

GENOA – People pay to go on hiking excursions all the time. Usually it's for a guide or a permit. Last week it was for a vet bill.

AJ and Cody thought it would be a great idea to go about 100 feet off the trail. The worst we thought is they would end up at the bottom of the canyon. Wrong. AJ came back with a gash that the next day required surgery. (She is doing fine, despite the cone and not being allowed to play for two weeks.)

It's just one of those things when you go off into the woods. There are sharp items. Was it a rock, a tree limb, part of a stump or something else? We'll never know.

But what it showed the seven of us is the necessity to have a well-stocked first aid kit. Between those who brought survival supplies we were able to come up with multiple items

to cover the wound of my four-legged daughter. Of course she wanted nothing to do with it so she ended up walking out without the torn skin being covered. She was on leash by this time.

Rosemary and I had attended a wilderness survival lecture last summer. Last weekend's experience got me thinking that maybe on all hikes or snowshoes I should carry my poles. We could have made a litter to carry AJ out of the woods. And it would be easy to put duct tape on the poles – because duct tape can be used in so many ways.

The hike

Carson Valley is becoming a hiking Mecca, with new trails being created all the time. Another route is being dedicated this weekend.

A week ago seven people – me, Sue, Suzy, Rosemary, Brenda, Danielle and Frank – and two dogs set off to do the 8.2-mile Genoa Loop. It has about 2,500-feet of elevation gain, which seemed to all be at the get-go starting from Carson Street.

The entire route is single-track. Luckily we all talk loud enough to allow for conversation with at least the person behind or in front of us.

It doesn't take long for expansive views of the Carson Valley to unfold. The land below looks fertile.

There are spots along the way where the trail splits, but they meet up again at the same point. Our guess is these are good passing opportunities for equestrians or mountain bikers. However, we only saw other hikers and some runners on the trail. And a sign along the way says the terrain is challenging and not recommended for horses or cyclists.

A short section is shale. Most of it is hardpack dirt. Portions are layered with pine needles. As it gets warmer and

drier, this trail is likely to be dusty, and definitely hot in the summer. Even on the first Sunday of April it was rather warm and nice to have as much shade as we did.

What surprised most of us was the abundance of water in various sections. This was perfect for the dogs.

Two other big surprises greeted us. One was Genoa Falls, which is about 12- to 15-feet high. It fell from a sheer rock face. Moss covered the lower rocks as bamboo sprung up along the creek.

Around a corner we came across a “Star Wars” pillowcase and a hard copy of “Field Guide to Trees and Shrubs” by George A. Petrides. What they were doing there we don’t know.

Rosemary added a compass to the collection and Suzy a pink flamingo keychain from Tampa.

“Lush” was the word Rosemary used to describe some areas of the route. And it’s not a word usually associated with the Carson Valley.

We scampered through Genoa, Schoolhouse and Sierra canyons along this trek. One misstep and it could be a long hike back to the trail.

While plenty of pine trees remind us we are still in the Sierra, the terrain was still much different than being in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

In a normal winter this trail would still have snow on it. A few patches remained on the side. There are other routes off this trail to explore on another day when my four-legged hiking buddy is able to explore again.

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Getting there:

- From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 east. Turn right onto Kingsbury Grade. Turn left on Foothill Road. Park near the Snowshoe Thompson statue – on the right – in Genoa.

Trail is across the street, up Carson Street.

- Park on Carson Street or on Centennial Drive for out and back hikes.

Other:

- Carson Valley Trails Association is online.
- Not all trails are recommended for mountain bikes or equestrians.
- Dogs are allowed.
- Clear Creek Trail grand opening is April 13 – 10am-3pm, 14-mile equestrian led tour to Knob Point and back. From 3-6pm is a 14-mile mountain bike led tour to Knob Point and back. Events start at Jacks Valley Trailhead on the west side of Jack Valley Elementary School.

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Judge: Treatment of Calif. mentally ill inmates 'horrific'

By Sam Stanton and Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

Following weeks of graphic court testimony and chilling videos of inmates writhing in pain as they were blasted with pepper spray, a federal judge has found that the use of force against mentally ill inmates in California prisons is unconstitutionally harsh.

