

Phyllis Ann Clifton — 1940-2014



Phyllis Ann Clifton

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Phyllis Ann Clifton passed from this life on Feb. 9. She was 73.

Phyllis was born on Sept. 16, 1940, in Modesto to Annabelle and Ernest Farrell.

When she was 8-years-old, Phyllis moved from Hickman to Portola Valley. As a teenager she attended Menlo-Atherton High School; and later studied to become a dental hygienist at the College of San Mateo, where she received an associate of arts degree.

Phyllis wed Lester Clifton in 1960. In 1967, and with two young sons, the family moved from Palo Alto to South Lake Tahoe. For more than three decades Phyllis worked as a certified medical assistant, and was a respected and well-known member of the local healthcare community.

In 1983, Phyllis was elected for the first of two terms as state president of the Nevada Association of Medical Assistants. For years she had been an active member at the local and state levels of the organization, serving in all offices at the local level, and trustee, secretary, vice president and president-elect at the state level.

In addition to an accomplished professional career, Phyllis made time to support her family, including volunteering for several Little League seasons to keep score at games and operate the popular snack shack. For many years she was also active in Beta Sigma Phi, an international women's social, cultural and service organization.

In 2007, Phyllis joined Soroptimist International of Sierra Tahoe, and was particularly supportive of the organization's programs that helped children in need.

Phyllis loved to travel, enjoying trips to Mexico and Tahiti with Les, and camping

and road trips exploring America's many wonders with her family. She and George enjoyed European river cruises and annual excursions to Hawaii. An active, outdoor enthusiast, Phyllis enjoyed hiking, bicycling, and playing golf; and she was also an avid reader. She was quite proud of each of her grandchildren, and loved to attend their school plays and programs.

A fun-loving woman with a great sense of humor, and flair for retelling stories, Phyllis was ever the social butterfly and enjoyed attending parties and celebrating milestones with her friends and family. She was also a gracious and easy-going hostess, and kept an open door for the many friends and family that visited her home.

Phyllis is survived by a loving family: son Chris and daughter-in-law Leigh Ann, grandchildren James, Daniel and Sienna; son Brent and grandchildren Monique, Brittany and Neil; loving companion George Perusits; brothers Ron Farrell and his wife Xylina, Patrick Farrell and his wife Betty, John Farrell and his wife Ila; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was predeceased by loving husband of 39 years, Lester, in 1999.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in honor of Phyllis Clifton to the Student Scholarship Fund of Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra. For more info, email sitahoesierra@gmail.com.

A celebration of life is planned for Feb. 22 at 2pm at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church, 2733 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Author Chris Millis to give talk in Incline

Prize-winning, bestselling writer, producer, and cartoonist Chris Millis will be at Sierra Nevada College on Feb. 21.

He adapted his first novel "Small Apartments" into a feature film that stars Matt Lucas, Billy Crystal, Johnny Knoxville, and James Caan.

The 7-9pm reading is free at the college's Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139-141.

Millis will also conduct a writing workshop (free to SNC students; \$50 for community members) from 9am-noon on Feb. 22. [Click here to register for the workshop.](#)

Series of art exhibits at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College has a slew of art exhibits going on.

Through March 14 is the UNR MFA Student Exhibit in the Haldan Art Gallery. Ginny Schankerman's "Seeking the Elephant" is in the Foyer Gallery through March 22. Tahoe Area High School Art Exhibit is in the Student Gallery until March 22.

The college's Art Department Faculty and Staff Show will take over the Haldan Art Gallery from April 17-June 20. There will be a reception April 17 from 5-7pm.

Shiloh Flood's "???" will be in the Foyer Gallery from April 12-June 21. An artist's reception will be April 17 from 5-7pm.

The annual Student Art Exhibition in the Student Gallery is May 18-June 14. The reception and awards ceremony is May 18 from 2-5pm.

Reconnecting to society can restore happiness

By Christian E. Megrelis

Emotional isolation is a growing problem, with more than one out of three adults aged 45 and older describing themselves as chronically lonely, up from one out of five a decade earlier.

