

Christmas light installation a growing industry

By Stephanie Gleason, Wall Street Journal

At Christmas time, Shirley Pepys often sits across the street from her home in Newport Beach and covertly listens to the oooohhs and aaaahhs of delighted passersby.

Pepys, a retired business owner, has been decking her home with boughs of holly – and much more – for the past 20 years. With each year, the décor has become more elaborate. Her display now features twinkling lights, illuminated snow, a family of faux penguins and a four-minute light show coordinated to “Carol of the Bells.”

Everything is custom built. But not by Pepys. For the past two years, she has enlisted Dillon Wells, an audiovisual professional, and his family to put together the full display, paying under \$15,000 for the whole shebang.

More Americans are forgoing the difficult and sometimes risky endeavor of installing their own holiday lights, asking professionals to take their place on the ladder. National chain Christmas Decor, which has 40,000 clients across the U.S., says it has seen sales increase 11 percent every year for the past four years.

Read the whole story

Important to be fire aware on the road

By Teri Mizuhara

Are you traveling this holiday season and staying in a motel or hotel? If you or someone you know will be on the road, take our five minute quiz to find out how savvy you are about fire safety.

Hotels and motels can become our home away from home and we often take it for granted that we are completely safe because we see sprinkler heads, exits routes posted on the back of each room door and exit signs in the hallways but we need to be proactive to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe in these places.

The quiz:

- How many motels-hotels are in the United States? According to 2011 statistics, there are over 51,000 which account for 4.8 million rooms.
- How many motels-hotels report fires annually? a) 1 in 12 b) 1 in 150 or c) 1 in 1250? The answer is (a) statistically, one out of every 12 hotels-motels reports a fire every year.
- Do you know what a motel-hotel smoke alarm sounds like? If not, ask the clerk what the alarm sounds like.
- Why should you count the number of doors from your room to the nearest emergency exit? So in the event you have to escape during a fire, you will know which way to turn when leaving your room and how many doors you must pass before exiting the building. Never use the elevator as they can become inoperable during a fire.
- Where should you keep your room key? Make a habit of keeping

your room key and a flashlight on your night stand so you can grab them and go if you have exit the building.

- Why would you review the exit listed in your motel-hotel room? ometimes the closest emergency exit is not the one you are aware of.

- Why bother noting where the fire alarm pull stations are outside your room? In case you need to report a fire and are able to get to the pull station.

- How do you determine if there is fire on the other side of your room door? Touch the door with the back of your hand to test the temperature. 1) If the door is cool, get down on your hands and knees, brace your shoulder against the door and carefully open it slowly. If there are flames on the other side be prepared to close the door immediately. If there are no flames, proceed with caution, and quickly move to the nearest exit making sure to stay low under the smoke where the air is cooler and safer to breathe. 2) If the door is hot, do not open it. Call 9-1-1 and tell the dispatcher what city you are in, then tell them the name and address of the hotel-motel where you are then tell them the room number. Place wet towels/blankets in the cracks of the door of your room to prevent smoke from entering. Wait at the window and use a flashlight or light colored cloth to signal where you are.

Teri Mizuhara works for the El Dorado-Amador unit of CalFire.

Online Christmas tree sales

gain in popularity

By Katarina Gustafsson and Matthew Boyle, Bloomberg

It's snowing. The children laugh and prance through the woods. Dad fells the perfect fir and carries it home over his shoulder. The family sings carols and drinks cocoa as they happily decorate the tree.

That yuletide dream, peddled by Hallmark cards and Lifetime movies, is as believable as flying reindeer. For Christine Chen, the reality is often squabbling over the right tree, scratching the car with the branches, and leaving a trail of needles as it's crammed through the door.

So this year, the new mom went tree shopping exactly where she goes for most purchases: the Internet, where she paid \$136.74 for a seven-foot fir. As more consumers like Chen opt for convenience over fantasy, online tree sellers are seeing sales surge this year.

Read the whole story

Study: Little difference between PG-13, R movies

By Herb Scribner, Deseret News

If violence were the only concern in opting for a PG-13 movie instead of an R-rated one, it might not make much of a difference.

According to a study done by the Annenberg Public Policy

Center and University of Pennsylvania, PG-13 and R-rated films show a similar amount of violent behavior.

Using top-grossing movies over a 25-year period, the study found 90 percent of those films showed main characters using violence, and 77 percent of those films had characters engaging in sexual activity, or using alcohol or tobacco. For PG-13 films, about 50 percent of main characters acted violently or engaged in drinking, sexual behavior or smoking within a five-minute window, the study said.

“There is essentially no difference between the most popular movies rated PG-13 for younger viewers and restricted, R-rated films in showing main characters engaged in both violence and alcohol use or violence and sexual behavior,” according to the study.

Read the whole story

Free radon kits available for Nevadans

Free radon test kits are available through Feb. 28 at University of Nevada Cooperative Extension offices and partner offices statewide.

Radon is a radioactive, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that comes from the ground. It accumulates in homes and can cause lung cancer.

During National Radon Action Month in January the Nevada Radon Education Program will offer presentations at various locations. Test kits will also be available at the

presentations.

Scheduled presentations are:

Jan. 2 – Washoe County Cooperative Extension, 4955 Energy Way, Reno, at 6pm.

Jan. 7 – Spanish Springs Library, 7100A Pyramid Lake Highway, Reno, at 6pm.

Jan. 8 – Northwest Reno Library, 2325 Robb Drive, Reno, at 5pm.

