Rahlves turns it up a notch in skiercross



Daron Rahlves left the world of downhill competition to start a second career in skiercross. The 36-year-old trains at Sugar Bowl.

Why did you choose this resort?: For the skiing and to work with the Sugar Bowl Ski Team and Academy. Sugar Bowl has an outstanding race arena for training and the team has full support from the resort. The terrain at the Bowl is awesome and there is a ton of back country terrain waiting just out of the resort.

How often are you in Lake Tahoe?: I live in Truckee 9 months of the year and get in the lake during the summer to water ski, wake board, SUP and swim.

When you arenâ€™t training and competing where can we find you and what would you be doing?: Spending time with Michelle and our twins Miley and Dreyson at home riding bikes, walking in the woods, skiing, at the lake, going out to lunch at Moodyâ€™s and playing with our two huskies. I also like to ride my sled in the winter and in summer dirtbike and mountain bike.

After you win gold in Vancouver, what is your next goal?: To compete in the Silver Belt Banzai March 14-15 at the Bowl and film big mountain skiing around Tahoe and in Alaska.

How long have you been participating in your sport?: Iâ€™ve skied since I was 3. Raced DH, SG and GS for 13 years on the USST and now ski cross on a limited schedule for the last 3 years. I donâ€™t compete in many ski cross events due to the

time it takes away from my family. Iâ€™ve been on the road most of the winter during my racing career so now itâ€™s all about days skiing in Tahoe.

Who inspires you most and why?: I get inspired by those who have confidence and a positive attitude.

Your life is devoted to an event that is over in minutes, how do you prepare for that thrill of victory or agony of defeat?: I never prepare for the outcome, but for the chance I get.

Anything else you would like to add?: Iâ€™d like to thank all the people who follow me in competitions and free ski films. Iâ€™d like to thank my sponsors Red Bull, Atomic, Spyder, Sugar Bowl Resort, Oakley, Swix, Giro, Start Haus, Le Chamois, the USST, my sister Shannon, Mom, Dad and most of all Michelle, Miley and Dreyson.

Publisher's note: *On Jan. 11 read about what it was like for a Tahoe reporter to cover the 1960 Olympics.*

El Dorado 1 of 13 counties to not go after state IHSS grants

By Kathryn Reed

Forty-five of the 58 counties in California are sharing millions of dollars in state grants to combat fraud in In-Home Supportive Services programs. El Dorado County is not one of them.

This is because the county did not apply for grant, not because the county doesn't have fraud.

"(Fraud) is definitely out there. But we have to look at the cost and benefits of combating it. On the face of it you want to say fraud is completely unacceptable. But if it costs more to root out the fraud than the fraud itself, it is a better scenario to not spend that money and to spend it on other priorities," explained Mike Applegarth, senior administrative analyst for El Dorado County.

The other part of the equation is that each county had to come up with matching dollars if they were to be awarded money from the state.

The anti-fraud effort is expected save the state's general fund $130 million in the 2009-10 budget. The $26.5 million grant program is divvied up by $10 million coming from the state's general fund, $12.2 million in federal matching funds and $4.3 million in county matching funds.

Most county Human Services Departments do not have much discretionary money because most of the dollars they receive from the state and feds are allocated to specific areas.

Senior nutrition and elder protection programs are a couple of the areas where El Dorado County said it has leeway with spending.

"We looked at the amount we would likely receive as a result of the application and compared it to the amount we would have to contribute as a match and it didn't seem to pencil out for us," Applegarth said.

The amount of fraud in the county was not going to generate a large grant payout from the state, Applegarth added.

The District Attorney's Office does have someone who investigates these types of fraud cases. Applegarth didn't have a figure for how much fraud may be going on in El Dorado County.

Nearby counties receiving grants include: Amador $20,046; Placer $230,229; and Nevada $67,226.

Los Angeles County receive the largest sum – $9,460,104.

Potential buyer wants to turn Bill's into strip club

By Kathryn Reed

A strip club. That's what Bill's Casino may become.

Potential proprietor Mike Laub and Douglas County Sheriff Ron Pierini met Monday to discuss the idea. The sheriffâ€™s department issues alcohol and adult entertainment licenses. But itâ€™s the county commissioners who first must approve the licenses.

When Laub tried to open a strip club a few years ago at the bottom of Kingsbury Grade in the old Faces and Tahoe Underground building, the commission denied him.



Bill's may become a strip club.

