

Thrill of sledding can often mean a trip to the ER

By Kathryn Reed

SPOONER SUMMIT – Despite the sounds of fearful screams echoing in the woods, the sledders jumped off the plastic speed bullets to hike back up the hill.

Clearly, the thrill of spinning out of control on a plastic saucer is addicting.

Reza Rahinzadeh likes going fast over bumps. At 4, he has learned going backward keeps the snow out of his face.



Reza
Rahinzadeh, 4,
likes to sled
fast with his
Aunt Angie
Winkler.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

The Redding youth was visiting his Aunt Angie Winkler of South Lake Tahoe this month. She knew just the spot to take the youngster for his second sledding trip – to Spooner Summit.

Winkler said it's her favorite spot to sled.

Tucked off the side of Highway 28 at the junction of Highway

50, there is plenty of parking, it's free to sled and the hill is plenty steep to get the adrenaline flowing.

Saucers of all colors, shapes and sizes abound. By the end of the season a pile of plastic debris sits at the bottom – signs of sledding gone wrong.

The Messoro family from Laguna Niguel didn't have to worry about buying an apparatus for their adventure. They were given items to slide on from the Stardust, where they were spending a few days. It was a recommendation from the concierge that got them up to Spooner.

Sledding opportunities abound throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. Some are free, some you pay to play.

However, this is one of those sports – if it can be called a sport – that often ends in the emergency room.

"Sledding can cause compressed fractures in backs due to people sliding down a hill and flying up and landing on their backs," Cynthia Burkart, registered nurse and interim director of the Emergency Department and director of Occupational Medicine at Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Besides back compressions, we do see a lot of broken legs and this is usually caused when parents ride in the front of the sled and try to stop. There are no breaks and they can be hard to handle."

The South Lake Tahoe medical facility doesn't have stats on the number of sledding injuries doctors treat.

However, the Center for Injury Research and Policy in Columbus, Ohio, coalesced data from 1997-2007, which found there were 229,023 injuries serious enough for emergency room treatment for children younger than 19. This equates to about 20,000 hospital visits a year related to sledding – and that doesn't include adults.

The total medical, legal and liability, pain and suffering, and work loss-related costs were more than \$4 billion in 2007 for the 160,000 sledding related injuries for all ages, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

This group says most injuries are to kids younger than 14.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says sledding for ages 5-14 results in more than 15,000 trips to the ER each year. This compares to skiing and snowboarding for the same age group that sees 29,000 hospital visits.

“Sledding accidents can happen to people of ages and I suggest that if you are going to sled, make sure you are at least 100 pounds, go on a safe, gentle and small powdery slope,” Burkart said. “Make sure there are no objects, such as people, animals, trees or rocks around. In addition, be sure and go slow and it never hurts to wear a helmet.”

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Bond of friendship stronger with Lou Gehrig diagnosis

By Susan Wood

When John Winkelman wakes up Christmas morning, the 1977 South Tahoe High School graduate and his class buddies will have the comfort of knowing they share the greatest gift of all – an everlasting friendship that long sustains the presence of the person.

Two years into it, Winkelman is dying of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) – better known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. The

debilitating illness that attacks the spinal cord and nerve cells of one out of every 100,000 people has taken away his ability to talk. But that setback has not deterred him from communicating with his friends who gather to share good times, laughs and understanding.

“It really is a celebration when we get together,” STHS grad Lynn Corey of Sacramento said.



John Winkelman
skied in the
1980 Winter
Games.

Photos/Provide
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The friends are spread out with Winkelman living in Los Altos. The Tahoe bond remains strong. The 51-year-old returns to the South Shore for the STHS homecoming every year.

This fall 65 people showed up to play bocce ball. The sport has turned into a mainstay of activity. And why wouldn't it? Winkelman was a first-class athlete in high school, playing football. He even placed 18th in downhill ski racing at the Lake Placid Winter Games in 1980.