Citing the “horrific” videos he viewed during hearings last fall and a wealth of other evidence, U.S. District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton on Thursday ordered state officials to continue revising the use-of-force procedures deployed against the state’s 33,000 mentally ill prisoners and to limit the use of solitary confinement as a means of disciplining such inmates.

The 74-page order cites the “overall significant progress” that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has made in modifying its use-of-force policies, especially new limits on how and when pepper spray can be used against mentally ill inmates.

Read the whole story

Gyll: ‘The department is in a tailspin’



Michael T. Gyll

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the three Douglas County sheriff's candidates a series of questions. The responses are running in the order they were received. All but one question is the same.*

Name: Michael T. Gyll

Age: 44

Occupation: Retired Nevada state police officer, Nevada Department of Public Safety, investigation division, headquarters commander.

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: Douglas County Parks and Recreation coach, Carson Valley Little League, National Rifle Association, Veterans Administration.

In Tahoe during the morning commute there are often multiple deputies out on Highway 50. How is enforcing speed the best use of limited resources?: Having patrols on the streets during commute hours is not just about enforcing speed limits. Officer presence is a deterrent. Those citizens who would not normally drive erratically, or push their driving abilities and their vehicle's abilities are much more likely to do so during commute hours due to being late for work or that always important meeting. When citizens drive beyond their ability they become a serious hazard to those who have planned their day accordingly. During commute hours vehicle crimes are not the only crimes that occur. Having deputies patrolling the highways also puts them in areas which would reduce response time to calls for service because they are already mobile and in the area.

When the South Shore is busy rental units often have so many vehicles they spillover onto the streets to create a problem for locals and pose a safety issue. Currently, nothing is

being done about this issue. What do you think should be done to address this ongoing issue?: Discussion/awareness town hall meeting with property managers and/or owners about the issue. Having grown up in South Lake Tahoe I understand the need for tourism and the effects it has on “locals” daily routines and lifestyles. The challenge is this; how do we create an environment that is safe and effective for visitors and locals while continuing to thrive as a tourist destination. When emergency response is hampered because of this issue, immediate and swift response should occur. If it is a nuisance issue, then discussion, time and understanding will have to be sought by all parties involved. If a solution or compromise is not realized then enforcement should take place. But all attempts to remedy the situation should be attempted prior to contacting law enforcement. To have law enforcement respond to non-emergency issues pertaining to parking would not be the “best use of limited resources.”

Do you believe it's better for the head of a law enforcement agency to come from inside or outside the department? Why?: There are pros and cons to both. Pros could be the fact that the person has intimate knowledge of the department's capabilities, personnel issues, department resources, etc. The cons are a high potential for “good ol boy” or nepotism scenarios. This is always an issue with smaller departments. There is also the issue of “If it's not broke, don't fix it” attitude. This attitude comes from individuals who have no vision for the department or community. Just because something works, does that mean it's the right or only way of conducting business? No. Just because it has been working for the last 16 years does that mean it works for law enforcement in the 21st century? No. Lack of vision and a status quo attitude will not survive in the arena that current issues have with law enforcement. An insider that lacks vision will cause a department to fall further and further behind. An outsider will bring new perspective, a fresh set of eyes and enhance the department's capabilities. You have a lot of qualified

personnel within these types of departments that find it hard to advance because of the negative issues described. An outsider will eliminate roadblocks to a qualified person's advancement by having that fresh perspective.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: I believe in this community and love the county I reside in. I have a lot of friends and acquaintances that call Douglas County home and have their business here as well. So when I retired from the state of Nevada, I became more active with those acquaintances and was overwhelmed with the lack of trust they had in their sheriff's department. Most cited bad experiences with the administration. As time went on, discussions were had about what can be done, then it happened, they started asking me about the possibility of running for sheriff. I continually dismissed their advances until one night at the father-daughter dance I found myself surrounded. I wasn't able to dance a single dance with my daughter. That night I thought about what had happened and wondered if there was any thing I could really do. I discussed it with my family, weighing the pros and cons and we decided that since we had so many friends at the sheriff's department and in the communities that my running for sheriff might be the right thing to. It's our community, our friends, our children's future, why not be the loyal resident and invest in our community? That's when I knew it was right and just and that this is what is needed for all.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I have the training, experience and knowledge to move the Douglas County Sheriff's Department forward in a new direction. With a fresh set of eyes and a new perspective, the sheriff's department will find harmony with the changing demographics Douglas County is experiencing. For far too long the sheriff's department has been steered into the 21st century with 20th century administrative views. With my experience, I can offer the deputies an opportunity to enhance their skills and abilities far beyond their current allowable limits. As for

