Santa Paws elevates animals to full family member status

By Kathryn Reed

> *"You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'My God, you're right! I never would've thought of that!'" – Dave Barry*

Apparently you can do some foolish things with them, too, and get the same result. Like taking them in for a family photo with Santa Paws.

They stand in line more obediently than many a child. They play nice with strangers – unlike some children. And they willingly go – no whining involved.



Gary and Lorna Lefler with their menagerie and Santa Paws. Photo/Dawn Armstrong

Now in its 25th year, Santa Paws is Lake Tahoe Humane Society's most well known fundraiser.

Each year someone puts on a hot costume – Santa Paws – and spends hours having people and animals on his or her lap as

the camera clicks away.

“The pets are great. The owners can be the problem. I have to tell the people to be quiet. I need to tell them to stop calling their pet because they are looking at them and not me,” Dawn Armstrong, who runs the Humane Society and is chief photographer at the event, said.

She has been part of Santa Paws for 20 of the 25 years it has been going on in South Lake Tahoe. She started with a Polaroid camera. Each picture was $5.

Now she uses a digital camera, it costs $20 and people are given a disc with multiple pictures.

This will be the first year the event has been at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center. With it completely inside and there being plenty of room, it should be better for the several dozen people who turn out each year.

More than 60 people usually show up, with 91 being the record.

Ray Petragallo is planning to be at the event next weekend with his granddaughter. Last year was the first time they had been at the Santa Paws event with her St. Bernard and his Weimaraner.

“My dog put the Santa Paws glove in its mouth and would not give it back. A lady came over with a treat and they traded. He gave up the glove,” Petragallo said. “These people are so good with these dogs.”

Judy Brown, who is on the Humane Society’s board of directors, said accidents are rare and when an aggressive dog comes in, he is shown the back door.

Many regulars come back year after year. Kids get older and bigger, and sometimes the pets are different.

Sometimes it’s the animal just with Santa Paws. Sometimes it’s

a single person. Sometimes it’s the whole family. And many times the animals are dressed up.

Many people use these as Christmas photos that get sent far and wide.

For Brooke Laine, she showed up last year with two dogs – her Border Collie, Pepper, and her son’s Lab, Buddy.

She and the dogs are her son, Matt’s, wallpaper on his laptop.

Laine plans to be back this year.

“It’s super fun and it’s for a good cause,” Laine said.

Dogs and cats dominate the animals brought in to be photographed. But birds, a snake, bunnies and ferrets are been part of the fun.

“Last year we had ferrets. They came near the end. It was a hoot. They had them all dressed up,” Armstrong said. “After they left, then the dogs were really weird. They wouldn’t get near Santa Paws. Ferrets stink.”

And, yes, animals and their humans do look alike, Armstrong said.

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Santa Paws is Dec. 3 from 11am-4pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center, 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. Cost is $20 – cash or check. For more information, call (530) 542.2857. Proceeds benefit the Lake Tahoe Humane Society. Donations of dry dog and cat food will be accepted for the Emergency Pet Food Bank.

Athletic supporters eager to improve South Shore fields

By Linda Conaboy

With voters deciding Measure R is a worthwhile piece of legislation, local playing fields will now have more discretionary dollars needed for field maintenance and renovation.

Although the fields are on public land, including the Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Tahoe Community College and Tahoe Paradise Park, a private group incorporated since 1989 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in California is responsible for coordinating field usage among various organizations within the South Shore area. That group is the Community Athletic Coordinating Council.

Steve Morales, director of facilities for the LTUSD, was a founding member of the CACC and has served on the council since then.



Upgrades to South Shore ball fields

will happen sooner with the passage of Measure R. Photo/Linda Conaboy

“It was formed by a core of city and school district staff and several individuals involved in community youth athletics,” Morales said. “Reductions at the city and district affecting the field maintenance budgets and growing youth sports programs resulted in a lack of fields and funds to maintain those available. The efforts of the CACC helped reduce those effects.”

At its formation, the first major objective of the CACC was to design an annual facility use schedule. Now, with a board consisting of the president, vice president, secretary/treasurer and the at-large members – two representatives from the member organizations (see list below) – the group’s role has changed to include fundraising duties as well.

