

Study: Christmas, New Year's top the list for days to die

By Jen Christensen, CNN

There are many well-known risk factors for death – high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, and Christmas.

Yes, Christmas.

Several studies show you have a greater chance of dying on Christmas, the day after Christmas or New Year's Day than any other single day of the year.

This is true for people who die of natural causes, which account for 93 percent of all deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

It's also true, researchers say, for people who die of the five most common diseases: circulatory problems, respiratory diseases, endocrine/nutritional/metabolic problems, digestive diseases and cancer.

There's a spike in deaths for all age groups on those days with one exception – children.

Read the whole story

Unplugging can bring families together

By Dennis Canfield

Wouldn't it be great if we could somehow bottle some of the Christmas magic that helps to bring our families together during the holidays, so we could enjoy that same feeling of togetherness year round? Of course, we can't do that; that would be too easy.

But it doesn't have to be difficult either. With that in mind, here are a few simple ideas to help the family togetherness of Christmas last throughout the year:

Unplug – Every now and again, maybe once a week, you and your spouse and your kids turn off your phones and TVs and log off the Internet and just be with your loved ones. Have an uninterrupted meal, play a board game, clean a room together, whatever. You may have to take several deep breaths after you put your phone down; that's OK. But it's a sign that you really do need to unplug.

Read to your children at bedtime – even as they get older. Let them pick out the books and make sure that nothing that happened earlier in the day intrudes on your time with your child. If you had an argument with your spouse, or a bad day at work, or if your child broke something or made a mess, let it go when you sit down to read. A few years from now you won't remember it anyway.

Listen to audiobooks when you're in the car together – Instead of everyone putting in their earbuds and listening to music or watching videos on their phones, listen to a good audio book together. You don't have to finish it all in one car ride; it may take a few weeks of car trips to get through. No matter how anxious you are to find out how the story ends, you can't listen to it unless you're all listening together.

Family movie night – Let the kids pick out the movie (subject to parental approval), put away your cell phones, pop some popcorn, and have some fun.

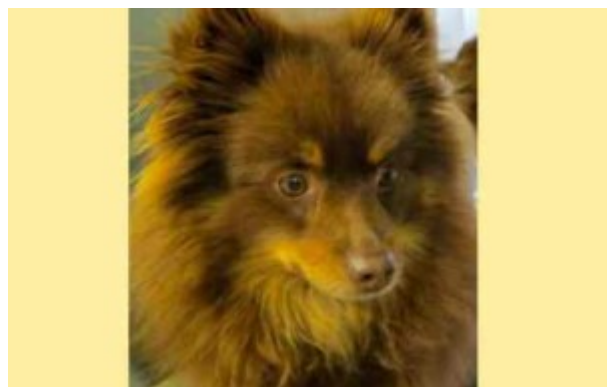
Family video diary – Get the whole family on the sofa in front

of a video camera and let the tape roll while everyone talks about anything and everything. It's especially fun to do this after holidays and vacations and family gatherings. Nothing is off limits, but there is one rule that everyone has to agree to: it's a private video that no one outside the family will ever see.

One reason we all like the holidays so much is that it's the time of year when we make a conscious effort to spend time with our loved ones. It's just as fun to spend time with love ones the rest of the year too; we just have to find time to interrupt the busyness.

Dennis Canfield is a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Commerce, and the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Herschel is one of six Pomeranians that were transferred to our shelter from the Central Valley this past weekend to find their new homes at Tahoe.

There are four females and two males. Three are brown or tan and the other three are black. All are very sweet and playful,

about 1 or 2 years old, and a few are a little more shy than the others.

Herschel is about 18 months old, outgoing and affectionate. Herschel is neutered, microchipped, 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 online 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

TOCCATA Winter MusicFest begins in January

Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus kicks off its 9th annual Winter MusicFest with the “Brrroque Masters” concert series Jan. 4, 5, 7 and 10.

