

# Tahoe wedding officiant has seen it all



Warren Kessler has been a wedding officiant for decades. Photo/ABHOW

**By ABHOW**

*To have and to hold, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish from this day forward, until death do us part.*

Warren Kessler, who moved to Tahoe Senior Plaza in South Lake Tahoe in September, has presided over the exchange of this vow more than 13,000 times.

Kessler began conducting weddings in 1983 after he moved to the area with his wife. He was ordained through the Universal Life Church and soon began freelancing as a wedding officiant. Also a state notary, Kessler went on to work for several chapels before settling in at Chapel of the Bells, where he performs ceremonies as an on-call minister. That means he has to be ready to go at a moment's notice.

"I could be at a restaurant. I could be anywhere," he says.

When he gets the call, he runs down to the chapel, does the wedding and goes back to where he left off.

The chapel is a no-nonsense kind of place, where couples often skip the typical frills like tuxes and gowns. “Two people just get out of their car. ‘I do, I do.’ That’s about it,” Kessler says.

With 31 years of experience under his belt, it’s not surprising that Kessler’s mental archives are bursting with fascinating tales. He has pretty much seen it all. Couples come in from all over the country and the world. “They all have interesting stories to tell you,” he says.

The average wedding goes smoothly, Kessler says, but every now and then strange things happen. He recalls a nearly 40-year-old groom named Joe, who was affectionately called “Junior” by his mother. In an effort to declare his independence, he insisted that Kessler call him “Little Joe” during the ceremony. Not only were guests confused, the mother was furious. “It looked like the blood drained out of her head and into her ankles,” Kessler says.

Other notable weddings include one with a groom getting married for the 10th time and another where the groomsmen rented tuxes but forgot the shoes, leaving them standing at the altar in sneakers.

There’s no doubt that Kessler enjoys his work. In fact, he doesn’t think of it as work at all – and it certainly isn’t the typical 9-to-5 job.

“Weddings are always fun,” says Kessler. “It’s a happy business.”

*Founded in 1949, ABHOW is widely known for its pioneering leadership in senior housing and health care. The company serves more than 5,500 residents in 44 retirement communities in California, Arizona, Nevada and Washington.*

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# Weight loss or not, exercise yields benefits

By Rachel Bachman, Wall Street Journal

Mary The Trieu does hourlong workouts at a CrossFit gym three to five days a week. She is also 5-foot-3 and weighs 205 pounds.

Trieu avoids junk food and eats balanced meals, but she's not on a diet. She works out to keep her weight stable and because she enjoys it.

"As I started exercising, I just got this adrenaline rush," says Trieu, an admissions officer at Columbia Business School. "It feels good to sweat. And it's hard. Part of it is my ego: 'Yes! I'm a bigger person, but I can still do the exercises you're doing.' "

A recent study underscores that there are significant health benefits to overweight and obese people being physically active, even if they don't lose a pound. The study, of 334,000 Europeans over 12 years, recorded twice as many deaths due to a lack of physical activity as due to obesity.

**Read the whole story**

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## Study: Pot may help with

# depression

By Carolyn Gregoire, Huffington Post

Research has suggested that cannabis may be a promising treatment option for a number of different physical and mental health conditions, from post-traumatic stress disorder to chronic pain. A study released last week suggests that depression can be added to that list.

Neuroscientists from the University of Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions found that endocannabinoids – chemical compounds in the brain that activate the same receptors as THC, an active compound in marijuana – may be helpful in treating depression that results from chronic stress.

In studies on rats, the researchers found that chronic stress reduced the production of endocannabinoids, which affect our cognition, emotion and behavior, and have been linked to reduced feelings of pain and anxiety, increases in appetite and overall feelings of well-being. The body naturally produces these compounds, which are similar to the chemicals in cannabis. Reduction of endocannabinoid production may be one reason that chronic stress is a major risk factor in the development of depression.

**Read the whole story**

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## Humans may be ruining man's best friend

By Sara Boboltz, Huffington Post

Our friendly domestic dogs have come a long way from their wolf ancestors, and it's all thanks to us.

"Somehow there's this misconception that dog breeds actually exist – like dachshunds are a natural thing in the world," Louise Murray, vice president of the ASPCA Animal Hospital, told *Huffington Post*. "We think, there are frogs, and there are chickens, and there are dachshunds. But of course you don't realize until later that they're just human constructs."

