

Preston retiring from LTCC after 20 years

By Anne Knowles

Cynthea Preston, long-time Lake Tahoe Community College faculty member and administrator, is retiring.



Cynthea
Preston is
retiring
after 20
years with
LTCC.

Photo/court
esy LTCC

Preston, who has been with LTCC for 20 years, first as a professor of English then as dean of instruction for the last dozen years, is taking an early retirement package offered by the school and leaving LTCC Sept. 21.

"I will miss the students the most and the programs I love," Preston told *Lake Tahoe News*. "There are so many areas I've been intimately involved with."

That includes the school's burgeoning culinary arts program, which has grown from 30 students to more than 300 students a year, and its 5-year-old jail program that teaches inmates how to cook and helps them secure jobs on release.

"It's an amazing program," said Preston. "We have a very vibrant culinary arts program."

Preston was also instrumental in developing LTCC's 7-year-old fire academy, which last year graduated 28 cadets, and the school's wilderness education program as well as its business and math programs, although she is quick not to take too much credit.

"A lot of people worked on these things," she said.

And Preston worked with a lot of those people over the years, including many students she taught before becoming an administrator.

"Before becoming dean of instruction, Cynthea was a terrific English instructor. Her classes were thought-provoking, fun and inspiring," said Frances Brady, former student and administrative assistant to the vice president of administrative services.



"I can't describe how much I'll miss her," said Tom Greene, LTCC vice president, academic affairs and student services.

"It's hard to describe how much I am going to miss her," said Tom Greene, vice president, academic affairs and student services at LTCC, after the LTCC Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday. "She has deep roots in this institution and institutional history."

In her 20 years with the school, Preston did witness a lot of change.

"I've seen growth in and the expansion of college," she said. "And the declining budget and its effects on growth and our community and courses."

'Ultimate people person'

"Cynthea is the ultimate people person," former LTCC President Guy Lease told *Lake Tahoe News*. "She really cares about the faculty and staff and the students. She's been there for them."

She was also there for Lease, who was president of the school when Preston was hired and encouraged her to take on the role of Rotary Club president, which she just completed.

"When I'd get too focused on something that needed to happen now, or with the budget," said Lease, "she was always there as sort of a counsel and advisor to keep balance between money and people."

"She's been a big part of the success of LTCC," he said.

Preston said the school has been more than a professional home to her.

"I have four children who went through this college and all have doctorates or law degrees or are teaching," she said.

Preston says she's looking forward to a "permanent vacation," and plans to travel and spend more time with her children and grandchildren, all of whom live in Southern California and

visit Lake Tahoe often.



Ten
employees
of LTCC
have
accepted
early
retirement
packages.
Photo/LTN
file

"My plans are to continue to be involved with the school and community," she said, "and to spend time with my family and travel."

Preston is part of a group who accepted an early retirement package as part of the school's efforts to shave \$500,000 off its 2013 budget. The other retirements accepted at Tuesday's LTCC Board of Trustees board meeting were Gary Brusco, a full-time custodian; Craig Gasteit, interim maintenance director; Ginger Janssen, graphics arts specialist; Peggy Meyer, library technician II; Bob Roseblade, purchasing technician; and Juan Veneros, accounting assistant. A total of 10 LTCC employees have taken the early retirement package.

During the meeting, several board members expressed their sadness at Preston's leaving.

"There will a lot of holes on this campus," said long-time board member Roberta Mason.

Berkley investigation overshadows Senate campaign

By Karoun Demirijan, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada Rep. Shelley Berkley was always going to have to face some tough music on the Senate campaign trail over allegations she used her seat in Congress to push for policies and programs that benefited her family's bottom line.

But the inquiry that stood at least a chance of being dismissed as a political witch hunt now ranks among the most serious investigations of alleged ethical offenses taking place this Congress.