“All proceeds generated by the CACC are designated for the improvement and expansion of the athletic fields in the community,” Morales said. He added that LTUSD currently pays for nearly all of the district’s infrastructure costs, although the construction of the two softball fields at South Tahoe High School were primarily funded through the efforts of the CACC through fee collection, the original community Food Fest events and community donations of labor and materials.

Because of the growing interest in field sports among not only boys and girls, but also adults, play on these fields has the potential to become big business, bringing many dollars to South Lake Tahoe. And in the middle of this burgeoning activity is CACC.

With this in mind and because of the importance of their function in the community, *Lake Tahoe News* decided to examine the CACC's role and how the group interacts with the city and the school district.

Because of the recent lay-off of Dede Lehnhardt, a city parks and recreation employee and former CACC treasurer/secretary, *Lake Tahoe News* was unable to obtain specific financial data.

CACC background

According to Chuck Leonard, the group's president, CACC came into existence specifically to build the Field of Dreams fields at South Tahoe High School – it raised funds to build fields and now is an entity where all different sports negotiate field use.

"The school district gets games on the calendar first, and then youth sports such as Pop Warner, soccer and Lake Tahoe Babe Ruth are scheduled. They are followed by adult recreation leagues like adult soccer and softball," Leonard said. "Then come club sports like club soccer. After everything else is scheduled, then you can start renting fields for tournaments."

Leonard said several tournaments including the Come Up for Air soccer tournament brings hundreds of players to the area, many hailing from neighboring states. He also said there were semi-pro football teams here last year playing at the middle school.

"We take in around $30,000 annually," he said. "The money comes from youth groups – boys and girls – all who pay for field usage. In fact, the only money that comes to CACC is from what each player pays each year to play."

The CACC is charged with organizing a long list of activities, including field maintenance, collection of funds, playing schedules and coordinating various tournaments. Besides his duties within the CACC, Leonard is also president of South

Tahoe Pop Warner Football Association Inc. and was co-chair of the Committee for Community Recreation – Measure R.

Leonard explained the playing fields are located in an area that encompasses Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School on the west and the Kingsbury Grade area on the east.

“(The CACC) maintain a central calendar in conjunction with the South Tahoe Parks and Recreation and the Douglas County Parks and Recreation departments and the Lake Tahoe Unified School District,” Leonard said. “Organizations that are members of the CACC have the first rights to the fields for their sports organizations.”

Although the number of CACC members varies as sports organizations are created or disbanded, the group currently consists of:

• South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation

• Lake Tahoe Unified School District

• Douglas County Parks and Recreation

• Lake Tahoe Community College

• South Tahoe Pop Warner Football Association Inc.

• South Tahoe National Little League

• South Tahoe Soccer Association

• South Tahoe AYSO

• Bijou Youth Soccer

• Bijou Adult Soccer

• ASA Girls Softball

• South Tahoe Babe Ruth

“Each of these groups pays $10 per player per season for field usage,” Leonard said. “These funds are then utilized to maintain and repair the various fields within the service area. In addition to the main group, there is also a subsidiary group named TR4CK that raises funds for the middle school track and helps to pay for repairs for that complex.”

Money raised to play is deposited into the general CACC fund Leonard said. The money is then utilized by the CACC to maintain or repair fields. “Annually, the CACC puts anywhere from $5,000 to $50,000 into field repairs and maintenance depending on the need.”

With the passage of Measure R, additional money, more than $200,000 initially, will be plowed back into fields as well from money collected from the original Measure S. (The recreation measure is paid by property owner on the California side of the South Shore.) The question of who will decide when and where that additional money will be spent is yet to be determined.

Leonard says he would like his group to have a seat on the yet-to-be-formed steering committee, which will oversee dispersal of the funds; however, the CACC is not guaranteed a seat.

(The three-member board overseeing Measure R has not set a date for the next meeting. They will determine who is on the committee and how it will be structured.)

What about the future?

Leonard is not the only one who would like to see more outside tournaments come to South Lake Tahoe.

Jim Tarwater, superintendent of LTUSD, envisions lots and lots of tournaments.