The commissioners then rewrote the ordinance dictating where these types of businesses are allowed. The only place on the South Shore of Douglas County a strip club is allowed is along the casino corridor â€“ right where Laub wants his club.

Not even Las Vegas has strip clubs on its Strip.

Laub did not return phone calls. He is an attorney on the South Shore. He used to own Brothers Bar on Emerald Bay Road.

Pierini told *Lake Tahoe News* that Laub is thinking about buying the two-story building from Harrahâ€™s Entertainment to have part of it be a strip club and part shops.

This can be a busy area with families walking by. Across the street is a movie theater at the Horizon. Restaurants and showrooms in the adjacent and nearby casinos all cater to children.

â€œThey wanted to see what the pleasure of the county would be because of the investment possibility,â€ Pierini said.

Laub essentially wants the OK from the county to do this before he makes a deal with Harrahâ€™s, otherwise he could end up owning a building without a business to operate.

Douglas County Commission Chairwoman Nancy McDermid did not want to discuss the matter at this time.

The commission would need more than public outcry as a reason

to deny the permit. However, entertainment licenses are hard to get. All employees have to have work cards and have background checks, plus other requirements.

Pierini believes Laub and the district attorney need to talk about Laubâ€™s business proposal.

â€œThe only opinion I will give, and I told Mr. Laub this, is I wonâ€™t give my personal opinion, but I can say it will increase calls of service,â€ Pierini said.

Pierini was captain at the Tahoe substation when a strip club was in the old Nugget building in the 1990s. It has since been subdivided and houses restaurants and other businesses east of the casino corridor.

That club didnâ€™t last long.

â€œTypically when you deal with strip clubs the problem is intoxication and disturbance of the peace with fights,â€ Pierini said.

John Packer, spokesman for Harrahâ€™s Northern Nevada, said the company doesnâ€™t expect to decide until later this month or February whether to sell or lease the property.

â€œThe only decision that was made was to close Billâ€™s on Jan. 4,â€ Packer said.

But he added, â€œHarrahâ€™s is not in the real estate business.â€

Harrahâ€™s is in the gaming business. It owns Harrahâ€™s Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline.

Packer would not comment on how a strip club might affect his business.

Others are more vocal about their thoughts.

â€œI think the location is not appropriate for it,â€ Carol

Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, said. â€œI would hope that is not the direction that our destination aspires to.â€

Although the strip club would be across the state line, the South Shore tries to be one community.

â€œWhen we say â€˜Americaâ€™s All-Year Playground,â€™ that is not what we had in mind,â€ South Lake Tahoe Mayor Kathay Lovell said.

Hammer time at Harrah's



By Mark Earnest, Reno Gazette-Journal

MC Hammer spent some more time in the spotlight this past year, with a reality show about his family, the start of a dance-oriented Web site, frequent updates on Twitter and his blog, and a new album in the works titled "DanceJam: The Music."

Yet, like other musical artists who tend to take their time, that new album will be ready when it's ready.

"I feel absolutely zero pressure to lock any dates down," Hammer said about his new album, which he has worked on for more than a year. "It's such an old, outdated business model to say, 'This is the date.' I do have a ton of material – we just finished three more songs in the last month, and I'm liking what I hear."

Whenever it comes out, the album will be one more stop on the varied adventure that's been Hammer's career. The rapper will perform Jan. 9 at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story

Anderson on track to conquer halfpipe

Jamie Anderson, 19, is one of the top female snowboarders in the world. She dominates slopestyle events. She is aiming for the Olympic halfpipe team – slopestyle is not an Olympic event.

Home resort: Sierra-at-Tahoe



Jamie Anderson

Why did you choose this resort?: Because it's close to home and it happens to be the best!

How often are you in Lake Tahoe?: Not very often.

When you arenâ€™t training and competing where can we find you and what would you be doing?: Either hiking, swimming, camping, bowling, skating, or chillin at the beach.

How long have you been participating in your sport? 10 years!

Who inspires you most and why? My mom is a huge inspiration to me. She is so real! I learn so much from her all the time and it’s so empowering to be around people like her.

Your life is devoted to an event that is over in minutes, how do you prepare for that thrill of victory or agony of defeat? I have no attachments. I sincerely love what I do, and of course I’m happy if I win, but I’m not sad if I donâ€™t. I know that I’m only doing it for the love, so all is well.

Anything else you would like to add? One Life! Send it!

