

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Foxtail

Foxtail is a stunningly handsome boy who looks like a Norwegian Forest cat. He likes to hide out in his house all day, so be sure to ask to meet him when you visit the shelter. He is about 4 years old.

Fees for all adoptions for the next few weeks have been paid by a kind donor. There are 14 dogs (including nine puppies) and 13 cats (including several kittens and several older cats) at the shelter as of today.

Foxtail is neutered, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go

online.

– Karen Kuentz

New Year's bash benefits High Fives

The Squaw Valley Prom, a fundraiser for High Fives, is Dec. 31 starting at 8pm.

The event will take place in the Olympic Valley Lodge. The 13th annual prom has an '80s theme and guests will be ringing in the new year back to the future style.

Tickets are \$100 per couple and \$200 stag (single). Only 400 Couples tickets are available. They are available **online**.

Bomb sniffing dog keeps South Shore safe

By Susan Wood

ROUND HILL – “Find it, find it, find it,” Battalion Chief Todd Moss said, while running around the Round Hill fire station.

He wasn't looking for his socks.

Instead, the Tahoe Douglas firefighter was giving out

instructions to his dog Gunner, who acted like there was a leftover turkey stashed on the engine in the garage or behind the exercise machines in the living room.

His nose went into overdrive at the cabinets in that room as well as in the kitchen. And the 4-year-old chocolate Labrador retriever thought nothing of stretching out on his hind legs to get a higher vantage point.

He was searching for explosives. For training purposes, it was just a sack of suspicious powder. With a snout able to pick up scents 40 times better than humans, the canine gets his target.



Gunner searches for “explosives” under the watchful eye of handler Battalion Chief Todd Moss. Photos/Susan Wood

Gunner has recently completed his 120 hours of training to be a certified “explosive detection canine.” This means the work

is just beginning. Moss will now log 16 hours a month practicing exercises with his four-legged companion.

“He’s a dog until it’s time to go to work,” Moss said as the canine stared at his master-handler. Gunner waits for the “squeaky” toy to come out as a signal it’s time for work. His reward? It goes without saying for a Lab – tennis balls.

Gunner will be used more often than what the public might think – but not for what one would think.

Post 9/11: If there’s a suspicious package, the fire protection district has a robot complete with a camera. It’s followed by a bomb squad crew member with an X-ray machine.

At times, Gunner may be used with Moss by his side. But Gunner – who always appears to stand at attention and willing to please – is more likely to be called out when buildings or venues need to be “swept” as in searched.

Bomb dogs have been brought out for events such as the summer concerts at the Harveys casino parking lot and across the street at the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course for the American Century Championship.

Think of the Boston Marathon as a good example.

The squad had been recently contacted by the U.S. Secret Service during the election season from August to November, when then presidential nominees Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton had rallies in Northern Nevada, and Trump flew into South Lake Tahoe.



Gunner and Battalion Chief Todd Moss

UNR has an explosive detection canine, along with the Reno Police Department and Washoe County Sheriff's Department. Two make their office at the Reno Tahoe International Airport.

"With all these dogs, they make a task force," Moss pointed out.

Douglas County felt a need to have its first bomb dog instead of tapping into one miles away.

"We really use them," Moss said. "We wanted to be a contributor (in the task force)."

As an exercise that serves as a wake-up call, Moss made pipe bombs by emptying shells from a 12-gauge shotgun to show his comrades that "it doesn't take much to hurt you."

The U.S. Department of Defense spent \$19 billion researching the best way to detect explosive devices and came up with dogs as the answer.

Trainers expose the canines to the smells of different

explosives and give them a reward.

Bomb dogs are more commonly known for their work in the field at war. More than 2,000 have been trained to sniff out explosives through handlers in the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, the National Geographic reported. The Smithsonian estimated that about 10,000 detection canines are at work around the world.

When the opportunity to have a special bomb dog arose, Tahoe Douglas got lucky when a Carson City military family moving to San Diego donated Gunner because the handler had two other dogs.

The dog was free as well as the training, which would normally cost a department about \$14,000. Handler and master dog trainer Jim McNeil of the Washoe County Sheriff's Department donated his time to the effort and brought the dog to Moss.



Battalion Chief Todd Moss and

Gunner always training and playing.

After 20 minutes of the first day of training at the vacant Kingsbury Middle School, the dog kept returning to Moss opposed to McNeil.

"I guess he's your dog," Moss recalled McNeil saying to him. Now McNeil has embraced the great uncle status.

"He's attached to me 100 percent of the time," Moss said, glancing at Gunner. The Lab, who Moss has had since June, remained focused on Moss with those deep, sincere eyes.

The mutual respect and love is obvious.

So how does a handler love a dog but remove oneself enough to do a job in which he sends his companion in harm's way?

"It's a job. We're trained to do what we do. We do it as safe as we possibly can. We put hours and hours in. Unfortunately, (accidents) are a part of the job. We try not to think about it," Moss explained.

