

Is technology changing how we approach a ski day?

By Brenda Knox

On a sunny bluebird ski day we gathered around my iPhone at the top of Grandview to check out where we wanted to ski after lunch. My iPhone had a good connection and it was fun to peruse the Sierra-at-Tahoe map from the iTrail application.

I'm finding that my iPhone applications work extremely well inside and in great weather. But out in the elements and the storms, my iPhone never leaves my inside jacket pocket. With thousands of ski applications out there for the iPhone, my mission to see if the applications were worthwhile, practical, or even useful to a recreational skier/rider began.



Brenda Knox
takes notes on
her iPhone.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Overall, I found the ski report applications and trail map applications impractical while actually on the slopes. I did enjoy looking through the various reports in the morning from the comfort of my home with a cappuccino in hand. Although, several inconsistencies existed between the snow levels out my window and what was being reported.

One morning looking out the window at several inches of new snow I wondered how many inches my favorite resorts had received. Using the iSki application I looked up Heavenly, Sierra, Kirkwood and Homewood. Heavenly and Sierra were reporting zero inches, even though my Heavenly email stated 10 inches. Kirkwood and Homewood information had not been updated in several days. I'm not sure what process the resorts participate in to keep their information updated, but it obviously was not reflecting actual snow activity on this day.

Another issue is connectivity. I had varying degrees of success getting a good strong signal at the resorts. Grandview at the top of Sierra was good. East Peak Lodge is my favorite resting location at Heavenly, but has zero service for my iPhone. I connected at the California Lodge and Gunbarrel Grill last week and showed off the iTrail map to friends.

On the slopes, the iPhone is better built to listen to music or to brag to your friends about all the powder you're enjoying. I don't go anywhere without my iPhone, but keep it safely tucked away in inclement weather. It's pretty much impossible to use with gloves on, so I do my information gathering on it while at home. My favorite ski apps are iSki and the REI snow report.

Brenda Knox is a gadget girl who mostly lives in South Lake Tahoe.

Bleak numbers force tourism officials to rethink message

By Kathryn Reed

A \$300 million decline in gaming revenue at Stateline from 1990 to 2009; the number of employees on the South Shore from 1990 to 2008 going from 13,000 to 7,000; hotel occupancy on both sides of the state line dropping from 57 percent to 43 percent between 2006 and 2009 – these are just some of the facts and figures officials on the South Shore must contend with when looking at the local economy and what to do to turn the rising tide of bad news.

The PowerPoint presentation was prepared by the Tahoe Douglas Visitors Authority with the help of Ward Bullard who works for Harveys-Harrah's casinos at the lake. It was first shown to the Douglas County Commission, with the South Lake Tahoe City Council shown the slides this month.



Tourism
officials plan
to promote the
outdoors of
Lake Tahoe,
with less
emphasis on
gaming.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, gave the presentation to the council along with her annual report.

With many of the Stateline casino workers living in South Lake

Tahoe, what the casinos are doing directly impacts employment levels of city residents and social agencies they may lean on for help.

“In case you think we’re unique here, the same thing is going on at tribal casinos,” Chaplin told the council.

She talked about layoffs at the Indian casinos just west of Lake Tahoe, how their market is shrinking, that they are fighting each other for the same customer, and how their buses to import customers are not working well.

Chaplin said the area that may prove to be a greater threat to the South Shore in the near term is Las Vegas.

“From the Bay Area you can hop on a plane and get a room for less than \$100 a night. You didn’t have that a couple years ago,” Chaplin said.

Still, it wasn’t all doom and gloom from the region’s tourism leader.

In Chaplin’s report about how the LTVA did in the last fiscal year, she pointed to the 16 percent increase in attendance at July’s annual celebrity golf tournament, 11 percent increase in traffic to the visitors centers, securing a Nevada Commission on Tourism grant, public relations having a 40-to-1 return on investment, and ending the year with 1,000 bucks in the bank.

As the summer advertising rolls out, it will have more to do with promoting the passion of locals, the events that attract young at heart adults and families of all ages, and the South Shore more holistically than it has been done in the past.

Chaplin pointed to the number of amenities Lake Tahoe has that other destinations can never have – the lake itself as one, and the varied experiences available in a relatively small area.