“Although we have a shortage of active field space, my dream

is to have a tournament each week in the summer," he said. "Now is the time to take a look at the long and short term needs. Eventually, I'd like to raise enough money to offset costs. It costs a lot of money to get a field back into shape after winter."

Stan Sherer, who oversees South Tahoe parks and rec division, also wants more tournaments in town.

"Yes, we're hoping outside groups will come from other areas to compete," he said. "For example, the big soccer tournament that comes here annually. We hope to continue that with other sports to enhance our tourism economy. Any way we can improve our facilities or add to them will make us more competitive and attract more athletic tournaments."

He added all money that comes because of outside tournaments would pay tournament costs. If the city produces the event, the money comes to the city for facility rental and other costs involved in the production of the tournament.

Increased tournament activity underscores the need for such things as permanent toilets and concession stands. Although Babe Ruth, Little League (and the high school's Viking Stadium) run their own concession stands and take in the profits from them, there is always a need for concession stands and the necessity for permanent toilets goes without question.

Morales said new concession stands are under construction at the Viking Stadium and the Field of Dreams softball fields. He added the district intends to construct a concession and restroom facility for the track/soccer complex at South Tahoe Middle School in the near future.

Permanent restrooms will be built at Viking Stadium in the spring, while the current construction of the student union at STHS will provide permanent restroom facilities for the softball fields.

According to Tarwater, the district has been working to get these improvements beyond the talking stages for years.

While the CACC remains an all-volunteer organization, Leonard said there has been talk of hiring a paid staff member.

“There’s not enough money now, but that could change,” he said.

Placer County working on a blueprint for Lake Tahoe

By Katherine E. Hill

KINGS BEACH – Wanted: Local residents and business owners to serve for at least two years on one of four committees to help direct future planning and growth on Tahoe’s North and West shores.

That’s the message from Placer County officials at a recent

meeting on the Community Plan Update, a multi-year planning project that will determine the future of commercial and residential growth in the Lake Tahoe Basin from the state line in Kings Beach to the El Dorado County line on the West Shore.

The plan will address zoning and design guidelines for land use, housing, safety issues, transportation and conservation across four plans areas: North Tahoe East from east of Highway 267 to the state line, including Kings Beach; North Tahoe West from west of Highway 267 through Cedar Flat; Great Tahoe City from Cedar Flat through Tahoe City and down the West Shore to the Granlibakken area; and West Shore from Granlibakken to the county line in Tahoma.



Placer County is working on its community plans in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The community plans are joint planning documents that were adopted by Placer County and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency nearly 20 years ago. Now, the TRPA is in the process of updating its Regional Plan and the community plans for counties and city around the Tahoe basin must be inline with that plan.

Placer County is taking on the process of updating its 20-year-old plans for the North and West shores to fall in line with TRPA guidelines. Placer County is consolidating the nine

plan areas that now exist into the four plan areas being reviewed.

During a quick-paced presentation by Placer County Supervising Planner Crystal Jacobsen, the audience of more than 100 residents and business owners heard the county's plan to address each area as an individual community for growth, housing, commercial and transportation issues. The call now is for residents, business owners and those with environmental interests in the plan area to serve on a committee that will help to develop the plans for these area. A task that Jacobsen says will likely take at least two years.

"The key factors are to have a good balance of commercial and residential uses," Jacobsen told the audience.

Committee members are being recruited now, with applications accepted through Nov. 30. The committees will be appointed in early January, with the county hosting open houses about every two months to gather public input on the plan.

Committees will be made up of seven to nine people, and members are required to either be a resident of or a business owner in the plan area of the committee that they wish to serve on, or, to have an environmental interest in the plan area. Membership on the committees is not open to second homeowners, however, but they may voice concerns at the public open houses, Jacobsen said.

While Placer County is recruiting committee members, county officials are already at work on proposed zoning maps for the plan areas as part of the Technical Committee, made up of representatives from utility districts, fire districts and other government agencies.

"The idea is that the framework will be set (by the first workshop)," Jacobsen said. "We'll then break out those subareas and decide the overall look and design."

The Community Plan Update is based on the Pathway 2007 document that Placer County completed four years ago to serve as a guide for development until 2027. Pathways 2007 calls for reinvesting in the basin's communities, including workforce housing, commercial and lodging for tourists; improving the gateway areas to the county; improving transportation, including non-motorized uses for residents and visitors; and to address water quality and environmental improvements.

