Mix of entertainment on tap at Valhalla for August

Get ready for jazz, Celtic, mystery, comedy, bluegrass, percussion and more at the Lake Tahoe Valhalla Arts, Music and Theatre Festival.

Some of acts are below:

New World Jazz Project, a contemporary sound with the saxophone of Niall McGuinness and soul, Latin, and Afro-jazz music, appears at the Boathouse Theatre Aug. 4 at 7:30pm. A murder mystery dinner will be Aug. 5. The Tahoe Improv Players return Aug. 10.



The Gatsby Festival is an annual event at Valhalla. Photo/Provided

The Gatsby Festival, artists in residence, Bare Bones Open Mic, wine tasting before events, Jim Stamates photo exhibit and a slew of other events are on tap for August.

For a complete schedule for the annual South Shore festival, click here or call (530) 541.4975.

Carson City adds budget cinema

By Reno Gazette-Journal

The former Wallace Theaters in north Carson City will see new theatrical life this weekend with the opening of the discount Carson Stadium Cinemas.

The multiplex opens July 29 with eight second-run titles.

The theaters were last open in 2007, but closed shortly after the new Galaxy Theaters opened south of the Wallace multiplex.

Read the whole story

Low-cost immunizations for incoming kindergartners

El Dorado County Health Services Department, Public Health Division, is offering low cost back-to-school immunizations for children entering kindergarten. Health Services can provide all childhood vaccinations required for school entry, including those that protect against the following:

* Polio

* Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis/Whooping Cough (DTaP)

* Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)

* Varicella (Chicken Pox)

* Hepatitis B

* Hib B (for preschool children)

In addition to kindergarten students, adolescents and college students also need vaccinations, according to El Dorado County Immunization Coordinator Cathy Dunbar. “The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that preteens, adolescents and students heading off to college receive the meningococcal conjugate (MCV4) and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines, as well as be up-to-date on their MMR, Hep B and Tdap vaccines,” Dunbar said in a press release. These vaccines are available through the Health Services Department.

“This year, with California experiencing an epidemic of whooping cough, it is especially important that teens and young adults, as well as teachers and daycare providers, get the Tdap vaccine,” said Dunbar.

Individuals may schedule a vaccination appointment with the Health Services Department by calling (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe. A parent or legal guardian must be present for all childhood immunization appointments, and parents are advised to bring the child’s immunization record so that the vaccinations can be documented.

Women’s history comes to life in Genoa

Nevada State Parks invites the public to Mormon Station State

Historic Park at 10am July 31 to hear a free presentation on “Women’s Voices on the Overland Trail.”

The 45-minute presentation will feature stories from women’s diaries and reminiscences of early pioneers who traveled westward on the trail. These accounts, which pay special attention to the landscape, Native Americans and the danger and promise of the journey, provide a vivid account of pioneer life and illustrate how women pioneers often formed the backbone and inspiration for the long, arduous western journeys of 19th-century emigrants.

Doris Dwyer will give the presentation. Dwyer is a professor of history at Western Nevada College whose research focuses on women pioneers of the nineteenth century American West. She is also nationally known for her Chautauqua portrayals of remarkable women from this period. Her appearance is made possible by the Nevada Humanities Committee, the National Endowment for the Humanities and NV Energy.

Bring a blanket, lawn chairs and meet in the shaded stockade area of Mormon Station State Historic Park. After the presentation, enjoy a picnic lunch in the park and tour the log-cabin museum and see relics from early pioneers. A $1 entry fee applies. Children 12 and under are free.

Mormon Station State Historic Park is located in Genoa, a 20 minute drive from Carson City via Highway 395 and a 20 minute drive from South Lake Tahoe via Kingsbury Grade.

For more detailed directions, call the park at (775) 782.2590.

Squaw’s new CEO has history, Colorado roots to contend with



By Kara LaPoint, Reno Gazette-Journal

Squaw Valley USA introduced the world to Lake Tahoe when the then-tiny resort hosted the 1960 Winter Games.

Alex Cushing made those Games happen after starting Squaw Valley Development Company in 1949 and opening the ski resort. He would continue to develop the Squaw into one of America’s premier ski destinations.

When Alex passed away in 2006 at age 92, his widow, Nancy Wendt Cushing, stepped into his role overseeing what is now the largest resort at Lake Tahoe.

Squaw Valley Ski Corp.’s CEO announced last week she’ll be stepping down, and that means Andrew Wirth has some very big shoes to fill.

