Safe Place sites provide refuge for youths

Safe Place is the first step to help for any youth in crisis or at risk. This community collaboration program, operated by youth shelters or youth serving agencies make it possible for any youth to access help at locations including fast food restaurants, convenience stores, fire stations, libraries and city buses which display the Safe Place sign.

March 14-20 is National Safe Place Week.

Youth can easily find help at Safe Place sites in their neighborhood whenever they need it. Safe Place connects youth to immediate help and safety and offers supportive services to both youth and their families.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services salutes the more than 125 Safe Place businesses and organizations in the South Lake Tahoe, Minden, Gardnerville & Alpine County areas. To make your business a Safe Place, contact Julie Franklin at (775) 782.4202 or julie@tahoeyouth.org.

For a complete listing of all TYFS Safe Places, click here.

CHP offers teen-parent driving class

Start Smart is aimed at helping newly licensed and future licensed teenage drivers become aware of the responsibilities that accompany the privilege of being a licensed California driver. The program was created in an effort to preemptively

reduce the incidence of teen injuries and deaths resulting from motor vehicle collisions.

Teen drivers and their parents/guardians are cordially invited to attend and participate in a Start Smart class. Recent statistics have shown that in California teenage drivers are injured and are dying in automobile accidents at an alarming rate. Through candid conversations, officers in attendance will address these facts and provide examples of driving tendencies that put young drivers at risk. This program will help you understand that driving is serious and a poor choice behind the wheel of a car can put your life and the lives of others in jeopardy.

The class is March 16 from 6-8pm at the South Tahoe High School Library. All classes are free.

To reserve a space in this Start Smart Class please contact the California Highway Patrol at (530) 577.1001.

Watching for forest fires with wireless technology

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado Hills-based Vicom Wireless said Tuesday that it has deployed its first fire-detection system for the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Over two years, Vicom Wireless designed and built a forest fire surveillance and detection system for use throughout El Dorado County.

Read the whole story

South Shore Soroptimists clubs honor women, students

The Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards program aids women seeking to improve their economic status by gaining additional skills, training and education. The program helps women who, as the primary wage earners for their families, must improve their employment status by entering or returning to the work force.

Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards applicants have faced severe hardships that have prevented them from pursuing and achieving their educational and professional goals. The Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards helps these women rebuild their lives through improved employment opportunities.

The Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards program was created in 1972 by popular vote of the Soroptimist membership. Because of their interest in â€œupward mobility for women,â€ members voted overwhelmingly for the creation of an award for training or retraining that would enable women to obtain higher-level jobs.

Since the programâ€™s inception, Soroptimist has funded almost $5.5 million in Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards and has assisted about 1,640 women. In total (including local club activity), approximately $15 million in Womenâ€™s Opportunity Awards has been disbursed to about 25,000 women since the program began in 1972.

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra awarded Michelle

Harvey this honor this morning.

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe honored Nicole Stimac with the award Wednesday.

Both clubs also recognized their Violet Richardson award recipients this week. The award is in honor of the president of the first Soroptimist club, Violet Richardson, a woman of action, whose indomitable spirit and sense of personal responsibility were demonstrated by her lifelong commitment to volunteering in her community.

Young woman between the ages of 14 and 17 who volunteer in their community or school can apply for this award.

The afternoon club on Wednesday paid tribute to Shanon Piazzo, Melissa Ewing and Alexis Holmes.

The morning club honored Gloriana Pillsbury, Ashni Patel, Hannah Elder and Krisha Penollar on Thursday.

Holmes and Pillsbury will be going on to the regional competition. At the regional level one finalist will be chosen among 28 winners for an additional award.

State of Douglas County presentation

Douglas County’s 2010 State of the County presentation will revisit the county’s history, celebrate a decade of success and chart the course for the future.

The event begins with a social at 6pm on March 15 at the CVIC Hall, 1602 Esmeralda, Minden.

The presentation starts at 6:30pm featuring Guy Rocha, historian and former Nevada archivist. Rocha will deliver a historical perspective on Douglas County. Following Rocha, Commission Chairman Michael Olson and Vice Chair David Brady will take the opportunity to recognize, promote and celebrate the significant progress that has been made in Douglas County during the last decade. County Manager Michael Brown will conclude the presentation with a focus on current projects and plans for the future.

The State of the County presentation borrows and expands on an idea from the *Record Courier's* December 2009 Progress edition that focused on many of the positive

community impacts made during the past decade. Many of those stories, with more from the lake, are incorporated into the presentation.

Is technology changing how we approach a ski day?