“We recognize our iconic location,” Chaplin said. “We need to capitalize to let people know how much we love this place and that they can too. Gaming is still important, but it’s going through a metamorphosis. We need to broaden our appeal beyond skiing and gaming.”

LTCC ‘Laramie Project’ actors struggle with difficult topic

By Susan Wood

When South Shore actor Rhonda Keen considers the “Laramie Project” opening next weekend at Lake Tahoe Community College, the local production hits home on many fronts.

The stirring docu-drama to be performed at Duke Theatre from March 12-14 and March 18-21 was introduced by the New York Tectonic Theatre and writer-director Moises Kaufman as a result of 400 hours of interviews of the citizens of Laramie, Wyo. The town was scarred after Matthew Shepard was brutally tortured, tied to a fence and left to die because of his sexual orientation. It left the community struggling with its differing beliefs, questions and ultimate transformation.



Chris Taylor
as Rulon

Stacey, CEO of
Ivinson
Hospital where
Matthew
Shepard was
taken, at a
press
conference on
Sheperd's
condition.
Photo/Pat
Leonard-
Heffner

The murder at the hands of two men Shepard met at a bar made national headlines 12 years ago and led to landmark hate crime legislation signed by President Obama last October. The Matthew Shepard Act is intended to provide \$5 million in funding to combat hate crimes, which according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, nudged upward in 2008 to claim 9,691 victims. More than 1,700 were attributed to sexual orientation.

Ironically, the day after National Coming Out Day – which was founded to recognize gay equality a decade to the month before the horrific crime – Shepard died in a hospital in Fort Collins, Colo.

Keen was living in Fort Collins in 1998 when the hate crime occurred.

“That’s what got me about the ‘Laramie Project’,” she said.

Keen is no stranger to the type of tragedy that leads to discussions of social justice and the human condition. She grieved with the family of a friend, one of 13 who died in April 1999 during the horrendous shooting massacre at Columbine High School, her alma mater of 1993.

When she thought of Matthew Shepard's mother, Judy, dealing with such a horrible tragedy, she choked up.

"It's hell to watch a parent who's lost a child. I can't imagine what it's like to have the murder of her son enacted every night," Keen said, her voice quivering.

If she could say anything to Judy Shepard, she told *Lake Tahoe News* it would be: "We just want you to know your son was loved and is still loved, and the world and I appreciate the work he has done for the cause. It's from this cause that the faith in humanity is able to carry on."

When the gay rights activist mother was visiting South Lake Tahoe in 2005 for a gay ski week, she told this reporter in an exclusive interview that she misses Matthew immensely and gets up every morning to try to think of a new way she can tell her son's story so this does not happen again. She called on the local and global community for a united front against hate.

Despite the March 19 planned protest, first reported by *Lake Tahoe News* on Feb. 24, by hate advocates of the Westboro Baptist Church led by the Rev. Fred Phelps of Topeka, Kansas, local organizers and advocates like Keen believe the "Laramie Project" may create that united front Judy Shepard spoke of five years ago when she was here.

A counter protest by local advocates of gay rights is slated for that night.

A candlelight vigil to promote non-violence is planned at 9:30 the next night following the show.

Keen, a self-proclaimed gay rights activist for years, has witnessed the transformation of her family since her cousin underwent serious life challenges after coming out as gay.

"It's good to watch people's eyes open. And since the cast knew each other, it was neat to watch people open up to view

the different ideas,” she said. “This is the type of piece that you hope to get to do as an actor, but don’t always get to. This is what good theater is all about – promoting social justice,” she said, calling the play a mental workout.

“I would feel drained by it, but usually got energy from it,” she said of rehearsals.

The 10 actors perform 70 roles in the play, with Keen jumping from playing the town minister’s wife to a friend of one of the convicted murderers, Aaron McKinney.

For the actors, rehearsals scheduled three times a week have culminated in a catharsis of crying, then healing as they’ve overcome some of the hateful lines being said on stage.

“(We, as actors,) have to distance ourselves (from those words),” she said. “Some of the things the minister is saying I’ve heard in church,” she added.

From the seasoned to growing

Another local actor, Ethan Nivan, can relate somewhat to Keen’s experience, though she has at least a decade of years on him.

Nivan, at age 20, had never heard of the Matthew Shepard murder, but knows all too well what it means to be a target of an incident of hate. Nivan recalled being attacked by a football team for his perceived sexual orientation as a senior at South Tahoe High School.