“I remember thinking that this is a man who was always an athlete, skied in the Olympics, played hockey on three different teams. The idea this athletic person was going to be reduced to an amuscular person was devastating,” said Corey, who drops what she's doing whenever the group calls.

People who know Winkelman may contribute to a website called the Caring Bridge to share thoughts on their friend

Corey stressed how when she and a handful of friends from STHS meet up, there's lots of laughing – sometimes over crazy antics when they were young. She shared classes with Winkleman.

She recalled how Winkelman was supportive, like a brother, when she took her military father's Jeep out for a joy ride with him.

After high school, time escaped until they reunited and ended up at Steamers Bar for a drink. She was troubled by watching him struggle with swallowing, a symptom of the disease. She learned about his prognosis about 10 months ago. From then on, the friends have met at an accelerated pace.

"I just didn't want the next time I see him to be at his funeral," she said.

Rob Miller, another friend and fellow grade, agrees. For Miller, the experience has hit close to home. His father died of ALS in 1981, so he witnessed firsthand the wrath of the disease. Most patients die between three to five years after diagnosis, but one-fifth of them live beyond that mark.

"It's hard because I know what lies ahead for him. As a group, we try to do all we can," he said.

Since Winkelman wants his home remodeled and is unable to perform the work, Miller is bringing a contractor over to help.

"I knew John would be needing help," he said.

The men played football together in high school, but Miller was adamant that they're closer now.

"His attitude is strong, and he still has his wit," Miller

said.

It's as though Winkelman is helping his friends discover what's important in life. And along the way, Winkelman has had his own epiphanies about the true meaning of success and living a life as a good person. The husband and father of two admits to being "overwhelmed" by the show of support from friends.

"Having a good reliable friend is like oxygen to me. I have to have it. All fires start small in your fireplace. With some work, you get it to where you want it, then enjoy it. I am now enjoying the warmth of my good, reliable friends," he said via email. "It feels great. May the STHS Viking spirit live on!"

He said he doesn't want to be remembered as a good athlete, but much more.

"I was gifted to be good at whatever sport I played. How I want to be remembered is summed up in a poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson. It has nothing to do with trophies, medals or places. It measures success," he said.

The poem called "Success" reads:

"To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one's self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived – this is to have succeeded."

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Sno-Flake celebrating 50 years of flipping burgers in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Even after being harassed by his family every night for years that he smelled like French fries when he came home from work doesn't keep Bill Schneider away from the Sno-Flake Drive-In.

He and his wife, Trudy, eat at the old-style hamburger joint every time they come to South Lake Tahoe – which is about once a month. The Minden couple owned the restaurant from 1989 to about 1992.



Trudy and Bill Schneider used to own the Sno-Flake.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

On Monday they were in town for their usual – turkey burgers.

Sno-Flake is in its 50th year, having opened July 19, 1961.

“When we bought it there was a lot of Mexican food. We changed

it to hamburgers, French fries, chili and hotdogs,” Bill Schneider said as his burger and chili were delivered.

During their ownership it was the Alpine burger what was popular. The burger with Swiss cheese and a slice of ham is no longer on the menu.

“We didn’t make much money on it, but we had a lot of customers,” Schneider said.

For current owners Duncan and Lisa Sennott it is the \$5.79 Tahoe burger that is the best seller. It comes with sautéed mushrooms, onions and Monterey jack cheese.

The Sennotts have owned the Sno-Flake for six years, having bought it from Pete and Susie Richards. The Richards bought it from the Schneiders.



The Sno-Flake will be 50-years-old in 2011.

Every owner has made changes to the building as well as to the menu.

Duncan Sennott said regulars won’t let him take things off the menu, so he spends time adding to it. The one thing he did eliminate was the deep fried burritos.

“We have probably doubled the milkshakes and the health options,” Sennott said.

The Oreo shake is the most popular, but the seasonal shakes like the eggnog and pumpkin, which he is whipping up now, sell no matter the outside temperature.