The contributing factors are easy to identify: high

unemployment; marriage rate at a historic low; increased reliance on technology over face-to-face communication.

The main problem of tomorrow is that people are becoming inwardly focused and cut off from their neighbors.

The global crisis is not only economical but individual. Especially in the industrialized nations, we are pulling farther away from our human connections to our own detriment.

Emotional isolation, which is on the rise according to a 2010 AARP study, has been found to cause or exacerbate a number of diseases, from Alzheimer's to cancer, and is as high a risk factor for mortality as smoking.

There's quality of life to consider as well. Lonely people are not happy people, hence the increased stress that causes physical illness. But we can change, individually and collectively, if we heed the wisdom that has endured for 2,000 years.

Here are five time-tested steps anyone can take to reconnect and restore happiness:

- Work on loving everyone – from the stranger on the bus to your worst enemy. This is difficult, I admit, but you don't need to do it perfectly to see the benefits. How does one take this from intellectual concept to practice? With humanitarian acts. Stop and help the person who has fallen down. Smile and say something kind to the harried store clerk. And give – not just what's easy to give, like the old clothes you no longer wear. Share your money, your time, and your resources.

- Don't judge. Another that's deceptively simple but gets easier with practice. Passing judgment on others is actually a very selfish act; we do it in order to feel better about ourselves, but it really isn't effective in that regard," he says. When you catch yourself commenting negatively about someone else, whether loud or in your mind, stop yourself and

consider your own flaws. Honesty demands you focus on and correct those before your neighbor's.

- Forgive. Holding a grudge or seeking revenge for perceived wrongs is a primitive impulse response. Forgiveness is a cerebral sentiment that comes from the cortex of the brain – the source of reason. Reason is what allows us to resist dangerous primitive impulses in able to achieve more far-sighted objectives, such as social life, which is impossible without forgiveness.

- Do good that makes a difference. Feeling we have no purpose in life or being unsure what our purpose is can lead to despair or indifference often resulting in sterile ambition, delusion or conceit, all of which serve to isolate us from others. We all have a purpose, whether or not it's easily discernible. Whatever place is yours in society, bring your brick every day to the never-ending construction of a happier world and you will quickly recognize your purpose.

- Have faith. You don't have to subscribe to a particular religion or follow dogmatic rules to have faith. It's actually harder than that. Faith is the belief that there is something greater than us, the creator of the world in which we live, guiding all with an order and a purpose. Faith may be – and often is – marked by periods of doubt, but it should be the compass to which you return. Faith brings with it a connection to all other living things.

Achieve, or at least work toward, these five steps and the result will be hope.

Hope is happiness – a state of mind that transcends ordinary happiness.

Christian E. Megrelis holds master's degrees in engineering, business and political studies. He is the founder of Exa International, a multinational engineering company, and vice chairman of the International Union of Economists. He is also

the former vice chair of the United Bible Societies, a major world publisher of the Bible.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Whiplash

Whiplash is so lonely, she is the only dog at the shelter right now.

She is a happy, bouncy, playful 1-year-old poodle mix who loves everyone. Whiplash came to Tahoe from a Central Valley shelter where her days were numbered. More dogs will arrive Wednesday from other shelters, and we hope Whiplash will have been adopted by then.

Whiplash is spayed, microchipped, tested for heartworm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online or 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

Doctor: High cholesterol not a reason to panic

By Kathryn Reed

Diet, exercise and body weight are critical factors when it comes to dealing with cholesterol.

David Young, a doctor with Barton cardiology, outlined the steps people can take to prevent getting high cholesterol as well as what to do when the numbers are above a good range.

“It is one of the most indolent diseases we have. It can start as a teenager and not manifest until five decades later,” Young told the more than 60 people gathered at Lake Tahoe Community College on Feb. 5.