“It brought up and fed my own emotional strife from my past,” said Nivan, who will also serve on a hate/tolerance panel at Lake Tahoe Community College following the March 14 matinee.

Not only has Nivan been affected by hate, he found it challenging to play the town’s minister.

“A lot of the characters we play say words that are not even

in my vocabulary. It was rough to hear and hard for a lot of the first week (in rehearsals)," he said.

Nonetheless, Nivan considers the play a powerful growing experience.

"I've never done anything like it and probably will never do anything like it again," he said.

A coming together

Having met doing productions in college, longtime South Lake Tahoe actors Chris and Pamela Taylor noted how this experience brings a level of depth to their drama careers and life as a couple.

Pamela Taylor described the difficulty in changing an entire thought process from one role to another on a dime. Even the subtle wardrobe changes are so sudden, they occur on the stage.

She plays the mother of an officer who responded to the scene of Shepard's beating and lashing. From there, she jumps to the first lesbian to come out at the University of Wyoming where Shepard went to school.

"This production takes a great amount of concentration having to develop and enrich a character as we go along. There are more than 10 actors (playing these roles). It's a community of a whole group of people in a courtroom during the arraignment," Taylor said. "This is life. If this show does not evoke emotion in the audience members, then maybe there's no emotion in them. We live in a community with a variety of people. It's not about what your beliefs are. It's what you've done with your beliefs."

And Taylor believes the protesters working under the auspices of www.godhatesfags.com have a right to speak out, regardless of how far on the other end of the spectrum of beliefs they

fall from hers.

“Their lives must be very small – a pathetic group of people that would rather spend time traveling to hold up a sign in a protest of hate than stay home and love their families,” she said.

It’s the third time director Susan Boulanger has put on the play and believes there’s still a vital need for the message of love and tolerance of your fellow man to get out.

“It’s about what kind of community we want to be,” she said, also referring to having moved here and being touched by this town’s heartfelt parade of love and support six months ago to kidnapping survivor Jaycee Lee Dugard of South Lake Tahoe.

Boulanger said she was especially struck by Shepard’s story as a result of a violent crime.

“The men who did this were not representative of their community. The play goes into the facts of the case and includes the confessions of the killers,” she said, adding the play revolves around the New York theater company going out to Laramie to find out how the citizens coped with the tragedy.

Tickets for the Laramie Project go on sale at LTCC’s theater box office on Tuesday. They cost \$7 for general admission, \$5 for seniors and children, and \$4 for LTCC student body cardholders. LTCC advises that mature subject matter may not be suitable for children younger than 15.

Upgrades make Barton’s birth

center more appealing

By Kathryn Reed



It's not quite the same as giving birth at home, but the improvements to the birthing center at Barton Memorial Hospital make it seem less sterile and more comforting.

A \$200,000 donation by Ethelmae Haldan and matching funds from the South Lake Tahoe hospital transformed the eight-room facility into a more welcoming center.

Gone are the typical blah linoleum floors. In its place is faux wood flooring. Dated, torn and worn wallpaper has been replaced with fresh paint. Window treatments and dividing curtains in the rooms are new. Bathrooms have been overhauled so the fiberglass showers are gone and tile has been installed. Bathtubs have been added to a couple of the rooms.

Impermeable counters are almost everywhere. Gone are the turquoise Formica countertops. Cupboards are new, too.

Pictures still need to be put back on the walls, with some new artwork possible.

The overhaul started in September 2008 and was completed in February. The unit never shutdown so it took a while to finish the project because only one room could be off-limits at a time.

Most of what was replaced was 15 years old and considered more than well used.

Several of the nurses weighed-in with what they thought would

be good for the unit that handles an average of 500 births a year. About 20 percent of new moms are from the Carson Valley.



Glass at the nurses' station adds privacy.

Things like having a salon chair installed in the lactation consulting room allows nurses to save their back muscles by lowering and raising the chair with the new mom in it instead of having to stoop.

Barton has been offering lactation education since 2007 after some of the staff became certified.

Rocking chairs in the rooms are now more functional for moms to nurse in. The seat is higher off the ground and the arms are wider. Just another item the nurses picked.

The department has 15 full-time registered nurses, a full-time unit coordinator, a part-time clerk, a full-time director and three who work per diem.