Upgrading the ingredients started early, which includes using as much fresh stuff as possible.

“I wanted to make sure the food really tasted great,” Sennott said. “There’s not much I can cut. The burgers all have a following.”



Cook Rene Rizo
mans the
kitchen.

He said some people have been getting the same burger for the last 20 years.

The couple left life in corporate America to operate the burger joint. He used to be in international banking in San Francisco, while she was an attorney in the Bay Area. Lisa, who was his fiancée when they bought the place, now works for Laub & Laub.

Since buying the place they’ve added to their family. They have a 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son.

Duncan Sennott spends at least five days a week at the low-key eatery doing a bit of everything.

“I had been taking cooking classes at the culinary academy for years. We moved here and it seemed like a natural change,” Sennott said. He has no regrets, but admits it’s harder work

than he ever imagined.

It's the little things like being closed three days last week because the fire suppression system went off.

He's not sure why Sno-Flake has lasted 50 years. Partly he thinks it's the old building.



Sno-Flake
workers know
many customers
by name.

"It's a time warp to my childhood," Sennott said.

Consistently good, hot food are other reasons. Location hasn't hurt either – being walking distance to El Dorado Beach. Lines are the norm during the summer. It's one of the few places to get soft serve cones on the South Shore. French fry connoisseurs (like this reporter) swear by their fries.

As for how to celebrate Sno-Flake turning 50, Sennott doesn't have all that worked out. But he is entertaining rolling back prices to 1961 – if only for a day.

Creditors to foreclose on SLT convention center; Lane out

By Kathryn Reed

Randy Lane and John Serpa are no longer involved in the would-be convention center project in South Lake Tahoe.

The two men who ran Lake Tahoe Development Company and sunk about \$90 million of their money in the 11-acre site must walk away with only concrete and rebar to show for their efforts.

The creditors who own the 29 parcels are in control. They have agreed to foreclose, South Lake Tahoe officials said. This all transpired in bankruptcy court Dec. 21.



Creditors
looking for
someone to buy
their rebar
and concrete.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

What happens next remains to be seen. Creditors and South Lake Tahoe officials have a meeting with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency representatives Jan. 4 to discuss what flexibility the bi-state regulatory agency will allow.

“The design is outdated,” South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony

O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We need to see what we need to do to amend the entitlements."

TRPA officials were not available for comment.

Although O'Rourke does not anticipate any work occurring at the state line area site for at least two years, he says it is imperative to know how the footprint can be changed to accommodate the next developer.

"The biggest issue is we are in a market place that has collapsed and it will take some time to rebound. This is way too valuable (property) for it not to be developed," O'Rourke said.

The July 2006 agreement with Zephyr Cove-based Lake Tahoe Development Company that the then-City Council of Hal Cole, Kathay Lovell, John Upton, Ted Long and Mike Weber approved called for two hotel-condo structures, retail, insufficient parking, and no easy access to Heavenly Village across the busy highway. (Additional parking was supposed to be at Harveys, but no agreement was ever secured. Caltrans never signed-off on a proposed over or underpass for Highway 50.)

With that operating agreement only good for fire starter or a doorstop, it's possible the next contract won't be so one-sided with the developer on the winning end.

Even though creditors – aka land owners – will have a large say in what happens, the city and TRPA will be part of the decision process because they dictate land use policy.

It was the council of Lovell, Long, Weber, Bill Crawford and Jerry Birdwell that gave the OK for LTDC to start construction without a final map in place – thus the reason multiple creditors own 29 parcels. Their vote also came with the assumption funding was in place, while in reality all LTDC had was a letter from a lending agency that turned out to be worth less than the paper it was written on.

Lane did not return phone calls.

Owens Mortgage Investment Fund is the largest creditor – owed about \$28 million. The attorney for the creditor was unavailable for comment.

Most likely the creditors will get their respective properties appraised to know the value in today's dollars. They vary in size and location, making them not of equal value.