We love having dogs around – in fact, between 37 and 47 percent of U.S. households own at least one dog, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That's about 70 or 80 million dogs overall. And while estimates differ, between one-third and one-half of those dogs are believed to be purebred, born of incestuous pairings. As a result, many purebred dogs are now facing an abundance of health problems, and many of their human companions have begun to question the ethics of it all.

**Read the whole story**

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**Road beat: Lexus SUV  
redefines luxury**



The Lexus LX570 is luxury built into a heavy-duty SUV.  
Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

It would be doubtful that anyone spending almost \$90,000 for an SUV would then test it by driving it directly to and over the Rubicon Trail, although with all its systems and super trick suspension it would not be out of the question. But that first scratch would be a killer. But there is little question that the LX would conquer the Rubicon with ease and comfort.

LX570 is a super luxury SUV sharing its platform with the slightly lesser expensive (about \$10k) Toyota Land Cruiser. But sheet metal on the LX is exclusive to the LX, although the shapes are similar. Outside the LX570 has the L'finesse design cues in its front end, but it is otherwise a large upright two-box design. Lexus has done a marvelous job instilling the L'finesse DNA in all of its designs that are now instantly recognizable as a Lexus. The new LX570 has a tasteful,

conservative, but yet very elegant appearance. It would be quite welcome at the opera.



Front or back, the seats are comfortable.

Size-wise, the LX is an oversized midsize SUV with a 112.2-inch wheelbase. But its length and width approach full size at 197 by 78 inches. It stands 76 inches with the roof rack, which appears to be standard equipment. That size is transmitted to the super luxurious interior.

Powering this 6,000 pound ground attack vehicle is a monster motor by today's standards, a 5.7L DOHC 32 valve long stroking V-8 that pumps out 383 hp at a low 5,600 rpm along with 403 pounds of peak twist at a moderate 3,600 rpm. Meaning that at that low rpm the engine is producing 276 hp. All four wheels are driven all the time via a six speed auto cog-swapper. It does have a two speed limited slip Torsen center differential and its trick electronic systems perform the job of effectively locking them up in critical situations. Unless it's a 90-degree slope, the LX is going where it's pointed.

Performance is excellent and in fact the LX is downright quick with a 0-60 mph elapsed time of just 6.89 seconds. Passing times are also quick with a 50-70 mph simulated pass of 3.59 seconds and an uphill simulated pass of 5.28 seconds. The LX gets it done. Throttle response is very strong.



## **Specifications**

Price \$82,690 to about \$90,000

Engine

5.7L, DOHC, 32 valve V-8 383 hp @ 5,600 rpm

403 lbs.-ft. of torque @ 3,600 rpm

Transmission

Six speed electronically controlled automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front engine/all wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 112.2 inches

Length 197.0 inches

Width 77.6 inches

Height 75.6 inches

Ground clearance 8.9 inches

Track (f/r) 64.6/64.4 inches

Weight 6,000 pounds

GVWR 7,385 pounds

Weight Distribution (f/r) 51/49 percent

Towing capacity 7,000 pounds

Fuel capacity 24.6 gallons

Cargo capacity third row removed, second row folded

83.1 cubic feet  
Turning circle 38.7 feet  
Steering lock to lock 2.4 to  
3.4 turns (at below 6mph)  
Wheels 20X8.5 inch alloys  
Tires 285/50 HR mud and snow  
Coefficient of drag 0.35  
Performance  
0-60 mph 6.89 seconds  
50-70 mph 3.59 seconds  
50-70 mph uphill 5.28  
seconds  
Top Speed Electronically  
limited to 137 mph  
Fuel economy EPA rated at  
12/17/14 mpg  
city/highway/combined.  
Expect 15.5 mpg in rural  
country driving and 20 mpg  
on the highway at legal  
speeds.

On the flip side, the LX is remarkably economical. EPA rates it at 12/17/14 mpg which is nothing to write home about. However, this is a full time AWD vehicle that weighs 6,000 pounds at the curb with lots of hp. In reality, the big Lexus averaged 15.5 mpg overall including all acceleration tests (at least 20 full throttle applications) in 250 miles. But get it on the highway with the cruise control set at 70 mph and it will return 20.4 mpg. Not that bad considering that a vehicle like this from 30 or 40 years ago would be lucky to achieve 10 mpg and 15 mpg on the highway. Part of the big LX magic comes from its very low coefficient of drag of 0.35, meaning this is one slick barn door going through the wind. Fuel capacity is almost 25 gallons. And if you are spending \$90k to buy it, gasoline cost would be considered dime wise and dollar foolish.

