High-end resorts lure corporate clients with more than free breakfast

By Nadja Brandt, Bloomberg News

Spa resorts such as Vermont's Stowe Mountain Lodge and the Broadmoor in Colorado are using wall climbing, carpentry classes and yoga to lure corporate clients accustomed to little more than free breakfast as a hotel perk.

Stowe Mountain has boosted its corporate group bookings with such programs as the "Naked Table Project," in which participants learn to build furniture from scratch. At the Miraval Arizona Resort & Spa in Tucson, guests can use meeting breaks to walk a tightrope or jump from a 25-foot pole, an activity known as the "Quantum Leap."

Luxury hotels, hurt more than their cheaper competitors by last year's U.S. recession, are working to reverse a drop in demand from business travelers. Spa resorts, upscale properties with a focus on health treatments and other recreational activities, are among those that have had the toughest time booking corporations, which became thriftier during the slump.

"These have been challenging times, but during these last two years, our programs have helped to attract corporate groups," said Morgan Fukumoto, a spokeswoman for Stowe Mountain in Stowe, Vt. "They look for more team-building activities and to get a great value for their money."

Read the whole story

Celebrating Mark Twain's 175th birthday

On the occasion of Mark Twain's 175th birthday, the Mark Twain Cultural Center will host a celebration and the old boy himself (impersonator McAvoy Layne) will hold forth on the balance of the autobiography that Twain asked be withheld for 100 years after his death.

The celebration, which honors one of Lake Tahoe's most well-known writers and pioneers, takes place Nov. 30 at 7pm at the new Mark Twain Cultural Center at 760 Mays Blvd., Ste. 10 in Incline Village.

General admission tickets are $19.99 for adults and $9.99 for students.

For 20 years, in more than 2,000 performances from Leningrad University in Russia to C-Span, McAvoy Layne has preserved the wit and wisdom of Mark Twain. McAvoy is also the author of the soon to be published "Becoming Mark Twain" and winner of the Nevada Award for Excellence in school and library service. He portrays the ghost of Mark Twain in A&E's "Biography of Mark Twain" and in the Discovery Channel's Cronkite award-winning documentary, "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

For more information about Mark Twain's 175th Birthday Bash and to purchase tickets, go to www.GhostofTwain.com or call (775) 831.2820.

Pray for Snow party brings out Sierra supporters

It was wall-to-wall people at Mo’s Place on Thursday night for Sierra-at-Tahoe’s annual Pray for Snow party.

The crowd dominated by twentysomethings is eager for the season to begin.

Plenty of people had Sierra garb on.



Hundreds fill Mo's Place Nov. 11 for Sierra's Pray for Snow party. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Freebies like passes, gear and beanies were being given away throughout the night for the various contests like the horse races.



Sierra-at-Tahoe General Manager John Rice

General Manager John Rice said the resort already looks like it's mid-winter with the snow that has fallen. One more good storm is needed before riders can start schussing on the slopes near Echo Summit.

If people were praying hard enough Nov. 11, the resort will be open Thanksgiving weekend.

Orientation for some of the new employees is today, so workers are ready for the lifts to start spinning.

– Kathryn Reed

Dental care on wheels keeps El Dorado youth healthy

By Jessie Marchesseau

The new pediatric dental office in El Dorado County is no ordinary dental office. The 42-foot-long van will have no permanent address. Instead, it will make its way to nine schools around the county each year.

This week it was parked outside the former Al Tahoe Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe.

Ana Salas, 24, learned of the program from her son's Early Head Start teacher. She brought her 2-year-old son, Luis, to the van for his first dental exam.



Dr. Celeste Eckerman examines Heidy Carrillo's teeth. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

“I think it’s good,” Salas said of the program. “It’s his first time and I wanted him to see what it was like.”

Though Luis only required a quick exam and fluoride application, not all the children who visit the van are so fortunate. Dr. Celeste Eckerman estimates about 80 percent of the children they have seen had cavities. She attributes this to South Lake Tahoe having no fluoride in the water and a lack of education among parents.

Kristie Miser, a registered dental assistant on the van who worked in a pediatric dental office for the past seven years, explained many parents are under the impression baby teeth are not important because they eventually fall out. However, healthy baby teeth are essential for smiling, eating, speech development and maintaining space for proper alignment of adult teeth.

While oral health for children is the main focus of the dental van, it also provides dental care for expectant mothers with Medi-Cal.

As Eckerman examined Heidy Carrillo, 16, who is nearly five months pregnant, she explained that cavities result in

bacteria in the bloodstream. A mother-to-be with cavities is spreading bacteria to her baby.

Eckerman referred Carrillo to one of two local dentists who accept Medi-Cal. Before leaving the van, Carrillo said that she is going to have her cavities fixed.

“Having no cavities means a healthy baby,” she said.

The El Dorado Children’s Dental Van was unveiled in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 25 after years of work and planning. The van will travel around El Dorado County, providing dental services to children 5 and younger with Medi-Cal insurance.

