

Caesars, Starwood combine loyalty programs

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Caesars Entertainment Corp. and Starwood Hotels & Resorts announced a partnership Tuesday linking the two chains' customer loyalty programs.

The partnership between Caesars' Total Rewards and Starwood's Preferred Guest begins Jan. 9. Customers who link their accounts will be able to earn points and credits for stays and other benefits at participating hotels and resorts across both networks.

"This partnership sets Caesars and Starwood apart by allowing members to both earn and redeem points while doing the things they love most," Caesars Chief Marketing Officer Tariq Shaukat said in a statement.

Read the whole story

Barton provides transition care for patients

By Cristina Janney, Telegraph

Over a period of 12 months in 2012 and 2013, Brooke Laine's father, Ed, was hospitalized twice with pneumonia.

Each time he came home from Barton Memorial Hospital, Laine tried her best to help take care of her father, but both

struggled. Brooke Laine worried about doing the right things and managing her father's mediations. Ed Laine, who is 82, also was worried about getting his medications right.

After the second hospitalization, the Laines found help through a new program provided by the hospital called Transitions in Care. The program provides nurses to help with care and recovery in the home after a hospitalization. The goal is to reduce costly re-admissions to the hospital.

One of the primary goals of the nation's new Affordable Care Act is to improve health care quality and use money more wisely. Hospital re-admissions are expensive and in many cases experts believe they are preventable with better primary care. Under the new payment system put in place by the new health law, re-admissions are one of the measures that will be tracked and tied to payments. Hospitals will face financial penalties for excessive re-admissions of Medicare patients with certain illnesses, including pneumonia, heart attack and heart failure.

Read the whole story

Down jackets come with cruel price for animals

By Marie Myung-Ok Lee, Salon

Now that the weather has turned cold, down is having its fashion moment. Every other person seems to be wearing the kind of brightly colored jackets once the province of serious climbers and hikers.

I grew up in the snow-swept tundras of northern Minnesota and am well-acquainted with down's unparalleled warmth for clothes and bedding. The trouble with it then was finding a way to stuff it so that you didn't look like the Michelin Man. With new ways of sewing down into smaller tubular shapes ("baffles" as they are called), fashionable silhouettes are possible. And even after a brief flirtation with Thinsulate, hardcore companies that equip climbers for the real outdoors, like REI and North Face, always come back to down.

What is down? "Down" generally refers to goose down (it is also sourced, but much less frequently, from ducks). It is the soft layer of tiny feathers closest to the bird's body. A single piece of down is called a "plumule," basically a multidirectional puff. These plumules interlock and trap tiny pockets of air – it's actually this layer of air that keeps the cold out and the warmth in. Down provides about three times more warmth per ounce than synthetics; that is, it's warmer and lighter and doesn't mat down over time as synthetics will do.

Even if you are careful to buy only free-range eggs and non-factory farmed meat products, you might be shocked to learn that your comfy and fashionable down may have come at the price of an animal's suffering.

Down is often collected through a procedure called live plucking. Which is pretty much what it sounds like: A worker restrains the bird and rips out feathers by the handfuls, especially from the goose's underbelly but sometimes also from the back. Often, pieces of skin come off as well, the birds scream in terror and struggle to get away. Sometimes they die from the trauma. Just Google "down cruelty" and you'll find plenty of pictures of miserable, bald and dying geese straight from my nightmare. Animal rights groups contend that this practice encompasses 50-80 percent of all down.

Read the whole story

Is work-life balance merely a myth?

By John Wenzel, Denver Post

Tired of hearing about that elusive work-life balance?

You're not alone. The concept, which promotes the idea that we can find an equilibrium between our home and work lives, has seen a backlash in recent years, with some calling it a myth that leads to unrealistic expectations and stress.

But while writers and business experts debate what to call it, the fact is that most of us still need a strategy for tackling these competing demands – especially as we grow ever-more connected to our smartphones and electronic devices.

