

Chief of STPUD prepping for retirement



Richard Solbrig is retiring as general manager of South Tahoe PUD in January 2019. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Stability. It's one of the reasons South Tahoe Public Utility District is as successful as it is.

Richard Solbrig is only the third general manager the district has had since 1977. The district has started looking for its fourth, as the 68-year-old plans to retire in January.

It is the culture he has helped build that he is proudest of. It's a team; where when an emergency happens people don't hesitate to come in to work no matter the hour or if it's a weekend. Collectively there is a commitment to their jobs, which is really a commitment to the area of the South Shore the district serves.

"When you are delivering services that are required for life, you don't want them compromised," Solbrig told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The board this month began discussing the general manager recruitment schedule.

Solbrig said the fact that there has been such little turnover at the top is a "testament to the boards that have been here. They haven't suffered drama, micromanaged or surprised staff."

Solbrig came to the district in 1990 as assistant general manager, becoming the top guy in 1993.

He grew up in New York, went to MIT to study civil engineering, then earned a master's in sanitary engineering at Cal. While working for a Bay Area firm he was the construction manager for a \$30 million project at Lake Tahoe. That three-year stint in the late 1980s gave his wife and two kids a taste of the mountains. They wanted to stay. That led him to commute before the STPUD job opened.

Solbrig has much to be proud of when it comes to accomplishments during his tenure. The last time the district exceeded the wastewater requirement was in 1995.

"We've always regarded ourselves as environmentalists. I'm proud of our record," Solbrig said.

The district is regularly replacing infrastructure. While much more needs to be done, he said STPUD is ahead of the curve compared to other agencies.

The district is still working on having the proper capacity to fight fires. In many ways it was lucky in 2007 that the Angora Fire erupted where it did because those lines had been upgraded and there was better storage capacity compared to what exists even today in some locations of the city.

The one big issue that won't be resolved before he leaves that

frustrates him is the PCE contamination at the Y. Tetrachloroethylene was used by dry cleaners and automotive shops. Officials have known since 1989 that a plume is in the local groundwater.

The water districts affected by the contamination are at the mercy of Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to determine who is liable and to come up with a remedy.

“Lahontan’s focus is on the process and not on the end product,” Solbrig said. “Their action has been creating process. The process is laborious and slow.”

Since the **last meeting in February** about the PCE issue the district received a \$504,295 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board to conduct a feasibility study of remedial alternatives to mitigate PCE contamination. The objective is to collect information on the aquifer characteristics and water quality to design strategies to control and/or remove PCE from groundwater. The field work should be completed by late June.

Dealing with contamination issues is not new to Solbrig. He was here during the MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether) debacle. In 1997 the gasoline additive was found to have contaminated wells. Shell Oil ended up paying the district millions of dollars to settle the case.

Solbrig has no plans to slow down between now and January. His desk is full of papers. It shows a man who still has much more to accomplish.

Still, he also has a clock on the desk counting down to the second how much time he has left.

Once retired he hopes he’ll be able to enjoy the area a bit more. Relaxing and traveling are what he looks forward to. He’s quite the dancer and hopes to be spending more time doing that as well. Solbrig also has a whole list of things to do

inside and outside the house that need tackling – things that have been neglected while he's been tending to the sewer and water needs of much of the South Shore.

African healer coming to South Lake Tahoe

Unity at the Lake is hosting an African healer/drummer/storyteller this Sunday.

Masankho uses a combination of interplay, storytelling, dance and African ritual. This will be a time to share songs, stories, dances and instrumental music. If you play an acoustic instrument and can improvise, plan to play.

Masankho has been a certified interplay leader since 1999.

Cost of the ritual is a sliding scale of \$19-\$39, though no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Unity is located at 870 Emerald Bay Road, Suites 204-207, South Lake Tahoe.

To register, call 385.282.8433. Or register at the door at 1:30pm. Event is from 2-5pm.

Van life to be showcased in

Tahoe City

Lake Tahoe's first-ever Van Life Rally has been added to the Alpenglow Mountain Festival.

It will be June 22 from 9am-2pm in the heart of Tahoe City.