A Labrador retriever is an ideal dog as an explosive detection canine because they have a hunting drive. The drive to seek remains constant.

When it fades, Moss gives him a break that allows him to hydrate and regroup through a change in environment.

"We take as long as we need," he said.

Gunner may even be influenced by his handler's current attitude. The dog is keenly perceptive and knows when to be intense and when to be fun-loving.

"They have a better temperament for this work," Moss said.

How?

"Look at him," Moss said, laughing and pointing to Gunner

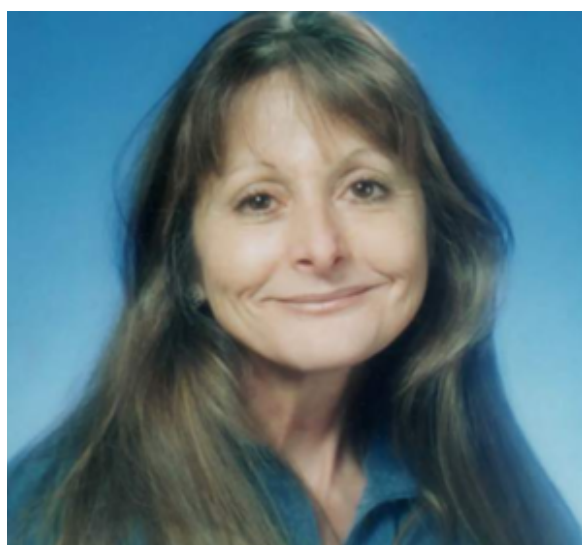
lying down by his feet. The dog was warned earlier not to tear up yet another squeaky toy. He looked up sheepishly like a child.

He's presentable in an event setting too, as public safety agencies make appearances to show off all the "tools in the toolbox," Moss noted.

"He's definitely an added plus. We've always depended on other (handlers and their dogs). Now we're a part of (the team)," Tahoe Douglas Fire Chief Scott Baker said.

The district wants to collect donations for a temperature control unit for the truck bed Gunner rides in so he won't be cold out on the job.

Laurie Weatherston — 1952-2016



Laurie Nelson Weatherston

Laurie Nelson Weatherston died Oct. 10, 2016, from

complications with surgery at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. She was 64.

Laurie was born June 11, 1952. She grew up in the Los Angeles area. After successfully battling cancer in her early 20s, she completed her studies at Sonoma State University, earning her bachelor's in psychology in 1976.

Her interests in running, hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing led her to Lake Tahoe in the early 1980s, where she met her future husband, Scott Weatherston, and her soon to be stepson Sean. Scott and Laurie celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary on Sept. 17.

Laurie's career began in 1984 working for Turner & Associates Inc. in Stateline. This was followed by Lumos & Associates Inc. in Carson City and R.O. Anderson Engineering Inc. in Minden.

She became a licensed professional land surveyor in 2002. In 2006, she started Weatherston Surveying LLC.

Laurie loved her mountains, often venturing out solo to hike, run and snowshoe in the Upper Kingsbury area. She trekked the mountain sides of Virginia City and Kingston to plot out properties for her clients.

She was also an avid San Francisco Giants fan, played the piano, acoustic guitar, and flute.

Her love of the outdoors led her to being an active and valuable member of the Douglas County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (DCSAR) team for 12 years. Along with responding to people in need, she also managed the first aid program for DCSAR, and took the lead in providing first aid teams for the many bicycle and running events at Lake Tahoe. Never turning down an assignment, she met the challenges with enthusiasm, in spite of her small stature, all of 95 pounds and 4-feet-11-inches.

Laurie leaves behind her loving husband, Scott; sister Kathy Nelson; stepson Sean Weatherston; and stepmother Marilyn Nelson. She also leaves behind numerous cousins, friends and her beloved cats, Persia, Wolfie and Yoda.

Laurie is preceded in death by her parents, Don Nelson and Barbara Eiler; part of a landmark entertainment family headed by her uncle and aunt, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson; and her stepfather Martin Sperzel.

A memorial and celebration of life for Laurie will be Dec. 10 at 2pm at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Climate change to highlight annual meteorologist conference

California Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León will be the keynote speaker at Operation Sierra Storm Meteorologist Conference in January.



Kevin de León

He will discuss California's role as an international leader in carbon emission reductions and national implications

longterm economic, environmental and cultural impacts; impacts a new president will have on policy, environmental initiatives and funding.

Richard Somerville, professor emeritus with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, will also join the presentation to provide insights on President-elect Donald Trump's climate change policy options and the impacts of COP 21 policy implementation.

The conference is Jan. 10-13. Richard Somerville will talk Jan. 12 from 8-9am, and de León from 9:15-10:15am. Both will be in Harveys Cabaret Theater in Stateline.

2 nights of MontBleu Holiday Extravaganza

This is our 22nd year for the MontBleu Holiday Extravaganza.