The House Committee on Ethics voted unanimously Monday to appoint an investigative subcommittee, armed with full subpoena power, to determine whether Berkley violated the House's Code of Official Conduct over matters "in which (her) husband had a financial interest."

In 2008, Berkley joined with other members of the Nevada House delegation, including her current Senate opponent, Dean Heller, to press federal officials not to shutter the kidney center at University Medical Center in Las Vegas, which would have sent Southern Nevadans in need of transplants looking out of state for treatment. In that same year, Berkley sent a letter on her own to Rep. Pete Stark, who chaired the House

subcommittee with jurisdiction over Medicare, urging him to oppose lowering Medicare reimbursement rates for dialysis.

[Read the whole story](#)

El Dorado County animal group sues banks over foreclosure

The Grace Foundation, an El Dorado Hills animal rescue organization, said it has filed a lawsuit against Wells Fargo Bank and Bank of America for \$20 million over the group's foreclosure.

The group says it is near bankruptcy as the costs of caring for 48 abused horses it received has reached \$800,000 and continues to cost \$50,000 a month.

"This is a nightmare we cannot wake up from," said Beth DeCaprio, executive director and founder of The Grace Foundation, in a statement. "The banks turned over ownership of the horses when they had no legal right to do so, the fact that they did this to simply to rid themselves of the liability is a crushing blow. The banks played the game 'hot potato' with our organization and with the lives of these horses; we have the horses and all the financial responsibility. There is no one that will take over the responsibility of these horses. We have no money to continue to care for them without help and yet if we stopped we would go to jail."

The foundation said the banks have offered a settlement that is less than half of what the foundation has already spent.

Nevada AG encourages homeowners file for free foreclosure review

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The deadline for a free, federal independent foreclosure review for Nevadans whose homes were in foreclosure in 2009 or 2010 has been extended to Sept. 30, 2012, Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto said today.

The previous deadline was July 31.

Ordered by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, the independent foreclosure review will determine whether individuals suffered financial injury and should receive compensation or other remedy because of errors or other problems which occurred during the foreclosure process.

“Do not wait until the extended Sept. 30 deadline to submit your application for a free and independent foreclosure review,” Masto said.

According to the OCC’s recent report, as of May 31, 108,687 Nevadans who are eligible for the review received a mailing and 4,267 Nevadans submitted requests for review.

Information about Independent Foreclosure Review may appear in

this format in advertisements and postcard notices that eligible borrowers recently received by mail.

More information, including edibility and online applications is available online or at 888-952-9105 (between 8 am and 10 pm (Eastern), Monday through Friday, and between 8 am and 5 pm Saturday). All requests for Review Forms must be submitted online or postmarked no later than September 30, 2012. Not every finding will result in compensation or other remedy.

In first announcing the program on May 31, Masto said: "I encourage Nevadans hurt by foreclosure errors and who are eligible, to apply for a free review before the July 31 (now Sept. 30) deadline. In doing so, beware of anyone who asks you to pay a fee for any foreclosure review service and immediately report those persons or companies to my office."

To be eligible, the foreclosure process must have been active between Jan. 1, 2009 and Dec. 31, 2010. The property securing the loan must have been a primary residence, and the mortgage must have been serviced by: America's Servicing Co., Aurora Loan Services, BAC Home Loans Servicing, Bank of America, Beneficial, Chase, Citibank, CitiFinancial, CitiMortgage, Countrywide, EMC, EverBank/EverHome Mortgage Company, Financial Freedom, GMAC Mortgage, HFC, HSBC, IndyMac Mortgage Services, MetLife Bank, National City Mortgage, PNC Mortgage, Sovereign Bank, SunTrust Mortgage, U.S. Bank, Wachovia, Washington Mutual, Wells Fargo, or Wilshire Credit Corporation.

More than 4.3 million forms and letters explaining the process were sent to eligible homeowners in 2011. Nevada residents who received a letter should be aware it is a legitimate program.