Whether you're living life on the road in your own tricked out rig, looking for a way to break into the van lifestyle, searching for new ideas to expand your current setup, or just curious about the ways of van-dwellers, this is the event for you. The event is free.

Alpenglow Sports will take over the parking lot behind the shop (415 North Lake Blvd, Tahoe City) to showcase the build-outs of Tahoe locals, as well as the tricked out Sprinter Van from Sufferfest Beer Company. Representatives from Trail Kitchen, creators of innovative products that enhance the mobile outdoor lifestyle, will also join the event and resident Mountain Festival photographer Scott Rokis, who quit his corporate job to live in his Sprinter chasing the adventure lifestyle, will also be on hand.

Don't own a van? Walk on in and see what all the fuss is about. Come with your curiosities, questions, and imagination for travel and the open road.

If you have a custom van and would like to participate, email info@alpenglowsports.com for more information on how you can showcase your rig.

DNA testing may reveal more than consumers bargained for

By Catharine Wang, The Conversation

Aggressive marketing techniques and the popularization of “gifting” recreational ancestry tests has led more consumers than ever to the world of personal genetic testing. Yet, the recent arrest of the Golden State Killer suspect has heightened concerns about privacy and ethics because of the way law enforcement used a third-party DNA interpretation company to identify close relatives and hone in on a likely culprit.

The company, GEDmatch, is well-known among genetic genealogy enthusiasts. When consumers want to learn more about their relatives than previously revealed by commercial testing companies such as AncestryDNA or 23andMe, they can seek out third-party companies like this one for further interpretation of their DNA results.

But, in addition to clues about where your ancestors were from, DNA holds information about your own medical risks. Here, at the intersection of recreational genetic genealogy and personal health information, is where direct-to-consumer companies are generating some unintended spillover effects that can have personal consequences consumers may not be prepared for.

I approach this area from the medical side. My own work focuses on how people use genomic information for personal health benefits. In particular, I’ve looked at when and how people decide to undergo genetic testing, and how they understand and cope with their results.

The rise of direct-to-consumer genetic testing has led to a sometimes dodgy do-it-yourself world of genetics. It may

provide access to personal genetic information for the masses, but in many cases, individuals aren't fully aware of all they may find out, or how their data may be used.

When genealogy interest leads to a health scare

My interest in the unintended consequences of genealogy exploration started a few years back with a patient who sought help in interpreting data she received from a third-party company that suggested she was at increased genetic risk for breast cancer. Concern over what had been identified in the interpretation report ultimately led this patient to see a genetic counselor – a trained professional who can advise on the genetic risks for various diseases. The counselor eventually determined the result was nothing that warranted concern. This “false positive” case raised red flags for me.

I interviewed this patient to learn more about why she'd used this company (that I had never heard about previously) to learn about her breast cancer risk. It turned out she'd stumbled into the area of genetic testing for health risks due to an interest in genealogy. While watching Henry Louis Gates' PBS show “Finding Your Roots,” she saw an ad for one of the commercial direct-to-consumer companies that offered ancestry testing.

Once the patient learned her ancestry results, she also realized that an entire world had opened up in terms of other possible nuggets of information she could discover from her “raw” DNA data. So she purchased access to a third-party health app to interpret her raw DNA. It was these results – provided without consultation with a medical professional – which then led her to clinic.

Currently, there are many of these third-party apps or online services available to consumers. They're not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration since, as argued by the companies behind them, they just serve as a “bridge to the literature”

and only provide access to the scientific evidence base.

Wild West of raw DNA uploads

My colleagues and I surveyed customers of these third-party companies to learn more about their motives for exploring the raw DNA data they'd received from commercial testing companies. Approximately two-thirds of consumers we surveyed were highly motivated to explore raw DNA for ancestral details. Forty percent were interested in both ancestry and health information.

Sixty-two percent of our respondents used GEDmatch, highlighting the extent to which DNA data that are heavily protected by companies such as AncestryDNA and 23andMe are unguarded by consumers themselves. Many choose to freely upload that data in hopes of finding other relatives. Notably, almost three-quarters of consumers reported using more than one third-party company to interpret their DNA.

Some might argue these tools provide a beneficial service for consumers, particularly when it comes to learning more about their health risks. In cases where genetic risks are determined via clinically validated tests, it can be empowering. Angelina Jolie is the perfect example.