O'Rourke speculates the group will bring in a recognized brokerage firm with experience domestically and internationally to move the project forward. In addition to anticipating a more traditional high-end hotel being part of the project, he believes a much smaller conference center will be erected.

"It will probably be more like a regional conference center like what Monterey has," O'Rourke said. "Over the course of the near future with the creditors in control we will come up with a game plan that is market drive. We hope to attract a major investor whether it is Vail Resorts or someone else."

Vail through its real estate arm RockResorts was going to be the initial hotel operator. That fell through long before the developer filed for bankruptcy in October 2009. The Colorado-company, which owns Heavenly Mountain Resort on the other side of the street, will not discuss future acquisitions.

Weather historian to delve into Sierra's winter wonders

By Susan Wood

Think globally, act locally.

Weather historian Mark McLaughlin is expected to bring this mantra to life when he addresses an extremely topical topic on Thursday at the Explore Tahoe in South Lake Tahoe.

McLaughlin has the spotlight for the center's second annual winter speaker series with his talk called "Reign of the Sierra Storm King," an overview of how the last 150 years of winter weather in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range tells about life at Lake Tahoe and the evolving climate.



Mark
McLaughlin

Topics that evening will include the Donner Party, the storm of the century in the winter of 1951-52, along with the tropical weather conditions associated with El Nino and La Nina, the latter of which Tahoe is experiencing. The lake is located on the north-to-south cusp of seeing unusually wet or dry, cold or warm conditions associated with the equatorial weather phenomena. This year's La Nina is expected to bring more extremes across the United States like El Nino did the previous year. The Pacific Northwest has already experienced wetter than average systems this winter as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted.

If there's one thing weather as a science can prove over time, long-term theories are "not all things to all people" or even places, McLaughlin explains.

The author and commentator who's made appearances on CNN, the

Weather Channel and History Channel said he tries to take recent information released from the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and be a bridge in deciphering these theories for the average weather watcher.

For example, he's noticed that since 1962 the lake level snowpack at Tahoe has diminished more than two weeks earlier each year. However, in the higher elevations such as Donner Pass, this is not the case. The legendary mountain region remains a place to be reckoned with in the winter, he said.

The winter of 1951-52 brought record snowfall with such magnitude, traffic in and out of the South Shore was cut off, a drop shipment of supplies was made from the outside world and residents dug out of their second story windows to get out of their homes. Some attend a reunion each summer to mark the occasion. The adults have looked back at that time as hard labor. The children at the time have rejoiced over sledding down the roofs of their houses.

Explore Tahoe Recreation Coordinator Lauren Thomaselli insisted the winter speaker series and specifically McLaughlin's talk that kicks it off fits well into the center's format and mission of blending environmental education with recreation.

"It's really to provide ways to get (people) connected with our area," she said.

The Dec. 23 talks starts at 6pm. A \$5 donation is requested. Refreshments will be served.

Wicked weather creates slushy mess throughout Lake Tahoe

Updated Dec. 20 9:52am:

Six inches of fluffy snow fell overnight in South Lake Tahoe and it hasn't stopped.

"Most of the roads in the county, both up there at the lake and down here in the valley, have ice on them. So far this morning we have had eight multi-vehicle traffic accidents – luckily none with serious injury – and numerous vehicles that have slid off the roadway," Jim Halsey with the Douglas County sheriff's department said.

By Susan Wood and Kathryn Reed

If this is what fall in Lake Tahoe is like, who knows what winter will bring when it starts tomorrow.

The La Nina tropical weather phenomenon is shaping up to be a doozy for the West Coast. With more than half the United States weather map covered with snow, the Weather Channel reports the Sierra Nevada beating a 30-year record with 300 inches of snow accumulating from November through December.

This latest storm series declared an "atmospheric river" of blustery weather is predicted to bring up to 15 feet of snow in some spots of the mountain range running up and down the spine of California. As a gauge, a basketball hoop sits at 10 feet.