Anyone who wants to report an independent foreclosure review scam can contact the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection Hotline at 702-486-3132 or go .

Tahoe Douglas bomb squad robot deactivates danger

By Susan Wood

GLENBROOK — When a suspicious package turns up, the Tahoe Douglas fire agency brings out the big guns in its arsenal of tools.

In the Glenbrook station stands a robot weighing 500 pounds, spanning 3 feet, standing 4-feet-high, with a reach twice that length and gun barrels pointed — ready for action. But the irony is, she appeared to have the push-button humanity we'd all wish to tap into during a crisis.

Her gender is really a mystery and the naming will come from a contest at the South Lake Tahoe Fire Fest slated for the fall. Jim Antti, a captain with the department and commander of the bomb squad unit, said they get asked that all the time about her name.



Capt. Jim Antti proves

training is a never ending component of being part of the Tahoe Douglas bomb squad.
Photos/Susan Wood

She is capable of dragging out a 200-pound person or device. She can also turn on a dime to position herself in compact spaces, Antti indicated as he pushed the toggle switches on the control panel handling the robot through a computer signal.

Forget Star Trek. Remotec's \$88,000 wonder bought with federal grant funds goes where no public safety official wants to go. She'll go in with her highly trained bomb squad technicians, whether a bomb or just a suspicious package is pinpointed. Weapons of mass destruction are also listed as possible front-line response calls.

"Those are 12-gauge shotguns," Antti said, pointing to two steely barrels on the robot.

It suddenly became apparent what she's capable of doing – blowing up a bomb, of course when it's safe to do so. The "safety" label written in red on the radio-controlled panel was on for good housekeeping, as she prepared to maneuver up a ramp from the back of the half fire truck, half cloak-and-dagger-type hideaway priced at \$320,000.

It's been an up-and-down ride for the robot and the men of the Tahoe Douglas Explosive Ordinance Disposal team formed 15 years ago, although a more informal collective of bomb squad unit has existed for a few decades.

Today's contemporary unit trains and trains and trains for an average of two to three calls a month. But those calls are often serious, even on the responses to hazardous materials. For that, the robot can sniff out the chemical danger with a

sensory device attached to her torso. She can also see – with five cameras on board. She comes equipped with a speaker that is used when she is accompanied by a technician needing to share information. She can walk up stairs and even travel over Lake Tahoe snow just by popping her wheels off.

“She’s designed to go over anything,” Antti said, while pushing buttons. “It’s like a big video game.”

Still, there are no fun and games in these calls. The unit – with its truck a cross between a studio set for the “Jetsons” and “24” – was dispatched to two calls of explosive devices set this spring in South Lake Tahoe.

Tahoe Douglas crews were on hand for one of the region’s worst crimes when a bomb ripped through the second-floor offices of Harveys casino three decades ago. The technicians trained to handle suspected bombs spent more than 30 hours on the device before it blew up.

In April 1995, the unit went to Oklahoma City where a federal building was blown to pieces in the worst domestic terrorism cases in our nation’s history. Even after the fact, the scene requires skilled technicians to maneuver through the rubble.

Then, the 9/11 terrorist attacks hit the nation six years later, and the calls of suspicious devices flourished, along with the funds from U.S. Homeland Security.

“We had a spike of calls after 9/11,” Antti said, adding the Nevada fire department in Douglas County doesn’t mind. “There’s only seven of us, so we depend on the public to recognize a bad situation.”

The Tahoe Douglas unit is one of four specialty divisions in Nevada, covering an area from its base county west to South Lake Tahoe and east to Carson City including the Nevada Legislature with assistance for the state Capitol Police force.

The unit – which collectively spans five decades of experience – joins forces with the ATF and FBI on cases. It assists and trains inside and out in various terrains alongside the other Nevada units on a regular basis. Complacency from fielding a lack of calls is something the unit battles.

“This is why we train,” the fire captain said.