Yet, the validity of genetic tests that consumers have direct access to remains questionable. In fact, a recent article by scientists at one of the clinical testing labs that medical providers rely on reported that approximately 40 percent of results reported from raw DNA interpretation were incorrect. Thus, 4 out of 10 people are told they have a greater risk for a disease, when they do not. That's an exceedingly high number of individuals to stress out with a false positive result.

My ongoing work has found that "worry" is the primary driver for patients to seek out medical assistance in raw DNA interpretation. As such, this false positive rate has a

notable downstream burden on the healthcare system.

Social media sites like Reddit are filled with examples of consumers who are confused about how to interpret the reports generated from some of these third-party companies, which vary greatly in clarity and quality. Or, they have learned from a report they might have a BRCA variant that might confer high risk for breast and ovarian cancer, and ask other site users for help in understanding whether their result is real. It doesn't have to be this way; there are genetic counselors who specialize in interpreting these kinds of results and helping patients figure out what to do.

Genetic counselors, meanwhile, are frustrated. The message from commercial testing companies has led to unrealistic expectations from consumers about what they can learn about themselves. It's challenging for counselors to correct misconceptions, especially when they are met with resistance from patients.

The gift of DNA knowledge?

2017 was the year commercial direct-to-consumer testing exploded. 2018 may be the year users rethink the value of this gift, or at least how to use it. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it isn't going back. The Golden State Killer arrest is only highlighting that the ramifications of genetic genealogy and widespread use of third-party DNA sites are broader than consumers could have ever anticipated.

Catharine Wang is an associate professor of community health sciences at Boston University.

TRPA recognizes those helping to improve Tahoe

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency recognized four people May 23 for their commitment to protecting and enhancing Lake Tahoe's environment with Lake Spirit Awards.

People whose passions include building new paths and trails led the way in nominations this year, with improving mountain biking routes, creating new multi-use paths, and advancing pedestrian and bicycle safety among the interests of the award winners.

TRPA gives the awards, which were started in 2011, to people from the North and South Shores who are either citizens or agency representatives/environmental scientists.

This year's Lake Spirit Award winners are:

South Shore Citizen: Gavin Feiger

Feiger is a passionate bicycle advocate who has shared his love of pedaling by doing everything from teaching elementary school students bike safety to analyzing existing bike parking and writing grants to get more bike racks.

North Shore Citizen: Sue Hughes

Hughes was instrumental in improving and maintaining the Incline Flume Trail, a trail above Incline Village popular with hikers, runners, and mountain bikers.

South Shore Agency Representative/Environmental Scientist: Jacob Quinn

If you've enjoyed any of the recent additions to mountain bike

trails at Lake Tahoe's South Shore, it's likely Quinn had a part in your ride.

North Shore Agency Representative/Environmental Scientist: Amy Berry

As the CEO of the Tahoe Fund, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building broad support and funding to restore and enhance Lake Tahoe's natural environment, Berry has helped raise more than \$7 million from private donors, including more than \$1 million for a new section of bike path from Incline Village to Sand Harbor.

Playwriting competition seeks submissions

If you have a story you want to share on stage, then enter WordWave's annual one-act playwriting competition.

Three winners will be celebrated on Oct. 20, with winners receiving a \$500 cash prize and a two-night stay in South Lake Tahoe to see their work directed and produced as a staged reading at the historic Valhalla Boathouse Theatre.

Manuscripts must have a running time of no more than 60 minutes and be written within the last five years. Writers may enter multiple works. There is a \$25 submission fee per manuscript.

Applications are available **online**.

S. Lake Tahoe seeks parade entrants for July 4

South Lake Tahoe is looking for participants in the annual 4th of July parade.

The parade will be staged on Ski Run Boulevard. Starting at 10am participants will head west on Highway 50 to Al Tahoe Boulevard where the parade will lead up Al Tahoe and conclude at Bijou Community Park.

Individuals, businesses, sports groups, philanthropy groups, schools, and others are invited to participate. Floats are encouraged. There is no entry fee, however an application is required to participate. This assists in the planning and execution of the parade.

Applications are available **online**. They are due June 15.