The program opens with Vivaldi’s famous Concerto for Two Trumpets, featuring baroque trumpeters Mark Lord and William van Meter. Organist David Brock will interpret Händel’s Organ Concerto Op. 4 No. 4 in F major, and performs as continuo player for the other pieces on the program. Arias from J.S. Bach’s Cantata No. 51 Jauchzet Gott, and Händel’s Let the

bright Seraphim will be performed by sopranos Joy Strotz, Anna Helwing and Michelle Norris. Finalizing the program will be Bach's Cantata No. 4 from the Christmas Oratorio.

Maestro James Rawie will conduct all performances.

The performances are Jan. 4, 7pm at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church in Incline Village (341 Village Blvd.); Jan. 5, 3pm at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe (1041 Lyons Ave.); Jan. 7 at 7pm at Shepherd of the Sierra Church in Carson City (3680 Highway 395 South), and Jan. 10, 7pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Reno, (501 California Ave.)

Tickets are available at the door or online, and at Tahoe City Visitor Center. General admission to all concerts is \$25 adults, \$20 seniors, \$5 students aged 19 to 23 with valid ID. Preferred seating is \$35 and \$15 for youth-students. Youth under 19 years of age are admitted free, in non-reserved seating, to most regular season concerts in 2014.

TOCCATA's 9th Season WinterFest continues Feb. 8-14 with Bach's Magnificat, Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 2 featuring Elizabeth Pitcairn with the legendary Red Stradivarius violin, and Saint Saens Piano Concerto No. 2 with the winner of the Paul Guttman Young Artists Piano Competition.

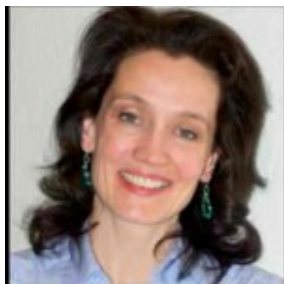
For more information or preferred seating, email ToccataTahoe@gmail.com, call (775) 313.9697, or go online.

Holidays don't have to be full of stress

By Mandy Kendall

Christmas is coming up fast and so are the situations that can stress us. Here are some *Qwik-e* tips to help reduce the stress and increase the fun.

Get the best price – Whether you buy discount gift cards to give them directly to someone or to buy a gift with you can save up to 30 percent buying discounted gift cards. You can also sell gift cards that you know you will never use. Just Google “discounted gift cards” for a range of different sites. You can also Google “discount codes” to find sites that offer promotional codes to be used on websites for rebates or free shipping, etc. There are also sites that track prices for you to make sure you get the price you want for a particular item.



Mandy Kendall

Check your loyalty points – Apparently the U.S. is sitting on \$5 billion worth of unused loyalty points. If you shop at a store frequently, you may find you have a nice balance you could use toward Christmas.

Agree on a budget for everyone – It is easy to get carried away with expensive gifts. Perhaps suggest to the adults in your family that there is a maximum amount to be spent per gift. It's surprising how creative you can get when you are on

a budget.

Free fun – One of my most favorite childhood Christmas memories is caroling around our neighborhood. You can deliver cards and gifts (saving on postage) and spread some holiday cheer at the same time.

Family fun – Playing games is much more conducive to family bonding than lying around watching TV all day, and better for you, too.

Christmas budgets – If the kids in your life have wish lists that make your bank balance groan (and you too), you can either join forces with other relatives or have a heart-to-heart talk with the kids about what they can realistically expect. According to a survey by Red Tractor food standards watchdog, more than one in four kids worries about how their family will afford Christmas, so it might not be a difficult conversation.

Spread the love locally – Buy certificates to encourage family and loved ones to support businesses in town.

Don't buy it, make it – Nothing says "I care about you" more than something you have made yourself.

Have fun with e-cards – There are huge variety of animated e-cards you can send to family and friends at the fraction of the cost of physical cards (in fact many e-cards are free). This frees up time and money, which can be donated to your favorite charity.