“There's power in discussing it,” said Teresa A. Taylor, a Denver-based business speaker and author of “The Balance Myth: Rethinking Work-Life Success.” “You realize you're not alone and that there can be ways through it if you share your experiences.”

Different terminology rings true with different people, but a good idea can be helpful regardless of how it's delivered.

Read the whole story

Scientists study bears to learn about obesity

By Jonathan D. Rockoff, Wall Street Journal

PULLMAN, Wash. — On a recent visit to a laboratory where he researches obesity, Kevin Corbit walked over to one of the patients he is studying to say hello. Then he clasped a claw.

Corbit, a scientist at drug maker Amgen Inc., is conducting his research on grizzly bears. He believes insights gleaned from the animals, who can take in as much as 58,000 calories in a day and weigh 1,000 pounds, could reshape understanding of obesity and identify new treatments for a condition that has stymied doctors and drug developers.

“When I thought about obesity, I thought about Yogi bear,” Corbit says.

Ursus arctos horribilis isn’t the typical lab rat. A grizzly can lift a heavy tree trunk—with one paw. In the wild, the bears win duels with wolves and mountain lions. They are powerful enough to tear through the side of a barn or even crush a small car. Also, the bears growl.

But bears do know a thing or two about weight gain, and that makes them more like people than rats whose genes are manipulated to make them obese.

Read the whole story

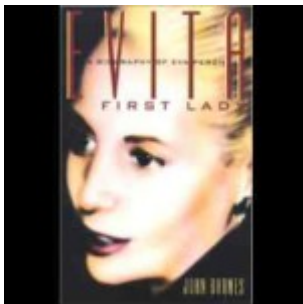
Eva Perón biography portrays a complicated woman

By Kathryn Reed

I decided to stick with my South America themed reading and started in on “Evita: First Lady.” It has been on my bookshelf for years.

It is a biography of Eva Perón written by John Barnes. It was published in 1975. My guess is I picked it up some time shortly after I was in South America in 2001.

Like any book it brought out more details about Perón’s life than what can be portrayed in a play or film.



Many books have been written about the controversial first lady of Argentina. Her life has been made into a musical both on Broadway and in film. The former was an Andrew Lloyd Webber hit that won a Tony for Best Musical. The latter starred Madonna.

My journal did not have much about visiting her burial site in Buenos Aires other than to say her husband was buried elsewhere. And unfortunately I don’t have photos to jar my memory because that roll of film was stolen with my camera. What I remember is Americans being interested in seeing the burial site and Argentines walking on by.

This biography is more complimentary of Evita than critical. While it does not shy away from saying how not everyone was thrilled with the Peróns, it read like a significant part of the story was not being told. But that can happen with biographies. This isn’t billed as an unbiased historical look at that time period.

But the book is interesting as it captures here childhood of poverty, her determination to make something of herself, and her rise to be nearly as powerful as her husband, Juan, who was president.

Evita's crusade to better workers and the unions is well documented, but then is juxtaposed against her spending lavishly on herself from donations that came via the people she said she was helping.

Eva Perón was first lady from 1946 until she died in 1952. She was 43.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Shay

Photos don't do Shay justice. She has the short, blocky, stout body of an English bulldog, and a huge head, and she's probably got some pit bull in her.

She is a sweetheart; very quiet in the shelter, she loves kids and other dogs and walks very nicely on her leash.

Go to the animal shelter's Facebook page to see a video of her playing with a couple of the puppies.

Shay is about 2 years old and will fit into just about any household that has no little furry creatures (including cats).

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

Go 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

Multigenerational households more in vogue

By Constance Rosenblum, New York Times

Khadija Benmakhlouf, wearing pink corduroys and a crimson shirt, is perched on a stool poring over her kindergarten math homework. Her grandmother, Tupper Thomas, who is curled up in a nearby armchair, offers encouraging shout-outs from the sidelines.

Around 5 o'clock, Khadija's mother, Phaedra Thomas, bustles in from her job as a community development consultant in Red Hook

with her son, Teddy, 3, whom she has picked up from day care. Within minutes the kitchen is flooded with an intoxicating aroma as lamb chops from the halal butcher down the street sizzle in the oven.