Dr. David Young talks Feb. 5
about cholesterol. Photo/LTN

While fat is needed, there are various types of fats. Trans fats are the ones to avoid. As Young said, they are “inflammatory to the body” and should be avoided at all costs.

Too much cholesterol leads to narrowing of the arteries, and in turn heart attacks and strokes may be triggered. A plaque rupture can also occur. This is when cholesterol material spills into the bloodstream.

“It causes an acute heart attack and chopper trip to Reno,” Young said.

A blood test is how people find out if their cholesterol is normal or high. The HDL is what’s considered the good cholesterol. LDL is the bad cholesterol.

Results with less than ideal numbers are not something to panic about, Young said. Most of the time a change in diet and an increase in aerobic exercise can lower the numbers. Losing weight and stopping smoking are other ways to improve ones cholesterol.

Cholesterol issues are also hereditary. Thyroid and kidney issues can also impact cholesterol, as well as certain medications.

When it comes to medication statins is often the route Young chooses. He said there is a lot of misinformation about these

types of drugs and often he has to battle with patients to convince them to take them.

“Statin is a drug that inhibits cholesterol in the body and acts in the liver,” Young said. “There are many different types of statins. Not all are equal. All have their own intensities.”

One that is often advertised on television is Lipitor. It’s considered a high intensity statin.

A criticism of statins is that they increase the chances of getting diabetes. Young said there is about a 1.09 percent chance of that occurring. What isn’t known is how statins and diabetes are linked.

“Some say it’s unmasking those who are predisposed to diabetes,” Young said.

A complaint of statin users is muscle pain. Young said between 2 and 11 percent of his patients on statins suffer from muscle aches.

The American Heart Association has an online cardiovascular risk calculator.

“If you get 10 percent or above, that is when you have a conversation with your doctor about should I be on statins,” Young said. “Everything we do in medicine has risk and benefits. Keep the end goal in mind.”

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Notes:

- David Young will speak on the same topic Feb. 12 from 6-7pm at Sierra Nevada College, Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139, Incline Village. The lecture put on by Barton Health is free.

Out of this world service, amenities at Constellation property in Truckee



Constellation residences, which are full ownership, come completely furnished. Photos/Provided

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – Kate Wormington knew she bought into the right ski resort housing venture when she surrendered part of this season to nursing a knee injury – and it wasn't from skiing.

The San Carlos woman recently came up to her four-bedroom, ski-in, ski-out abode that is attached to the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe at Northstar's mid-mountain lamenting her running

injury. The staff listened. Without a request, an employee working at the Constellation Residences owned by JMA Ventures and managed by Vail Resorts' RockResorts' hospitality division delivered a surprise – popcorn, hot chocolate and a movie.

"I didn't even ask," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The perfection of the place was also confirmed one day when her family of four was whisked away by a snowcat driver who happened to pull up to ask if they wanted to go on a joy ride. They jumped in and had a blast.

Wormington, her husband and two children also have spent many hours watching the mountain bikers roll down Northstar's ambitious park, walking their Bernese mountain dog on the mountain and stargazing out the window.

And this year, it's increasingly obvious how a family may overcome a lackluster snow winter season. The ski-in, ski-out complex has a snow gun situated next to the building on a bunny run leading down to the Big Easy chairlift.



The Constellation, right, is attached to the Ritz-Carlton at Northstar via a walkway.

"A lot of people talk about how terrible the season is because of the snow this year – but ask a mom. The ski school groomers are ideal, and the snowmaking at Northstar is fantastic," Wormington said, acknowledging the most prominent silver

lining for the dry winter season. This is the best time to learn how to ski or hone your children's skills. The days are sunny, and the crowds are less.

While her 9-year-old daughter has all but passed her up in ability, her 4-year-old son still could use a little work just based on his age. In the summer, he's also enamored with catching a trout at Northstar's reservoir that is used to make all that snow when Mother Nature doesn't deliver.

"My kids have never skied anywhere else. And we never felt the need to take them anywhere else," Wormington said, albeit further admitting she and her husband have traveled and skied all over. "When it came to Northstar, it's such a cool atmosphere for kids."

