

LTCC seeks actors for spring performance

Lake Tahoe Community College is seeking men and women of various ages, types and ethnicities for its upcoming production of the dark comedy “The Last Days of Judas Iscariot” by Stephen Adly Guirgis.

Auditions are Jan. 6 at 7pm in LTCC’s Duke Theatre. Performances will be March 13-22.

Set in a time-bending, darkly comic world between heaven and hell, “The Last Days of Judas Iscariot” re-examines the plight and fate of the New Testament’s most infamous and unexplained sinner. The action takes place in Hope, in a corner of Purgatory, and the cosmic court is in session when a defense attorney, outraged that Judas remains condemned for eternity, obtains a writ from God to force a retrial. The defense and prosecuting attorney (who, comically, has arrived from hell for the trial) bring in a number of colorful witnesses, including Judas’ mother, street-talking saints, Sigmund Freud, Mother Teresa, and a jaded Satan.

Auditions will consist of readings from the play. Scripts are available on reserve in the LTCC library. Audition information and character breakdowns may be found online.

Opportunities for light and sound board operators, stage manager, backstage crew, and construction crew are also available.

For more information, call 530.541.4660, ext. 240.

Student choirs to perform holiday concert

The 20th annual Holiday Extravaganza is Dec. 18-19 at MontBleu.

The show consists of student choirs as well as a faculty-parent choir. Included is the award-winning Blue Ribbon Classical Choir.

The finale includes more than 250 singers.

Special guests include a Blue Ribbon reunion of more than 30 alumni singers from all over the country as well as selected performers from Marcia Sarosik Shining Stars dance troupe.

The shows begin at 7pm. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors, and free if younger than 5.

Nevada tourism grant benefits LTVA

The Nevada Commission on Tourism has authorized \$414,854 in grants for programs and activities designed to deliver more tourists to rural Nevada.

The Rural Grants Program funds are disbursed twice a year. This recent distribution is the second in fiscal year 2015; a total of \$1.4 million was awarded in fiscal year 2015.

Among the funded projects:

- An \$8,000 grant was approved for the Lake Tahoe Visitors

Authority to promote the Amgen professional women's cycling race in May 2015. About 84 athletes are expected to compete in two races that will raise awareness of the destination through coverage on AEG Sports, the race producer. Grant applicants estimate the value of the media coverage of this event to be in excess of \$200,000.

- A \$10,000 grant was awarded to the Elko Regional Airport to advertise SkyWest air service to Elko from Salt Lake City in the Utah market.

- A \$10,000 award was given to the White Pine Historic Railroad Foundation in Ely to create 20 webisodes about the Nevada Northern Railway that will be posted to the railway's YouTube channel.

- An \$8,000 award was granted to the Dam Short Film Society in Boulder City to promote the Dam Short Film Festival, which takes place in February 2015.

- A \$6,500 grant was approved to Indian Territory, a nonprofit organization promoting tribal tourism, to hire a photographer to complete a comprehensive photo library of the state's American Indian tourism destinations.

- A \$3,800 award was granted to Nevada Silver Trails, a nonprofit group promoting tourism to the state's central and southern rural areas, to create a brochure about attractions off the Highway 95 corridor between Reno and Las Vegas.

Truckee pilot among elite

group

Truckee resident Tom Meadows has flown more than 1,000 Young Eagles, placing him in the top 1 percent of all Experimental Aircraft Association pilots who have flown 100 or more kids.

Meadows, a semi-retired flight instructor, regularly has the kids sit in the left seat as pilot, while he explains what's happening as they actually fly the plane.

Not only has he flown local youths, but he and wife, Lynn, also a pilot, have flown their Cessna 172 to South Dakota, Iowa, Washington, Florida and Ohio to give kids free flights..

Experimental Aircraft Association's Young Eagles program started in 1993 to introduce youths 8-17 to aviation. Since then almost 2 million Young Eagles have enjoyed a free flight from EAA's network of more 46,000 volunteer pilots.

"One of the best parts of being an EAA member is introducing young people to aviation, and the best part of that is taking them flying. The younger kids are amazed that the cars look like toys, and the older ones are excited to see their house from the air." Meadows said in a press release.