Pat Okacz, one of the nurses, designed the department's logo. It is placed at the nurses' station in the main hallway.

"We didn't have the glass before. It adds a lot more privacy," Peggy Wright, director of the Barton Family Birthing Center, said. "It's much quieter. We are a small department built around a central court."

Behind the glass staff can have more private phone

conversations, be a bit more secluded when entering data into the computers and have a little separation from the foot traffic in the hall.

The nursery did not get remodeled. It doesn't get the use like the birthing rooms do. Still, Wright would like to modernize it one day.



Peggy Wright, director of Barton's birthing center, shows off a warming unit.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

A warmer for newborns is in each room. The Barton Foundation donated two of them at a cost of \$16,000 and \$18,000, respectively. Jaundice babies and preemies use them the most. The newer ones weigh the babies, allow for warming lights to be turned on without sterilization issues and allow for medical staff to do everything they need even if the infant is hooked up to other apparatuses.

Though new moms might prefer sleep to television, the new flat screen monitors come with built-in DVD players. Movies about car seat safety, breast feeding and what to expect when the little one gets home are shown.

Comfort for dads was also considered. The old reclining chairs

they slept in are gone. In their place is what looks like a normal couch. With a little manipulation the bottom flips over and turns into a twin bed.

“Dads tell us the mattress is quite good,” Wright said.

Wireless was already in the hospital so sending pictures of the newborn to family and friends can be instantaneous from laptops.

Kirkwood's Cohee likely to buy Sierra Summit resort

By Kathryn Reed

Tim Cohee's dream of owning a ski resort may be realized in a matter of days.

Long known as the voice of Kirkwood Mountain Resort's ski report, as well as president 13 of the 17 years he's been at the Lake Tahoe area resort, Cohee and a group of investors have put together a deal to buy Sierra Summit Mountain Resort.



Tim
Cohee

The resort is 65 miles northeast of Fresno on Highway 168. It has 1,679 vertical feet, with a base elevation of 7,030.

“People should not jump to the conclusion I will leave

Kirkwood and run (Sierra Summit) on a daily basis," Cohee told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday.

The paperwork was supposed to be signed March 5. This was the second delay. Now the deal is supposed to be consummated March 12 assuming all of the kinks can be ironed out. Escrow on the multimillion dollar deal would close April 30.

Snow Summit Ski Corp. is the seller. When they acquired the operation in 1981 they abandoned the China Peak name.

Cohee is used to owning businesses far from where he lives. He has owned a couple ski shops in Wrightwood in Southern California for a handful of years. He checks in on them and the house he owns about once a year.

Like most deals of this magnitude, there are a lot of moving pieces. For one, no paperwork has been signed. If it does go through, Cohee and his partners have someone in mind from outside of the Lake Tahoe area who could run the resort and therefore not require him moving there. Plus, he said the staff in place is good.

Cohee has been in the ski industry for 36 years, all but five of them he's been in management.

Cohee doesn't expect to have a conversation with the ownership and management team at Kirkwood regarding his role at that resort until all is done with the Central California resort.

Cohee envisions Sierra Summit, which may revert to its old name, to be a feeder resort of sorts for Kirkwood. The two could have season pass deals.

Lake Tahoe dining adventure to highlight area cuisine

By Kathryn Reed



Dining around Lake Tahoe is about to take on a new meaning this fall.

Plans are in the works to create the inaugural Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week. It will mean being able to have a three-course meal at a slew of eateries around the lake and in the Truckee area for a fixed price of \$20, \$30 or \$40.

The idea is the cost will be a savings for the diner. The restaurant will have advanced reservations so staff knows how many people will be dining a particular night.

It will be up to the restaurants if they offer a vegetarian choice, include any alcohol in the price, which of the three prices they want to charge, and what the courses entail.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity to try restaurants you maybe haven’t been to before and to visit old favorites,” event organizer Pettit Gilwee said. “Everyone loves fresh, unique cuisine. It cuts across all different types of people and interests because we all love food.”

The Sept. 5-12 time-frame was selected because the whole basin slows down immediately after Labor Day. The idea is this might give tourists some incentive to stay longer, for those coming up for the annual Autumn Food and Wine Festival to come sooner, and for locals to get out after the summer crowds have

dissipated.