By Brenda Knox

On a sunny bluebird ski day we gathered around my iPhone at the top of Grandview to check out where we wanted to ski after lunch. My iPhone had a good connection and it was fun to peruse the Sierra-at-Tahoe map from the iTrail application.

I'm finding that my iPhone applications work extremely well inside and in great weather. But out in the elements and the storms, my iPhone never leaves my inside jacket pocket. With thousands of ski applications out there for the iPhone, my mission to see if the applications were worthwhile, practical,

or even useful to a recreational skier/rider began.



Brenda Knox takes notes on her iPhone. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Overall, I found the ski report applications and trail map applications impractical while actually on the slopes. I did enjoy looking through the various reports in the morning from the comfort of my home with a cappuccino in hand. Although, several inconsistencies existed between the snow levels out my window and what was being reported.

One morning looking out the window at several inches of new snow I wondered how many inches my favorite resorts had received. Using the iSki application I looked up Heavenly, Sierra, Kirkwood and Homewood. Heavenly and Sierra were reporting zero inches, even though my Heavenly email stated 10 inches. Kirkwood and Homewood information had not been updated in several days. I'm not sure what process the resorts participate in to keep their information updated, but it obviously was not reflecting actual snow activity on this day.

Another issue is connectivity. I had varying degrees of success getting a good strong signal at the resorts. Grandview at the top of Sierra was good. East Peak Lodge is my favorite resting location at Heavenly, but has zero service for my iPhone. I connected at the California Lodge and Gunbarrel Grill last week and showed off the iTrail map to friends.

On the slopes, the iPhone is better built to listen to music or to brag to your friends about all the powder you're enjoying. I don't go anywhere without my iPhone, but keep it safely tucked away in inclement weather. It's pretty much impossible to use with gloves on, so I do my information gathering on it while at home. My favorite ski apps are iSki and the REI snow report.

Brenda Knox is a gadget girl who mostly lives in South Lake Tahoe.

LTCC 'Laramie Project' actors struggle with difficult topic

By Susan Wood

When South Shore actor Rhonda Keen considers the "Laramie Project" opening next weekend at Lake Tahoe Community College, the local production hits home on many fronts.

The stirring docu-drama to be performed at Duke Theatre from March 12-14 and March 18-21 was introduced by the New York Tectonic Theatre and writer-director Moises Kaufman as a result of 400 hours of interviews of the citizens of Laramie, Wyo. The town was scarred after Matthew Shepard was brutally tortured, tied to a fence and left to die because of his sexual orientation. It left the community struggling with its differing beliefs, questions and ultimate transformation.



Chris Taylor as Rulon Stacey, CEO of Ivinson Hospital where Matthew Shepard was taken, at a press conference on Sheperd's condition. Photo/Pat Leonard-Heffner

The murder at the hands of two men Shepard met at a bar made national headlines 12 years ago and led to landmark hate crime legislation signed by President Obama last October. The Matthew Shepard Act is intended to provide $5 million in funding to combat hate crimes, which according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, nudged upward in 2008 to claim 9,691 victims. More than 1,700 were attributed to sexual orientation.

Ironically, the day after National Coming Out Day – which was founded to recognize gay equality a decade to the month before the horrific crime – Shepard died in a hospital in Fort Collins, Colo.

Keen was living in Fort Collins in 1998 when the hate crime occurred.

“That’s what got me about the ‘Laramie Project’,” she said.

Keen is no stranger to the type of tragedy that leads to discussions of social justice and the human condition. She grieved with the family of a friend, one of 13 who died in April 1999 during the horrendous shooting massacre at Columbine High School, her alma mater of 1993.

When she thought of Matthew Shepard’s mother, Judy, dealing with such a horrible tragedy, she choked up.

“It’s hell to watch a parent who’s lost a child. I can’t imagine what it’s like to have the murder of her son enacted every night,” Keen said, her voice quivering.

If she could say anything to Judy Shepard, she told *Lake Tahoe News* it would be: “We just want you to know your son was loved and is still loved, and the world and I appreciate the work he has done for the cause. It’s from this cause that the faith in humanity is able to carry on.”

When the gay rights activist mother was visiting South Lake Tahoe in 2005 for a gay ski week, she told this reporter in an exclusive interview that she misses Matthew immensely and gets up every morning to try to think of a new way she can tell her son’s story so this does not happen again. She called on the local and global community for a united front against hate.

Despite the March 19 planned protest, first reported by *Lake Tahoe News* on Feb. 24, by hate advocates of the Westboro Baptist Church led by the Rev. Fred Phelps of Topeka, Kansas, local organizers and advocates like Keen believe the “Laramie Project” may create that united front Judy Shepard spoke of five years ago when she was here.

A counter protest by local advocates of gay rights is slated for that night.