Slushy roads were the norm throughout Lake Tahoe during the weekend.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

But it's the high winds with heavy rain that captured the headlines this weekend.

The National Weather Service in Reno reported a 155mph gust at Alpine Meadows Ski Resort on Sunday. A 67mph gust was reported at Lake Tahoe Airport in South Lake Tahoe.

Take that with the Weather Service reports of at least 3 inches of rain at the lake in a three-day period, and emergency crews have the makings of a major weather event including flooding, downed trees and power lines. The Lake Tahoe region remains in a winter storm warning period until 4pm today.

Downed power lines west of Sierra-at-Tahoe closed Highway 50 near Tamarack Pines Sunday afternoon. In the morning the South Shore ski resort was evacuating skiers and riders after a tree landed on a chairlift cable. This highway incident came hours after snow slid off the cliff onto the eastbound lanes of 50 on the east side of Echo Summit, California Highway Patrol reported.

"Luckily, and I knock on wood, there have been no injury

accidents,” CHP Sgt. Terry Lowther reported Sunday afternoon. “But if this rain and slush freezes tonight, it will all be ice.”

Temperatures were supposed to plummet to a low of 22 degrees overnight, making for slick, dangerous conditions for late-travel and this morning’s commute.

For people coming to the mountains, it was an interesting drive with restrictions on most of the roads in and out of the basin. That is likely to be the scenario for the better part of the week as storms keep rolling in. Be sure to check the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* to know the road conditions.

South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Josh Adler said officers are finding people driving way too fast for the conditions. Officers were contending with tons of spinouts and accidents throughout the weekend. No injury accidents were reported through Sunday afternoon.

“One guy said he skidded for 100 feet. I told him you are driving too fast,” Adler said of the motorist who hit the backend of a BlueGo bus.

Douglas County sheriff’s dispatch said nothing out of the ordinary was going on.

Lake Valley Fire was hopping Sunday afternoon with engines at incidents of two downed trees – one at North Upper Truckee that closed the road at Shoshone and another plunging into a home at the 1300 block of Glen Eagles, north of Pioneer Trail.

“When you have the high winds with the ground saturated, we’re going to have some trees come down,” fire Battalion Chief Gareth Harris said.

Sierra Pacific Power was busy Sunday as well. One minor outage was reported at the Skyland area, with another 30 households

in the Glenbrook area without power for several hours Sunday. The 80 customers in the North Upper Truckee by Meyers were to have lights back on Sunday night.

In Tahoe City, 500 customers were in the dark, while 1,000 in Incline Village lost power. Those areas are not expected to have power until this morning.

"We heard the crash and we knew that was not a pine cone hitting the roof. And then the power went out," Tracy Owen Chapman said of the tree in the middle of the street in the Skyland area.

One person on the street could not get out because the live wires were directly in front of their house. No injuries occurred, and the tree did not hit a house or a vehicle.

The Reno-Tahoe International Airport experienced delays with the first storm in the series Friday, but reported no affects on Sunday afternoon, airport authority spokeswoman Heidi Berthold noted.

Flooding was a problem on Highway 89 for one Caltrans crew dealing with a pond about a block west of 15th Street in the westbound lane. Those men reported up to a foot of runoff water at the road there.

John Greenhut, director of Public Works for South Lake Tahoe, said minor flooding in low lying areas started on Sunday, but nothing serious.

"... we are equipped for either snow or rain. We don't like to have an excess of either," Greenhut said.

With this being the fourth winter after the devastating Angora Fire, Greenhut said everything in that area is stabilized, but his crews still have an eye on the area.

It has been slush on the roads and in driveways. People don't know if they should be shoveling or using a broom to clear the

muck.

"At 6,600 (feet) I cleaned up about a foot of heavy, wet snow this morning. It is back to rain again at about 34 degrees. We are praying for the temps to drop again so that the storm continues on a cold note," Chris Nelson of Tahoe Donner said late Sunday morning.