"We are not trying to compete with other food and wine events in the region. We want to become known as a great dining destination in addition to skiing and boating," Gilwee said. "I feel like Tahoe is ripe for this. We have that caliber of restaurant."

Gilwee is in the process of negotiating with a variety of restaurants. Some are high end, some are mom and pop eateries, some are well established, others are less than a year old.

Details of who is participating will be forthcoming.

Gilwee's goal is to have 20 restaurants the first year – 10 on the South Shore, 10 on the North Shore.

Restaurant weeks are not a new idea. Sacramento just had theirs in January – a month that is deemed slow for that city. Other cities have been doing this sort of thing for years.

Gilwee hopes people will start on one end of the lake and end the week at the other as they eat their way around Lake Tahoe.

She is working with the different chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus in the region to pull this endeavor off.

Besides providing what is being touted as a great experience for diners, the idea is to bring dollars to restaurants, hotels and other establishments in the basin at a time that is traditionally slow.

The website for Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week is still being worked on. It will be www.tahoerestaurantweek.com. The idea is the participating restaurants will be listed with a link to their website. Diners will book directly with the restaurant – no middleman to deal with, no tickets to buy.

Plastic bags in South Tahoe OK, polystyrene may not be

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is on course to create a massive education campaign about why saying no to plastic bags is the right thing to do and why using a reusable canvas bag is the best option.

This comes at the direction of the city's Sustainability Commission, which met Wednesday afternoon. The commission called for a special meeting for March 17 at 4pm at Lake Tahoe Airport to hammer out the specifics of the campaign.



Containers like this may one day be banned in South Tahoe.

At the commission's February meeting, a full house weighed-in on the good and bad of banning plastic bags. At this time the commission is not seeking a ban.

Reasons the commission is against a ban are because the state will not allow a fee to be imposed on businesses using plastic

bans and several jurisdictions have been sued because of their respective bans.

“More than public education, it should be a public campaign,” Commissioner Claire Fortier said. “We need to have goals.”

All of the commissioners concurred.

South Tahoe High School teacher Jamie Greenough was with a handful of her students at the meeting. Though no students chose to speak, Greenough offered to help however her classes can when it comes to education about using reusable bags.

The commission welcomed the support and will be working with the students and teacher.

Also at the March 3 meeting, the seven-member panel agreed to recommend to the City Council to ban the use of polystyrene throughout the city within a year. The council will likely take this up in May. It has ultimate authority over saying yes or no to ordinances.

The American Chemistry website says, “Polystyrene is found in your home, office, local grocery and in the cafeteria. It comes in many shapes and forms, from foam egg cartons and meat trays, to soup bowls and salad boxes, from coffee cups and utensils to CD jewel boxes” and from produce trays to “peanuts” used in packing and the lightweight foam pieces that cushion new appliances and electronics.

The commission is more interested in eliminating to-go containers made from polystyrene than all of the items mentioned above. However, the commission did not address specifics in the motion.

The city attorney’s office is tasked with bringing back to the commission language for the proposed ordinance before it goes to the council.

“I think polystyrene is easy. There are so many distribution routes in place,” Chairwoman Kirstin Cattell said in regards to how businesses could replace the product they are now using.

Commissioner Do Lee suggested the ban be phased in so the impact to small businesses would be less.

Another item the commission voted on was to further investigate joining a statewide coalition that is looking into having an environmental impact report done in regards to banning plastic bags.

LTUSD approves \$1.8 million in cuts, teacher layoffs

By Kathryn Reed

It was an all too familiar scene with an all too predictable outcome.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District’s board on Tuesday night approved \$1.8 million in budget reductions for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, along with reducing certificated employees by 5.688. Board member Sue Novasel was absent.

Board member Judy Cefalu seemed lost in the whole process. She didn’t want to vote. It appeared at that moment in the South Tahoe Middle School auditorium the reality of what it means to be a board member struck her. It’s not all about site visits to classrooms, construction projects and million-dollar grants to spend.



LTUSD CFO Deb
Yates goes
over the
numbers March
2.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

As board President Wendy David put it, no one wants to cast these votes, but it's the board's job to keep the district solvent.

Because education funding comes with so many strings, the board is left with the task of explaining to the community how millions of dollars are being spent on new buildings while layoffs and furloughs are in the near future.