The annual show at the Stateline casinos started in 1995. The show consists of third-, fifth-, sixth-, eighth-, ninth-, 10th-, 11th-, 12th-grade choirs, as well as a faculty-parent choir. Included is the award winning Blue Ribbon Classical Choir.

The finale includes more than 200 singers. Special guests include selected performers from Marcia Sarosik Shining Stars dance troupe and Liz Niven's musical "White Christmas" at South Tahoe High School.

Shows are Dec. 14 and Dec. 15 at 7pm.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors. Younger than 5 are free.

Holiday lighting and winter conservation tips

Liberty Utilities is suggesting the following electrical safety and conservation tips.

Holiday lighting tips:

- Switch to safe, long-lasting, energy efficient LED holiday lights.
- Use a timer to reliably turn lights on and off.
- Don't overload your electric circuits.
- Stay within limits of your circuit breaker.
- Adhere to manufacturer's designations and locations for indoor vs. outdoor use.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, around furniture legs, or across doorways.
- Avoid stringing more than three sets of lights together and plugging into a single outlet.
- Keep your natural trees well-watered to prevent bulbs from igniting dry branches.
- Never use electrical decorations on metal trees.

Winter energy conservation tips:

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees when home, and then back to 55-68 degrees when unoccupied.
- Open window coverings on the sunny side of your home to take advantage of free heat from the sun.
- Close foundation vents.
- Turn off lights and appliances when not in use, including your computer.
- Vacuum your refrigerator coils, underneath and in the back.

Creativity shines at Festival of Trees and Lights



Elegance oozes from the Winter Ice display. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Restraint was needed to not lick the supersized cupcakes and other sugary delicacies. After all, they were just decorations on a tree.

But these were no ordinary ornaments, so to speak. Gateau et

Torta won the most creative, or out of the box tree at the Festival of Trees and Lights. (This reporter was one of the seven judges.)

This is one of 11 decorator trees on display at the four-day event at MontBleu casino that runs through Sunday. Barton Foundation puts on the extravaganza that is all things Christmas – with the trees being the highlight of the festival.

Lisa Shafer with Wildwood Makers Market designed the sweet tree.

A sprawling display that is more like a New Year's Eve party than a Christmas celebration won most elegant.

Katie Long from Thran's Flowers designed what she called Winter Ice. It has the only tree that rotates. All of the extras makes it hard to miss in the large convention center.



Woodland Queen took the overall honors at the 2016 Festival of Trees and Lights.

Woodland Queen earned best interpretation of theme as well as best of show. Jeri Oishi and the design team at Enchanted Florist created this masterpiece. It's so well done it's hard to know if this is more woman or more tree. It's almost like she could come alive, but not in a scary way like the trees in "Harry Potter" do. This queen seems regal, almost otherworldly.

Also being judged were the various trees – albeit much smaller in size – that were decorated by area schoolchildren. The

variety of class-crafted ornaments is stellar.



Ornaments crafted by children adorn the school trees.

Winners were:

- Most out of the box: Lake Tahoe Environmental Magnet School
- Best use of theme: Tahoe Valley Elementary School
- Handcrafted with care: Sierra House Elementary School.

All of the designer trees will be auctioned off at the Dec. 3 gala. Most come with an assortment of gifts as well. This is the eighth year for the festival. Every year a different beneficiary within the Barton Health system is chosen. This year the proceeds will go toward cancer wellness programs.



Festive wreaths are also part of the holiday decor.

Notes:

- The festival runs through Dec. 4. For details on specific events at the festival and prices, go **online**.

Food, toy collections on South Shore

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and South Tahoe Refuse & Recycling Services are partnering to make giving to Christmas Cheer easier than ever.

The LTVA's Drive and Drop for Christmas Cheer takes place Dec. 5-10 from 9am-5pm. Drive through the visitor center parking

lot at 3066 Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe to drop donations of food or toys into the bins provided by South Tahoe Refuse. Cash donations should be brought inside the visitor center.

South Tahoe Refuse is also having its annual Community Holiday Food & Toy Drive Dec. 5-9. Leave canned/packaged food or toys curbside on your regular collection day, or drop off at South Tahoe Refuse, 2140 Ruth Ave., during business hours.

Christmas Cheer feeds more than 1,000 people each month, year-round, and the need for wholesome meals is even more important to families with children who are out of school at the holidays.

For more information about donating, call 530.541.5255.

Artists sought to create streetlight banners

North Tahoe Business Association is looking for artist to create streetlight banner art to be displayed along main street Kings Beach.

The selection committee is looking for artwork that is colorful, meaningful and enhances Kings Beach main street.

Banner size is 18 inches wide by 36 inches high. Proposals should include a preliminary color rendition and brief narrative description of the artwork.

Proposals are due Feb. 24 and should be emailed as PDF files to info@NorthTahoeBusiness.org.

An \$80 honorarium will be awarded for each selected banner.

NTBA will have selected artwork professionally printed onto poly canvas and plans to install banners by summer 2017.