the citizens and communities that make up Douglas County and are served by the sheriff's department, I offer strength and vision as an administrator that has not been realized by an administrator for the sheriff's department in at least 16 years. I started my career as a state trooper, through training, hard work and determination, I was promoted and transferred to the investigation division. I have conducted and/ or supervised many investigations which involve, but are not limited to: illegal/ illicit dangerous drug crimes, officer involved shootings, murder/ homicide, suicide, crimes against children and the elderly, and crimes against public trust. I have supervised sworn police officers and civilian employees, I have had the privilege of hiring well-qualified personnel, and relieving personnel of their duties using progressive steps in discipline which had included termination of service. I have the experience, knowledge and loyalty that the citizens of Douglas County deserve.

What is your stand on medical marijuana?: I believe that the path has been paved for the formal acknowledgment that medical/medicinal marijuana is here to stay. I believe the actual use of marijuana for the treatment of aches and pains is not justified. But I do believe the use of marijuana to enhance appetite and healing for cancer patients is warranted. If it is proven to help with treatment and it was my loved one, I would condone its use.

What kind of enforcement issue would that present for the department?: Medical marijuana is currently lawful in the state of Nevada. Enforcement is already being addressed and implemented for some time.

What do you believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: Open door access and complete transparency. There should not be administrative secrets between the sheriff and county commissioners. We should all be working to the same common goal, safety for our citizens and visitors to Douglas County.

This can be achieved by open and frank communication. Barriers such as egos and personal agendas have no place in the Sheriffs administration.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: None. First of all a 10 percent budget cut is unrealistic. If any cuts to the budget are made, I would reallocate resources, seek additional funding through OCJA and ensure that prevention, enforcement and presence in not diminished.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: I would have to decline this answer due to the fact venues are always changing and effecting Lake Tahoe differently each and every time. I must take a fluid stance and let it be known that every venue in Douglas County will be carefully scrutinized to ensure the safety of all who attend and/ or participate.

The sheriff's department has always refused to make the New Year's Eve celebration at Stateline a sanctioned or permitted event. The casinos have asked for this and have wanted to expand the festivities, but DCSO says no. Do you believe this is a good policy? Why or why not? And how would you address it?: For those of us who remember the '80s and '90s celebrations, I believe New Year's should have been a sanctioned or permitted event. But today's attendance numbers and the economy the way it is, it would be difficult to justify the additional expenses and personnel costs. If the casinos wanted to expand, where would they expand to? I think the enhanced outdoor venues during spring, summer and fall should give county commissioners an excellent perspective as to what would one additional venue really matter. If the county commissioners and the residents want to move forward and look at sanctioning or permitting the event, then I to would be willing to readdress the issue. If you stand back and watch, a lot of what happens at Lake Tahoe should be addressed

during the 4th of July arguments that are up coming.