The two women moved into the two-family house in February, dodging workers as their contractor, the M&H Art General Construction Corporation, transformed the century-old home into a dwelling suitable for a 21st-century family.

“I’m a big believer in this sort of arrangement, maybe because it never happened for me when I was a parent,” said Tupper Thomas, a longtime resident of Park Slope who retired three years ago from a three-decade career as the president of the Prospect Park Alliance. “I didn’t have that mom person around.”

With several generations in residence, the Thomas household represents a housing model that social scientists are paying a lot of attention to these days, one that grows out of a phenomenon that economists call “shrinking households” or “missing households.” The terms refer to an arrangement not uncommon today among some ethnic groups and viewed as an encouraging throwback to the way many families lived decades ago.

Read the whole story

**Tahoe man resurrects
skateboarding-snowboarding**

magazine

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

Just like the rockers who've regrouped to capture their glory days, the recent resurrection of Heckler magazine sounds something like this: *Dudes, we're getting the mag back together!*

Heckler was one of Sacramento's magazine success stories, a homegrown publication that chronicled skateboarding, snowboarding and music for an international readership. But as it goes with good times on a board or playing with a band, they rarely do last. Heckler wound down in 2002, with its staff splintering toward new projects and careers.

More than 20 years after its earnest but scrappy debut, Heckler is reborn. Heckler now takes on a distinctly 21st century feel, continuing as an online magazine with embedded video ads, story-sharing features for social media and other digital bells and whistles.

"We're telling the story of skateboarding, snowboarding and music as seen through the eyes of Heckler," said JP Lagos, Heckler's publisher. "Competing with other publications isn't what we're trying to do. We're just here to show the lifestyles we lead and the people we admire."

Lagos, 34, embodies Heckler's traditional go-with-the-flow attitude. He oversees the multimedia magazine from his North Lake Tahoe home, where no winter day is complete without a gnarly snowboard session, and he basically runs Heckler as a labor of love. Lagos covers his bills and his lift tickets as a Web designer and software developer.

Read the whole story

Researchers getting to the root of vitamins

By Carl Zimmer, New York Times

In 1602, a Spanish fleet was sailing up the Pacific coast of Mexico when the crew became deathly ill. “The first symptom is pain in the whole body that makes it sensitive to touch,” wrote Antonio de la Ascensión, a priest on the expedition. “Purple spots begin to cover the body, especially from the waist down; then the gums become so swollen that the teeth cannot be brought together, and they can only drink, and finally they die all of a sudden, while talking.”

The crew was suffering from scurvy, a disease that was then both bitterly familiar and deeply mysterious. No one knew why it struck sailors or how to cure it. But on that 1602 voyage, Ascensión witnessed what he considered a miracle. While the crew was ashore burying the dead, one sick sailor picked up a cactus fruit to eat. He started to feel better, and his crewmates followed his example.

“They all began to eat them and bring them back on board so that, after another two weeks, they were all healed,” the priest wrote.

Over the next two centuries, it gradually became clear that scurvy was caused by a lack of fruits and vegetables on long-distance voyages. In the late 1700s, the British Navy started supplying its ships with millions of gallons of lemon juice, eradicating scurvy. But it wasn't until 1928 that the Hungarian biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi discovered the ingredient that cured scurvy: vitamin C.

Szent-Gyorgyi's experiments were part of a wave of early-20th-century research that pulled back the curtain on vitamins. Scientists discovered that the human body required minuscule amounts of 13 organic molecules. A deficiency of any of the vitamins led to different diseases – a lack of vitamin A to blindness, vitamin B12 to severe anemia, vitamin D to rickets.

Today, a huge amount of research goes into understanding vitamins, but most of it is focused on how much of them people need to stay healthy. This work does not address a basic question, though: How did we end up so dependent on these peculiar little molecules?

Read the whole story