

Nevada education still far from an A

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

The hangover from Nevada's budget crisis continues to impact the state's education system, which still has a long way to go to fully prepare students for the jobs of the future, experts said in Reno on Thursday.

The event was the second town hall meeting held as part of the Reno 2020 project, a collaboration between the *Reno Gazette-Journal* and the University of Nevada, Reno's Center for Regional Studies.

The second town hall, broadcast live on KNPB Channel 5, focused on education, one of several key areas identified by the project as a critical component in diversifying Nevada's economy. Other needs include updating the state's tax structure and diversifying its industries beyond gaming and tourism.

Education received a "C" grade from the Reno 2020 project, largely due to the lack of resources set aside for education programs. This includes the Knowledge Fund, which was created by the legislature to help boost research within Nevada's higher education and research centers but was not allocated any funding.

"Certainly, we have a lot of progress to make so a 'C' (is fair)," said University of Nevada, Reno President Marc Johnson, a panelist for the event. "We've still got a lot of work to do to get a 'B' or an 'A.'"

Johnson pointed out programs that were axed as a result of cuts to higher education, including the university's highly rated logistics program.

American River Canyon restaurateur not going back to jail

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Kevin Cairns, the Highway 50 restaurateur convicted of assaulting people who stopped in his parking lot, will face no additional jail time, an El Dorado Superior Court judge said Friday.

Judge Daniel B. Proud sentenced Cairns to a year in jail, minus the days he served before his trial, but stayed the sentence. If Cairns completes three years' probation and mandated anger-management class, he will not go to jail.

Nevertheless, Proud strongly criticized Cairns for saying he'd done nothing wrong, even after conviction on five misdemeanor counts of assault, vandalism, brandishing a weapon and disturbing the peace.

The incidents took place at Dante's on the River, his restaurant east of Pollock Pines, on a windy and somewhat isolated stretch of the highway.

"He obviously feels he was entitled to do what he did in his parking lot," Cairns' lawyer, Stephen Tapson, told the court during the sentencing hearing. "We can't come to you in good faith and say he's sorry."

As soon as Cairns had been sentenced, Tapson submitted a

notice of appeal.

Proud declined to sentence Cairns to jail, noting that he'd been punished by having to shut his business, and that further jail time would probably only hurt his family. But those consequences, Proud told him, were his own fault.

Read the whole story

Man drowns on American River in Placer County

By Allen Pierleoni, Sacramento Bee

A man drowned along a remote stretch of the north fork of the American River about noon Saturday, according to the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The man, who was not identified, was reportedly attempting to help two other rafters who were having difficulty maneuvering the rapids near a run called Chamberlain Falls in Placer County, said Julie Hutchinson, Cal Fire battalion chief. The cold water gushes fast there this time of year, forming rapids that range from Class 3 to Class 5.

During the victim's attempt to help the two rafters, they hit another set of rapids that apparently caused the man to fall into the water, where he disappeared, Hutchinson said. The two surviving rafters found him later, brought him to shore, started CPR and called authorities.

Read the whole story

Finalists to be Nevada's tourism agency all from outside the state

By Brian Duggan, Reno Gazette-Journal

State officials are considering four advertising companies for a \$3 million, two-year contract to sell the Nevada as a compelling tourism and cultural destination to the rest of the country.

But unlike eight of the 19 companies that submitted a proposal for the job, the four finalists are not based in Silver State.

Valerie Glenn, the CEO of the Reno-based Glenn Group, said it's a shame no Nevada companies made the short list for such a large contract, including her company.

"All things being relatively equal, there should be a process in place to use some common sense that would lean toward supporting businesses in Nevada," Glenn said. "Especially given our economic situation and our governor's stance on promoting economic development and job creation."

The finalists were announced in an email sent by the state's purchasing department on Tuesday.

It occurred after the department concluded its initial scoring process that determines which companies will get to interview for the job that would fall under the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. Its director is a cabinet-level officer.

The interviews are expected to start next week. The state

Board of Examiners could approve the contract later this summer. The finalists are Aristotle Inc. of Little Rock, Ark.; Daniel J. Edelman Inc. of Los Angeles; Fahlgren Mortine of Columbus, Ohio; and New York City-based Burson-Marsteller – one of the largest public relations firms in the country.

Read the whole story

Limited public access in Ray May Fire area

A 6-square-mile area owned by the Bureau of Land Management near Gardnerville will have restrictions until Aug. 1, 2014.