Publisher’s note: *Read about what is happening along the Olympic torch route on Jan. 8.*

Emotionless father sentenced for killing 4-year-old son

By Kathryn Reed

A two-hour sentencing hearing may have seemed long for the more than 50 people in the courtroom, but for those who had to wait 24 years to hear a judge say Ulysses Roberson would spend 15 years to life in prison, it was time well spent Wednesday afternoon.

Roberson, who last month was convicted of second-degree murder in the death of his son, continued to express his innocence.



Ulysses
Roberson

Dressed in an orange jumpsuit, he showed no remorse, nor exhibited any with his words as he denied killing 4-year-old Alexander Olive. The boy's body has never been found.

"He showed his true colors today by not accepting any responsibility or exhibiting any emotion," FBI agent Chris Campion said of Roberson. "You don't meet too many sociopaths. He is one of them."

When both sides had their say, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury said all the adults in the boy's life had failed him.

Roberson lived with several women in the Tahoe Keys neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe. The boy is believed to have been killed in December 1985 or January 1986.

Judy Olive, the boy's mother, forgave Roberson at Wednesday's sentencing, just like she had done on the witness stand. However, she chose not to be in the courtroom when Roberson spoke.

Roberson asked to be able to leave when Olive gave her PowerPoint presentation, but the judge denied that request.

Olive showed slides of her life, the family members her son never met, the few pictures she has from his short life.

A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 15 to determine how much credit for time served Roberson will have taken off his

sentence. The state Department of Corrections will decide where he will be imprisoned.

BlueGo is seeing red; more cuts needed



By Kathryn Reed

A $211,000 shortfall is requiring BlueGo to tweak bus routes in South Lake Tahoe – again.

It seems like every few months officials from the South Shore bus agency come before the South Lake Tahoe City Council with either proposed route changes or fare increases.

On Tuesday there will be a public hearing on the proposed suspension of routes, including doubling the wait time for the main route on Highway 50 through the center of town. The BlueGo plan is scheduled to begin Jan. 13 and last until June 30 – the end of the fiscal year.

When the agency has budget hearings next spring, reintroducing the suspended routes is likely to be one of the topics.

South Tahoe Area Transit Authority (STATA) board members first must approve the changes at their meeting Friday at 1pm at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency office in Stateline.

All but one affected route is in South Lake Tahoe. The lone

Nevada route involves Whittell High School-Zephyr Cove on the weekends.

The route restructure should bring a savings of $183,000. The entire operating budget is being looked at to see where other dollars can be saved.

“If we did any further cuts to the transit system, we would have impacted people’s ability to get around,” explained John Andoh, BlueGo administrator.

Andoh and the agency’s accountant are the only two paid employees. BlueGo contracts with MV Transit to operate the buses.

The city, El Dorado and Douglas counties, the Stateline casinos, Ridge Tahoe and Heavenly Mountain Resort are some of the entities that make up STATA and pay into the bus service.

Funding comes from a variety of sources, including both states, the feds, grants and fares. But the money that one state ponies up cannot be used in the other state. This is why California is feeling the brunt of the route suspensions.

“Revenue is not coming in as projected,”Andoh said. California uses property taxes to fund transit agencies, and those taxes are down significantly from years past.

The entire BlueGo budget is $4 million a year.

Changing the operation



"What is a

BlueGo?" tourists ask. A picture of a bus on the signs would answer that question.

It wasn't until a couple years ago that BlueGo had an administrator or was operated as a coordinated transit agency.

The operating agreement from 1995 is still in affect. It is going to be reviewed Jan. 8 as well as the bylaws. Changes should be finalized in the coming months.

STATA members each get a vote. But in 1995 Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys had different owners, so they still each have votes when in fact they are now one company.

On the flipside, when MontBleu and Horizon joined they were owned by the same company but are now under separate ownership.

"Friday's discussion is how do they add more members for additional revenue into the system," said Rick Angelocci, South Lake Tahoe assistant city manager and the city's alternate representative to the board.

(South Tahoe's rep and Mayor Kathay Lovell did not return a phone call. Neither did Nancy McDermid, Douglas County commissioner and chairwoman of STATA.)

About a year ago, Ridge Tahoe at the top of Kingsbury Grade was brought in to STATA. The time-share resort donated its vehicles and put up some cash.

Other lodging properties have expressed interest in joining as well. In the past, Sierra-at-Tahoe has been talked about as a potential member.