Details on the Community Plan Update and the maps of the four plan areas are available online under Planning Services Division. Applications to serve on the committees also are available on the site.

ZCES Sharing Feast embodies true meaning of Thanksgiving

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Sampling the pie before the main course was barely touched, a pair of third-graders gave the sweets thumbs up.

Rachelle Hernandez is used to eating pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, so for this meal she chose cherry. Her friend Alyssa Siewell was not going to break with tradition, so she was diving into the pumpkin.



Rachelle Hernandez and Alyssa Siewell are fans of the pie at ZCES' Sharing Feast. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Both said the pie at Wednesday's Sharing Feast at Zephyr Cove Elementary School was the best part of the meal.

"This is coming in second place right here," Alyssa said of the roll she had covered with mashed potatoes. While that isn't usually how she eats bread or potatoes, it was working for her the day before Thanksgiving.

Now in its third year, the Sharing Feast is the brainchild of parent Kelly Krolicki. The idea to ensure everyone – students, teachers, administrators, parents – have at least one hot Thanksgiving meal.

The sharing part is that it's a group effort to feed 210 students plus all the adults. They share in the preparation and the eating. Per health codes regulations it is store bought food the parents must bring, while under the guidance of the school nutrition manager the hot food is freshly prepared.

Lakeside Inn donated the turkey. Filling out the plate were green beans, mashed potatoes, gravy, and fresh fruit. Rolls

and cranberries were on each table, with pie and juice also available.



Teachers and parents share a meal with students Nov. 23.

No worries about twin kindergartners Henry and Andrew Craig fighting over who gets more gravy. Andrew doesn't want a drop to hit his plate. Henry is more than glad to have another ladle.

"I love gravy on my mashed potatoes," Henry said.

While Andrew is a huge fan of potatoes – it practically looked like he licked his plate – he likes them au natural.



Kelly Krolicki dishes turkey to students at ZCES.

Principal Nancy Cauley walked among the tables with a plate of

food – making sure everyone was having a good time. She is proud her school is the only one in Douglas County School District to have such a feast.

Mixed in with the students are parents and extended family members.

“The food is so good,” kindergartner Hana Muller said as she cut another piece of turkey.

No one seemed to care they might be having a very similar meal today.

State forcing South Tahoe drug task force to disband

By Kathryn Reed

Drug dealers and users may have something to celebrate with the New Year. For everyone else it might not be such good news that the South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team is disbanding.

SLEDNET is one of the 34 drug task forces being forced to shutdown because of state budget cuts. The remaining 18 operations in the state rely solely on federal money.

While the local agency has been around since 1988, the joint task forces of federal, state and local law enforcement have

been part of the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement since 1976. This is the oldest state narcotics bureau in the country, having started in 1927.

On Dec. 31, 170 agents employed by California will work their last day. This is part of Gov. Jerry Brown's quest to cut $71 million from the Department of Justice budget over the next two years.

"If you take away the threat of being caught in this community, it is going to be disastrous," Jeff Catchings, SLEDNET commander, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"It would not be good. I cannot say that enough," he said of eliminating the narcotics task force.

Catchings works for the state, but is one of the agents with enough longevity to be spared receiving a pink slip. Between now and the end of the year he is working with local law enforcement and the state to keep SLEDNET functioning in some manner.

In addition to Catchings, officers from South Lake Tahoe Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol are part of SLEDNET.

What the state brings to the table are resources and money. The state has a greater ability to gather intelligence, especially with drug trafficking, than local jurisdictions have.

"We are trying hard and looking at every avenue we can to keep this task force intact," Sheriff John D'Agostini told *Lake Tahoe News*. "All the typical results you see in a drug ridden community, you would see that increase in the basin (without SLEDNET)."

All the local players are looking at operating SLEDNET – just without the state's oversight. No money comes out of the local

agencies’ general funds for the drug team – it’s grants and drug forfeiture money that pays for things. What the state picked up was Catchings’ salary and equipment.

Police Chief Brian Uhler said he and D’Agostini are trying to meet with Attorney General Kamala Harris to keep the asset forfeiture money in town to go solely for SLEDNET. That meeting, though, has not been arranged.