Pilots are not compensated for their time or aircraft costs.

The local Truckee Chapter has flown over 3,000 Young Eagles in the past 21 years.

Road beat: Power not a

problem with Lexus hybrid



The Lexus GS 450h has power and great gas mileage.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

While the electrified Lexus GS450h hybrid has a bit of a disconnected feel, it doesn't lack for power. And we are talking more than just horsepower.

As Lexus's refinement of all its hybrids continues, this new GS450h is the best example the Road Beat has tested.

While it's hard to believe Toyota's first U.S. marketed hybrid was introduced 15 years ago, the technology hit the Japanese market 17 years ago. My, how it has matured. Transitions have become literally imperceptible; braking action is smooth and the power is breathtaking, never mind the improved fuel economy.

Design of the new GS continues to evolve from the original 1993 Giugiaro penned shape. Most interesting and pronounced is the L'finnesse front end snout. Perhaps it is the most aggressive of all Lexi. Overall the design is smooth and attractive, with excellent proportions and nothing offensive or added on for the sake of complexity.



Specifications

Price \$60,510 to about \$71,000

Engine

3.5L DOHC 24 valve V-6 286 hp @ 6,000 rpm

254 lb.-ft. @ 4,600 rpm

Electric Drive

Motor Max output 200 hp

Battery Type Sealed Nickel Metal Hydride

System voltage 650V

Max output 41 hp

Combined Max power output 327 hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Front engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 112.2 inches

Length 190.7 inches
Width 72.4 inches
Height 57.3 inches
Track (f/r) 62.0/62.6 inches
Ground clearance 5.5 inches
Trunk capacity 13.0 cubic feet
Fuel Capacity 17.4 gallons
Weight 4,112 pounds
GVWR 5,125 pounds
Weight distribution (f/r) 51/49 percent
Steering lock to lock 2.8 turns
Turning circle 34.8 feet
Wheels 18X8 inch alloys
Tires 235/45RX18
Coefficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 5.31 seconds
50-70 mph 2.96
50-70 mph uphill 3.62 seconds
Top speed Governed at 131 mph
Fuel economy EPA rated 29/34/31 mpg
city/highway/combined Expect 31 mpg overall in mixed driving. At 70 mph on cruise control two way run 39 mpg on longer level highway trips at legal speeds expect 37 mpg.

Wheelbase is midsize at 112 inches, length is 191 inches and width is a svelte 72 inches. What's nice is that outside

dimensions don't belie the rather large rear seat comfort and legroom remarked on when carrying two rear seat adults to lunch one afternoon. However, the hybrid's trunk is reduced by more than a cubic foot by the hybrid's battery. Notwithstanding, it is still very usable because of its shape.

Powering the GS450h is the same V-6 as found in the conventional GS350 except for some minor modifications to improve efficiency like making it into an ultra high compression (13:1) Atkinson cycle engine. Consequently power drops from 306 hp at 6,400 rpm to 286 hp at 6,000 rpm. Peak torque also falls by 23 pounds to 254 pounds of twist at 4,600 rpm. However, the GS450h makes up for that with an electric motor kicker with a battery output of an extra 41 hp (327 hp combined). While that may not sound like much, it is. This GS450h flat out flies.

It will do the benchmark 0-60 mph run in 5.31 seconds. That is world-class performance. Passing times are also world class with 50-70 mph runs on level ground and up a 6 percent grade averaged 2.96 and 3.62 seconds, respectively. That is getting it done. And throttle response is near perfect and linear. It is impossible to tell this vehicle is a hybrid except for when the green EV light lets you know the engine has quit running. Then you can notice the deafening silence.

OK, hybrids are supposed to be fuel efficient and this one certainly is. The GS350 is rated by the EPA at 19/29/23 mpg city/highway/combined. It is also not as quick as the hybrid, close, but no cigar. The hybrid GS450h however is rated at 29/34/31 mpg. But here is the even better news. On the highway at 70 mph on cruise control the GS450h averaged 39 mpg on a two-way run. Amazing. Overall with little time spent on the freeway it averaged 31.1 mpg. However, in a two-way run from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe and back, the 450h averaged 34 mpg. Speeds were kept at 60 mph and under. The 450h is not only a bit quicker than its conventional sibling; it's about 8 mpg more economical.