But there is even more praise to be laid on the big SUV. Suspension is state of the art double wishbone and a four link live axle in the rear with coils in all four corners. However, it also has an electro-hydraulic controls with height control and automatic load leveling Adaptive Variable Suspension. Track is a wide 65 inches and the variable ratio hydraulic steering works from 2.4 to 3.4 turns lock to lock. And last but certainly not least are the wheels and tires with super wide 285/50X20 series tires mounted to 20 x 8.5 inch alloys. To put that in English, each tire puts nearly 10 inches of rubber (width) on the road and that's a lot of grip. Consequently the LX changes direct with stiction and power that is surprising. When the road bends, no problem as the LX precisely follows directions input into the steering wheel. You would think heads would toss and there would be extreme body lean, but you can forget about it. This LX is amazing when it comes to changing directions.

Ride quality is extremely quiet and solid, damping out all road imperfections quite remarkably. There is no float or bobbing and weaving, something you might expect of a vehicle this heavy and large with a ground clearance of nine inches. It is a wonderful ride. The engine turns a very low 1,700 rpm at 70 mph and there is no wind and road noise making the super trick Mark Levinson sound system extra special. Music never sounded this good.

LX has four huge ventilated discs with all the braking acronyms. They are powerful stopping the big LX in 42 feet from 40 mph. Those huge tires also help big time. Safety is everywhere starting with a strong ladder frame, vehicle stability control, active traction control, hill decent control, adaptive front HID lighting (turns night into day), and at least 10 airbags, but if you count roll sensing the front and rear sensing airbags as two, then there are 14 (one for each row of seats). It also has a wide view front camera along with parking assist.

Inside is the luxury you would expect from a nearly \$90k ride. My tester had the \$1,510 extra luxury package which means the skins are semi-aniline, super soft leather and are gorgeous and sublimely comfortable. Of course they are heated and cooled and the second row seating being also heated. The interior feels more like a traditional English study with big overstuffed leather chairs, a fireplace and lots of polished wood. With the Mark Levinson comes a superb movie theater for the second and third row passengers. Limousines don't compare.

Total interior volume is almost 160 cubic feet, with still about 16 cubic feet available with the rear seats up. Pricing starts at \$81,780 plus \$910 for the boat from Japan. My tester had every option bringing the price to \$89,555 all in. It will criss-cross the United States with or without paved roads.

*Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.*

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## **9-year-old chamber claims it is 60**

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce came into being in 2006. On Feb. 25 it is celebrating its 60 anniversary. (That was not a typo.)

It was a 13-0 vote by the Tahoe Douglas Chamber of Commerce to merge with the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. Three board members were absent and one abstained. The South Lake Tahoe chamber board voted 18-6 to combine resources. Those two chambers were then legally dissolved.

The new board created a new name, didn't hire either of the existing executive directors and in one of the more controversial decisions entered into a long-term lease agreement for a building in Stateline.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce Executive Director B Gorman deferred questions about why the chamber is celebrating the Feb. 17, 1955, birth date of the South Lake Tahoe chamber instead of its own to Mike Johnson, a board member and attorney by trade.

"As for the 'birth date', a component of the current chamber was 'born' in 1955 and (the) merger with another component did not serve to alter that date," Johnson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He chose not to answer these questions posed by *LTN*:

- But how was it decided which birth date to recognize?
- And why not recognize your true birth date of a few years ago?

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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## Auditions set for 'Pippin' at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College is having auditions for the Tony Award-winning musical "Pippin", on Feb. 17 at 7pm in the Duke Theater. Callbacks will be Feb. 21 at noon.

LTCC is looking for actors, singers and dancers of various ages and types, including one boy to play a 9 to 11 year old.

Strong dancers as well as aerialists, gymnasts, jugglers and acrobats are also needed. Actors are required to sing selections from “Pippin” for the audition. Audition material and information may be found online.