The problem is there can be no co-mingling of different funding sources.

LTUSD is dealing with continued reductions in state dollars as well as enrollment that won't stop sliding downward. The last official enrollment number was 3,966 students, but Superintendent Jim Tarwater says it's been dropping 12-15 students a week this calendar year.

With an unemployment rate nearing 17 percent in South Lake Tahoe, Bill's Casino closing, other casinos laying off workers, the city cutting staff, the hospital making cuts – it means families are moving to where the jobs are – which isn't Lake Tahoe.

In California, districts are paid based on average daily

attendance. The state has reduced the per pupil allotment from \$6,376 to \$5,186 for the school year starting this fall.

But the cost of doing business doesn't change much – teachers and staff need to be paid, lights turned on, buses filled with gas, paper to write on, pencils to write with.

March 15 is the deadline for the district, per state law, to let teachers know if they'll be hired back next school year. With two resignations coming in this week, the district is hoping others will retire so no pink slips are actually sent out.

Only two of the nearly 60 people at the meeting spoke. Birgit Lukins, who has been in the front office at South Tahoe High School for 16 years, was in tears as she talked about the possibility of her co-worker losing her job.

"The attendance office is not a one person job," Lukins said. "I would be willing to take a three-day furlough."

That is one of the scenarios the board approved Tuesday. Teachers would lose three staff development days and all staff would be furloughed three days. It would save the district \$285,000.

Based on they only work 180 days, the reduction in pay is 1.3 percent. It would not affect their long-term pay scale or retirement.

It is something that needs negotiating. This will take place in May with the unions after all the sun-setting labor rules are dealt with in April.

If the unions don't agree to the furlough days – something that has occurred for most government workers throughout California – it will mean losing a full time counselor, a maintenance worker and the high school attendance technician Lukins spoke of.

If the governor and Legislature come up with different numbers that are less drastic, the furlough days could be rescinded.

No matter what happens on that front, the board agreed to reduce the reserves from 3 percent to 1.5 percent. This puts that fund at \$500,000.

Board member Larry Green asked if reducing the reserve will affect the district's bond rating. CFO Deb Yates said no.

Tarwater isn't concerned the county or state will force districts to immediately replenish reserves to what is supposed to be a minimum threshold of 3 percent.

"They couldn't enforce it because districts would be bankrupt," Tarwater said.

Some of the other cuts in 2010-11 include: saving \$100,000 by not offering vacation buyouts, losing a person at the district office or everyone taking six furlough days to save \$60,000; reducing elementary office staff hours or cutting a full-time position; cutting from transportation; losing a custodian; not paying the city of South Lake Tahoe for grounds keeping; and reducing stipends for lead teachers.

The district plans to offer a golden handshake (aka pay incentive to retire early) to at least 15 people, which would bring a savings in 2011-12.

On March 9 the school board will be discussing more budget issues. The 2010-11 budget is expected to be adopted in June.

South Shore attorney buys Bill's Casino for \$5.22 mil.

By Kathryn Reed

South Shore attorney Mike Laub paid Harrah's Entertainment \$5.225 million for the five parcels that encompass Bill's Casino at Stateline.

The sale went through Friday.



Bill's is gone; what the new business name will be remains to be seen.

Bill's ceased being a casino Jan. 4. It was a slots only gaming facility for the past few years. Named after Harrah's founder Bill Harrah, the small club nestled on the east edge of Harrah's Lake Tahoe was a draw for locals and tourists in its heyday. People used to spill out onto the sidewalks because it didn't have traditional doors.

Like so much of the gaming industry in Northern Nevada, but especially in Lake Tahoe, the influx of Indian casinos throughout California has been debilitating.

Laub, who has a Glenbrook mailing address, has spoken with

Douglas County officials about putting a strip club in where the casino was.

It's zoned for such a business.

Douglas County Manager Michael Brown said Laub has not submitted any plans to the county.

Brown said the county, including the elected commissioners, have jurisdiction over land use issues but cannot deny a business the right to operate just because they may not like the type of establishment.

Commission Chairwoman Nancy McDermid did not return phone calls.

Laub did not return phone calls Monday either. Jacqueline Peterson with Harrah's Entertainment in Las Vegas said, "I don't imagine we're commenting" when asked what the company thought of potentially having a strip club steps from its Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harvey's properties.