What is even more amazing is the fact that the GS450h weighs 4,112 pounds or nearly 400 pounds more than its sibling GS350.

Now this is where it gets interesting. The GS450h can flat out corner. Its suspenders are state-of-the-art double wishbones up front with a multilink independent system bringing up the rear. Coils and gas filled shocks are in each corner with stabilizer bars at both ends. A vehicle speed sensing electric rack guides the car and it is integrated with the Vehicle Dynamics Integrated Management system. It's also quick at 2.8 turns lock to lock. Standard rubber is 235/45×18 inch tires mount to wide 18×8 inch alloys. As to the 450h's cornering power, it is huge. During hard corners at speed vehicle attitude also remains firm and flat so it has the ingredients of a genuine sporting sedan, but it misses one thing, good feel and feedback from the steering. The GS could be hustled through corners that would have lesser cars crying "uncle," but it takes driver concentration, input and guidance, more so than say Miata or a new Ford Mustang GT. Turning circle is a tight 34.8 feet.

Understanding that, the GS has a marvelous ride quality. It absorbs road punishment perfectly, no harshness or jarring yet the ride is solid and firm with absolutely no float. It's about as good as I have ever encountered. And it is quiet, even outside the car it is hard to hear the engine at idle and it is absolutely dead silent in all driving regimes except full throttle when you can hear a bit of V-6 engine bark. By the way, this is one of the first V-6s that almost has the sound of a V-8 under full throttle acceleration.

During normal driving it is so quiet you cannot tell if the gas engine is running or it is on pure electric power, which the GS450h can do up to about 42 mph under very light throttle pressure. There is no tach so the only indication is the green EV light is on. The GS450h can travel about a mile or so under continuous pure electric drive.



The Lexus is full of luxury.

Strides have also been made with smooth braking. There is no pulsing during stopping. It is next to impossible to sense any powertrain transitions, especially with the super smooth CVT transmission. Panic stops from 40 mph take 43 feet under absolutely perfect control. Of course every safety acronym known to mankind is present in this vehicle.

Inside is a luxurious interior with extremely comfortable front chairs that are infinity adjustable. There is no tach, but most other gauges are present, but the Lexus Mark Levinson sound system while sounding superb is difficult to control with a flighty mouse used for everything but volume. It is a sore spot that hampers an otherwise outstanding automobile. Trick technology for its own sake doesn't always work. It also causes too much driver inattention. It sets the car back 50 years as in older airplanes when a radioman was required just to work communications.

Rear seat room is astounding.

Pricing starts at \$59,600 but options like the Luxury Package (\$5,255), the HDD navigation (\$1,735) and the Mark Levinson Sound System (\$1,380), plus some other items brought the total price including \$910 for the boat from Japan to \$70,649. That is substantial money to show off your environmental sensitivity.

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.

At 50, 'Rudolph' sets television record

By Lisa Respers France, CNN

The longest-running holiday special still has a very shiny nose.

"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" premiered on television Dec. 6, 1964, and is now one of the holiday season's perennial favorites. The story of the reindeer who saves Christmas is beloved among children and adults alike.

The Rankin-Bass animated film production company used Japanese puppets and stop motion to tell the tale, bolstered by a soundtrack featuring Burl Ives' rendition of the theme song.

In the story, Santa's reindeer Donner and his wife have a son, Rudolph, who has the distinction of a nose that glows. He runs away after being made to feel an outcast and links up with an elf who dreams of becoming a dentist and an adventurer seeking silver and gold.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Mr. Boots

Mr. Boots is a 13-year-old Maine coon cat who has come back to the shelter. He was adopted, but was too rough for the dogs in his new home. He is nice with his people, but he might be best as an only pet. Mr. Boots qualifies for a free adoption to seniors and the right home.