The sheriff is a political position, something you don't have experience with as a trooper with the NHP. What do you see as your biggest challenge and how will you overcome it?: First of all, I started my law enforcement career as a state trooper employed by the Nevada Department of Public Safety, Highway Patrol Division. After working hard to attain all that I could as a state trooper, I promoted to the rank of detective and was transferred to the investigation division which is still under the Nevada Department of Public Safety. After a time of working undercover as a narcotics detective, I was promoted to sergeant and was the administrative and operational supervisor. I was charged with the coordination of a local task force which consisted of state detectives, detectives from three counties, agents from DEA, and agents from the Office of the Military and a traveling narcotic task force which was staffed with state detectives and assisted any of the 17 counties in the state of Nevada with trouble areas that a local detective or team would be unable to accomplish enforcement activities. I was responsible for the budgets, grants, training, equipping and evaluation of all personnel and responsible for all operational issues. I was then promoted to lieutenant and headquarters commander for the investigation division. I directly supervised two multi-agency task forces, the major crimes unit, the polygraph examiners unit, the Nevada Threat Analysis Center, administrative personnel assigned to headquarters, NTAC and Fallon. I was responsible for statewide budget as it pertained to training, travel, vehicle procurement, supply procurement, uniforms, salaries, fringe benefits and emergency deployments and/ or events such as air race crashes, floods, fires, active shooter incidents or any requests from other federal, state, local or municipal law enforcement agencies. So I know I have the experience, training, knowledge, demeanor and loyalty it takes to be the sheriff of Douglas County. I know I have the skills and abilities to perform those duties of the Douglas County

sheriff. I have the political experience and more to be a very effective Douglas County sheriff. Task forces and threat analysis centers are very political and are watched closely from the executive branch of Nevada government.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees? Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Of course I believe deputies should be paid more. When you are looking for a professional position as a deputy pay is only one part of the deciding factor to work or don't work for a specific agency. If all you wanted was higher wages, you would move to Las Vegas and work for Metro or Henderson. But if you want quality of life for you and your family and know that you are being paid well for the work you are doing and can wake every morning, look out your windows and see the majesty in front you being the Sierra Nevada, Carson Valley and Lake Tahoe, then the reduced pay is worth it. When elected sheriff I will of course lobby the county commissioners for better pay and work with the association to ensure my employees don't fall further behind in regards to pay and benefits. As for your comparisons, SLTPD and EDSO, it's apples and oranges, California and Nevada, but when you compare salaries to other Northern Nevada counties, Douglas County deputy wages are comparable.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: Douglas County Sheriff's Department with regards to personnel and equipment is as always lacking personnel. Equipment is always attainable, but qualified applicants are not. The department could stand to increase its number of sworn personnel, but that all hinges on the economy and county commissioners. As for other resources, well, we are professional law enforcement officers, we always want the

newest and greatest tools to perform our duties, and wish we had resources available to us like major metropolitan police departments.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: Morale.

The department is in a tailspin and the administration thinks it is fine so long as the administration can keep quiet the masses. The first issue I will broach is the morale issue and I will do this using peer and supervisor evaluation and review methods. If I was to start at the top, all I might get is smoke and mirrors and never get the core of the problem. I have found through my years of supervisory experience that most often the view of a suspected problem is less hazy and very real if you look at it from the line level personnel perspective. This goes along with my "new perspective, fresh set of eyes" platform. It's time that deputies are again proud of not only the profession they have chosen, but the department they have chosen to work for.

What is one do-over you would like to have in terms of a professional decision you have made?: I would have become a fireman.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: I was raised between Lake Tahoe and Placerville. My father was an El Dorado County deputy sheriff and my mother worked for the casinos. I went to Meyers Elementary, Sierra House Elementary, Pinewood Elementary, and graduated from South Tahoe High School.

Rafting season could evaporate quickly

By Paul McHugh, Sacramento Bee

California boasts some of our globe's hardest-working water. It flows off ski slopes, rolls past wildlife habitats, tumbles into reservoirs, then gushes through pipes and turbines, sprinklers and faucets. En route – particularly in a drought year – water managers horde every drop they can capture, and parcel it out according to an elaborate rubric of contracts and agreements.

Thanks to that essential arrangement, northern and central portions of the state will score a whitewater recreation season that will be surprisingly long and robust, but only on dam-controlled rivers such as the Klamath, Trinity, and south and middle forks of the American and the Tuolumne.

On popular free-flowing rivers, such as the Kings, Merced and California Salmon, would-be rafters and kayakers should look online to study flows and weather, talk to outfitters, and stay poised and ready to leap onto these streams in April and May. Once their thin snowpacks melt and flow down the canyons, they'll be done.

So much for the general whitewater season profile.

Read the whole story

Heroin spreads misery throughout U.S.