A candlelight vigil to promote non-violence is planned at 9:30

the next night following the show.

Keen, a self-proclaimed gay rights activist for years, has witnessed the transformation of her family since her cousin underwent serious life challenges after coming out as gay.

“It’s good to watch people’s eyes open. And since the cast knew each other, it was neat to watch people open up to view the different ideas,” she said. “This is the type of piece that you hope to get to do as an actor, but don’t always get to. This is what good theater is all about – promoting social justice,” she said, calling the play a mental workout.

“I would feel drained by it, but usually got energy from it,” she said of rehearsals.

The 10 actors perform 70 roles in the play, with Keen jumping from playing the town minister’s wife to a friend of one of the convicted murderers, Aaron McKinney.

For the actors, rehearsals scheduled three times a week have culminated in a catharsis of crying, then healing as they’ve overcome some of the hateful lines being said on stage.

“(We, as actors,) have to distance ourselves (from those words),” she said. “Some of the things the minister is saying I’ve heard in church,” she added.

From the seasoned to growing

Another local actor, Ethan Nivan, can relate somewhat to Keen’s experience, though she has at least a decade of years on him.

Nivan, at age 20, had never heard of the Matthew Shepard murder, but knows all too well what it means to be a target of an incident of hate. Nivan recalled being attacked by a football team for his perceived sexual orientation as a senior at South Tahoe High School.

“It brought up and fed my own emotional strife from my past,” said Nivan, who will also serve on a hate/tolerance panel at Lake Tahoe Community College following the March 14 matinee.

Not only has Nivan been affected by hate, he found it challenging to play the town’s minister.

“A lot of the characters we play say words that are not even in my vocabulary. It was rough to hear and hard for a lot of the first week (in rehearsals),” he said.

Nonetheless, Nivan considers the play a powerful growing experience.

“I’ve never done anything like it and probably will never do anything like it again,” he said.

A coming together

Having met doing productions in college, longtime South Lake Tahoe actors Chris and Pamela Taylor noted how this experience brings a level of depth to their drama careers and life as a couple.

Pamela Taylor described the difficulty in changing an entire thought process from one role to another on a dime. Even the subtle wardrobe changes are so sudden, they occur on the stage.

She plays the mother of an officer who responded to the scene of Shepard’s beating and lashing. From there, she jumps to the first lesbian to come out at the University of Wyoming where Shepard went to school.

“This production takes a great amount of concentration having to develop and enrich a character as we go along. There are more than 10 actors (playing these roles). It’s a community of a whole group of people in a courtroom during the arraignment,” Taylor said. “This is life. If this show does not evoke emotion in the audience members, then maybe there’s

no emotion in them. We live in a community with a variety of people. It’s not about what your beliefs are. It’s what you’ve done with your beliefs.”

And Taylor believes the protesters working under the auspices of www.godhatesfags.com have a right to speak out, regardless of how far on the other end of the spectrum of beliefs they fall from hers.

“Their lives must be very small – a pathetic group of people that would rather spend time traveling to hold up a sign in a protest of hate than stay home and love their families,” she said.

It’s the third time director Susan Boulanger has put on the play and believes there’s still a vital need for the message of love and tolerance of your fellow man to get out.

“It’s about what kind of community we want to be,” she said, also referring to having moved here and being touched by this town’s heartfelt parade of love and support six months ago to kidnapping survivor Jaycee Lee Dugard of South Lake Tahoe.

Boulanger said she was especially struck by Shepard’s story as a result of a violent crime.

“The men who did this were not representative of their community. The play goes into the facts of the case and includes the confessions of the killers,” she said, adding the play revolves around the New York theater company going out to Laramie to find out how the citizens coped with the tragedy.

Tickets for the Laramie Project go on sale at LTCC’s theater box office on Tuesday. They cost $7 for general admission, $5 for seniors and children, and $4 for LTCC student body cardholders. LTCC advises that mature subject matter may not be suitable for children younger than 15.

Plunge into Lake Tahoe to support Special Olympics

On March 20, hundreds of brave souls with warm hearts will be taking the Plunge for Special Olympics.

Join Area Director Jody Filgo and others to help raise funds for the Special Olympics South Lake Tahoe athletes. It is easy to participate and there is still time to join. Register online and then email family, friend and co-workers to support you.

The Plunge is not a swim. You take a quick dip at Zephyr Cove then head to the Post Plunge Party at the MontBleu Resort to celebrate with other participants.

â€œPlungeâ€ is used loosely. You can dip your big toe or your whole body, it is completely up to you. For those who donâ€™t want to get wet, you can still help. Register as a chicken and on plunge day youâ€™ll be issued a sticker that will excuse you from taking the plunge. Plunger or chicken, everyone who raises at least $100 will receive the Polar Plunge Sweatshirt and free admittance to the post plunge party.