Looking forward and back

To attract bus riders, the board realizes it must make the system approachable. One definition of that is comfort.

“The city is getting new buses in a couple weeks. They have extra heaters, extra CNG tanks so they can go farther without refueling, wider seats that are a little more cushiony and satellite radio,” Angelocci said.

He said these are things that will attract the “choice riders” – those who choose to ride BlueGo as opposed to those who have to ride the bus to get to their destination.



Most bus stops on the South Shore are exposed to the elements. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Another thing that will change in the next year is installing bus shelters so people don’t have to keep sitting or standing in the cold. So many of the bus stops throughout the South Shore are just a bench. And because sidewalks are so haphazard and seldom shoveled even getting to the bench can be dangerous this time of year.

The City Council last fall allocated $30,000 from its air quality mitigation funds to help fund the shelters. Grants are also being sought to help pay for shelters.

A former elected official said the city bought shelters in the past that were stored at Lake Tahoe Airport, but were never used. It’s unknown what happened to them.

Another issue for South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 12 will be deciding in closed session whether to file a lawsuit against ATM, the transit operator before MV. The lawsuit ATM filed against the city in federal court for breach of contract was thrown out last year.

BlueGo is in debt about $1 million to MV. Officials say this has to do with startup costs because the city’s bus garage was in such disrepair when Area Transit Management abruptly quit operating days before it was scheduled to in December 2008.

It used to be that TRPA would float BlueGo the money when it came up short on cash, then have transit grants pay TPRA back. That was until two years ago when BlueGo was told it had to be a standalone entity without those crutches.

Angelocci said it could take four years to pay off that debt, unless the city tries to recover those costs in court.

MV had to fix buses, cleanup the garage and buy parts. Employees had to be hired and trained.

But no one in the city lost his or her job for not overseeing the ATM operation and allowing it to become what it became.

Multiple safety infractions led the city to want to get rid of ATM. Andrew Morris ran ATM after buying the company from Ken Daley in November 2006.

Daley formed ATM in 1985 and began running STAGE, the predecessor to BlueGo.

He was at odds with the city several times in those 21years – sometimes regarding money. (Daley is now a real estate agent and will be installed as treasurer of the South Tahoe Association of Realtors on Friday.)

Daley was at the helm in June 2002 when a $3.6 million deal was signed to bring what was touted as a state of the art bus system to the South Shore. Sixty-five telephones and 31 kiosks were supposed to be installed so passengers could find out when the next bus would arrive.

It never worked. They were pulled offline within months and never returned to service. It’s unknown what happened to the kiosks and the technology.

Hight ready to reach new heights



Elena Hight finished sixth in the halfpipe at the 2006 Olympic Games. At 20, she hopes to improve upon that accomplishment in Vancouver next month.

Home resort: Northstar-at-Tahoe

Why did you choose this resort?: Northstar always is so much fun to ride. They always make great park and pipe and no matter what are maintaining it.

How often are you in Lake Tahoe?: I spend about a total of 3 months of the year at home between all my travels.

When you arenâ€™t training and competing where can we find you and what would you be doing? I spend most of my time relaxing in my house. I love to cook so I am typically in the kitchen during anytime I have off.

After you win gold in Vancouver, what is your next goal? Wow … well, right now think I am just focusing on one thing at a time. I will tackle something new when the time comes.

How long have you been participating in your sport? I have been snowboarding since I was 6 years old and I have been competing professionally since I was 14.

Who inspires you most and why? My mom is my biggest inspiration because she is always there for me and somehow always has the right answers.

Your life is devoted to an event that is over in minutes, how do you prepare for that thrill of victory or agony of defeat? The Olympics would be an amazing goal to achieve but no matter what the outcome, I still snowboard because I love it. No matter what I will still continue to push myself and look for the next challenge within snowboarding.

Publisher's note: *Read about slopestyle specialist Jamie Anderson on Jan. 7.*

Squaw – from a rope tow to Olympic mountain



By Kathryn Reed

Alex Cushing left his East Coast law practice to move to Squaw

Valley in the 1940s, soon convinced PanAm pilot Wayne Poulson to sell him 600 acres in what is now Olympic Valley and then spent $100,000 to build a ski lodge near what is KT-22.

By 1954, Cushing was entertaining the notion of Squaw hosting the 1960 Olympics.