By Amy Forliti, Dan Sewell and Nigel Duara, AP

On a beautiful Sunday last October, Detective Dan Douglas stood in a suburban Minnesota home and looked down at a lifeless 20-year-old – a needle mark in his arm, a syringe in his pocket. It didn't take long for Douglas to realize that the man, fresh out of treatment, was his second heroin overdose that day.

"You just drive away and go, 'Well, here we go again,'" says the veteran cop.

In Butler County, Ohio, heroin overdose calls are so common that the longtime EMS coordinator likens the situation to "coming in and eating breakfast – you just kind of expect it to occur." A local rehab facility has a six-month wait. One school recently referred an 11-year-old boy who was shooting up intravenously.

Sheriff Richard Jones has seen crack, methamphetamine and pills plague his southwestern Ohio community but says heroin is a bigger scourge. Children have been forced into foster care because of addicted parents; shoplifting rings have formed to raise money to buy fixes.

"There are so many residual effects," he says. "And we're all paying for it."

Heroin is spreading its misery across America. And communities everywhere are indeed paying.

The death of actor Philip Seymour Hoffman spotlighted the reality that heroin is no longer limited to the back alleys of American life. Once mainly a city phenomenon, the drug has

spread – gripping postcard villages in Vermont, middle-class enclaves outside Chicago, the sleek urban core of Portland, Ore., and places in between and beyond.

It remains a small part of America's drug problem; cocaine, Ecstasy, painkillers and tranquilizers are all used more, and the latest federal overdose statistics show that in 2010 the vast majority of drug overdose deaths involved pharmaceuticals, with heroin accounting for less than 10 percent.

But heroin's escalation is troubling. Last month, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder called the 45 percent increase in heroin overdose deaths between 2006 and 2010 an "urgent and growing public health crisis."

In 2007, there were an estimated 373,000 heroin users in the U.S. By 2012, the number was 669,000, with the greatest increases among those 18 to 25. First-time users nearly doubled in a six-year period ending in 2012, from 90,000 to 156,000.

The surge is easily explained. Experts note that many users turned to heroin after a crackdown on prescription drug "pill mills" made painkillers such as OxyContin harder to find and more costly. Whereas a gram of prescription opiates may go for \$1,000 on the street, that same gram of heroin will sell for \$100, authorities say.

It's killing because it can be extremely pure or laced with other powerful narcotics. That, coupled with a low tolerance once people start using again after treatment, is catching addicts off guard.

In hard-hit places, police, doctors, parents and former users are struggling to find solutions and save lives.

"I thought my suburban, middle-class family was immune to drugs such as this," says Valerie Pap, who lost her son,

Tanner, to heroin in 2012 in Anoka County, Minn., and speaks out to try and help others. "I've come to realize that we are not immune. ... Heroin will welcome anyone into its grasp."

Minnesota: Message for the masses

The night before Valentine's Day, about 250 people filed into a Baptist church in Spring Lake Park, Minn., a bedroom community north of Minneapolis that brags of its "small-town charm and friendly folks." There were moms and dads of addicts, as well as children whose parents brought them in hopes of scaring them away from smack.

From the stage, Dan Douglas gripped a microphone as a photograph appeared overhead on a screen: A woman in the fetal position on a bathroom floor. Then another: A woman "on the nod" – passed out with drug paraphernalia and a shoe near her face.

Douglas didn't mince words. "You just don't win with heroin," he declared. "You die or you go to jail."

It was the third such forum held over two weeks in Anoka County, which encompasses 440 square miles of urban neighborhoods, rural homesteads and suburban centers that are home to nearly 340,000 souls. Since 1999, 55 Anoka County residents have died from heroin-related causes. Only one other Minnesota county reported more heroin-related deaths – 58 – and it has a population three-and-a-half times greater than Anoka's.

In 2009, when Douglas began supervising a drug task force, authorities were focused on stamping out meth labs. Heroin, with its dark and dirty image, just wasn't a concern. Then investigators noticed a climb in pharmacy robberies and started finding Percocet and OxyContin during routine marijuana busts.

As prescription drug abuse rose, so, too, did federal and

state crackdowns aimed at shutting down pill mills and increasing tracking of prescriptions and pharmacy-hopping pill seekers. Users turned to heroin.