There are other choices in housing or hotel stays around Northstar – at the village, in the surrounding neighborhoods served by bus or even near Martis Valley with the 3-year-old Martis Camp, luxury homes built by DMB Development.

"They're beautiful homes and way more expensive, but kids can't get down to the place. My 4-year-old can't make it," she said. The Martis chairlift off Lookout Mountain serves five black diamond runs. The one blue run, Washoe, is even "tricky" for him, she added.

The Wormingtons briefly thought about housing options at the Northstar Village but believed it was a little too noisy to live or stay in.

"I don't want a club scene. I want a community," Wormington said. "If we want a vibrant scene, we'll take the gondola down," she said. A gondola is located outside the two adjacent properties. "And I like that there's a certain sense of decorum here at mid-mountain." She finds that staff watches out for her kids when they're out and about.

They considered housing sold through the Ritz-Carlton

Destination Club but didn't like the fractional ownership idea.

"We would wonder what weeks we would get," she said.

With JMA Ventures at the helm, the Wormingtons believe they got the best of all worlds. They brought in their own furniture, which is optional but not common, and turned one of their bedrooms into a bunkroom to accommodate six kids. Everything is there, so when they drive up from the Bay Area, they bring half a suitcase and a cooler and park the car until they leave. The Wormington family is a big hit with friends, too, hosting 20 families since buying Labor Day 2012.

Last November, JMA – which owns Homewood Mountain Resort and expects to break ground in 2015 with an ambitious master plan for the West Shore resort – upped the stakes at Northstar by bringing RockResorts on board as the manager to its Constellation Residences. The Vail Resorts subsidiary specializes in "casually-elegant accommodations," so Constellation was right up its alley.

Starting at \$1.3 million, the residences come with the amenities of the Ritz-Carlton, which is attached by a sky bridge, so owners could saunter through the properties with their slippers on.

Wormington declared the RockResorts-JMA team "takes better care of us than even the Ritz." Of course, access to all those Ritz amenities like the year-round heated pool, 1,700-square-foot spa and fitness center as well as ski valet and three dining outlets such as its signature Manzanita restaurant add to the ambiance. There are even grocery runs and in-room dining service provided at Constellation.

The residences are loaded

Built in 2008 to sell, the 1,800-square-foot residences are equipped with LCD televisions, wireless Internet, gas

fireplaces, patio furniture, washers and dryers, central heating and air conditioning, a wine refrigerator, heated marble floors and jetted tubs in the master bathroom – among other things. The craftsmanship is meticulous, and the floor plan is ideal for those wanting a little space in their bedroom wing. Outside storage for larger toys is available.

Then there's the no-holds-barred service to answer every whim. Units the owners have rented out have hosted wedding parties and many special occasions.

"You know, we bought it for the layout, and the Ritz amenities are super, but we found out later how amazing the Constellation staff is. We've stayed all over the world, but the customer service is best here," Wormington said.



Northstar's slopes are out the back door. Ski valet is provided as well as an area to warm boots.

And Constellation sales specialist Brit Crezee said more ideas are in the works to beef up the service and amenities such as beach shuttles in summer. Prospective buyers have responded. While 11 units fall under the fractional Ritz Destination Club realm, only five of the 17 Constellation housing units in the first phase are left. The second phase of Constellation is expected to be available for purchase in about a year. JMA Ventures expects to begin building those 50 units in 2015.

Crezee isn't surprised by the demand. Beyond the obvious San Francisco Bay Area market, she's had buyers from Boulder,

Colo., and San Diego.

“At 6am, they can be on a flight (to Reno), and be on the slopes by 9,” she said of Southern Californians.

Crezee has seen all types of buyers and renters – but all seem to share one common denominator.

“People want the Ritz experience, but want more convenience and to have the room to spread out,” she said. “There’s really nothing like this in Tahoe or North America.”

Indeed, the Constellation Residences represent the positive “perfect storm” of ski resort housing for those who can afford it.