Occasionally, the tactical squad has made the trek to train with forces in Israel where bomb handling may be considered a way of life.

The world is a dangerous place – with bomb recipes easy to get and easy to make for those with warped personalities and the drive to do damage.

“The Internet has certainly not done us any favors,” the commander said, firing up the van’s generator. “Now you can go on the Internet and find out how to make anything. But what you don’t know is whether the person (online) knows what they’re talking about.”

The suspects are charged with felonies.

The selection process for the bomb squad is lengthy, demanding and not for the faint of heart. For one thing, making the unit means being able to wear a 100-pound suit with a ballistic vest and steel plates. This costs \$28,000. The helmet, complete with a defroster and radio, runs \$10,000.

“Twenty, 30 minutes of work time in a bomb suit, and you’re done,” Antti said.

All the equipment is nicely tucked into closets and compartments in the van. Up front is a fire truck. In back, the van resembles living quarters, with a microwave, coffee maker and refrigerator in case it’s a long call. Two computer screens inside and one outside the truck show the progress of the robot. Floodlights on the back are there to guide the

machine.

“We need to be self-contained for a few days,” Antti said.

For undercover cases or those demanding a 4-wheel drive vehicle, Tahoe Douglas fire parks a pickup version of the full van in the Carson Valley.

The unit with van and robot make public appearances, including its annual pilgrimage to the local school’s Drug Store Project to give youngsters an up-close-and-personal view of public safety resources.

“I have been asked many times why do we need a bomb squad up here at the lake. It is easy to see that we have a strategic location advantage, that we can respond down to the valley and assist for incidents, and we protect one of the world’s natural resources along with the casinos at Stateline,” said Eric Guevin, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District spokesman.

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Sierra Rose sinks at Tahoe Keys Marina dock

The multi-million dollar yacht known as Sierra Rose is two-thirds submerged in water at its dock in Tahoe Keys Marina.



The Sierra
Rose submerged
in water at
its dock in
Tahoe Keys
Marina.

Photo/Anne
Knowles

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department received a call at 4:01am Monday that the 85-foot luxury boat was sinking, according to an officer with the SLTPD's two-person unit marine unit who was at the marina in the afternoon to investigate the cause of the accident. The officer said no one was on board at the time and no one was hurt. No information was yet available on why the boat sank.

Mike B. Stewart of Reno, who is listed as a sales contact for the boat on its web site said he was at the marina working with a crane operator and could not talk when reached by phone. Another sales agent listed, Julio César Martinez of San Francisco, said he could not comment since he was unaware the boat had been damaged. Robert Spinnato, general manager at the marina, did not immediately return calls. A call to Lt. Dave Stevenson with SLTPD also was not immediately returned.

The Sierra Rose is a rental yacht, available for \$2,000 a night, \$12,000 a week or \$40,000 for a month, according to its web site. The description says it sleeps a maximum of six in two staterooms each with king-sized beds and private bathrooms, and a crews' quarter. But it can hold 100 people for a summer event or 40 people in the winter when it's too

cold to utilize the upper deck. It also comes equipped with its own speed boat, an all-mahogany 20-foot Grand-Craft sport model runabout.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

‘Do Not Drink’ in effect for Topaz Ranch Estates

A “Do Not Drink” order remains in effect in the Topaz Ranch Estates General Improvement District after a water line break and a well pump failure on July 8.

Currently the TRE GID is making repairs to one well and discontinued use of another well, which may have been a possible contamination source into the water system.

Results from a new set of tests taken today will not be known until Tuesday afternoon.

The TRE GID has contracted for a private potable water truck to make potable water service available to the community as of 6pm Monday. The truck will be available at the Topaz Ranch Estates Community Center, 3939 Carter Dr., Wellington, Nev. Homeowners will need to provide containers to fill water from the truck.