“It hit us in the face in the form of dead bodies,” says Douglas. “We didn’t know how bad it was until it was too late here in our community.”

Douglas says authorities are doing what they can: educating doctors about the dangers of overprescribing painkillers, holding events where residents can dispose of prescription opiates, and aggressively trying to get drugs off the street. But, he says, “law enforcement cannot do this alone.”

The idea for the forums came not from police but rather from Pap, a third-grade teacher whose youngest son died of a heroin overdose.

Tanner was an athlete who graduated from high school with honors. In fall 2012, he was pursuing a psychology degree at the University of Minnesota, and dreamed of becoming a drug counselor. He had not, to his mother’s knowledge, ever used drugs, and certainly not heroin.

Then one day Tanner’s roommates found the 21-year-old unconscious in his bedroom.

Amid her grief, Pap realized something needed to be done to educate others. She met with county officials, and the community forums began soon after. At each, Pap shared her family’s story.

“Our lives have been forever changed. Heroin took it all away,” she told the crowd in Spring Lake Park.

Douglas says most heroin-related deaths he has seen involve victims who struggled with the drug for years. The detective usually tries to shield his own boys, ages 7 and 11, from what he sees on the job. But after meeting parents like Pap,

Douglas shared his heroin presentation with his oldest son, complete with the sobering pictures.

“Could I still be blindsided? Absolutely,” he says. “But it’s not going to be for lack of information on my part. ... I don’t want to scare my kid. I don’t want to scar my kid. But I sure as hell don’t want to bury him.”

Ohio: OD antidote helps save lives

Brakes screech. The hospital door flies open. A panicked voice shouts: “Help my friend!” Medical technicians race outside with a gurney. An unconscious young man is lifted aboard, and the race is on to stop another heroin user from dying.

It’s known as a “drive-up, drop-off,” and it’s happened repeatedly at Ohio’s Fort Hamilton Hospital. The staff’s quick response and a dose of naloxone, an opiate-reversing drug, bring most patients back. But not all. Some are put on ventilators. A few never revive.

“We’ve certainly had our share of deaths,” says Dr. Marcus Romanello, head of the ER. “At least five died that I am acutely aware of ... because I personally cared for them.”

Romanello joined the hospital about two years ago, just as the rise of heroin was becoming noticeable in Hamilton, a blue-collar city of 60,000 people. Now it seems to be reaching into nearly every part of daily life.

“If you stood next to somebody and just started a conversation about heroin, you’d hear: ‘Oh yeah, my nephew’s on heroin. My next-door neighbor’s on heroin. My daughter’s on heroin,’” says Candy Murray Abbott, who helped her own 27-year-old son through withdrawal.

Abbott and childhood friend Tammie Norris, whose daughter was also a heroin user, decided last year to bring attention to the problem in their hometown, using Facebook to organize

poster-waving demonstrations by everyone from recovering addicts to parents and grandparents of children who died of overdoses.

Norris could only shake her head at the surge in attention to heroin after Hoffman's death. "Well, duh," she says, "it's been happening to our kids every day – and nobody sees it."

A couple decades ago, the big problem in Hamilton was cocaine. That shifted to prescription drug abuse, which morphed into heroin as pharmaceuticals grew harder to come by. Now heroin-related deaths have more than tripled in Butler County, where Hamilton is the county seat. There were 55 deaths last year, and within one two-week period, the city's emergency paramedic units responded to 18 heroin overdoses. Once, they had five overdose runs in a single day.

Users run the gamut, says EMS veteran Jennifer Mason – from streetwalkers to business executives. They die in cars, public parks, restaurant bathrooms, a university building. Mason has found people turning blue with needles still in their arms.

Sojourner Recovery Services, an addiction treatment organization in Hamilton, has a six-month waiting list for beds for male addicts.

Romanello's hospital saw 200 heroin overdose cases last year, and countless related problems: abscesses from using unsterile needles, heart-damaging endocarditis and potentially fatal sepsis infections.

Overdose patients usually bounce back quickly after given naloxone, known by the brand name Narcan. It works by blocking the brain receptors that opiates latch onto and helping the body "remember" to take in air.