“We’re ready to help these kids that need it,” Miser said. “We’re excited.”

The van is a collaborative effort between First 5 El Dorado, Shingle Springs Tribal Health Program, El Dorado County Office of Education and the El Dorado County Health Services Department.

“We’re just really excited about this,” Steven Thaxton, executive director of First 5 El Dorado said. “Oral health under the age of 5 is an important need and this is a really positive program to meet that need.”

The van was custom built and features state-of-the-art dental equipment, including three dental exam areas, a panoramic X-ray unit and cordless digital X-ray system. It is a full-service dental office providing cleanings, fillings and other preventative services.

The three-person dental van team is comprised of a dentist, Eckerman, and two registered dental assistants, Miser and Char Thompson. As a dentist with a family practice in South Lake Tahoe, Eckerman said she saw a huge need for dental care for the kids in the area and is looking forward to her new role in the community.

“I became a dentist so I could help people who couldn’t afford dental care, so this is my perfect opportunity,” she said.

First 5 El Dorado expects the van to serve about 2,000 children annually. The team said the response so far has been great, adding the El Dorado County Office of Education has done a good job of getting the word out to parents.

The El Dorado Children’s Dental Van is scheduled to return to South Lake Tahoe in April when it will be at Bijou Community School.

For more information, go online or call 800.388.8690. Appointments are necessary. Paperwork is sent home with eligible children when the van is in area.

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Postal Service deadlines to deliver international mail by Dec. 25

Shipping packages to friends and family around the world in time for the holiday season can be as simple as clicking here.

Whether ordering shipping supplies, printing postage, getting information about mailing guidelines, filling out required customs forms or requesting free package pickup, the U.S. Postal Service is ready to help international shippers get a head start on the holidays.

Shipping packages around the world can often be done without leaving your home.

Customers going online can save on postage and order free Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes. Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes are available in four sizes, with shipping prices starting at $11.45 to Mexico and Canada, or $13.45 to most other countries. Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes are also available free at any post office. Postage, labels and customs forms can be printed online anytime using Click-N-Ship.

The Postal Service recommends the following deadlines for international delivery of holiday cards and packages by Dec. 25.

International Mail Addressed To	Global Express Guaranteed (GXG)1	Express Mail® International (EMS)2	Priority Mail® International (PMI)4	First-Class Mail
Africa	Dec. 17	Dec. 11	Dec. 3	Dec. 3
Asia/Pacific Rim	Dec. 17	Dec. 16	Dec. 10	Dec. 10
Australia/New Zealand	Dec. 17	Dec. 16	Dec. 10	Dec. 10
Canada	Dec. 21	Dec. 17	Dec. 13	Dec. 10
Caribbean	Dec. 20	Dec. 16	Dec. 13	Dec. 10
Central & South America	Dec. 20	Dec. 11	Dec. 3	Dec. 3
Mexico	Dec. 21	Dec. 16	Dec. 10	Dec. 10
Europe	Dec. 20	Dec. 16	Dec. 13	Dec. 10
Middle East	Dec. 17	Dec. 16	Dec. 13	Dec. 10

President Grant’s trip

through Nevada

By Guy Rocha

Despite claims to the contrary, former President Ulysses Grant didn’t get into hot water at Walley’s Hot Springs or Steamboat Springs.

Grant, accompanied by his wife and son on a world tour, visited Nevada in October 1879.

Grant had long since left the military as a Union Civil War hero and recently completed two terms as president of the United States (1869-77). His itinerary in Nevada was tightly scripted. Virtually every step he took was covered by the area’s newspapers.

On Sunday afternoon, Oct. 26, 1879, the Grant family detrained at Truckee. A carriage conveyed the party to Tahoe City where they were met at 2:30 p.m. by a delegation of prominent Nevadans, including lumber tycoon Duane L. Bliss. They boarded Bliss’ steamship the Meteor and crossed Lake Tahoe to Glenbrook. There, according to the Carson City Morning Appeal, passage was taken on Bliss’ narrow gauge Lake Tahoe Railroad to Spooner Summit. Renowned stagecoach driver Hank Monk held the reins of Grant’s carriage as it traveled down Clear Creek Canyon to Carson City, where a throng of people jubilantly greeted the former president at 7pm.

Guy Rocha is the former state archivist with the Nevada State Library and Archives, a Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. For more information, go to http://nsla.nevadaculture.org/.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe gathers to honor local veterans

By Kathryn Reed

Veterans tend to carry scars upon their body, mind and sole. The scars never completely fade away – whether they have left the battlefield or left the service.

Speakers at South Lake Tahoe's Veterans Day ceremony at the packed American Legion Hall reiterated this reminder in their various ways, many on the verge of tears.

The more than 100 in attendance sat on the floor, friend's laps, stood and drifted into the hall to be part of this annual day to honor all veterans.



Curt Emrie leads the Veterans Day ceremony in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

"We understand the sacrifices service members and their

families make every day," said Curt Emrie of Legion Post 795. "We will remember you always not for protecting our freedom, but for putting service before self."