Trouble thinking of a gift for someone – How about donating to their favorite charity on their behalf?

Eat before you go to a party – This may sound a bit counterproductive, but it will help you make wise choices at the buffet table. Eating some protein first will also keep you feeling fuller for longer.

Keep hydrated – Alcohol can lead to dehydration (amongst other things). So, to help stave off a headache in the morning and possibly embarrassing situations at the party, try drinking a glass of water in between each glass of your favorite cocktail.

Over indulge in nutrition – The fast pace of Christmas, added to the less nutritious dietary temptations during the holidays, can lead to a sluggish immune system (as well as you feeling sluggish). Balancing indulgences with good healthy foods will help you fight off seasonal sickness, and an expanding waistline.

Wishing you, and yours, a happy and healthy holiday.

Until next year.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

TRPA honors citizens helping to preserve Lake Tahoe

Eight people were recognized at the Lake Spirit awards ceremony at the Dec. 18 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board meeting.

The Lake Spirit Awards honor people making progress at restoring Lake Tahoe. Awards were given for exemplary citizen and exemplary agency representative or environmental scientist.

Exemplary Citizens

Tom Carter, North Shore, for spending his summers diving from his paddleboard to retrieve lost tires and debris from the bottom of Lake Tahoe.

Jeff Poulin, South Shore, for collecting as many as 20 bags of litter a day from alongside bike trails and roads at Lake Tahoe.

Exemplary Agency Representative or Environmental Scientist

Cindy Gustafson, Tahoe City Public Utility District, for her commitment to the North Shore, particularly in her perseverance to construct bike trails and sidewalks in and around Tahoe City and for her leadership in creating and chairing the nonprofit environmental foundation Tahoe Fund.

Kathy Strain, Lake Tahoe Community College, for being an inspirational and accomplished environmental science educator who also helped secure a \$1 million grant to create the Summit to Sand environmental education program to promote environmental stewardship.

Citizens Honorably Mentioned

Dylan Eichenberg for his energy and enthusiasm as a 23-year-old volunteer cleaning up graffiti on rocks along the lakeshore, picking up trash along the beaches, and pulling aquatic invasive weeds to protect Lake Tahoe.

Tom Wendell (posthumous), for his years of working to encourage sustainability and being a passionate, outspoken advocate for improving recreation and non-motorized transportation at Lake Tahoe.

Agency Representatives/Scientists Honorably Mentioned

Missy Mohler, Sierra Watershed Education Partnership, for her work in the Truckee-Tahoe Unified School District to improve students' understanding of their watershed environment and for creating and maintaining many effective programs.

Dan Shaw, California State Parks, for his efforts battling Eurasian watermilfoil in Emerald Bay .

Tips be safe while driving in winter conditions

With another winter storm hitting the Lake Tahoe Basin today, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office is reminding drivers that winter driving can be risky.

"We see too many crashes from drivers not slowing down and not being prepared to drive in winter conditions," Capt. Duane Meyer said in a statement. "We ask that drivers slow down, wear their seat belts and turn off their cruise control."

Statistical data show that as many as 800 car accidents in Nevada were caused by unsafe driving behaviors in wet and snowy conditions last year.

The sheriff's office is asking drivers to remember the three P's of safe winter driving: Prepare before you leave; Protect yourself; and Prevent an auto accident.

Prepare:

Travel in winter weather only when necessary. Leave enough time to safely reach your destination and plan your route to avoid snowy-icy areas and steep hills.

Check weather and road conditions by dialing 511 in Nevada.

Maintain your car: check your battery, tire tread, windshield wipers, levels of no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir and your antifreeze.

Maintain a high fuel level in your gas tank.

Keep a basic winter travel kit in the car: chains, a flashlight, jumper cables, shovel, snow brush, ice scraper, water, road flares and a blanket.

Protect:

Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.