Costumes are encouraged. At the post plunge party awards will be given for funniest costume, best theme, top fundraiser and more. But wetsuits are not allowed â€“ thatâ€™s cheating.

To join, click here.

The money raised by Team Tahoe will help to support the Special Olympics athletes who participate in the South Lake Tahoe Special Olympics program.

Schedule:

10-11:45am Registration

11:45am – Costume Parade and Contest

noon – Plunge

12:30pm – Post Plunge Party

Upgrades make Barton's birth center more appealing



By Kathryn Reed

It's not quite the same as giving birth at home, but the improvements to the birthing center at Barton Memorial Hospital make it seem less sterile and more comforting.

A $200,000 donation by Ethelmae Haldan and matching funds from the South Lake Tahoe hospital transformed the eight-room facility into a more welcoming center.

Gone are the typical blah linoleum floors. In its place is faux wood flooring. Dated, torn and worn wallpaper has been replaced with fresh paint. Window treatments and dividing curtains in the rooms are new. Bathrooms have been overhauled so the fiberglass showers are gone and tile has been installed. Bathtubs have been added to a couple of the rooms.

Impermeable counters are almost everywhere. Gone are the

turquoise Formica countertops. Cupboards are new, too.

Pictures still need to be put back on the walls, with some new artwork possible.

The overhaul started in September 2008 and was completed in February. The unit never shutdown so it took a while to finish the project because only one room could be off-limits at a time.

Most of what was replaced was 15 years old and considered more than well used.

Several of the nurses weighed-in with what they thought would be good for the unit that handles an average of 500 births a year. About 20 percent of new moms are from the Carson Valley.



Glass at the nurses' station adds privacy.

Things like having a salon chair installed in the lactation consulting room allows nurses to save their back muscles by lowering and raising the chair with the new mom in it instead of having to stoop.

Barton has been offering lactation education since 2007 after some of the staff became certified.

Rocking chairs in the rooms are now more functional for moms to nurse in. The seat is higher off the ground and the arms are wider. Just another item the nurses picked.

The department has 15 full-time registered nurses, a full-time unit coordinator, a part-time clerk, a full-time director and three who work per diem.

Pat Okacz, one of the nurses, designed the department's logo. It is placed at the nurses' station in the main hallway.

"We didn't have the glass before. It adds a lot more privacy," Peggy Wright, director of the Barton Family Birthing Center, said. "It's much quieter. We are a small department built around a central court."

Behind the glass staff can have more private phone conversations, be a bit more secluded when entering data into the computers and have a little separation from the foot traffic in the hall.

The nursery did not get remodeled. It doesn't get the use like the birthing rooms do. Still, Wright would like to modernize it one day.



Peggy Wright, director of Barton's birthing center, shows off a warming unit. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A warmer for newborns is in each room. The Barton Foundation

donated two of them at a cost of $16,000 and $18,000, respectively. Jaundice babies and preemies use them the most. The newer ones weigh the babies, allow for warming lights to be turned on without sterilization issues and allow for medical staff to do everything they need even if the infant is hooked up to other apparatuses.

Though new moms might prefer sleep to television, the new flat screen monitors come with built-in DVD players. Movies about car seat safety, breast feeding and what to expect when the little one gets home are shown.

Comfort for dads was also considered. The old reclining chairs they slept in are gone. In their place is what looks like a normal couch. With a little manipulation the bottom flips over and turns into a twin bed.

“Dads tell us the mattress is quite good,” Wright said.

Wireless was already in the hospital so sending pictures of the newborn to family and friends can be instantaneous from laptops.

Business of fun shines through at expo

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Halfway into the four-hour annual Business Expo, it was hard to get around. Organizers thought this was a good thing.

Friday night was a time for members of Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce to show off what they are all about.



Bistro Danielle caters to vegetarians and meat lovers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The convention center at Harveys casino was filled with about 70 booths â€“ the maximum that could fit. This is less than 10 percent of the businesses that are part of the chamber.

More than 1,000 people – the same as last year – filled aisles. Some were picking up veggie bites at Bistro Danielle's booth; a long line was at the Beacon for their rum runner; Sierra and Heavenly were boasting about things other than snow; art; authors; media; medical; solar; and more were represented.

One thing people commented on being different this year compared to recent years was new vendors. Sacramento International Airport, which is



Tom Sakowski of Deep Lake

Design based
in Stateline.

starting a shuttle service between South Lake and the airport, was one of the newbies; so was Deep Lake Design of Stateline with its display of logos – many of them for local businesses.