Kaycee Odom of Charlotte, N.C., was awed by seeing snowplows for the first time. She and her friend came to ski, but the weather has not cooperated. Instead, they found their way to the Beacon restaurant for food and drinks on Sunday.

All this weather has been a mixed blessing for people who play in the snow. While the ski resorts are rejoicing about the amount of snow dumping on them, the wind is making the freshies inaccessible.

Most resorts around Lake Tahoe closed early Sunday because wind made operating the lifts hazardous. Sierra-at-Tahoe had the most notable news Dec. 19 when a treetop fell onto the West Bowl lift. Five people sustained minor injuries that did not require hospitalization.

Heavenly closed early except for the Boulder area. Mount Rose and Squaw closed.

"La Nina continues to deliver massive storms to the region – after opening on 100-plus inches of snow, we are now over 200 inches for the season and it's still just December. This storm, while a bit heavier than the Thanksgiving storm, is helping build our base depths and fill in all the nooks and crannies in the trees. Once the temps drop and the snow gets lighter, we'll be looking forward to some big powder days," said Kirstin Cattell, spokeswoman at Sierra-at-Tahoe.

Backcountry enthusiasts will want to keep a close eye on reports from the Sierra Avalanche Center because the conditions have been precarious.

Hotels around the basin have rooms to rent because people are choosing to not come right now.

Jerry Bindel, who runs Lakeland Village in South Lake Tahoe, said his property's rule is reservations can be pushed back if people don't feel comfortable coming up in the weather, but refunds aren't possible unless the roads are all closed.

"Everyone I talk to is saying business levels are healthy right now," Bindel said. He anticipates all this snow will translate to heads in beds the entire winter.

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Tree falls onto chairlift cable, no serious injuries at Sierra

By Kathryn Reed

A treetop fell onto the cable of the West Bowl chairlift at Sierra-at-Tahoe this morning, bouncing a handful of people out of the chair and onto the slope.



No one was seriously injured. The skiers were treated by ski patrol and the doctor at the resort on Highway 50 on the outskirts of the Lake Tahoe Basin. No one was transported to the hospital. The five injured people left the resort on their own.

The people who tumbled out of the chair fell between 5 and 15 feet.

“There was no real damage to the chair so we ran it until all the people on it were off,” Kirstin Cattell, resort spokeswoman said. “We shuttled the rest of the people out of West Bowl. At 11am we closed the whole resort for the day.”

Cattell doesn't know the last time Sierra was closed because of winds. This resort near the top of Echo Summit is considered one of the better places to ski when it is windy.

However, the National Weather Service is calling for wind gusts this afternoon at the lake being 50mph, with ridgetops hitting 100mph.

About 150 had to be escorted out of the West Bowl area either on snowcats or snowmobiles.

Cattell said everyone evacuated in an orderly manner, with no one panicking.

Resort officials are spending the afternoon inspecting the towers, cables and chairs to ensure the lift will be functioning on Monday. Ski patrollers are examining the terrain for precarious trees.

The tree that toppled today had been loaded with snow, temperatures warmed up, then the winds picked up which caused it to break from the top.

Cattell said, “We have a robust hazardous tree removal plan in place.”

The resort takes out about 100 trees a year that could be a danger to guests.

For people who skied on Sunday, they can bring their ticket with Dec. 19 on it back any day to trade it in for a full day lift ticket at Sierra, Cattell said.

Caltrans to work on South Shore highways for years

By Kathryn Reed

Peering at a Caltrans work map, the highways on the South Shore look like they will be under construction for several years.

Eight of the 10 projects are for water quality; the other two are labeled intersection projects.



Construction on Luther Pass will be completed in 2011.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mike Cook, who oversees the projects for this area, gave an update to the incoming South Lake Tahoe City Council on Dec. 14 about what to expect on highways 50 and 89.