It might not matter if the meeting happens because Harris has been outspoken in not agreeing with the governor’s decision, saying she wants more control in how to make the cuts to her department. But she is not getting her way.

If the state doesn’t help resolve the issue, Uhler wants the police and sheriff’s departments to pick up the commander’s salary. But that will take an act of the City Council and Board of Supervisors to reallocate funds.

Uhler said the drug problem on the South Shore is huge, and that it would be worse without SLEDNET. He points to the heroin busts in town in the last year as examples of why SLEDNET must stay intact.

Catchings said marijuana is another significant problem here.

Highway 50 and the airport are conduits for drug traffickers.

“The FAA is constantly tracking tail numbers. A lot of things happen behind the scenes that people don’t realize,” Catchings said.

Squaw Valley on course to revamp its reputation

By Kathryn Reed

Renaissance – that's what Squaw Valley's makeover is being called by resort officials.

With plenty of snow on the mountain, the resort opens Nov. 23, though the ski team first took turns Nov. 9.

At a meeting last month put on by the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, CEO Andy Wirth talked a bit about the changes coming to Squaw. He was not shy in admitting improvements beyond on-mountain upgrades need to happen.



Squaw Valley is improving its grooming for the 2011-12 season. Photo/Keoki Flagg

He revealed surveys consistently say three things about the resort:

• It’s not friendly;

• People don’t feel welcome;

• The mountain is intimidating, that people have a hard time navigating it.

“Everything we are doing with the renaissance is rooted in that,” Wirth said. “We are going to go back to where we started. That’s why we call it a renaissance – because we feel we can bring back the luster.”

Personality-wise, it is working on having less attitude.

“You’ll see the level of service increase. We will absolutely compete with Deer Valley, Vail and Beaver Creek,” Wirth said when it comes to hospitality.

There is no doubt Squaw is an epic mountain. And with its legacy of hosting the 1960 Winter Olympics, its mark in the history books is indelible. But in an era of “What have you done for me lately?” attitude, Squaw didn’t have much of an answer. Until now.

The ownership change a year ago from the Cushmans to KSL Capital Partners, then to the merger being finalized this month of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings running Squaw and Alpine Meadows, the North Shore resort is ready to be a player again.

While this season it’s still not possible to legally ski between the resorts, one day that may change. For now, the combined 6,600 acres will be connected via free shuttles.

The infusion of $50 million in five years (one year is completed) will go a long way to upgrading Squaw physically.

From a marketing standpoint, the amount of time Squaw was

portrayed in the latest Warren Miller movie will inevitably entice people to make a trip to North Lake Tahoe. It's estimated 800,000 people will see the film this fall.

Part of the cash going into the resort was $3 million on 10 snowcats.

"We think we have one of the most remarkable mountains. Imagine if we have world class parks on that mountain," Wirth said. Six cats are dedicated to working on Squaw's terrain parks.

In summer 2012, Granite Chief chairlift will be replaced.

A snowsports building is at the base of the mountain. This is where a ticket for any on-mountain activity can be bought.

It's not all about skiing at Squaw.

The SnoVenture center features new and expanded activities for kids and families, including mini snowmobiles and enhanced snow tubing. Dog sledding, horse-drawn sleigh rides, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are operated out of the center, too.

Eight shops are opening this season in the Village at Squaw Valley – including Salomon, North Face and Oakley concept stores. Farrah Rale Jewelry Design allows guests to create jewelry.

Full Belly Deli and Euro Sweets will each open in early December. Batch Cupcakery will open closer to the December holidays. Wildflour Baking Company is expanding.

Rocker@Squaw is in the village offering lunch, dinner and late night fare. Its claim to fame is being the only restaurant in the country allowing guest-generated on-site video editing and screenings.

The historic Olympic House was completely remodeled. Gold

Coast Lodge at the top of the Funitel has a new restaurant – Funi’s.

