

Calif. middle class feels health insurance squeeze

By Christopher Cadelago and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Dawn and Nick LaPolla of Fair Oaks are solidly middle class, and they aren't uninsured.

Yet their required switch to a new health insurance plan under federal changes puts them at a financial crossroads.

If they earn less than \$94,200 a year, the family of four's preferred plan through the California health exchange would cost about \$750 a month. But if they make even slightly more, they'll pay about \$1,040. That's because they would exceed the threshold to qualify for federal subsidies. Their current high-deductible plan, which expires in two months, costs \$573 a month.

Unlike wealthier state residents who more easily can afford the new, often more comprehensive plans, or lower-income people aided by government subsidies, the LaPollas are part of a sizable segment of Californians slowly coming to grips with dedicating a greater percentage of their income to new policies.

For the vast majority of residents, the Covered California subsidy isn't an issue. Low-income residents receive health insurance through Medi-Cal. Millions of others have insurance subsidized by their employer.

Read the whole story

Calif. beats U.S. in millionaires, food stamp users

By James Nash, Bloomberg

Gov. Jerry Brown, who decries a widening gulf between rich and poor, is campaigning for a fourth and final term presiding over a state that's outpacing the U.S. in producing millionaires and food-stamp recipients.

The number of households with more than \$1 million in assets gained 3.6 percent since the Democrat took office in 2011, compared with 3.5 percent nationally, according to Phoenix Marketing International's Global Wealth Monitor. Food-stamp use rose 18.2 percent in the period, almost twice the nation's 9.4 percent, U.S. Agriculture Department data show.

Brown, 75, who signed a bill to raise California's minimum wage to \$10 an hour by 2016, goes before the state Democratic convention tomorrow unopposed after turning budget deficits into the largest surplus in more than a decade. California's economic health improved more than 44 other states between the first quarter of 2011 and the second quarter of 2013, according to the Bloomberg Economic Evaluation of States.

Read the whole story

U.S. attorney, FBI agent

singled out for work

By Kathryn Reed

It is never the work of one person to put a criminal behind bars; it often takes cooperation at many levels.

The efforts of Michelle Rodriguez, assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California, has helped get a number of South Lake Tahoe's notorious criminals off the streets for years.

In her 20 years she has worked on the Jaycee Lee Dugard case, Operation Clean Sheets that involved fraud against the Redevelopment Agency, the Fedora bank robbery, multiple child exploitation cases, and more recently the case of disgraced South Lake Tahoe police Officer Johnny Poland, who in November started serving an 18-month sentence for obstruction of an official proceeding.



South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole reads a proclamation for Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Rodriguez.
Photo/LTN

As Mayor Hal Cole read the list of her accomplishments, he added, "It sounds like we have a horrible city here."

Rodriguez countered, "We're working together to pull the weeds

in the community.”

While the veteran prosecutor is not retiring, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department and local FBI office believed it was long overdue to recognize Rodriguez’s contributions to making the area a safer place by getting criminals locked up.

“What Michelle excels at is digging deeper, finding out what is really there,” local FBI Agent Chris Campion said at the ceremony last week.

Tom Osborne, assistant special agent in charge of the Sacramento FBI office, said Rodriguez “is a model for how to get things done.”

Rodriguez refused to take full credit for the accomplishments her peers spoke of.

“You guys make the cases and pound the pavement,” she said to the room full of officers.

Afterward Rodriguez told *Lake Tahoe News*, “What makes a difference is this community is interested in dealing squarely with the problems confronting it.”

She had high praise for Campion who was also honored for his years of service as the resident FBI agent in South Lake Tahoe. He admitted to the irony in everyone being able to keep the surprise from him.

“He can bring resources together and that makes a difference,” Rodriguez said.

While Campion is not retiring, his accomplishments were also noted. Both were given proclamations from the city.

“Mr. Campion goes out of his way. He juggles a lot of balls in the air at the same time and does so with aplomb and grace,” Rodriguez said.

Several South Tahoe officers praised the work of Campion.

“One reason I’m here now is this man shoots straight,” police Lt. Brian Williams said of Campion. They were involved in a shooting several years ago.

Also being presented was Poland’s badge. Campion returned it to Police Chief Brian Uhler. It was recovered during the investigation. Poland had given it to someone with close ties to gangs and violent people, Campion said.