Jan. 9 – Sierra View Library, 4001 S. Virginia St., Reno, at 3:30pm.

Jan. 11 – North Valleys Library, 1075 N. Hills Blvd. No. 340, Reno, at 11am.

Jan. 22 – South Valleys Library, 15650A Wedge Parkway, Reno, at 6pm.

Jan. 27 – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, 128 Market St., Stateline, at 6pm.

Jan. 28 – UC Davis/Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC) at Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village, at 6pm, with a reception at 5:30 ppm

Jan. 29 – CVIC Hall, 1604 Esmeralda Ave., Minden, at 6pm.

Jan. 30 – Carson City Sheriff's Office, 911 E. Musser St., Carson City, at 6pm.

Holiday albums a lackluster genre

By Hannah Karp, Wall Street Journal

Two years ago, it looked as if Christmas albums could help save the record business. But now the holiday genre appears to be losing its sparkle, amid a dearth of releases from giant stars.

Kelly Clarkson's album, "Wrapped in Red," released in October, has sold a few hundred thousand copies, but it is trailing sales of the Christmas album from the cast of reality TV's Duck Dynasty. "Duck the Halls: A Robertson Family Christmas" has sold more than 360,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Those numbers are shy of last year's top releases at this time, and they pale in comparison to Michael Buble's "Christmas" in 2011, which was the second-best selling album that year, selling more than 2.5 million copies in 2011 and nearly a million copies more since then.

[Read the whole story](#)

Largest private land holding in Tahoe sold

By Kathryn Reed

It took more than seven years and for the price to drop \$55 million before Tranquility got a new owner.

Tranquil Investments LLC bought the Zephyr Cove property for \$45 million. When it first went on the market in 2006 the asking price was \$100 million. It is the largest private land holding in the Lake Tahoe Basin.



This staircase is designed to look like the one on the Titanic. Photo/Chase International

In 1996 Joel Horowitz, co-founder of Tommy Hilfiger, and his wife, Ann, bought the 210-acre undeveloped property for \$4.5 million from South Shore developer Falcon Capital, which was run by Randy Lane. Falcon bought it in a bankruptcy deal involving Wayne Newton for \$2.51 million. The Bourne family, who owned the Singer Sewing Machine Co., are the original property owners. The Bourne Meadow is on the other side of Highway 50 from this parcel.

It took 30 months to build all the structures. There are nine bedrooms, 14 full baths, five half baths and room for 16 vehicles.

The main house, which feels like a museum, is 27,000-square-feet. Most of the furnishings come with the house. The marble floor entrance was built to resemble the New York City Library – a couple lion statues are out front just like in the Big Apple. Then there is the replica of the Titanic staircase. A rectangular mezzanine level is a library. The theater seats 19.

Near the main house is the 5,000-square-foot guesthouse, which feels more like Tahoe. It has the only wood fireplace. Ten small gas fireplaces are on the property.

Across the drive is the 5,000-square-foot wood-framed caretakers' quarters. A 1,400-square-foot log cabin art studio is on the far side of the natural, private lake.

Beyond the guesthouse is a 4,000-square-foot wood barn and stable. Near the stables is the 4,000-square-foot wood-framed and steel trussed gymnasium with basketball court.

A tunnel connects the glass mosaic pool and spa to the main house.

LTCC offering 2 weeks of Spanish in Guatemala

Lake Tahoe Community College is offering students an opportunity to learn Spanish in Guatemala next summer.

The program is open to anyone who is at least 18. Participants do not have to be current LTCC students. All levels of Spanish language learners are welcome.

The two-week program starts July 27.

Students will receive six hours of Spanish language instruction every day through the PLFM Language School. The program also includes a home stay with a Guatemalan family. All host families live within walking distance of the PLFM school. Host families will provide room, board, and all meals except on Sundays.

As part of the program price, participants will also have the opportunity to take side trips.

The program price is \$2,943 if registered by Jan. 17 with a \$200 deposit.

To register for this program, go online. The group leader is "Barclay," and the Group ID number is 85515.

For more information, contact Nancy Barclay at (530) 541.4660, ext. 204 or Barclay@ltcc.edu) or Sara Pierce at (530) 541.4660, ext. 255 or Pierce@ltcc.edu).

Fake vs. real Christmas trees

By Bruce Barcott and Michelle Lau, Sunset

When I was a child, my family adhered to a strict policy when it came to Christmas trees: We never drew from the same well twice. One year, we rolled up to the White Front parking lot in Everett, Washington, where my dad haggled with the schnapps-warmed proprietor over the price of a 6-foot fir.

In a better winter, we tramped into an Alaskan forest, axe in father's hand. During our California years, my sister and I pitched in to assemble our wire-and-plastic tree, working it like a big Tinkertoy set.

The ease with which this long-dead lumber is recalled speaks to its power. Holidays come and go, but Christmas trees stand in memory's warehouse forever. Now, with two kids of our own, my family is all about the adventure of finding the perfect real tree. We've cut our own at a farm and carted it by boat and ferry from the San Juan Islands to our home in Seattle.

But not everyone does. My mother, she's out of the real-tree game.

Read the whole story

2 nights of singing by South Shore youth

The 19th annual Holiday Extravaganza is Dec. 19-20 in the MontBleu showroom at 7pm.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors. Those younger than 5 are free. Tickets are available at the door.

The show consists of grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 choirs, as well as a faculty-parent choir.

Also performing is the award winning Blue Ribbon Classical Choir.

The finale includes more than 260 singers.

Select performers from Marcia Sarosik Shining Stars dance troupe will perform.