This high-energy, award-winning musical follows the story of Pippin, a young prince who longs to find passion and adventure in his quest to live an extraordinary life. His journey is encouraged by the seductive, yet sinister leading player, a Mephistophelean figure who, along with a troupe of players, lures the naïve prince into a variety of “extraordinary” experiences, to the final “One Perfect Act.”

Rehearsals will be Monday through Thursday evenings beginning April 6. Performances are June 12-21.

For more information, call 530.541.4660, ext. 240.

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## No matter the wedding size – get married in Tahoe



Tahoe weddings often come  
with a view. Photo/LTN file

**By John Spinola**

So you want to get married? And you want to get married in Lake Tahoe. *Aaand* you're on a budget.

Well, let me just mention that in 15 years of me being a wedding officiant in Lake Tahoe I have never come across a couple that said, "We aren't on a budget and can spend any amount of money you can come up with." So, if you are like 99.9999 percent of the couples out there, you have a budget.

Let me start with my first piece of advice if you are on a budget – elope. Really, elope. If it is just the two of you, you will have fewer obligations to meet both monetarily and time-wise. You won't have to purchase food for people, you don't need a big venue and all the amenities that go with it. You won't have to purchase bouquets or boutonnières for your bridal party, hair and makeup for one is less than hair and make up for a group, you don't have to offer lodging and you won't have friends increasing your spending with all of their suggestions.

If it is just the two of you, you can hire a minister, get a marriage license and I would highly recommend a photographer so you have pictures to share with people after you get back. Eloping offers more locations in the area. If you have group, you will need parking, bathrooms, seating. bridal room, etc. If it is just the two of you, there are some very nice ceremony locations here. I call them ceremony locations because they really aren't "wedding" locations. In other words, they don't work well with a group of people.

Eloping also has the advantage of increasing your free time. You don't have to cater to all the production stuff that shows up with groups – rehearsal dinner, ladies' events, guys' events, picking up people at the airport, meeting people after they arrive, etc.

Eloping allows your vision to stay true to what you want. When you involve your friends and family you will inevitably hear –

you should do, you have to do, you could do, you can't do, the book says, this is tradition, I did do, I didn't do. Guests add drama, time, as well as costs.

And, yes, my wife and I eloped.

If you are like most people, you want to have guests. That is fine and I am all for it, but just remember what I have said above.

### **Lake Tahoe and guests**

Consider a morning ceremony (11am, noon). Morning ceremonies tend to flow into a lunch reception rather than a dinner reception. Lunch is less money than dinner and people drink less at lunch than dinner. A morning time also allows any guests that live close to drive home after the reception. Earlier time slots might also be discounted because most couples want an afternoon time.

Consider a day other than Saturday. Saturday is the busiest day for weddings. Most vendors and venues offer discounts for non-Saturday weddings. Also, lodging is less during the week. Rates for lodging go up over the weekend.

Consider a smaller guest count (50 people venues/receptions cost less than 100 people venues/receptions). Also, fewer people means less drama.

### **Things not to cut from your budget**

Get a cake locally. I have never seen it go well when someone travels with a cake. I have seen people's car breakdown or lose air conditioning. Melting cakes are very sad. I have seen friends run late with the cake. I have seen people show up with a cake and not have any flatware or dinnerware to serve it. Also, most venues do not have a place for you to store your cake, so you have to provide your own refrigeration. Really, get a cake locally.

Hire a professional photographer. There is a saying among wedding vendors: "Friends don't let friends shoot their weddings." A professional knows you are on a timeline. They know the shots that are important and know how to get them. A professional is not emotionally attached to you or your event. They are emotional and passionate about their work and the final product they provide. I have seen friendships end because of poor quality wedding photos. I have seen friends/family get tipsy and forget that they are the "photographer" for the event. You want your friends and family to be guests and not vendors.

Have your flowers done by a florist or flower shop. You need refrigeration for flowers that is completely separate refrigeration from food. Food gases will wilt/kill flowers. You also need time to put them together and supplies to put them together.

When are you going to put yourself together if you are putting flowers together? You as a bride (or groom) must stay focused on being the bride/groom. You cannot be the coordinator, flower person, baker, decorator. You can be involved in the choices and process, but you need to remember to be the bride/groom first. I have seen people become more of a host rather than the people that the event is about.