El Niño could bring wet weather to Calif.

By Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times

U.S. government forecasters say odds are increasing that El Niño, an ocean-warming pattern that alters weather across the globe, will develop later this year.

Conditions in the eastern tropical Pacific have shifted enough that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday activated its alert system to issue an official El Niño watch.

The alert means that meteorologists now believe El Niño, a natural cycle that occurs every two to seven years, has a more than a 50 percent chance of forming by the summer or fall.

Read the whole story

Poll: Nevada obesity rate among lowest in U.S.

By Kira Terry, Las Vegas Review-Journal

A Gallup Well-Being poll released last week shows Nevada among the top three states with the lowest obesity rates with an average of 21.1 percent obesity.

Nevada comes in as the third lowest in the nation, falling just behind Colorado at 20.4 percent and Montana at 19.6 percent.

Gallup used information gathered from telephone interviews that took place through much of 2013 as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index survey.

The poll highlights that Nevadans and other top states with the lowest obesity rates have less of a possibility of being diagnosed with chronic diseases during their lifetime, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, depression, diabetes, cancer and heart attack.

Read the whole story

Soroptimist honor South Shore women, teens



Ten women receive awards
March 6 from Soroptimist
International. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Women helping and recognizing other women. That in large part is what Soroptimist International is all about.

The two South Shore groups came together Thursday night to honor local high school students, women who have made a difference in the community, and to honor two women who despite struggles are turning their lives around.

In the latter category, the Women's Opportunity Award was given to Monica Mata and America Ramirez Aranda. They were each given \$2,000 to help further their education.

Mata is a full-time student at Lake Tahoe Community who hopes to earn her associate of arts degree in a year. Then she plans to pursue a degree in criminal justice at CSU Sacramento.

But Mata is also a single mother of five children between the ages of 2 and 10. She works 40 hours a week at MontBleu. She has overcome domestic abuse and abandonment. But she said if it weren't for her parents, she would not be on the path she is today.

For Aranda, she too is a single mom – of one son. English is not her native language, but she was able to learn the language well enough to graduate in three years from South

Tahoe High School. She has an AA from LTCC. Now she is working on a bachelor's.

Aranda has worked at the local college for 10 years. After she gets her degree she wants to become a certified public accountant and work with low-income people.

She is chairwoman of the local Latino Affairs Committee.

The Ruby Award honors women who have worked to improve the lives of women and girls through their professional or volunteer work.

"Kathy has built a legacy and changed a school and the community forever," Wendy David said of Kathy Haven.

Haven was the driving force behind getting Bijou Community School to have a two-way immersion program.

"It's so nice to hear, but it's really not about me. It's a lot of people coming together," Haven said. "I just have the biggest mouth."

Also receiving the Ruby Award was Jeanette Shippee. She is the supervising cook at the El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe.

She does more than cook food. She has designed a culinary arts program in conjunction with LTCC that gives inmates college credits. They also leave jail with job skills. And while they are incarcerated, the inmates are doing most of the cooking.

The Violet Richardson Award is given to girls who are above average when it comes to volunteering in the community.

This years winners from South Tahoe High School are Emily Aminian, Zoe D'Angelo and Jessica Pak. The winners from Whittell High School are Danica Bunnett, Kelsey Kjer and Tori Jimenez.

Calif. sees dearth of new teachers

By Diana Lambert and Phillip Reese, *Sacramento Bee*

Young teachers have become far more scarce in California classrooms after school districts slashed their budgets to survive the recession.

From 2008 to 2013, California saw a 40 percent drop in teachers with less than six years' experience, according to a *Sacramento Bee* review of state data.

As the state cut funding, districts laid off teachers with the least seniority and stopped hiring new applicants. Those employment practices, in turn, discouraged college students from pursuing the profession in California, as enrollment in teaching programs fell by 41 percent between 2008 and 2012.

Students are learning from more experienced teachers, but the hiring changes have disrupted the natural flow of classroom talent that districts typically rely upon. First-time teachers bring "freshness and energy" and ensure schools have a steady pipeline ready to replace veteran instructors who retire, said Jon Snyder, executive director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Read the whole story

Theories abound on gold treasure's origins

By Samantha Schaefer, Los Angeles Times

The news of a Northern California couple's discovery of more than 1,400 gold coins hidden on their property has experts, history buffs and regular folks speculating on the treasure's origin.