At least 17 states and the District of Columbia allow Narcan to be distributed to the public, and bills are pending in some states to increase access to it. Attorney General Holder has

called for more first responders to carry it. Last month, Ohio's Republican governor signed into law a measure allowing a user's friends or relatives to administer Narcan, on condition that they call 911.

Romanello says his patients are usually relieved and grateful by the time they leave his hospital. "They say, 'Thank you for saving my life,' and walk out the door. But then, the withdrawal symptoms start to kick in."

"You would think that stopping breathing is hitting rock bottom," adds Mason. "They don't have that fear of dying. You've blocked the heroin, and they have to have it. They go back out to get more. You haven't fixed their addiction."

Oregon: Former addict fights back

Before 9 o'clock every weekday morning, the secret to one of the most successful drug rehabilitation clinics in Portland waits behind a locked door. Meet David Fitzgerald, leader of the mentor program at Central City Concern, which claims a 60 percent success rate for treating heroin addiction.

The lock, Fitzgerald says, is a necessity because his addicts will take every opportunity offered, including early access to the "mentor room."

Inside, the walls are covered in photos, including a collage from last year's group picnic. Recovering addicts smile and hold plates of food. Seven months later, Fitzgerald looks over the faces. Are they all still sober? Are they all still alive?

"Most of them," he says. "Not all."

Heroin cut a gash through the Pacific Northwest in the 1990s. Then prescription pills took over until prices rose. Now the percentage of those in treatment for heroin in Oregon is back up to levels not seen since the '90s – nearly 8,000 people last year – and the addicts are getting younger.

Central City's clients reflect that. In 2008, 25 percent of them were younger than 35. Last year that went to 40 percent.

"A lot of them aren't ready at a younger age," Fitzgerald says. "The drug scene, it's fast ... it's different. It's harder than it was."

Fitzgerald, 63, speaks with a laconic prison patois, a reflection of 20-plus years incarcerated, all the while addicted to various drugs. The worst was heroin. In 1997 he got sober, and in 1999 he joined Central City Concern, then a burgeoning outfit.

Fitzgerald saw that the usual path for treating addiction wasn't working. Addicts were processed through detox for seven or eight days, then handed a list of tasks that included finding work, meeting with a probation officer, and locating the drop site for their daily food box.

"Like they're going to do any of that," Fitzgerald scoffs. "First thing they do is see somebody they know, get that fix."

Central City Concern instead accompanies clients to housing appointments, keeps their daylight hours filled with to-dos and requires they spend idle hours at the facility, where they also sleep.

It's a bare-bones staff operating on a razor-thin budget, and the crop of younger addicts presents a new problem: finding appropriately aged mentors to match them with. But Fitzgerald has hope in 26-year-old Felecia Padgett, who remembers clearly the first time she fired heroin into her veins.

"I heard one time somebody say it's like kissing God," says Padgett. "It is. It's like getting to touch heaven."

Padgett's six-year tumble involved, in order: heroin smoked, heroin shot intravenously, homelessness, one overdose, two close calls, a suicide attempt, arrest, jail, arrest, jail,

arrest, jail and, finally, a one-shot, last-chance stop at Central City.

Before sobriety, she found herself selling to people younger than herself, suburban kids rolling up in their parents' cars.

Fitzgerald doesn't yet have money to pay her, and Padgett herself is still in recovery. But she, and others like her, may play a crucial role in confronting the problem as the face of Portland's heroin addiction gets younger.

Fitzgerald knows that many of the clients he sees at 25 may be back in rehab at 35, but he tries to remain optimistic that some of what they learn at Central City will, ultimately, make a difference.

"That's about all you can do," he says, "hope some of it sticks."

Evaluation uncovers home water waste

By Kathryn Reed

All it took was looking at the tank size and the handle for the water wise evaluator to know the toilet was installed before 1992. In the world of toilets, that's pretty darn old. Even worse, it's a water hog.

Toilets already use the most amount of water of any household appliance – 26 percent. And an old one, well, it's practically off the charts.

That was one of the many lessons I learned when Donielle Morse

came to my house this month to perform a water wise evaluation. South Tahoe Public Utility District offers this service for free so people can learn ways to conserve water, identify leaks, and figure out if apparatuses are efficient.