With a heavy heart, George Ramirez, who is the POW representative for the area, spoke about how vets Bill Hanson and Gene Ross are not doing well – and will no likely be here for next year's service.

Hanson was a prisoner of war. Ross is former commander of the local post.

For the six veterans at Barton's Skilled Nursing Center, goody bags were to be taken to them after the ceremony to honor them.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago spoke of her father who served in Vietnam and was in the Navy for 25 years.

"What I have learned from my father is to stick by what is right," Santiago said. "As your supervisor, I am committed to the veterans of this community."

She mentioned how next week she and her colleagues will be faced with making $5.5 million in cuts for the next fiscal year – just half of what will be slashed in the coming months from the 2011-12 budget. Veterans' services could be axed. Santiago, though, pledged her vote would be to keep the programs intact.

For Patty Smith and Kenny Curtzwiler, Thursday was about their sons who are no longer here. Smith lost her son, Timmy, in combat in 2008. Curtzwiler spoke briefly about his son, Kaleb, who had been in the military, who took his life earlier this year. The boys were high school friends.

John Lingar paid tribute to the prisoners of war and those missing in action. A table sat for one was at the front of the room representing the lone soldier against his or her captors.

The white table cloth a symbol of purity, a single rose for the blood that may have been shed, a yellow ribbon for hope of their return, a slice of lemon for their bitter fight, a flickering candle as the beacon of light in their dreams leading them home.

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History: USFS, historical estates have legacy of uneasy relationship

Publisher's note: ***The following is from the May 1973 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.***

The following letter was sent by our Forestry Service Committee chairman, Barbara Smith, May 3, 1973. If you feel as Barbara does, please send a letter on this matter to Mr. Schmidt.

Dear Mr. Schmidt,



Lake Tahoe Historical Society

We of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society are gratified to learn that funds are now available for an historical evaluation of the Richardson, Valhalla, McGonagle, Pope, and Fallen Leaf Lake areas. Our concern had been that destructive tendencies were afoot without proper consideration of historical value. That danger has now, hopefully, been allayed.

One other item has given us concern. The “estates” have been without a caretaker for some time now, and attrition in the form of vandalism and winter weather damage has been alarming. We would urge that you employ your good offices in an effort to acquire the funds and bureaucratic approval for caretaking facilities in that area.

If this group can be of any assistance in these matters please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Barbara Smith, vice president

New releases about Reno history, Comstock era

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

More than a hundred years of Reno history, stories of the Comstock Lode and a big white bear fill up three new books by local authors.



“Remembering Reno” (Trade Paper Press, $16.95 paperback) is filled with nearly 130 historic photos of Reno and the surrounding area.

The pictorial excursion begins with the days of Lake's Crossing and progresses through subsequent booms, mineral and otherwise, into the 1970s.

Compiled by Donnelyn Curtis, head of Special Collections and of Research Collections & Services at the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries, "Remembering Reno" brings to life about 110 years of history.

The purpose, Curtis said in the book's preface, is to "let photographs speak for themselves in presenting the history of Reno, with minimal interpretation."

So, we see floods, celebratory parades, merchants and gamblers, family life, work life and many of the other elements that have made up Reno since its birth.

Read the whole story

Wish list for Truckee Community Christmas program

The Truckee Community Christmas program is asking locals to open their hearts to help make the holidays brighter for several hundred less fortunate local families and individuals.

Serving the community in its seventeenth year as an all-volunteer umbrella organization coordinating the efforts of several groups that rally to assist fellow townspeople in need, the Truckee Community Christmas program oversees the collection and distribution of food, toy, and clothing donations.



Here are things that are needed:

Food: Look for food collection barrels to appear at local grocery stores the week before Thanksgiving. Cash and gift card donations are gratefully accepted as well. Suggested food item lists are posted at the collection barrels.

Toys: New unwrapped toys can be placed in collection bins at banks, real estate offices, schools and businesses. Toys that are often in short supply include gifts for infants and teens.

Coats: Warm, clean coats that you are ready to pass along to other families are greatly appreciated. Drop-off gently used winter outerwear at Church of the Mountains, located on Church Street in downtown Truckee.

Senior Holiday Wish program: Donors can provide necessities according to wish lists that residents of the Truckee Senior Center complete. For more information, contact Jesse Griffin at (530) 587.5152 or email xmas.wish@hotmail.com. Area homebound seniors will be taken care of by a team representing the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation’s Queen of Hearts.

Sorting, packing and wrapping: The Sierra Mountain Community Education Center on Donner Pass Road will serve as command central Dec. 16-17 for sorting, packing and wrapping of all donated items.

For those who prefer to help by writing a check, contributions may be mailed to Truckee Community Christmas, P.O. Box 2955, Truckee, CA 96160. Money will be primarily used to purchase food gift cards. All donations are tax deductible.

For general information about any component of Truckee

Community Christmas, call the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce at (530) 587.2757.