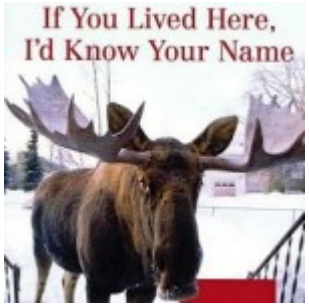
Life in tiny Alaskan town comes to life in fun book

By Kathryn Reed

An obituary writer and social columnist in a small town writing about her experiences might not seem like a book worth reading. Think again.

Heather Lende's "If You Lived Here, I'd Know Your Name" is a delightful and entertaining glimpse into life in Alaska as well as the characters filling the town.



Lende delves into the struggles of living in such a remote location. Though she doesn't glamorize the ruggedness, she doesn't whine about the hardships either. They just are what they are.

When one person goes out for a long skate on a frozen pond the drama created makes you wonder if the man will survive. There's just enough suspense to make you forget for a moment this is non-fiction. It proves that real life is so much richer than anything anyone can make up.

Lende is able to capture life in Haines, Alaska, in a way that brings the town and its people to life. It's almost like I felt as though I became friends with these people. And then as the pages turn she is writing about one of their deaths. It's poignant.

Writing a good obituary is a bit like creating good art. It's hard. But she makes these people real. She shows that their lives mattered.

My friend Susan gave me the book before moving to Chicago,

saying I would find it entertaining. She was correct. This was published in 2005. I would imagine Lende would have enough fodder to publish a sequel or something else about her world 90 miles north of Juneau.

Besides writing for the local paper, Lende also contributes to the *Christian Science Monitor* and NPR's *Morning Edition*. She also writes a column for the *Anchorage Daily News*.

Boomers redefine retirement living

By Sally Abrahms, AARP Bulletin

For years, boomers have denied they are going to get old. Now, with knees that need scoping and birthday cakes with way too many candles, the defiant generation is finally thinking about the future – especially where and how to live.

Visits to their parents in sterile, regimented assisted living or nursing homes are leaving boomers dismayed. They want better choices for Mom – and for themselves. While they may be a decade or more away from needing care, they're overhauling or honing traditional models and inventing new ones.

In choosing how they want to age, and where, boomers are helping shape the future of housing. "They have changed expectations every decade they've gone through; I don't think it will stop now," says John McIlwain, senior fellow for housing at the Urban Land Institute. Down the road, he says, "there won't be one single trend. People will be doing a lot of different things." They already are. The common denominator in existing and still-to-be-created models, say experts, is

the desire to be part of a community that shares common interests, values or resources. People want to live where neighbors know and care about one another and will help one another as they age. That doesn't mean they'll become primary caretakers; if it gets to that point, outside professionals may need to help.

They also won't necessarily retire from their jobs if they live in a "retirement" community. Today's housing options reflect the attitude of older Americans: Stay active, keep learning, develop relationships and have fun for as long as possible.

Read the whole story

Summer home maintenance will make winter less stressful

By Dan Sheehan

Summer is right around the corner and the sun will be beating down on Lake Tahoe once again.

What did you learn from this past winter and what are you going to do to prepare for next winter?



As a contractor in Lake Tahoe, I see firsthand how the environment/climate of the region affects the homes here. The following are a few things that probably could use some attention on your home this summer as well as a few other Lake Tahoe summer home maintenance tips.

House siding maintenance: If your home is like many in the Tahoe basin, it probably has wooden siding; be it shiplap cedar, shakes, board n' bat, T111 or something else. If your siding could talk to you, it would very likely tell you it is thirsty. Your home does not wear sunscreen nor does it go inside after being in the sun for a few hours. Your home sits there day in and day out and gets hammered by the sun, rain, wind and snow.

This combination of elements dries out your home's siding, which typically can lead to structural failure (cracks, splitting, etc.). This is predominately true of the southern facing exposures of your home. If your roof is poorly designed, maybe runoff from it is watering your siding as well. So, it is good to maintain the coating on it whether it is oil/stain or solid paint. By maintaining the coatings on your home you will save yourself the trouble of having to do more costly repairs of replacing it down the road. It is also a good time to go over the siding and caulk any joints or cracks which may be a place for water to penetrate and freeze. Important places to pay attention to are around windows, doors and corners.

Decking and railing maintenance: Like your siding, your deck is probably thirsty, too. Decks have it harder in some ways. Primarily, a deck's biggest obstacle is gravity. Water just sits there. Worse yet, snow that is piled up on a deck slowly melts, keeping your deck perpetually wet. On top of that, if you have snowpack on your roof, it might be beating/dripping on to the deck. If you live in your home full time maybe you keep the snow shoveled from your deck, which is great. However, if your Tahoe home is not your primary home, then most likely the snow does just sit on that deck.