Lake Placid officials were furious he won the U.S. Olympic Committeeâ€™s approval. He went on to beat out Innsbruck, St. Moritz and Garmishe-Partenkirchen. (Innsbruck was selected four years later and again in 1976. Lake Placid hosted the game in 1932 and 1980.)

In 1955, when the International Olympic Committee chose Squaw, the North Shore resort had one chairlift, a rope tow and a 50-room lodge.

Construction on Olympic-quality facilities started the next year – $8 million worth. This set an Olympic record. (By contrast, the Vancouver Olympic Committee says the expense of this yearâ€™s Games is in the billions of dollars.)

The abundance of snow in Lake Tahoe was one of Cushingâ€™s selling points. The problem in 1960 was the snow was sparse. There was talk of trucking in snow or moving the events to Slide Mountain (now part of Mt. Rose ski resort).

But Mother Nature cooperated; with the snow seeming to fall by the bucket load that February just as the Games were to begin.

So much fell that Walt Disney â€“ who was putting on the opening ceremonies â€“ feared all of the white stuff and nasty weather would ruin his festivities. (Disney helped found Sugar Bowl ski resort 70 years ago.)

Richard Nixon, then vice president and one-time congressman from California, was 90 minutes late because of the storm. The 15,000 people in attendance had to wait for his arrival.

With 10 inches falling in the valley and even more on the

mountain, the menâ€™s downhill was pushed to the first Monday.

Seven hundred athletes from 33 countries competed in 27 events in 1960. The bobsled event was canceled because there wasnâ€™t enough money to finish building the route, though officials at the time said it was because not enough countries wanted to participate.

Leading up to the Games, Buddy Werner was one of the countryâ€™s potential medalists in skiing, but he had broken his leg earlier in the season. If that name sounds familiar, youth ski programs now carry his name.

Jean Vuarnet stunned the world by winning the menâ€™s downhill on metal skis â€“ the first time metal skis had been used. The French also didnâ€™t wax their skis.

It wasnâ€™t just the slopes that were catching peopleâ€™s attention. These VIII Winter Olympics were the first time any skating event was contested inside and therefore the first on manmade ice. Ponds of frozen ice were the norm before Squaw.

However, the speed skating was outdoors on a 400-meter oval.

They were also the Games to usher in electronic timing.

The Squaw Games were the first to have daily television coverage. Walter Cronkite was the voice of those Games for CBS.

About 300 people worked security at Squaw. This pales in comparison to the number Vancouver is employing – 15,000 police, private security and military personnel at a cost of nearly $1 billion.

Other than the Olympic flame and those famous five rings at the entrance to Squaw off Highway 89, relics of 50 years ago are hard to find.

The roof of Blyth Arena â€“ the ice rink â€“ collapsed in the

1980s. Condos near Red Dog replaced the torch tower and podium. The ski jump sat unused for a couple decades until it, too, was removed. The Nevada Visitors Center is now the Far East Center and the California Visitors Center serves as the members' locker building.

Although most of the structures are long gone, the memories of those 1960 Games at Squaw seem to burn as bright as the Olympic flame.

Publisher's note: *Read about potential Olympian Elena Hight on Jan. 5.*

Finch eager for second chance at Olympics

Andy Finch, 28, hopes to make Vancouver his second consecutive Winter Olympics in the snowboard halfpipe competition.

Home resort: Northstar-at-Tahoe

Why did you choose this resort?: I can look out my window and see how good it is at Northstar. Also, itâ€™s the best park and pipe.



Andy Finch

How often are you in Lake Tahoe?: Unfortunately, not enough.

But probably about 4 to 8 days a month during the winter.

When you arenâ€™t training and competing where can we find you and what would you be doing? On the Central Coast drowning in some waves or somewhere warm and tropical.

After you win gold in Vancouver, what is your next goal? Honestly, my life is in the hands of God and I will go where he directs me.

How long have you been participating in your sport? I have been competing in snowboarding for 12 years.

Who inspires you most and why? Travis Rice because how big he goes and the flair he adds on his tricks.

Your life is devoted to an event that is over in minutes, how do you prepare for that thrill of victory or agony of defeat? At different moments you will perform better, so I make sure I get my state of mind right so I can perform as well as I can and just have fun. The rest is up to the judges.

Anything else you would like to add? The Olympics was a great experience 4 years ago and it would be a blast to go again. I enjoyed representing our country in a way not many get to.

Publisher's note: *Read about the history of the 1960 Squaw Valley Olympics on Jan. 4.*