Premium viewing locations will be along Highway 50 between Ski Run and Al Tahoe.

A celebratory barbecue will follow, with all proceeds benefiting the American Legion Post 795.

Doctor-historian dissects

1800's medical care



Bob LaPerriere's talk on historical medical care is a bit graphic.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Saws and drills that look like they belong in woodshop, medication with no known benefits, prescriptions for maggots. This is what medical care was like in the 1800s.

Bob LaPerriere, a retired medical doctor and historian, shared stories this month about life during the Gold Rush era in terms of health care. He is the curator of the Museum of Medical History of the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society. That medical society, which is the oldest one in the state, covers El Dorado, Sacramento and Yolo counties.

This was a time when doctors treated the patient because they didn't know the cause of the disease.

Bleeding, vomiting, blistering and purging were four the main ways to help relieve someone of their symptoms – at least that is what was believed at the time. Leeches were one way to get

people to bleed. A sharp, knife-like instrument called a fleam was another.

With immunizations not yet created and living conditions at times substandard based on today's regulations, childhood diseases were the norm. Measles was common.

"Surgery was pretty primitive," LaPerriere told the packed room at Camp Richardson Lodge. The talk was put on by the Lake Tahoe Historical Society. "The most common operation was amputation."

Gastrointestinal issues were the No. 1 complaint for people heading West on wagon trains. Contaminated water was common.

Even once they reached California the once pristine area was ravaged by the gold miners. Human sewage polluted the streets and drinking water. As LaPerriere said, "Sanitation was a luxury."

Anesthetics were rare. Ether wasn't introduced until after 1846.

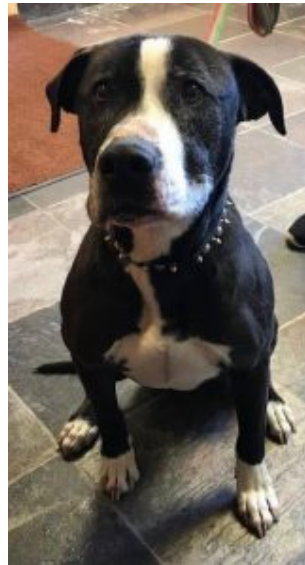
Prior to the 1900s it was arsenic and strychnine that were the medications of choice. Then came mercury and narcotics.

Chinese herbalists were practicing as well. They are credited with saving the life Jane Stanford, the wife of then-Gov. Leland Stanford.

One of the worst things to strike the Sacramento area was the cholera epidemic of 1850. It hit all classes, killing nearly 1,000 people in three weeks and by some estimates 5,000 in total. Of the 50 doctors in the area at the time, 17 died from the disease.

At the museum in Sacramento is the original X-ray tube that came to Sacramento in about 1900. Also on display is an iron lung used for polio patients.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Soja

Soja is a nice 7 year old terrier mix. He loves to play with other dogs and is very affectionate.

He is house trained and crate trained, and loves to play ball and go swimming. Soja has lived with children, but would prefer to live with older ones.

Soja is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with 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**.

Tickets on sale for Tahoe Donner July 4 concerts

Tahoe Donner will kick off the July Fourth weekend by hosting the annual Summer Concert on the Green featuring two nights of live performances by top tribute bands.

Tickets are on sale and are expected to sell out.

On July 6, there will be performances by The Big Jangle Band (a tribute to Tom Petty) and Pop Fiction. On July 7, Los Angeles-based tribute band Best Shot celebrates Pat Benatar. Mustache Harbor closes out the night that with sing-along soft rock hits, also known as Yacht Rock.

Summer Concert on the Green is an outdoor, family-friendly event on the Tahoe Donner Driving Range, located adjacent to Trout Creek Recreation Center. Concert attendees may bring picnics and low back lawn chairs. Food will be available for purchase provided by local vendors.

New this year, a limited number of VIP tickets are on sale allowing early entry access into the venue starting at 3pm, with exclusive access to a VIP tent. Gates open for general admission at 4pm with music starting at 6pm. Tickets are \$40 for adults, \$20 for children ages 5-12. VIP tickets are \$90 for adults and \$30 for children ages 5-12. Toddlers ages 4 and under are free.

For more information and tickets, go **online**.