Project 1: Originally known as the Ski Run to Stateline project, this will begin in 2011 and continue into the next building season. However, the project now goes 1,200 feet west

of Ski Run to Wildwood and doesn't go all the way to the state line. "This is a better use of money," Cook said. This is because much of the state line area already has had water quality treatments. Discussions are still ongoing to widen the street, with Caltrans having met with stakeholders on Dec. 2.

Project 2: Trout Creek to Ski Run will also begin in May. Construction is estimated to take three years. It will include class 2 bike trails and shoulders being widened to 6 feet, sidewalks and landscaping. No traffic delays will be in affect during the time Tour de California cycling events are going on in May, Cook pledged.

Project 3: Trout Creek to the Y will be overhauled in May 2013. Lanes will be wider, a class 2 bike trail put in and sidewalks. Cook said it would not be as extensively landscaped as other sections of Highway 50 because Caltrans is the exclusive payee on this portion.

Project 4: A left turn lane at Sierra Boulevard. This could be part of Project 3.

Project 5: The improvements at the Y, the intersection of highways 89 and 50, were finished last year.

Project 6: Y to Cascade Road will begin in 2014. Caltrans is working with the U.S. Forest Service as the federal agency looks to reconfigure bike trails in the Camp Richardson area. Caltrans plans to replace culverts, add sidewalks, and make the shoulder 4-feet wide in part of the area.

Project 7: Y to Airport Road will have 4-foot shoulders put in starting in 2013. Cook warns this may not be possible for the entire stretch.

Project 8: Another 2013 project is to widen the shoulder from Meyers Road to Incline Road in El Dorado County.

Project 9: Highway 89 from Meyers to the Alpine County line

will be finished next year. With Luther Pass being the detour route while Echo Summit is closed, the plan is to not have delays on this section at that time.

Project 10: Replacing seven rock walls on Echo Summit beginning spring 2011 as soon as weather permits could be the most disruptive of the projects. Highway 50 will be closed for two weeks. From Sacramento/Bay Area, the main alternate route being promoted is using highways 49, 88 and 89 to the South Shore. This will add about an hour to the drive – though it is scenic. After the closure, the highway will have controlled traffic for four weeks. Marketing gurus, who were in attendance at the meeting, are not calling it a closure despite the fact the road will be closed. Originally, the outreach to let people know about the closure was about \$50,000. Caltrans has added another \$150,000 – especially with people coming to town for the Amgen bike race.

Projects slated to begin beyond 2011 do not have secure funding, so the start dates may change.

Tamarack Lodge opens today at Heavenly Mountain Resort

By Kathryn Reed

Something dramatically different is in store for skiers at Heavenly Mountain Resort today – the first new lodge in 30 years at the South Shore resort is open.

With 40-foot windows giving expansive views to the slopes and an interior that barely feels like you've left the woods, the multi-million dollar Tamarack Lodge is ready for hungry

skiers.

Inside the 9,150 Bar are round wooden tables made from trees that had been removed a few years ago when the Olympic lift was reconfigured. The resort kept the trees on site just in case they'd have a future use.



The 9,150 Bar
at the
Tamarack Lodge
has tables
made from
trees cut at
the resort.
Photo/Provided

Blaise Carrig, co-president of Vail Resorts Mountain Division and one-time COO at Heavenly, said he got the idea for the tables from having seen a similar design at the Manzanita restaurant at the Ritz-Carlton at Northstar.

Sixteen of those tables are scattered about the bar – which got its name from the elevation of where it sits.

The lodge's name is from the six-pack chairlift – Tamarack – that is just steps from the lodge.

With the moisture lasting into early summer, the lodge was almost scrapped this building season. But the builder – SMC Contractors – convinced resort officials it could have everything done by February. Clearly, they finished well ahead of schedule.

“Heavenly gave us the resources we needed to work at an accelerated schedule,” Joe Stewart with SMC told *Lake Tahoe News*. This included providing snowcats and snowmobiles for workers to get to the job site once the snow started to fall.

Stewart also credits the planning of the project for his crews to be able to do their job.



Lots of seating and natural light at the new lodge.