Avoid quick starts, stops and fast turns. Accelerate, brake and steer smoothly and gradually.

Reduce Speed. Speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions, not winter road conditions.

Don't slam on brakes. Apply steady pressure on ABS-equipped vehicles and pump the brakes if necessary on non-ABS vehicles.

Keep additional distance from other vehicles.

Don't pass without good distance and sight clearance.

Avoid using cruise control in inclement weather.

Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shady areas; they may freeze first.

Comply with all posted chain requirements.

Watch carefully for snow removal equipment.

If vehicle begins to skid, steer in direction of slide and slowly remove foot from accelerator.

Prevent:

Before driving, place your cell phone in the glove box where you won't be tempted to use it while driving. Or you can simply turn off your phone when driving.

Remove snow and ice from all car windows, mirrors, lights, turn signals and license plates.

Make sure vehicle exhaust system is clear of snow when parked.

If you plan on drinking, designate a sober driver.

Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest before a trip. Try to stop every three hours and rotate drivers if possible.

If your vehicle has snow tires, install and use them between Oct, 1 and April 30.

If parked or stuck in snow, leave window slightly cracked for ventilation.

'Thee and Thou and Now' at Truckee High

Truckee High School's drama club is putting on "Thee and Thou and Now" Jan. 9-11.

Well-known works from Shakespeare and the play "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown", and the classic Abbott and Costello bit, "Who's on First?" will be paired with lesser known pieces from "Almost Maine" and others. One of the actors will perform an

original monologue that she wrote.

The actors are preparing for the Lenaea Theater Festival at the end of January where many of these pieces will be entered for competition.

All shows are at 7pm in school auditorium, 11725 Donner Pass Road, Truckee. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students. They will be available at the door.

For more info, call (530) 386.1929.

Tahoe author to discuss Olympic history

Award-winning author David Antonucci will present an illustrated talk on the 1960 Squaw Valley Winter Olympics on Jan. 7 at 6pm.

Antonucci will feature his most recent book, "Images of Sports: The 1960 Winter Olympics", which will be available for sale and autographing.

This book showcases the highlights of the Games through rare and previously unpublished images. The 1960 Olympic Winter Games were a long-shot effort that succeeded beyond wildest expectations.

This free presentation at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., is sponsored by Friends of the Library.

For more info, call (530) 573.3185.

3D underwater movie being shot in Lake Tahoe

By Heather Segale

TERC researchers Brant Allen and Katie Webb along with 3D movie specialist Steve Andersen, script writer Sharon Wood, and the entire TERC education team, are working hard to bring the Tahoe Science Center another 3D movie.

This film will let visitors virtually dive under the water and learn about the ecology and physics of the lake using actual 3D video footage from under the surface of Lake Tahoe.

Imagine being able to see the kokanee salmon swimming under water, algae growing, and researchers diving, all in 3D.

Getting these shots is not easy. In order to get 3D footage the videographer needs two cameras set up for the “left” and “right” eye. On top of that, the cameras must be waterproof, stable, and timed to perfection. Filming in 3D takes a lot of precision and control – two things that are hard to come by diving deep under the surface in Lake Tahoe. Often shots are hard to film because of sediment and organic material being stirred up by diver’s flippers or the wind. TERC is using cameras and waterproof housing donated by GoPro to capture all the action from the boat and underwater.

Not only are Allen and Webb certified research divers and scientists, they now are amateur filmmakers. So far, they have been filming their underwater research for TERC. Since the

script is not yet finalized Allen and Webb are taking shots that they think will work well and that everyone would love to see. This movie will allow visitors to see the lake from a diver's or a fish's point of view, a rare and beautiful way to see the lake. There is so much to see and learn under the surface of Lake Tahoe, and soon the Tahoe Science Center will be able to show visitors this unique perspective.

The tentative completion date for the film is summer 2014.

Heather Segale is education and outreach director for UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center in Incline Village.