“Not efficient” was the finding for one of the two toilets. STPUD has a rebate offer now of up to \$100 if pre-1992 toilets are replaced with a high efficiency toilet that flushes 1.28 gallons. Ours is flushing at least 2 gallons each time.



Donielle Morse tests the flow of water at the kitchen sink. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Then Morse gave me a bit of a lecture about what to be flushing. There was a huge spider in the bathtub when she went to check things there. I killed it with a tissue. It went in the garbage – because she said so – instead of down the drain.

“Only toilet paper breaks down,” Morse, who is a water conservation specialist, told me. “Even tissues don’t break down as well as toilet paper. If you were going to flush the spider, you would have wasted 1.6 gallons.”

And she also said the flushable wipes that are sold in stores

are flushable in the sense they go down the drain. The problem is they don't decompose. So in the water-sewer world they really aren't flushable.

Before Morse makes a house call she does a little research to see if people are on meters. (Not yet for us.) She looks at water consumption. She checks the age of a house because those built before 1992 are likely to have water-guzzling units. That is the year plumbing codes changed for low flow devices.

A low flow toilet, like in the guest bath, is a 1.6-gallon toilet.

Then Morse asks a series of questions to help her evaluate how our use might be changed to save some water. (I think I would use paper plates before I sacrifice long, hot showers.)

Questions include length of showers, how many a week, how many people in a household and things about irrigation.

Every place there is a faucet she looks for leaks. She even does this with the toilets by dropping a dye tablet into the tank.

Morse has a goodie bag of sorts with her. She leaves me with two aerators for the bathroom faucets. These were easy to screw in. They reduce the amount of water coming out so less is wasted.

Showerheads, kitchen sink aerators and toilet flappers can also be distributed for free of charge if she sees the need and people will use them.

The washing machine was replaced a few years ago, so nothing more to be done in that room. The district still offers a rebate on washing machines, which helped us save some money. Washing machines are the second largest water using appliance.

When it comes to washing dishes, Morse says, "Even older dishwashers are more efficient than hand washing."

All California households are supposed to reduce their water consumption by 20 percent as outlined in Gov. Jerry Brown's drought declaration earlier this year.

Snow was on the ground so we could not test the sprinklers for efficiency.

STPUD continues to offer its turf buyback program.

Water restrictions will be enforced this year. Even numbered addresses may water on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; odd numbered on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Morse suggests people adjust their sprinklers monthly to compensate for temperature. A yard doesn't need the same amount of water in June as it does in August.

"We recommend watering in the early morning or evening to prevent evaporation," Morse said. It's also less windy at those times.

There are even high-efficiency sprinkler heads.

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Notes:

- To schedule a water wise evaluation, contact Donielle Morse at 530.543.6368 or dmorse@stpud.dst.ca.us.

Study: Calif. women make 84 cents for every \$1 men do

By Shan Li, Los Angeles Times

Despite all the recent focus on female empowerment and “leaning in” at work, California women are still paid just 84 cents for every \$1 paid to men in the state.

In the Golden State, a woman who works a full-time job earns, on average, \$41,956 a year, compared with \$50,139 for a man who works full time, according to an analysis from the nonprofit advocacy group the National Partnership for Women & Families. That’s a wage gap of \$8,183 per year between the genders.

Collectively, California women lose out on a total of nearly \$37.7 billion annually, the report said.

Read the whole story

Future hardships for Calif. as drought persists

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

As California’s drought stretches toward the hot summer months, state and federal officials are planning extraordinary measures to protect drinking water supplies and endangered Sacramento River salmon, according to a plan unveiled Wednesday.

The “Drought Operations Plan” was released by the state Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which operate the primary systems of water reservoirs and canals in California.

Among other things, the plan calls for further loosening of water quality rules in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta,

allowing the agencies to keep river flows low to preserve as much water as possible in upstream reservoirs, especially Shasta Reservoir. Temporary dams are proposed on three Delta channels to allow the remaining freshwater runoff to more effectively push back saltwater intrusion from San Francisco Bay.

Read the whole story