First, the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe is the only 5-diamond resort in the Tahoe area and for good reason. It lives up to its brand name in a mid-mountain environment.

And Vail has made a significant investment since buying Northstar from Booth Creek Holdings a few years ago.

“They know the demographic and know what to do to make people happy,” Crezee said.

Vail’s subsidiary RockResorts is a leading vacation-rental and whole-ownership hospitality company with luxury resorts maintained and managed from Colorado to Jamaica’s renowned plantation-influenced Half Moon property in Rose Hall, which is celebrating 60 years in 2015. Vail has been the sole owner of RockResorts since 2005. Laurance Rockefeller started it.

Interestingly enough, the city of South Lake Tahoe had a shot at RockResorts to run the hotel of the convention center project before the developer of the Chateau at Heavenly Village went bankrupt due to financing issues. RockResorts long ago terminated marketing license and technical services agreements associated with the project.

Vail Resorts Hospitality Chief Operating Officer James O'Donnell declined to comment on previous "business dealings" such as the aforementioned negotiation, but as the ski resort company runs Heavenly Mountain Resort across the street he took the high road in saying Vail "has a keen interest in seeing someone being successful with development there."

Vail Resorts Hospitality still made its mark in the South Shore market by recently buying the Accommodation Station when long-time vacation rental owner Greta Hambsh retired. The Vail company changed the name to Lake Tahoe Lodging Co., which manages 70 vacation rentals and nearly 200 long-term seasonal rentals.

The Constellation project represents a shift in focus to grow lodging properties at the base of ski resorts. Nonetheless, Vail's focus on the year-round business through RockResorts' offerings is expected to lean toward enhancing the activities of summer.

"This is a unique opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to enhancing the entire guest experience. We couldn't have been more excited," said Ashley Lowe, the senior spokeswoman for the hospitality and real estate division of Vail Resorts Management Company.

It's all about relationships

No one could be in more agreement with the RockResorts' line of thinking than Todd Chapman, chief executive officer of JMA Ventures, a company he has helped run for 13 years with his father, Art.

Chapman pointed out to *Lake Tahoe News* that he has a professional and personal interest in Constellation Residences at Northstar.

"The partnership is the driving force behind the relationship. We have a well-located product. RockResorts – Vail's

hospitality arm – saw this opportunity as unprecedented access to the mountain that no one else can deliver,” Chapman said. “It’s obvious that when we look at investment opportunities, we look at the interest level of others to them.”

But it’s not all about business and coinciding partnerships to Chapman. He walks the talk. Chapman bought into the housing complex and relishes his time there to “unplug” from the pressures of modern life with his family consisting of his children, ages 6, 8 and 9.

“This is the best time to enjoy our family. We drive up from the Bay Area, park the car, and we don’t touch the car until we leave for the weekend,” he said. “My kids can sleep in until 8 and be on the mountain by 8:45. We value (that time),” he said.

However, he did admit to being a little surprised by the interest level this year with the dry winter conditions.

“Based on the snow, this says a lot about the commitment folks have to the alpine life,” Chapman said.

Placer County expands library program

Placer County libraries have expanded their pool of books by participating in Zip Books, a program supported by the California State Library that allows librarians to pull from the “shelves” of Amazon.com when a book requested by the public is not available at their library.

When someone requests a book or audiobook that the library does not own, the library will try to find and purchase the item from Amazon.com, or third-party book sellers on Amazon.com, and have it shipped directly to the patron's address. Once the book has been read, or heard, it is returned to the local library branch where it becomes available to future patrons as part of the library's permanent collection.

The program allows only one item per Zip Book request. But once the book or audio book is returned to the library, another Zip Book request can be made.

There is no cost to patrons to "check out" a book through Zip Book.

Zip Book requests must be made in person at a Placer County library and participants are asked to return the item to a library staff person rather than using the book drop.

The Zip Books program includes new and used regular or large print books or audiobooks that are available on Amazon.com. Books that cost more than \$35 will require approval by the library. Videos and DVDs are not available through the Zip Books program.