Read the whole story

Hot August Nights has yet another alternative location

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

A pair of local businessmen and classic car enthusiasts are planning to give locals an alternative to traveling to South Lake Tahoe to show off their classic vehicles in advance of Hot August Nights.

Michael Babcock and Mike Baker have organized the three-day Rebel Reunion, a event open to any classic car buff or hot rodder.

It will include cruises, poker runs, a concert, dance contest and drive-in movies. It is scheduled to run Thursday through Saturday,.

“We’re not doing this to replace Hot August Nights,” said Baker, who owns A&W Restaurant on Kietzke Lane, the central location of the new event.

Read the whole story

Millennium scholars praise Guinn for creating education program

By Lenita Powers, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Jared Townsend wrote the thesis for his doctorate in

biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of California, Davis last month, he gave Gov. Kenny Guinn credit for much of his success in college.

“I never met Gov. Guinn, but I always felt I definitely owed something to him,” said Townsend, who now works at Sierra Sciences, a Sparks biotechnology company researching ways to halt and reverse the effects of aging.

Townsend, a Las Vegas native, said his siblings never graduated from high school. But he became the first in his family to graduate from college by earning a combined bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2005, thanks to the Millennium Scholarship.

Established in 2000, the program provides $10,000 to academically qualified Nevada high school graduates to attend an in-state college or university.

Read the whole story

Donner Party was carrying documents from President Lincoln

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

Researchers in Illinois, Utah, and California have confirmed that an original Abraham Lincoln document from the 1830s was carried by one of Lincoln’s militia buddies on the ill-fated Donner Party expedition to California in the 1840s.

The researchers said the document, an 1832 list of the men in

a company of Illinois volunteers during the Black Hawk War, was carried on a 2,000-mile journey across the continent among the papers of James Frazier Reed, one of the founders of the Donner Party of 1846-47.

The list is now in the California State Library in Sacramento, where experts recently determined it contains Lincoln's original handwriting.

"We often find documents that detail fascinating stories about Abraham Lincoln's life and times, but it is rare indeed for the document to have such an intriguing history after it was written," said Daniel W. Stowell, director of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. "That these documents detail part of Lincoln's military service and that they accompanied the Donner Party to California makes them doubly significant."

Read the whole story

Writers' workshops at Squaw Valley

The 41st Annual Community of Writers at Squaw Valley will convene again this August with workshops in fiction, nonfiction and screenwriting.

Participants assemble each day for workshops, as well as attend presentations on the craft and business of writing led by renowned authors/teachers. Most events are free and open to the public.

Click here or call (530) 581.5200 for the full schedule of events.

The workshops run Aug. 8-12.

South Tahoe jail's success a testament to staff's work

By Kathryn Reed

Finding fault – that's usually what a grand jury does.

It's getting more difficult to do that at the South Lake Tahoe jail.

Every year the two jails in El Dorado County are scrutinized by the grand jury – it's the law. Commendations are extremely unusual. The South Lake Tahoe jail received its third commendation this year.



Randy Peshon

Sheriff Fred Kollar says the praise in this summer's report "says a lot about (jail commander and Lt.) Randy (Peshon) and his staff."

Just based on the people who spend the night, trouble has walked through the door. It's how the staff deals with the inmates that contribute to the 158-bed facility functioning so well.

“This group I’m working with in the jail is the best ever. They are very excited and very positive,” Peshon said. He has been jail commander for eight years.

The report says, “The 2009-2010 El Dorado County Grand Jury commends the South lake Tahoe Jail administration and staff for their dedication in providing a safe and secure custodial environment. The number and variety of available programs, especially the Culinary Arts program, have a proven record of success.”

Other entities receiving commendations from the grand jury this year include:

• The registrar of voters for plans to save the county money and actions to secure accuracy of all ballots cast.

• The Probation Department and Office of Education for advocacy and rehabilitation programs for at-risk youth.

• The CAO and staff for consolidation of administrative service functions in county government.

• Growlersburg Conservation Camp leadership for various items.

Besides the culinary program, which serves 700 meals a day, the grand jury noted the church services, drug and alcohol counseling, English as a second language, GED program, Health Education and Recovery Through Self-Responsibility, Mental Health Court, and Women’s Health.