### **Some good advice**

If you are flying here, ship your dress. About four to six weeks before your event pack up your dress and ship it to the local dry cleaners. They will unpack and prep your dress for when you arrive. Send it certified so you know it has arrived. This will eliminate one more thing for you to keep track of and will also eliminate the possibility of the airline losing or damaging your dress right before your wedding.

Please, please – secure your ceremony time and venue before you plan your reception time and venue. I cannot tell you how many

times I have had brides call and say "I need X" time because I already have my reception planned. Start with your ceremony time.

Rent tux locally. Go to a Selix dealer in your area. Pick out a style and get measured. Tell them you are getting married in Lake Tahoe. We have a Selix dealer here. If you rent a tux from the Tahoe dealer, you only have to rent it for a day. If you rent a tux from your area, you have to rent it for the length of your trip and you have to travel with it.

Arrive the day prior. Wake up where you are getting married. I have never seen it go well when people want to drive up the day of their wedding. Consider traffic. What if there is an accident. Car troubles? If you get a late start, you cannot make that time up on the road. What if your flight is late or luggage and rental car don't go as planned? Where will you get ready for your event after you arrive. Most hotels have a check in time between 3-4pm. If your event is scheduled for 5 (or even earlier), that doesn't give you any time (or place) to get ready. Again you really want to wake up where you are getting married.

### **Parents and money**

All I have to say is that, "If they pay, they get a say." If possible, have your guests ship presents to your residence after the event. It will save them the hassle of traveling with a gift and you the hassle of having to bring it home.

If you are planning an event on the South Lake Tahoe, be sure to stay in South Lake Tahoe. I have seen people make lodging arrangements in North Shore and then pick a venue in South Shore that they like. You don't want to add 45 minutes to an hour in the car on your wedding day. This also applies to a North Shore event. Stay in North Shore if your venue/event is in North Shore.

If you can visit the area before hand, please do. This will

give you the opportunity to meet vendors and see the locations in person (and what surrounds the locations). Please remember that it looks very different in winter than summer and also schedule your visit during the week. Most vendors will not have a chance to offer consultations on Saturday because they are busy doing weddings. Monday-Thursday work best for visits.

Look for small print on the websites. There is a lot of it. Some places don't include a license, some have the minister's fee separate from the package. Some hide a Saturday surcharge in the small print. Ask for a total price. Ask who is the minister? Who is the photographer? And ask to see samples of their work or if you can meet them or talk with them ahead of time. Use the 800 number to talk with people. It is a personal service/experience, so be sure to interact a bit with the people that will be handling your event. They should make you feel comfortable. They should also answer your questions and listen to what you have to say. There should be some kind of "click" between you.

Ultimately, do what you as a couple want to do. It is your wedding. Don't let friends or family pressure you into a large event if you don't want one. I have seen family members and friends pressure couples into events that they really didn't want. Again, people add drama and costs.

## **In closing**

I hope the above doesn't discourage you from having a destination wedding. I just want to make you aware of the things you will encounter with planning a wedding whether here in Tahoe or where you live. I have helped many couples in the 15 years that I was doing this and 99 percent of them have been very happy with my services. (If you are in customer service you know you cannot please everyone.)

*The Rev. John Spinola has been a wedding officiant for more than 15 years – which includes more than 3,000 weddings, from*

*two to 200 guests – from formal gatherings to rock climbing.*

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## **S. Tahoe woman on Grammy-winning album**



Anne Roos at her first Grammy's is a winner.

Photo/Provided

The album South Lake Tahoe's Anne Roos contributed to won a Grammy on Feb. 8 for best New Age Album.

"Winds of Samsara" is the album, with track No. 8 "Eyes of Wonder" where Roos comes in with her harp. Ricky Kej composed the album and played keyboards, while Wouter Kellerman was the flutist.

Roos attended Sunday's awards ceremony in Los Angeles. The presentation for her category was made before the televised performance.

# Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Chuck

Chuck is a 3-year-old American Staffordshire terrier who is smart, friendly, and well behaved.

He walks nicely on the leash, and knows sit, stay, and down.

Staffordshire terriers are often compared to pit bulls, but while they have similar characteristics, they are generally shorter and stockier. Both breeds are known for being loyal, fearless, and affectionate. Chuck appears to have all of these traits, and will make a great pet for just about any household.

Chuck is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, 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*