Mr. Boots 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

Vermont writer wins Tahoe poetry contest

Julia Shipley is the 2014 winner of Bona Fide Books' Melissa Lanitis Gregory poetry prize.

Shipley is the author of three poetry chapbooks. She is a two-time recipient of grants from the Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Arts Council and has also received fellowships from the Frost Place in New Hampshire the Center for Books Arts in New York City, and the Studios at Key West.

A born-again agrarian, she raises animals and vegetables on her 6-acre farm in northern Vermont.

The prize is named after Lanitis, a South Lake Tahoe artist who died in 2009. This award created by Bona Fide Books Publisher Kim Wyatt is in honor of her friend and to recognize the inspiration Lantis gave to so many others in pursuit of literary and artistic dreams.

Shipley's collection of poetry titled "The Academy of Hay" will be published by Meyers-based Bona Fide Books in 2015.

Weight, food, inactivity contribute to cancer risk

By Kathryn Reed

While the cause of many cancers is unknown, a person's lifestyle can be a large contributing factor.

That was the overriding message delivered by Lynn Norton, a registered dietitian with Barton Health, during a Dec. 2 lecture at Lake Tahoe Community College.

"The majority of cancer is basically preventable," Norton said. "There are enough things in our lifestyle and with nutrition that we can do."

She cited several studies that underlined the need to pay attention to diet, body weight and exercise.

The risk of cancer increases, Norton said, with a high body mass index. This number is based on a person's height and weight. A healthy weight for a person who is 6-feet-tall is between 140 and 180 pounds, while someone 5-feet-6 should weigh between 115 and 150 pounds.

There are people who are overweight, and then those who fall into the obese category. In the United States people are increasingly in the worst category – obese. Thirty-four percent of the people in this country are considered obese. For those 19 and younger, the percentage is 17.

Obesity increases the risk of being diagnosed with the following cancers: esophagus, pancreatic, colorectal, breast, endometrial, kidney and gall bladder.



Garlic is said to ward off

certain cancers. Photo/LTN
file

Being active is going to help reduce one's weight, as well as reduce the risk of cancers like colon, post-menopausal breast and endometrial.

The recommendation is get 30 minutes of at least brisk walking every day, then work up to 60 minutes.

Another suggestion is to limit high calorie foods and sugary drinks. This can be attained by a diet derived mostly from plants. Norton pointed out how some veggies have more benefits than others, like garlic is a deterrent to colorectal cancer, carrots help prevent cervical cancer, and legumes ward off stomach and prostate cancers.

"Fibrous foods are dense and filling," Norton said. "Americans eat 10 to 15 grams of fiber a day and it should be 20 to 35 grams."

Red meat should be limited – in how often it is consumed and how much. Eighteen ounces a week is the recommendation.

When it comes to alcohol, Norton said it is considered a carcinogen. Two drinks a night for men, one for women, are the ideal amounts based on studies.

Sodium, while it's needed, is often consumed in alarming rates at restaurants and via packaged foods.

Norton cautioned people to be wary of supplements because they are unregulated. She stressed the need to do research to know what a safe level of them is.

She said the easiest way to begin making changes is to shop differently at the grocery store by putting more grains in the basket, along with vegetables. Norton suggests buying extra chicken or fish so there are leftovers for lunch instead of

eating processed food midday. Shrink the size of the specialty coffee, order veggies on a pizza and no meat, put wine in a smaller glass. And treats – make them a treat, not a staple.

Christmas trees rule in these homes' decor

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

What would the holiday season be without trees?

Since ancient times, these symbols of abundance, home and eternal life have been part of winter celebrations. Historians trace the use of evergreens as decorations back to the Egyptians, Chinese, early Hebrews and Scandinavians. By the 16th century, old Tannenbaum had become a regular part of the seasonal decorating inside German homes.

As a melting pot culture, America embraced this tradition as their own. All that holiday history can give tree decorators a whole world of inspiration, too.

Dozens of decorated trees at six homes will be part of this weekend's "Homes for the Holidays" tour in El Dorado Hills and surrounding communities. Hosted by the Assistance League of Sierra Foothills, this family-friendly tour supports several programs for schoolchildren in El Dorado County.

Read the whole story