The report found four items the jail needs to address – most of which Kollar and Peshon said have been taken care or are in the process of being fixed. With the building originally built in 1971 and an addition coming 20 years later, the flat roof the grand jury pointed out as contributing to leaks is not going to change any time soon.

Originally, the facility was the sheriff’s department substation.

In the 2010-11 county budget are the dollars to upgrade the security and surveillance cameras, as well as improve and expand the number of recording cameras.

The department is working on getting the cracks in the cinderblock fixed. Kollar said it was built with 4-inch blocks when it was supposed to be 8-inch.

What the inmates get

Budget issues are always looming over Peshon's head. One category he has little control over is medical expenses. About $1 million a year is spent on inmate health care – just in the Tahoe jail.

"Inmates generally have more health care issues than the general population," Peshon said. "People who go through the system have more issues. They age faster."

It's not unusual for a 50-year-old inmate to have the health problems a 70-year-old on the outside would have.

Peshon said with a significant number of inmates older than 34, he has noticed a rise in health issues.

People coming in often experience withdrawals from their drug of choice in a matter of hours. A nurse is on duty 24 hours a day to handle whatever comes up.

A general practitioner comes in once a week, as does a psychologist. Psychiatric care is via videoconference.

A trek to Placerville is required for dental care.

Serious medical conditions mean a trip to the hospital.

Exercise is encouraged, with an area downstairs for those who can't walk upstairs, and a larger area on the second floor for the more able bodied.

Taking part in one of the programs in also encouraged.



The commercial kitchen at the South Lake Tahoe jail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“You are dealing with people who may not want your help, but need your help,” Peshon said of the inmates.

Most of the programs are segregated by gender, but a few are co-ed. The thinking is that with so many inmates having relationship issues that getting them to interact with the other gender before getting out will make their release easier.

Inmates are not allowed to call staff by first names. It’s rank and last name.

“There is always something going on 24 hours a day,” Peshon said. “If it suddenly goes quiet, you are going to have problems.”

Various murals are painted on the walls inside – all done by inmates. The one in the kitchen has the culinary program’s theme written out – “Jail house catering, it’s so good it’s a crime.”

A system within the system exists if inmates misbehave. Steve Sherman is responsible for making sure the punishment fits the crime. If an inmate is caught writing on the wall, his likely sentence is painting.

Once formally sentenced, inmates can stay in county jail for a year. Some have stayed longer while awaiting trial. Ulysses Roberson, who was convicted earlier this year in the murder of his 4-year-old son, spent six years in this jail before his trial began.

Working inside the jail

“Literally, it’s like running a little town,” Peshon said of the jail.

When he got into law enforcement he never envisioned he would learn so much about food and nutrition, as well has laundry.

Under his direction the culinary program is receiving awards, allowing inmates to have a skill when they get out and provides qualified employees for local businesses.

Keeping the peace is a full-time job for Joe Ruelas. As a gang expert, he figures out who plays nice together and when housing changes need to be made.

“It’s a balancing act,” Ruelas said. He is part of the regional intelligence meetings that include California and Nevada law enforcement, parole and probation officers.

It’s the Norteños and Sureños that dominate the turf on the South Shore, with the Sureños the larger group. The latest gang of concern is the Juggalos out of the Modesto, Ruelas said.

No one in the jail wears a gun. This is for everyone’s safety. But tear gas, grenade launchers and gear are just outside the housing units in case officers need to quell a major disturbance.

Often it is the jail employees who come up with ways to make their work area function better. Pads were added to the booking area to prevent injuries because this had been an area where fights would often break out.

Computerization has made it so booking went from a four-hour event to 45 minutes.

A box phone is in the holding cell because years ago an inmate hanged himself with the cord from the old phone. Another suicide preventive feature is sprinkler heads designed so an inmate can’t tie off on it.

“We exceed the training for suicide prevention,” Peshon said.

Even when there was a fire a year ago in the jail, the staff still managed to lay eyes on every inmate each hour – a state requirement.



The second-floor control room.

On the second floor Sherman doesn’t stand still. A slew of monitors are in front of him. Out the vast windows in this circular work area are the various pods of inmates. The floor has glass so he can see some of what is going on below him.

The jail is at minimum staffing with 24 sworn officers and six sergeants, along with Peshon who is a lieutenant.

Clerks, nurses, sheriff’s technicians and detention aides make up the whole workforce.

“What keeps it running smoothly is everyone watches out for everyone else,” Peshon said. “We keep our humor up. We run it as a family.”