Placer County's Zip Books program is funded by the California State Library through a grant from Library Services and Technology Act. The Placer County Library is one of 16 in the state participating in the program.

Working on tax returns makes

financial sense

By Jeff Gorton

Nearly 150 million Americans will file federal income tax returns this year and, unfortunately, many will be shelling out much more of their hard-earned money than necessary.

With the ridiculous complexity of our tax code, I can understand how the average person might want to put off doing their homework, but that'll cost you.

When you think about all you do to earn your money, and the lengths we'll go to save a few bucks, it doesn't make sense to not do all we can to prepare for the inevitable – our compulsory contribution to Uncle Sam's bank account.

There is nothing unpatriotic about taking advantage of legal measures to reduce your tax bill. Most Americans, however, don't understand the basics of how to minimize the tax burden, he says.

If you wait until the last minute to do your taxes, you're sure to miss out on savings.

Here are some basic and more advanced tax-saving options.

- **Credits:** Tax credits are usually subtracted dollar for dollar from the actual tax liability and may be utilized when filing for 2013. They include the Child Tax Credit, which allows up to \$1,000 for children younger than 17; the American Opportunity Credit, featuring up to \$2,500 in tax savings per eligible student for tuition costs for four years of post-high-school education; and the Energy-Efficient Home Improvement Tax Credit, which grants qualifying taxpayers 10 percent of the cost of certain energy-efficient building materials – up to a \$500 lifetime credit. The Child and Dependent Care Credit, for those who have to pay someone to

care for a child younger than 13, or another dependent, offers up to \$3,000 for one qualifying individual, or up to \$6,000 for two or more qualifying individuals.

- **Deductions:** Like tax credits, deductions have phase-out limits, so you may want to consult with a professional. Deductions are subtracted from your income before your taxes are calculated, which may reduce the amount of money on which you are taxed and, by extension, your eventual tax liability. Some examples include contributions made to qualifying charitable organizations. And, you may be able to write off out-of-pocket costs incurred while doing work for a charity. Others may include amounts set aside for retirement through a qualified retirement plan, such as an Individual Retirement Account; medical expenses exceeding 10 percent of your adjusted gross income are now deductible – expenses exceeding 7.5 percent are still deductible for those older than age 65; and, potentially, mortgage interest paid on a loan secured for your primary residence.

- **Tax-favored investing:** This involves tax-exempt investments and tax-deferred investments. Tax-exempt investments, which include such vehicles as municipal bonds and certain money market funds, offer a way to grow your money that's exempt from federal taxes. Municipal bonds are free of federal income tax and may be free of state and local income taxes for investors who live in the area where the bond was issued. Tax-deferred investments, on which taxes are postponed until you withdraw your money, include qualified retirement plans, such as traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored plans, as well as insurance products such as annuities and, sometimes, life insurance.

Jeff Gorton is a certified public accountant and a certified financial planner specializing in individual tax and retirement planning.

Paper wins out over computer for note taking

By Wray Herbert, Huffington Post

I went to college long before the era of laptops, so I learned to take notes the old-fashioned way: ink on paper. But that does not mean my note-taking system was simple. Indeed it was an intricate hieroglyphic language, in which asterisks and underscoring and check marks and exclamation points all had precise meaning, if only to me.

It's a lost art. Many college students have some kind of electronic note-taking device nowadays, and most will swear by them. And really, only a Luddite would cling to pen and notebook in the 21st century. Typing is faster than longhand, producing more legible and more thorough notes for study later on.

But has anyone actually compared the two? Is it possible that laptops somehow impair learning – or conversely, that pen and paper convey some subtle advantage in the classroom? Two psychological scientists, Pam Mueller of Princeton and Daniel Oppenheimer of UCLA, wondered if laptops, despite their plusses, might lead to a shallower kind of cognitive processing, and to lower quality learning. They decided to test the old and the new in a head-to-head contest.

Read the whole story