Though officials said it is unlikely the coins were stolen in a turn-of-the-century theft at the U.S. Mint in San Francisco, some wonder if the cache could be one of many believed buried by the Knights of the Golden Circle.

The secretive, subversive Confederate group is thought to have hidden millions in ill-gotten gold across a dozen states to finance a second Civil War.

The coins very well could be a fortune buried by a wealthy businessman, but the time period, markers near the cache and manner in which the coins were buried fit the mold of the KGC, said Warren Getler, a former Wall Street Journal reporter who coauthored "Rebel Gold," a book about the group.

[Read the whole story](#)

June election full of choices for Tahoe voters

By Kathryn Reed

Voters will have a slew of decisions to make in June during the primary election.

The deadline to file for office for El Dorado County was March 7 at 5pm. That was the same for Placer County. However, for Placer the date is extended to March 12 if an incumbent has not filed. March 14 is the deadline to file for Douglas County races.

The following people are running for El Dorado County offices:

- **Superior Court Office 1**

Vicki Ashworth, David Combellack, Joe Weinberger

- **Superior Court Office 3**

Suzanne Kingsbury

- **Superior Court Office 4**

Steven Bailey

- **Superior Court Office 5**

Joseph Hoffman, Dylan Sullivan

- **Superior Court Office 6**

James Wagoner

- **County superintendent of schools**

Jeremy Meyers

- **County supervisor District 4**

Scott McNeil, Tim Palmer, Lori Parlin, Howard Penn, Michael Jon Pettibone, Winston Pingrey, Michael Ranalli, Dave Souza

- **County supervisor District 5**

Kevin Brown, Kenny Curtzwiler, Gerri Grego, Sue Novasel,

Teresa Piper, Angela Swanson

- **Assessor**

Karl Weiland

- **Auditor-controller**

Joe Harn, Michael Owen

- **District attorney**

Judson Henry, Vern Pierson

- **Recorder-clerk**

Chris Amaral, Bill Schultz

- **Sheriff**

John D'Agostini

- **Surveyor**

Rich Briner

- **Treasurer**

Ron Briggs, C.L. Raffety.

Here are the candidates in Placer County:

- **Superior Court Office 1**

Charles Wachob

- **Superior Court Office 2**

Michael Jones

- **County Superintendent of Schools**

Gayle Garbolino-Mojica

- **County supervisor District 1**

Jack Duran

- **County supervisor District 2**

Regy Bronner, Robert Weygandt

- **Assessor**

Kristen Spears

- **Controller**

Andrew Sisk

- **Clerk-recorder**

Jim McCauley

- **District attorney**

R. Scott Owens

- **Sheriff**

Edward Neil Bonner

- **Treasurer**

Jenine Windeshausen.

California statewide offices on the June ballot include:

- Governor
- Lieutenant governor
- Secretary of state
- Controller
- Treasurer

- Attorney general
- Insurance commissioner.

In order to win the contest outright on June 3 a person must receive 50 percent plus one vote. If no one reaches that amount, then the top two vote getters will square off in November.

In addition to the individual races, there are a number of local and statewide initiatives that will be before voters in June and November. Plus, El Dorado and Placer residents will be asked to vote on a congressional race and Assembly.

On the November ballot will be South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates. The seats occupied by Angela Swanson, Brooke Laine and Tom Davis will be up.

November will be the first time Lake Tahoe Unified and Lake Tahoe Community College candidates are elected by district. This means people will vote for only one person.

South Tahoe PUD seats will also be up.

The filing for November opens in mid-July.

Study: Consumers unaware of their water usage

By Monte Morin, Los Angeles Times

Americans use twice the amount of water they think they do, and appear to be particularly oblivious about how much H₂O they flush down the toilet on a daily basis, according to new

research.

In a paper published online Monday in the journal PNAS, a researcher concluded that Americans underestimated their water use by a factor of 2, and were only slightly aware of how much water goes into growing the food they eat.

The study's conclusions were based on an Internet survey of 1,020 people, and comes amid a national drought that extends from the Pacific Coast to portions of the Mississippi Valley, with the most severe conditions in California.

Read the whole story