Even though Harrah's and MontBleu have nightclubs inside the casinos, access to them is only from inside the casino. Scantily clad women have been part of their lineup at times, but never have they operated what would be called a strip club.

"We are opposed to it," Mike Donovan, spokesman for MontBleu, said of a strip club moving in next door. "I don't think it's good for the overall market place. An element like that taints the cleanliness of the Lake Tahoe market just a bit. I think it will hurt other aspects of the Lake Tahoe market."

Lakeside Inn and Casino as well as the Gaming Alliance are also opposed to this type of business going in.

"Douglas County commissioners will hear an overwhelming weight of opposition to this not for moral reasons, but purely for economic development reasons," Mike Bradford, president of

Lakeside Inn, said. “Edgewood Companies is working on a proposal that would turn Horizon into some completely different kind of facility. With a strip club across the street, it would be a disincentive to do that.”

Edgewood Companies officials didn’t return calls. The Minden-based company owns the property Horizon and MontBleu are on as well as the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

Bradford acknowledged that gaming is taking a backseat to the outdoors and that something more inline with what he envisions for the future of the South Shore should occupy the Bill’s property to better complement where the area is going, not where it has been.

No one from Horizon or Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority returned calls.

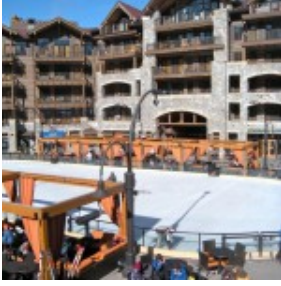
Northstar improves mountain, not overall experience

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Magic Moguls – that’s the one run I always want to do at Northstar.

Each season the rollers off Vista Express are a little different. Each season it’s worth having some fun on them. It reminds me a bit of when I was a kid and we’d ski here as a family. My friend Darla would take me all over the mountain, over little jumps we’d go, so sure we had gotten some big air.

Seeing what boarders and skiers do these days, I’m not even sure we got any air back then.



Northstar-at-Tahoe Village

These Magic Moguls aren't anything compared to what is in the terrain park that the lift crosses over. The features in there look pretty intense – especially for non-aerialists.

It was a week ago today that Sue and I spent the day at Northstar-at-Tahoe. Having the luxury of being able to stay at my sister's place made the experience all the more enjoyable.

Fortunately, we arrived mid-morning. This meant missing the single-digit temperatures on the mountain that fellow skiers had experienced.

The snow on the front side was good. (I wish we were there today for the freshies from this past storm.) The back side, though, was slick, hard and unforgiving.

It reminded me a bit of the men's downhill course at Whistler, just not as steep. It was like this area didn't get any of the fresh snow that had sprinkled the rest of the mountain the previous couple of days.

This area didn't even exist when I was kid. Only the front side of the Comstock lift was inbounds.

It's the backside and Lookout Mountain where the bulk of the black diamonds are. In the past I've had some fun skiing the trees at Lookout Mountain. The conditions didn't allow for it this particular day, but still, the groomers kept us entertained.

The views into the Martis Valley and into the wilderness are spectacular. Lake Tahoe is visible from other areas of the mountain, which always confounds me because that big body of water is not where I think it should be.

From the mid-mountain lodge the Ritz-Carlton peaks out among the trees. They've done a good job to not make it obtrusive. It's open to the public and could be skied to for lunch. A free gondola takes riders between the village and Ritz.

The village at the base is a great spot to rest. Cushy seating around massive fire pits beckon. An ice rink sits in the middle of everything so free entertainment is available, even if it means watching a woman be carted off on a stretcher after blowing out her knee on the ice.

One of the things about staying at Northstar is being able to access the free bus service. Our bus-mate in the morning, though, said all the changes to the area in the last few years have meant having to wait longer for a ride. It took 20 minutes for a bus to arrive to haul us to the village.

Back at the village after showering we looked around for a place to eat. Our choices were upscale, Japanese or pizza. We picked the latter. And it was yummy. But the options were obviously limited.

Most of the shops were closed as we walked around at 6pm. It was dead.

All of this was rather disappointing since we'd had a great mid-week village experience at Whistler a month earlier.

Northstar was once known as a family destination. In talking to people visiting the resort some still see it that way. Their conclusion is families don't do villages.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder