

One-of-a-kind trees shine at Tahoe festival



Tantalizing Tango by Belen Urrutia is the overall winner at this year's festival of trees. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Imagination, creativity and artistry come together to capture the holiday spirit in mostly untraditional ways at the Barton Foundation's Festival of Tree and Lights. This is because these are no ordinary evergreens.

Eleven trees have either been ornately or whimsically transformed from a barren (fake) conifer into a one-of-a-kind Christmas wonder.



Jeri Oishi and the Enchanted Florist team won for creativity.
Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Now in its seventh year, the festival is a showcase for designers to demonstrate their innovative ways to decorate a

tree. Schoolchildren get in the act as well – but with much smaller trees. Barton employees show their originality with decorative wreaths.

The five-day festival has a variety of events for all ages, from a hospital for teddy bears to a station for writing letters to Santa to a fancy adults-only gala.

This is the foundation's biggest fundraiser. All proceeds benefit the trauma center at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Untraditional is what captured the judge's attention. Best of show in the designer category went to Tantalizing Tango by Belen Urrutia. This also won for being the most elegant.



No Place Like Home by Cyndy Brown-Carlson is the winner of the best themed tree. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

The red and black-themed tree stands out in the room. It's not hard to envision a couple from Argentina doing the tango on the false dance floor surrounding the tree.

The creativity award went to Jeri Oishi and the Enchanted Florist team for Steampunk Christmas. An upside down tree is a definite rarity.

The best interpretation of the theme went to No Place Like Home by Cyndy Brown-Carlson. Hers was also one of the larger displays.

This take on the “Wizard of Oz” was replete with a bicycle and Toto, as well as ruby red slippers in a glass case.

Other winners were:



Most South Shore schools competed with classroom-made ornaments. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

In the schools category:

- Lake Tahoe Homeschoolers – best ornaments
- Sierra House Elementary School – best use of theme
- Lake Tahoe Homeschoolers – most creative.

Best Barton wreaths:

- I’m Dreaming of a Wine Christmas by Barton Laboratory Department.

Notes:

- The festival runs through Dec. 6 at MontBleu in Stateline.
 - The schedule and details are **online**.
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Why Americans dress so casually

By Roberto A. Ferdman, Washington Post

Look around you, and you'll likely notice a sea of different outfits. You might see similar articles of clothing – even the same ones – worn by different people, but rarely do you find two pairings of tops, bottoms, shoes, and accessories that are exactly alike.

That wasn't always the case, said Deirdre Clemente, a historian of 20th century American culture at UNLV, whose research focuses on fashion and clothing. Americans were far more formal, and formulaic dressers, not all that long ago. Men wore suits, almost without fail – not just to work, but also at school. And women, for the most part, wore long dresses.

Clemente has written extensively about the evolution of American dress in the 1900s, a period that, she said, was marked, maybe more than anything else, by a single but powerful trend: As everyday fashion broke from tradition, it shed much of its socioeconomic implications – people no longer dress to feign wealth like they once did – and took on a new

meaning.

The shift has, above all, led toward casualness in the way we dress.

Read the whole story

SLTFD Christmas truck schedule set

The following is the schedule for South Lake Tahoe Fire Department's Christmas engine.

Dates, times, and areas are all subject to change due to any weather or emergency situation. The engine leaves Station 2 at 5pm.

Dec. 10 – Tahoe Keys/Venice

Dec. 11 – Glenwood

Dec. 12– Tahoe Keys Boulevard/State streets

Dec. 13 – South Y/Tata

Dec. 14 –Barton/Tahoe Island

Dec. 15. – Al Tahoe Boulevard

Dec. 16 – Springwood/Bijou Pines

Dec. 17 – Main areas/Highway 50

Dec. 18 – Sierra Tract

Dec. 19 – Ski Run Boulevard

Dec. 20 – Heavenly Valley

Dec. 21 – Gardner Mountain

Dec. 22 – Stateline/Hotels

Dec. 23 – Stateline/Pioneer Trail

Dec. 24 – Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

Tahoe Adventure Film Festival ready to roll

Tahoe Adventure Film Festival is the annual gathering of the who's who of outdoor adventure set.

This is year 13 of Todd Offenbacher's local festival. TAFF celebrates the adventure sports community with newly released films of daring exploits and epic adventures in some of the most remote places and harsh conditions that test the human spirit. Filmmakers capture the power and intensity of skiing, snowboarding, kayaking, rock climbing, surfing, mountain biking, BASE jumping and other heart pounding sports. Many of the segments are special edits including previews of films that have not been released.

This year the festival will include three special edits that highlight the importance of decision-making that all adventurers must face. These films delve into the mindset of the adventurer and how each athlete deals with assessing risk during every outing, making judgments about the consequences of pushing the limit. "On the Fence" by Chris McNamara,

climber and SuperTopo author, is a self-examination of some close calls that caused Mac to stop BASE jumping. "Reach for the Sky" by filmmaker Ryan Cleek chronicles the fast paced career and ambition that catapulted Cam Zink into pro-mountain biker status and how Zink has chosen to balance it with family life. "The Unrideables" by Red Bull Media combines skiing and parachute flight to access terrain that would otherwise be inaccessible.

For the past 10 years, Offenbacher has presented the Golden Camelot to honor action and adventure sports pioneers for their astounding contributions, excellence, achievements, and leadership.

The 2015 Tahoe Adventure Film Festival debuts Dec. 11 at MontBleu in Stateline. The doors open at 6:30pm, followed by the films at 7:30pm. Tickets can be purchased at the MontBleu ticket office or by calling 775.588.3515

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2016 Tahoe Adventure Film Festival Western U.S. Tour:

Petaluma – Jan 29, 2016

Park City – Feb. 13

Jackson Hole, Wyo. – Feb. 15

San Francisco – Feb. 18

Mammoth – March 3-5

Reno – March

Minden – April.

Handbell ensemble to give free Tahoe concerts

Reno's handbell ensemble Tintabulations will be performing in

Lake Tahoe in December.

The group will be performing Dec. 12 at 11am at Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra (930 Julie Lane, South Lake Tahoe) and Dec. 13 at 1:30pm at the Village Church (736 McCourry Blvd., Incline Village).

Entitled “I’d Like to Teach the World to Ring”, there will be more than 120 handbells and chimes playing music from several countries.

The concerts are free, though donations are accepted.

‘Creed’ nearly as good as original ‘Rocky’



'Creed'

5 out 5 bagels

Rated PG-13

By Howie Nave

The best thing for both “Rocky” fans and those who’ve been under a rock for 40 years having never seen a “Rocky” film, naming this movie “Creed” was the best move ever because it stands alone on its own. But we all know ultimately it’s a

“Rocky VII” flick and outside of the first one the best in the franchise since Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) took on the menacing Clubber Lang (Mr. T) in “Rocky III.”

What director J.J. Abrams did to the rebooting of the ailing “Star Trek” franchise in 2009, 29-year-old writer/director Ryan Coogler has done the same here with “Creed.” What a rush it must have been having someone like Coogler, not only taking on the monumental task of directing a classic franchise, but as a kid being a true fan of the “Rocky” franchise. Coogler wasn’t even born when the first “Rocky” was released back in 1976.

“Creed” is the first in the “Rocky” franchise that Stallone didn’t write and the first where Stallone is cast more as a supporting role. But make no mistake about it he’s the thread that has carried us through this journey from the beginning. What a journey, too, as we now find Rocky running a restaurant named Adrian’s, after his late wife and we’re reminded of those around him that we all saw in the previous movies who are now gone. Life seems to be a waiting game now, as Rocky knows all the glory years of love and triumph are long gone and the last thing he wants to do is resurrect the past.



At the same time in a parallel story we’re introduced to actor Michael B. Jordan (who Coogler directed in “Fruitvale Station”) as Adonis Johnson (who goes by Donny), the illegitimate son of Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), Rocky’s first opponent and the man who would jump start his boxing career giving him a shot at the title and eventually wind up being his best friend. After Apollo dies (in the very lame “Rocky IV”), Adonis ends up in

foster care with a huge chip on his shoulder and who is known

for causing fights. The young Creed is taken in by Apollo's widow (Phylicia Rashad) and raised in more comfortable surroundings. But comfort doesn't seem to mellow Adonis whose been spending his evenings driving south of the border to box in seedy venues.

And, yes, you can almost predict what's going to happen now and how long before Rocky meets the son of his late best friend, Apollo Creed. There's much more than that trust me, but you know it is inevitable.

The similarities between "Creed" and the first "Rocky" are very apparent, but make no mistake about it, this is director Ryan Coogler's movie and brings out first class performances from the relatively new Jordon and veteran Stallone. The supporting cast is also top notch from Donny's girlfriend, Bianca (Tessa Thompson) to "Pretty" Ricky Conlan (played by real-life UK boxing champ Tony "The Bomber" Bellew). Some of the scenes are amazing; particularly one in the first fight scene showing this one long, uninterrupted shot. The film's score by Ludwig Goransson is excellent, but I got shivers hearing Bill Conti's iconic Rocky theme and seeing Rocky on those Philadelphia steps one more time (and you will too).

"Rocky" received 10 Academy Award nominations in nine categories winning three for best picture, best director and best film editing. I think "Creed" is going to receive a few, and wouldn't that be the coolest taking an Oscar home after 40 years?

"Creed" clocks in at 2 hours, 12 minutes and is rated PG-13 for violence, language and some sensuality.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

What are the best hand warmers?

By Joe Jackson, Outside

Hand warmers—those small, usually disposable packets that provide on-demand heat—come in five main varieties, including some that run on charcoal and lighter fuel. The three most common types you'll see on the slopes are either air-activated, use a supersaturated solution, or are battery-powered.

All three can last anywhere from one to 10 hours. That's a pretty broad range, and we wanted to find out which of these five popular hand warmers was the warmest and most useful for playing in the mountains.

[Read the whole story](#)

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Baby

Baby is a beautiful 3 year old lynx point shorthair girl who has been at the shelter for almost a month. Due to a kind person's donation, her adoption fee has been sponsored.

Such spectacular eyes! And she is a nice, friendly playful cat.

Baby is spayed, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. She 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

Holiday gifts that keep on giving



An amaryllis in full bloom.

Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

By Melinda Myers

Terrariums have made a comeback and make wonderful do-it-yourself projects and gifts for beginning and experienced gardeners. They enable gardeners to continue to grow no matter the weather outdoors and can be updated and used as decorations throughout the year with some simple updating for holidays and other special occasions.

Just add a few ceramic items like a Christmas tree ornament, ceramic bunny or other adornment or two that represent the season.

Don't know where to start? No problem. You can create your own from an old glass jar or vase or purchase an elegant terrarium with copper bottom guaranteed to create the perfect stage for your tabletop garden. Or purchase a terrarium kit

that includes the plants, container and all you need.

For the artist, young or old, and avid birder, consider a green birdhouse. These biodegradable birdhouses are made from 100 percent recycled paper and designed to last through one nesting season. You will have fun decorating it with stickers, markers or paint, making this a gift you and the birds will enjoy. Plus, once the season is over, there's no need for cleaning. It can simply be added to the compost pile.

Not feeling artistic? No worries. Give a decorative treat for the birds. Those with live Christmas trees can extend their enjoyment by decorating the tree with colorful birdseed ornaments once it is moved outdoors. Make your own ornaments from suet, peanut butter and birdseed or purchase ready-made ones.

And no green thumb is needed for this DIY holiday beauty. Easy care waxed amaryllis bulbs are self-contained and easy to grow. The bulb is sealed in gold or silver wax, making it both decorative and low maintenance. There's no watering or container needed. Just set it in a bright location and wait for the floral display to appear before your eyes. You'll be enjoying big blooms for several weeks.

Stay on your diet as the holiday approaches with a sugar-free advent calendar. You can make your own from felt and fabric glue or start a family tradition by purchasing a handcrafted advent calendar like the wooden bird cottage advent calendar that celebrates nature and the holiday. Each day leading to Christmas you'll remove a bird from its cubby in the cottage. Peg it to the birdhouse and watch the flock grow.

Your friends and family will know Christmas is coming each year when you break out the calendar. It's sure to provide years of memories and could soon become a family heirloom.

Gardening expert, TV/radio host, author and columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and

has written more than 20 gardening books.

The stories of Placer County's bridges



Placer County is retrofitting its bridges.
Photo/Erik Bergen

By Robert Miller

For decades, cars, trucks, people, bikes and motorcycles have traveled the 117 bridges that are Placer County's responsibility. From the iconic Foresthill Bridge standing 730 feet over the American River, to the simple, single-lane bridge over Yankee Slough on Dowd Road in rural western Placer County, they have a history.

While there are different reasons behind why the bridges were built, how they were built and their sometimes changing uses, they all have a common thread: engineers in the county's Department of Public Works and Facilities keep a watchful eye on the structures and when warranted, add them to the list of bridges needing replacement or rehabilitation.

To ensure the county's roadways are safe for all who use them, the county is continually prioritizing projects to replace or retrofit worn structures. With an average planned lifespan of about 100 years, many bridges are reaching, or have reached, the end of their planned service life. While that doesn't mean they are unsafe or can't continue to serve their purpose, it does mean that many of them are overdue for major overhauls – and at nearly the same time. In the last decade, 15 county bridges have been replaced and one was retrofitted. Projects to do similar work to another 14 are either underway or are in the planning stages.

Another commonality for the county's bridges is how replacement and upgrade projects are funded. The 29 projects mentioned above have a combined cost of \$220 million. Of that amount, 92 percent, or \$202 million, is from state and federal funding. The county has parlayed about \$18 million of local taxpayer money into \$220 million worth of public works projects.

Jurisdictions typically use a 100-year bridge lifespan as the benchmark for bridge replacement and rehabilitation. Given the state's aging infrastructure, for all bridges to meet the 100-year standard, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that about \$1 billion a year is needed. The federal government's annual allotment to California for bridge work is \$300 million. While there is competition for funding, the county is judicious in applying for state and federal funding, focusing on those projects that are likely to secure funding.

Last year, the county completed the largest project in county history. Contractors retrofit and repainted the Foresthill Bridge to both improve the span's integrity and increase its ability to withstand earthquakes and the elements.

The bridge was completed in 1973, after two years of construction. It is the highest bridge in California and the fourth highest in the nation.

Building the bridge was part of the Auburn Dam, a project that was started but never completed. Had the dam been completed, the bridge would have been the sole roadway to Foresthill and forestland beyond when the reservoir behind the dam inundated the canyons below. The three-year, \$76-million retrofit and repainting project was done on a bridge that originally cost \$13 million to build.



Alpine Meadows Bridge replacement. Photo/Erik Bergen

The retrofit project won numerous awards, including the prestigious 2014 Bridge Project of the Year award from the American Society of Civil Engineers, an award given to engineers by their peers.

Not all bridges in the county are as stunning as the Foresthill Bridge. But this bridge, like many throughout the county, was showing its age and wear.

Every bridge in the state is inspected at least once every two years by Caltrans.

Bridges in need of retrofitting or replacement can be categorized as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. When bridges in the county fit into one or both categories they are moved up on the priority list.

The single-lane suspension bridge at Yankee Jims sits a few

feet above the North Fork of the American River on the twisty dirt road between Colfax and Foresthill.

Built in 1930, the suspension bridge was given low ratings by Caltrans after a careful analysis of all the bridge's components.

Weight limit restrictions were then imposed. Placer County engineers, working with contract consulting engineers, used computer modeling to verify the load limitations and helped determine what future actions should be taken. The bridge, however, is safe.