Like your siding, it is good to go over your deck, replacing bad screws and deck boards and also giving it a good coat of oil. And if snow was piled on your deck, then your railing probably got pushed around a bit and now is a good time to

tighten the post’s bolts and check that everything is screwed up tightly. Tip: Be sure to go over your deck and countersink any protruding. This will save you some aggravation when you go to shovel your deck next winter – or walk on it barefoot this summer.

Roof and ice dam prevention: As mentioned above, you’re siding and decks get hammered from the winter’s cycle of rain, snow and sunshine. Very



Snow can take a toll on houses in the Tahoe area. Photo/Moonshine Ink

often the roof is a source of problems and summer is the absolute best time to address them rather than in the middle of winter. If you had any roof leaks, get them looked at by a good roofer. If your roof sheds water, snow and ice over your deck, entryways or onto the siding, then these are great places to install gutters to divert the water away. For gutters to be effective, you’re going to need to install some form of ice melt technology such as the Bylin system which will keep ice from forming along the edge of your roof and breaking the gutters off. There is nothing worse than slipping on ice. A properly installed gutter and ice melt system can help to alleviate this.

Drainage: Water, water, water. That has been the main theme

here. Water is life and water can be death to your home. Like the need to keep the ice dams in check and gutters to divert water away from your homes shell, you also need to think about the water at ground level around your property. If your home sits on a hillside, it probably has good natural drainage keeping water away from your foundation and lower components. Many homes, however, sit on relatively flat lots and if the proper drainage system is not employed, then you could face some problems. Water and wood do not mix well and you should always be thinking of ways to keep them apart. Summer is a good time to look at the areas around the house that were always under water. A good contractor or landscaper will know what to look for.

Some other things to do now for winter: Another thing to think about this summer are things to buy now rather than wait till winter when you wished you had them. The two items that come to mind are: 1) snow blower and 2) generator.

If you wished you had a snow blower all winter, then buy one this summer when you find one cheap rather than waiting until a big storm. Did your power go out this winter? How much of a bummer was that? For less than a thousand bucks you can get a generator that can keep the lights on, Internet working, coffee maker brewing. Your neighbors will be jealous.

Do you have any other great tips to add to the Lake Tahoe summer home maintenance list? I would love to hear them.

Dan Sheehan is a Lake Tahoe general contractor. His company DS Construction stays busy repairing, maintaining and remodeling homes in and around the Tahoe City-Truckee area. You can find out more about DS Construction and read more at Sheehan's construction blog.

Hip hop artist Wiz Khalifa to play in Stateline

What do black and yellow and bleu have in common? Billboard’s Top 100 hit “Black and Yellow” will be performed by Pittsburgh hip hopper Wiz Khalifa at MontBleu casino in Stateline on June 21.

Khalifa has been selling out stadiums across the country following the release of Rolling Papers, his freshman album. It debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard “Top 200 Albums,” second only to Britney Spears’ recent release, and was at No. 1 on Billboard’s “Top R&B/Hip Hop Albums” and “Top Rap Albums.” His two most recent singles, “No Sleep” and “Roll Up” are currently No. 17 and No. 28, respectively, on Billboard’s Hot 100.

Born Cameron Thomaz, Wiz Khalifa began recording and producing records in his father’s Oklahoma studio at the age of 12. When he moved Pittsburgh as a teen, Khalifa laid down the groundwork to begin a solo career by recording music in a local studio, I.D. Labs. Khalifa stood out among the studio’s regulars, bringing him to the attention of Benjy Grinberg, a former executive assistant to L.A. Reid at Arista Records, who had started up a new independent label, Rostrum Records, and signed Khalifa.

Tickets are $39.50 plus taxes and fees. Doors open at 8pm and the show starts at 9pm.

History talk at Camp Richardson

Margie Daum, long-time resident of Lake Tahoe and member of Lake Tahoe Historical Society, is the featured speaker at the society's meeting April 26.

Daum attended the one-room Lake Valley School in the 1940s.

She will show a film made by the casinos to promote the area and will share stories about early Tahoe life. Members and friends of the society will meet at 7pm at Camp Richardson's meeting room. The museum's traveling mini bookstore will be open for business.

Contact the museum for further information, (530) 541-5458.

Design contest for Downtown Truckee Thursdays

Truckee Downtown Merchant Association's 2011 design contest invites local artists to get their creative juices flowing and submit a design that captures the popular weekly summer event series. The winning design will be printed on T-shirts that will be sold throughout the summer.

TDMA will accept entries through Sunday, May 15.

Quickly becoming a feel-good summer mainstay, Downtown Truckee Thursdays 2011 will kick off June 16 and continue through Aug. 19 from 5-9pm. The summer event was launched four years ago by the Truckee Downtown Merchants Association in an effort to

highlight and revitalize the town and underscore a ‘Think Local’ mentality. It has a host of children’s activities, live music, art, the Foothills Farmers Market, a beer garden and vendors of all ilk..