Photo/Provided

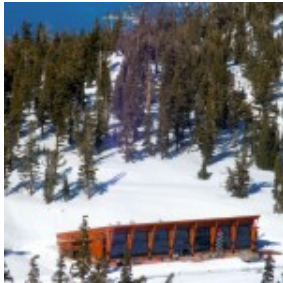
He is extremely complimentary of Carrig’s interior design savvy. And Carrig returns the compliment to Stewart and his team.

Carrig has an eye for such endeavors, having designed two of his houses – inside and outside. He did some substantial design work for previous employers at Sugar Bush and the Canyons.

“Back in the day when I was a ski patrol director, in the summertime I had a small building business,” Carrig told *Lake Tahoe News*. “At that time we specialized in old Vermont architecture style, like old farm houses.”

Part of what he wanted for the Tamarack Lodge was for it to have a comfortable lodge feel even though the windows are high and the room wide-open.

With painting the sheet rock red and then putting Douglas fir planks horizontally on the wall with 2-inch gaps in between so the red shows through, it gives the room some depth. Plus, the black bolts give it a more of rustic feel.



The Tamarack Lodge from the slopes of Heavenly.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“Large chandeliers also anchor the ceiling and make the room feel smaller than it is,” Carrig said.

Carrig’s fingerprints are all over the lodge. He was working hand-in-hand with the architect – right down to the bar tops, bar features and tile for the bathrooms.

For the oversized restrooms with numerous stalls Carrig selected large square natural curly tiles.

This lodge near the top of the gondola finally gives skiers a place to escape the elements – which for this weekend will be a welcome change if the forecast holds.

Five themed food stations are available, with 500 indoor seats and 250 outdoor.

Heavenly’s master plan calls for two more lodges – Powder Bowl and Sand Dunes. Construction dates have not been set for either one. East Peak Lodge is the last dining facility to

open at Heavenly – that was 1970.

“The company is really proud of this,” Carrig said of Tamarak the day before it officially opened. “Heavenly definitely needed to have a really comfortable lodge.”

Postal Service predicts busiest day of year to be Dec. 20

By Kathryn Reed

For many people this is the one time of year when there is something in the mail besides bills and unwanted solicitations.

It's also the time of year when anyone and everyone associated with U.S. Postal Service barely has time to take a break.



Mail keeps coming even in the snow and with the house number covered.

Photo/Kathryn

Reed

"It's a fun time of year – giving cards and presents," Donna Bobeda, a carrier in South Lake Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* as she delivered mail this week.

It's taking her about an hour longer these days to do her route because of the extra volume of mail.

Even though the Postal Service is seeing a reduction in the amount of mail being sent because of email and other mailing options, people still like to communicate at the holidays the old-fashioned way – with a handwritten note.

South Lake Tahoe Postmaster Toni Passot said Dec. 13 was extremely busy at all the South Shore locations, but it's Dec. 20 that is expected to be the busiest mailing day of the year. The USPS anticipates 801 million pieces of mail will be processed Monday.

Passot is not allowed to hire extra staff for the extra work, but just about everyone is getting more hours.

"We are bringing in all the troops," Passot said for Dec. 20.

Bobeda has noticed larger packages being sent this year.

"I think more people are ordering online," Bobeda said.

She and other carriers often finish their route, go back to the main office and there is another truckload of parcels to deliver. This means out they go – twice in a day this time of year.

But not everything in the mailbox is supposed to be delivered. Bobeda said every now and then a plate of cookies is in the box as a thank you for the work she has done. After all, even if the snowplow doesn't come or school is canceled, the mail keeps being delivered.

During the holidays the Postal Service processes an average of 661 million pieces of mail. This compares to an average of 559 million pieces the rest of the year.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas the USPS delivers about 15.8 billion cards, letters and packages. The agency has been doing this for 235 years.

For people hoping to have letters delivered by Christmas, it's recommended to have them in the mail by Dec. 20.