Any bridge that county engineers feel is a hazard is closed to all traffic. A new bridge is now proposed to span the American River's North Fork and will likely sit adjacent to the existing structure. County public works is still evaluating several designs and has not arrived at a final decision on what the new bridge will be and whether the existing bridge will remain, and for what uses.

Planning for bridge projects can take five years or more before construction begins. Not only do the engineering and design specifications have to be determined, but a project will also be evaluated for environmental considerations including cultural and biological issues. Building a new bridge can disturb a lot of soil. What may be buried in that soil is of concern for project engineers and it's not uncommon for archeologists to be called in to evaluate uncovered artifacts. Most county bridges cross creeks or waterways that are home to endangered fish, frogs, snakes, birds and many other protected animals. County engineers lead the effort on each project to include measures that protect endangered species during construction. Additionally, utility lines are frequently attached to bridges. Moving these lines, whether they handle water, sewer, electrical or communications, can be extremely complicated.

The county board of supervisors recently approved an

environmental monitoring plan for the Brewer Road Bridge replacement project. The bridge, a 73-year old structure that crosses the Pleasant Grove Creek waterway, will be replaced with a modern bridge that complies with current building standards. As part of the project, a county staff member will be assigned to the project to ensure that adherence to the monitoring plan is maintained. The plan calls for environmental protection measures for numerous creatures, including vernal pool fairy shrimp, steelhead, several reptiles, migratory birds and birds of prey.

Environmental documentation is a complex process. The county strives to be a good steward of the environment and every project will be scrutinized for any environmental impacts it causes. Although construction is not expected to begin until 2018, county supervisors recently approved initial environmental documentation for a project to replace a bridge on Gold Hill Road over Auburn Ravine. This is one of the first steps of many that the county will take before construction actually begins.

The existing Gold Hill Road Bridge is more than 85 years old and is at the end of its useful life. It is deteriorating structurally, and is too narrow for modern vehicles. In addition to environmental considerations, the county solicited public input for the project from nearby property owners and provided updates to a local advisory council. Using the input received, the design for the replacement will preserve the area's rural character while providing safe access for residents, emergency vehicles, trucks and other users.

As population has changed in the county and technology has advanced, so too have the uses and requirements of roads and bridges. There are two aging bridges in western Placer County that exemplify these changes. One has already been replaced and replacement of the other is poised to begin.

The old steel truss bridge on Cook-Riolo Road in the western

county was a single-lane structure built in the flood plain. Due to its age and the increased traffic in the area, Caltrans determined that the bridge is structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. The old bridge was susceptible to flooding, which rendered it impassible and created serious safety concerns. The newly completed bridge sits more than 10 feet above the old one, has multiple lanes and provides safe, protected areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Walerga Bridge replacement project, in western Placer County, is scheduled to begin in 2018. This project will build a significantly larger structure to accommodate both increased traffic and to replace an aging structure that periodically floods. The current two-lane bridge is about 125 feet in length. The new bridge will be more than 500 feet in length and approximately 14 feet higher, with barriers separating automobile traffic from pedestrians and cyclists.

The Bowman Road bridges in North Auburn are set to be reinforced in late 2015 with a heavy-duty polymer as part of rehabilitation and seismic retrofit.

A project to replace an aging bridge that is subject to harsh winter weather started this spring. The Alpine Meadows Bridge, an old structure over the Truckee River near Lake Tahoe, is the nexus of trails, pedestrian and bike paths, and a gateway into Lake Tahoe. The bridge spans a waterway that is listed as impaired by the Environmental Protection Agency. The replacement bridge will not only improve travel on the roadway, but will also have environmental benefits. Sediment is one of the pollutants that denigrate the Truckee River. The new bridge will have better drainage and catch basins that will capture silt and sediment, preventing its free flow into the river. Aesthetics will also be improved with a new design that will remove a pier that currently sits in the river, allowing for a more natural water flow.

Robert Miller works for Placer County's Public Affairs Office.