With free parking, folks stroll through the downtown district, popping into its interesting shops, sampling food and wine, listening to music at the train depot and catching up with friends and neighbors. Partnering with various nonprofit organizations each week, the TDMA provides attendees with entertaining themed events along with kid-friendly activities including a bounce house, arts and crafts and much more.

Last year the 10-week event garnered more than 7,000 attendees and event organizers expect a significant increase again this year. The summer-long event is organized and funded by the Truckee Downtown Merchants Association, through grants from local organizations Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce and Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, private sponsors, the Town of Truckee, and participating vendor fees.

To submit a contest entry, send the design by email to info@truckeethursdays.com or drop it off at the California Welcome Center located in the downtown train depot.

Whitesnake’s latest project a Tahoe affair

By Forrest Hartman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Whitesnake may not be the commercial juggernaut it was in the late 1980s, but the band still has legions of fans who buy albums and line up for concert dates, and singer David

Coverdale is as appreciative as anyone.

“I’m sitting doing interviews with people in a year that I’m going to be 60 years old, talking about a new album and a tour,” Coverdale said during a telephone interview from his Lake Tahoe home. “It’s astonishing to me because when I started, the life expectancy of a commercial musician in a professional enterprise, you were lucky to do three years. It was less than a frickin’ tennis player. It’s almost 40 years since I joined Deep Purple. It’s astonishing to me.”

Coverdale, who formed Whitesnake after leaving Deep Purple in mid-’70s, has long had a home in the Lake Tahoe area. He isn’t the road warrior he used to be and, in fact, considers himself semi-retired. But that hasn’t stopped him from recording a new Whitesnake album, making a Tahoe-shot video for the album’s first single, “Love Will Set You Free,” and laying the groundwork for a world tour that kicks off in New York in early May. The album, “Forevermore,” was released in late March, and Coverdale is pleased by the response from fans.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Poetry Posse roaming the South Shore

On April 25 and 26, the Tahoe Poetry Posse will bomb the South Shore with poems. Kim Wyatt, publisher of Bona Fide Books, organized the event as part of National Poetry Month, which occurs each April.

“We mark the most important times of our lives—graduation, weddings, and funerals—with poems,” Wyatt said in a statement.

“They provide immediate connection in a way no other writing does. We want to share the power of poetry with our town, and, in a way, help people feel less alone.”

The poetry bomb will take place over two days, and Wyatt and her team hopes to place 10,000 poems in the hands of local residents. Each member of the poetry posse will take a specific part of town, such as Bijou or Meyers, to canvas with poems. Suggestions for poems to include were solicited from local poets and writers and placed into sacks for distribution. Instructions are included, for example, don’t place in mailboxes because it is illegal.

Wyatt would like to see the poems pass from hand to hand.

“When times are hard, poetry can give people hope,” she says. “We’re hoping that people receive the exact poem they need to read at that moment.”

Other events for National Poetry Month include a poetry slam at LTCC on April 26 at 7pm, hosted by Poetry Grand Slam Champions Matt Blesse and Denise Jolly. The slam will be in the LTCC Teaching and Learning Center, and will take up to 10 competitors. The entry fee of $5 will go toward the cash prize, but there will be other prizes as well. Audience participation is free and open to the public.

For more information about Bona Fide Books, the South Shore’s only small press, go online or call (530) 573.1513.

Gardening books tackle

apartment gardens, simple composting

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

Real estate is expensive. You pay for it in rent or a house payment, says a garden book author. So if you're a gardener, make that real estate count.

That's what the authors of two new books hope to help gardeners achieve this season.

One book cuts to the simplest terms and most basic illustrations offering simple procedures and explanations for the garden newcomer or cut-to-the-chase hobbyist. Another explores a very specific wrinkle in garden culture complete with slick pages and full-color photography.

"Garden Rules: The Snappy Synopsis for the Modern Gardener" (Cool Springs Press, $9.95 paperback) by Jayme Jenkins and Billie Brownell, gives down-to-earth advice about a lot of topics the glitzier garden books take for granted.

Read the whole story

Earth Day inspires people to reuse stuff

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

What would you do with a stack of old tires? How about a heap of plastic bags? Can a pile of junk become a gold mine?

Inspired by a drive to recycle and powered by imagination, inventors and artisans are finding unusual uses for other people’s discards. They’re mining the dump and making treasure out of trash.

On Friday, millions of people around the globe will celebrate Earth Day, not so much as a holiday but as a reminder that most resources are finite.

“Reuse, repurpose, recycle” has become a mantra as “green” goes mainstream. For some people, it represents opportunity, too.

Clinton Watson and Mark Platt are prime examples. In their Applegate workshop, discarded tires find new uses as garden art and home products.

Flowerpots, fountains, mirrors, chalkboards, dog beds, chandeliers. These low-tech products give new life to old tread.

“When I cut open a tire, I’m inspired,” Watson said. “It’s like opening a gift.”

Read the whole story