Projected opening dates (weather dependent):
Alpine Meadows – Dec. 10
Boreal Mountain Resort – Open
Diamond Peak Ski Resort – Dec. 15
Donner Ski Ranch – TBD
Granlibakken Resort – Sled hill Nov. 24, ski hill Dec. 15
Heavenly Mountain Resort – Open
Homewood Mountain Resort – Dec. 17
Kirkwood Mountain Resort – Nov. 25, Fri.-Sun only, check website
Mt. Rose – Nov. 23
Northstar – Open
Royal Gorge Cross Country – Dec. 10
Sierra-at-Tahoe – TBD
Soda Springs –TBD

Spooner Lake Cross Country – TBD
Squaw Valley – Nov. 23
Sugar Bowl – Nov. 24
Tahoe Cross Country – Nov. 25
Tahoe Donner Cross Country – TBD
Tahoe Donner Ski Resort – Dec. 9

Thankfulness – the No. 1 ingredient in a feast for 300

By Kathryn Reed

Vegetables keep being washed. Knives don't seem to stop. Bread comes and goes from the oven. Cranberries whir in the food processor.

It's Sunday afternoon and the kitchen at Grace Hall in South Lake Tahoe is a bevy of activity in preparation for tonight's annual community Thanksgiving dinner. With 275 people served last year, it's anticipated 325 could come through the doors today from 4-5:30pm.



William Wagener adds veggies to what will become turkey stock. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While cooking for so many is serious business, everyone in the kitchen is having fun. Laughter fills the air along with aromas from the stove. Some of the crew are regulars on Mondays to help with the weekly Bread & Broth dinners – people like John Mauriello and William Wagener. Others help on special occasions – like Billy Marchetti, Ellen Nadreau and Mark Nadreau.

Diane Weidinger is the maestro in the kitchen, while her right-hand woman is Kathi Olsen.

Everyone on Nov. 20 expresses gratitude for being able to give back – a thankfulness to be part of something special and meaningful.

A woman stops by asking if she can volunteer. Because she has her serve safe certification she's given an apron and put on orange detail. She's in tears when she arrives and tears when she leaves.

"You guys help me way more than I helped you. You made may day," Jennifer says. Out of work, she's been at Bread & Broth the previous two Mondays for the free hot meal.

When it comes to the food for tonight, Weidinger said, “Thanksgiving is always about tradition.”

Turkey, stuffing, yams, pumpkin pie – are just some of the items on the menu.

Tips are given – like put some lemon juice or white wine on the mushrooms to keep them fresh. Some volunteers are professionals in the restaurant business, while others just like to be in the kitchen working. The regulars say they are always learning something. At times they are the ones creating the menu Monday nights.

It was the stuffing and fresh cranberries that were being assembled yesterday.

Onions, carrots, celery – all chopped in order to be sautéed. Loaves and loaves of bread cut into (large, by some standards) bite-size pieces for stuffing.

Oranges were zested for the cranberry relish.

The cranberry concoction is one of the first dishes Marchetti learned to cook in culinary school in 1977.

Cranberry Orange Relish

4 C fresh cranberries, rinsed

¾ C sugar

1 whole orange

½ tsp fresh grated ginger

Blanch cranberries for five minutes, chill.

Peel the orange. Reserve the sections, remove the thick white pith and reserve the zest.

Combine the cranberries, sugar, orange zest and ginger. Pulse

in a food processor until chunky. Chill and serve.

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Bread & Broth's 23rd annual Thanksgiving feast is today from 4-5:30pm for anyone. St. Theresa Church is located at 1041 Lyons Ave. in South Lake Tahoe.

While Bread & Broth has an arsenal of about 100 volunteers and does not need to expand right now, what it does need is people or businesses to participate in the Adopt A Day program. This is where for $250 a Monday night meal (other than Thanksgiving) is supplied to about 100 people, with four people from the business helping in the kitchen. For more information, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

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Heavenly Mountain lives up to its name on opening day

By Kathryn Reed

Seven months was a long wait. And when the wait was finally over at 8:30am Saturday, cheers reverberated throughout the plaza at Heavenly Village.

Heavenly Mountain Resort opened for business for the 2011-12 ski season Nov. 19 with the gondola, Tamarack and Dipper running. As more snow falls, more lifts and runs will be accessible.



Heavenly Mountain Resort provides some of the best views of Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Mostly snowboarders were playing in the Ante Up terrain park.