This order is in effect for water used for potential human consumption, such as drinking, cooking or brushing teeth. Other water uses, such as bathing, washing vehicles, or watering of residential lawns/plants, may continue as normal.

Six area construction sites cited for worker comp violations

Six citations were issued for workers' comp violations against firms doing construction in South Lake Tahoe as part of a statewide sweep of illegal construction sites in June.

The California Contractors State License Board, which conducted the operation in conjunction with the state Department of Insurance, Employment Development Department and county district attorneys' offices, is not releasing any names of the companies while investigations are ongoing. But of the 14 job sites in the Lake Tahoe-area that were checked, seven of them have some type of pending action, indicating that 50 percent of the randomly checked job sites were out of compliance with either state contracting, insurance, or labor laws, or a combination of state laws, Melanie Bedwell, a CSLB spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In South Lake Tahoe, three investigations and audits were opened.

The statewide sweep targeted 133 contractors in 11 counties, where 104 enforcement actions were issued for failure to carry workers' compensation insurance, under-reporting the number of workers to obtain cheaper insurance premiums and to pay less payroll withholding tax, and cash payment to hide unregulated

practices.

“Participants in the state’s underground economy are harmful to everyone,” said CSLB Registrar Steve Sands in statement. “Anyone who neglects their responsibility to comply with state contracting, insurance, and payroll requirements drives up premiums. At the same time, legitimate licensed contractors struggle because illegal operators underbid them.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Missing volunteer found near Wrights Lake

By Michelle Ponto, News 10

A Shingle Springs man is found alive after being missing for more than 24 hours near Wrights Lake.

El Dorado County Search and Rescue teams searched for 65-year old Chris Chaloupka, the missing U.S. Forest Service volunteer Saturday and Sunday before locating him shortly before 9pm Sunday.

El Dorado County Sheriff’s Deputy Matt Cathey told News10 that a team heard a whistle in a distance and then brought in a search dog who located him. Once found he was said to be sitting up and talking but that he was unable to walk his own.

Cathey told News Ten a Calstar rescue helicopter used night vision goggles to land near the injured man’s location where he was then taken to a hospital to be checked out.

Read the whole story

2010 sewage spill may cost NTPUD \$232,100

By Kathryn Reed

North Tahoe Public Utility District may have to pay a penalty in excess of \$200,000 for allowing approximately 129,500 gallons of raw sewage to reach Lake Tahoe.

The sewage spill occurred Dec. 19, 2010, during a heavy snowstorm. The power went out on the main line and then the generator ran out of gas. No alarms were installed to let officials know the generator was not functioning properly.

By the time the ordeal was over, 500 gallons of sewage had filled a basement and surrounded the home in the Dollar Point area; while the bulk of the untreated sewage went into Lake Tahoe.

The Lahontan Water Quality Control Board is meeting July 12, with the fine on the agenda.

Doug Smith with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News* that NTPUD is “pointing the finger at one of their contractors.”

He added, though, that the permit is in NTPUD’s name, so it’s the district’s responsibility to follow the Porter Cologne Act, Lahontan’s basin plan and the state permit.

“The permit requires they keep sewage in the pipe however they can make that happen,” Smith said.

With the event occurring in winter, it did not impact any recreation activities. No one from the public complained, either.

However, the spill impacted lake clarity.

From the administrative civil liability attachment B, it says, "By contributing to the lake's overall nutrient load, it is reasonable to expect that the discharge also contributed to the degradation of clarity and color within Lake Tahoe as a whole, though the amount of degradation is not likely discernible due to the small added nutrient load compared to the lake's annual nutrient loading from all other sources."

Lahontan has recorded nine sewage spills from NTPUD of varying degrees from December 2007 through June 8, 2012.

The board on Thursday will decide if any penalty should be imposed and the amount. NTPUD will make its case and the public is allowed to comment, too.

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Note:

The meeting is July 12, 8:30am, 971 Silver Dollar Ave., South Lake Tahoe.