Plenty of snow covers runs. With the roar of snowmaking guns, more terrain is likely to open soon.

It took about 10 minutes to load the more than 100 people who stood in line to catch first tracks. Of course, many more riders came throughout the day. These were just the die-hards who needed to their fix first thing.

Casey Bedell and Megan Hickel of South Lake Tahoe were two of the many with smiles on their faces as they made their way to the front of the gondola line. They said having all summer off made them eager to get back on the slopes.

Yungjin Choi came up with his 12-year-old daughter Eura and 10-year-old son Brendon to snowboard. Even though the San Ramon family had never been to Heavenly, they were in line to buy the Tahoe Value Pass.

Eura, according to her dad, is the one who wanted to come opening day. With Heavenly having to delay opening a day because of weather, it worked for them not to have to skip

school to be at the resort Nov. 19.

Leaning on a rail, watching the skiers and boarders getting on the gondola, some guy came up and said, “What do you do here, Pete.” “I’m the general manager,” Pete Sonntag said. “That’s cool. I just bought the Epic Pass.” To which Sonntag said something like, “Have a great time.”

That friendly interaction among employees of all levels and riders was evident all morning.

Ron Thompson, who spends about 30 percent of his time in Meyers and the rest in Fremont, commented on how much better the conditions were this opening day compared to 2010. Not only is the snow better, but also more runs are open. Plus, it was a bluebird day for much of the morning.

“It’s just that feeling of getting back on the snow. It’s incredible,” Thompson said. He added that skiing on California Trail before anyone was there gave him chills. He caught the 10th gondola chair up the mountain.

While Thompson has been skiing 43 of his 47 years, John Gianotti of Stateline has him beat. The 83-year-old has been schussing down slopes throughout the world for 78 years.

“I ski practically every day because I’m old and I don’t have anything else to do,” Gianotti said as he took the gondola down after skiing for a couple hours. “Look at what you see. It’s absolutely one of the most beautiful places in the world.”

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Coordinated trail system at Camp Rich in the works

By Kathryn Reed

Turning the more than 40 miles of trails in the Fallen Leaf Lake-Camp Richardson area into a more cohesive, logical system is being proposed by the U.S. Forest Service.

While the project area encompasses nearly 13,000 acres on the South Shore, nowhere near that much will be touched. The physical boundaries are Lake Tahoe to the east, Glen Alpine to the west, Mount Tallac to the north, and Angora Ridge to the south.

The proposal that is out for public review contains 12.9 miles of new trails, 8.4 miles of reconstructed trails and decommissioning 14.4 miles of trail.



The bike trail by Camp Richardson may be upgraded and parking in the dirt eliminated. Photo/LTN file

"What is there now is a kind of spaghetti string mess," Jacob Quinn, trails coordinator for the Forest Service, told *Lake*

Tahoe News. “Some trails are Forest Service-created and some are user-created. There is not a lot of signage where the trails go or to know how to get to where you parked your car.”

Improving connectivity is a main goal of the project. While most cyclists stick to the lake side along the paved trail, the plan is to better tie that area to what is on the other side of Highway 89.

While the trails won’t be technical, various loops will be different lengths. Signs will tell people what they are about to embark on. Nothing like that exists today.

While the paved trail dead ends on the north, this will be changed so there is a logical place to cross the highway to hook up with trails on the other side. However, the west side will not be paved. It will be a hard-pack natural surface.

The bridge crossing the dam at Fallen Leaf Lake will be reconstructed so cyclists can easily cross it.

All of these ideas are just that – ideas. The Forest Service will compile comments it receives between now and mid-January to see if changes need to be made to the scoping document, if something needs to be studied more, and if new ideas should be incorporated.

Input from agencies like Lahontan Water Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Department of Fish & Game are being sought now, too.

Most likely an environmental analysis will be done. Once that document is completed, the USFS can start seeking funding to do the work.

Quinn would not put a dollar amount on the project because with it still in the scoping stage much could change. He said funding is often easier to secure once a project is shovel ready. It’s possible the project would be built in phases;

with the soonest any work might happen being late next summer.

Some of the significant changes people are likely to notice as they drive through the Camp Rich area are parking differences and the bike path not next to the road.

Caltrans has on its books (albeit without a start date) plans to eliminate parking on the shoulder of Highway 89. The Forest Service wants to coordinate its efforts with the state agency.

The USFS expects the overflow used for events at Valhalla to be paved. That area is an old polo field. Behind it could become a gravel overflow lot.

A second lot could be built about one-quarter mile east of Spring Creek. This would be where people on the far end of the bike path could park.

Expansion of the Tallac trailhead lot is also proposed. It would not grow so significantly as to bring more people to the area. What it would do is get people off the plants and dirt – which is where some people are parking.

“We don’t want to go so big so it would change the character of the recreation experience,” Quinn said of the trailhead parking.

The parking at all lots would be free.

No new paved bike paths are proposed, though slight alterations to the existing one include widening it to bring it up to current standards and having it be set farther back from the highway. This would involve the removal of some larger trees.

The myriad dirt trails leading through the meadow to the homes on West Way would not be touched with this project.

With the holidays coming up, the Forest Service has decided to extend the comment period on the Fallen Leaf Lake Trail Access

and Travel Management Project to Jan. 13. For more information on the proposal and how to comment, go online or contact Jacob Quinn at (530) 543.2609 or email jmquinn@fs.fed.us.

Winds wreak havoc, destroy one South Lake Tahoe house

By Kathryn Reed

This particular Christmas tree will not have any presents under it next month. No children will fill the four twin beds upstairs.

That's because this house on Anita Avenue in South Lake Tahoe has been condemned.

Greg Falkner got a call from a neighbor at 6am Friday saying a tree had gone through the house. He drove up from Alameda and this afternoon was moving belongings to more secure areas of the home.

It's so bad he doesn't plan to show his wife any pictures.



No one was home when a tree crashed into a bedroom

of a house on Anita Avenue. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“Last weekend people were sleeping in there,” Falkner says of the room with the twin beds. Three beds are next to the wall and below the roof where much of the damage occurred.

Someone easily could have been impaled had they been sleeping there. Tree limbs are on the floor. The beds are sunken into the garage below.

The house has been in Falkner’s family for 36 years. Last summer he bought it from his parents. He spent six months fixing it up. It may take longer than that this time around.

General contractor Tony Piscitelli was on site helping clean up the mess. Next step was to take the dormer off and seal the holes on the house with plywood for the winter.



The house has been condemned.

Piscitelli estimates the Jeffery pine was 80-feet tall and 3½ feet in diameter. Ed Cook was at the house about 8am taking away the tree that was rotten on the inside.

Houses on both sides of the Falkner’s also sustained damage, but are livable.

The National Weather Service said the highest wind gust clocked at Lake Tahoe Airport was 56 mph early Friday morning. Ridge tops had gusts of more than 100 mph.

The U.S. Coast Guard reported swells on the lake at 4 feet. Lake Tahoe continues to be a sea of white caps. The wind advisory is in effect until 4pm Nov. 18.

“It’s mainly a cold and windy storm,” said Jessica Kielhorn, meteorology technician with the National Weather Service in Reno. “It’s a very quick moving storm.”

Snow started falling on the North Shore in the late morning, with flurries being spit out on the South Shore by the afternoon. Snow totals aren’t expected to be much – 1-3 inches at lake level by Saturday morning, 4-6 inches at the higher elevations.

Winds were strong enough to prevent Heavenly Mountain Resort from opening Friday. This is the third consecutive year Mother Nature has delayed the opening. The gondola is slated to open Nov. 19 at 8:30am.



White caps on Lake Tahoe, with 4-foot waves spotted on the North Shore.

Liberty Energy said the storm has kept crews busy, but not with major problems. Branches on power lines and sporadic

outages have affected customers.

NV Energy did not return a call, though they are working with significant power issues related to the devastating Reno fire.

Sgt. Shannon Laney with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department said a tree on Chonokis fell in the street and was cleared, a power line fell on Apache, wires were hanging on Seneca and part of the traffic signal at Al Tahoe was damaged.

Mostly it was burglar alarms that kept officers busy. Winds trigger them.

Kielhorn said most of the snow would come overnight. The cold will stay through Saturday with a high on both ends of the lake expected to be in the low 30s and the overnight low for Friday and Saturday in the teens.