Vehicles and woodcutting won't be allowed in the Ray May burn area while rehab work is preformed.

Signs will be posted saying what areas are open.

Two teen-age boys started the first Aug. 16 by not fully extinguishing their campfire.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

75-minute bus ride home possible for LTUSD students

By Kathryn Reed

School has been out for more than an hour. Do you know where your child is?

The answer next school year might be: “on the school bus”.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of education members on Tuesday heard two proposals of what the bus schedule could be for the 2012-13 school year. They didn't like either and asked staff to come up with something else.



LTUSD buses may be in the barn more than on the streets in the fall.

Photo/LTN file

One scenario had some students riding a bus home for 75 minutes. The longest route now is about 45 minutes. Considering it's 12 miles from Meyers to Stateline, that's one long trip to get from school to a bus stop.

Students in the Tahoe Keys could be faced with a longer walk because buses for students in grades 6-12 might be eliminated. They would have to walk to Eloise or Washington to find a school bus.

Board members were adamant that having students arrive at South Tahoe Middle School 20 minutes before classes start is a horrible idea.

The district has been subsidizing the bus program for years.

It costs \$1.2 million to bus about 1,900 students a day. The state reimburses LTUSD \$830,000.

The district has an ongoing deficit of \$1.2 million to deal with what could grow to \$2.5 million if voters say no to a measure on the November ballot that would fund education in California.

So, the cuts to LTUSD transportation are for two reasons – to deal with the current shortfall, and plan for a possible take-away by the state.

Because the district accepts state transportation dollars it must provide busing for K-8.

Twelve of the 16 bus drivers the district employs were at the May 1 meeting.

“It looks like six may be cut,” Steve Morales, facilities director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Parents who have the means already pay a fee for their child that starts at \$150 a year. About \$60,000 is collected each year in bus fees, according to Morales.

“I think parents would be open to a sliding scale or paying more,” parent Karen Fink told the board.

Asked by *Lake Tahoe News* about using BlueGo as a means to transport students, Morales said there is “no appetite” to do that. He added that school buses are designed differently than municipal buses and that drivers having different training.

“A lot of students ride the bus who wouldn’t have another way to get to school,” parent Alice Jones told the board. “Not only do they make it to school, but they are there early enough to get the free or reduced breakfast.”

Jones also brought up the adverse environmental impacts of having more vehicles on the road if fewer buses are rolling.

The district runs 12 full size buses that can seat 84 and four smaller buses with a capacity of 20. The smaller buses are used for special education students. Federal law mandates public schools accommodate these students, often not having them co-mingle with the larger student population. The district cannot save money with spec ed even if it wanted to. Districts must provide for spec ed students even at the expense of the majority.

Missing skier found dead in Mono County backcountry

By John Counts, AnnArbor.com

Authorities are confirming the death of Boris Avdeev, 31, the U-M doctoral graduate who went missing during a backcountry ski trip in California.

On Thursday at about 3:30pm, Avdeev was found by search and rescue teams in Cocaine Chute, a popular backcountry skiing location, according to the Mono County Sheriff's Department.

He had been missing since April 19.

As of Friday afternoon, search and rescue teams, aided by a helicopter, are continuing to try to recover Adeev's body from the chute.

On May 1, police found a note left under the windshield wiper of Adeev's Honda Civic stating he was heading up Mount Dana Couloir for the day to ski down Cocaine Chute.

Search and rescue teams from surrounding counties scoured the mountains for days before locating him.

Read the whole story

Fire cadets completely total vehicles in the name of training

Cadets in the Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Academy this week went through auto extrication training.

The academy is a collaborative effort between Lake Tahoe Community College and Lake Valley Fire Protection District, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, and Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

Cadets must spend a certain number of hours learning about and performing various drills.

With the assistance of Emerald Bay Towing and our agency partners, the academy was able to provide the cadets with hands-on auto extrication training.

– Leona Allen, Lake Valley fire





Lake Tahoe Fire Academy cadets learn to use tools of the trade needed to get people out of a vehicle.

Photos/Leona Allen



Lawsuit filed to stop feds'

wildlife damage control program

By Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee

The federal government's wildlife damage control program is based on outdated science and indiscriminate tools that kill many non-target animals, including protected species, according to a lawsuit filed Monday by WildEarth Guardians, a Colorado-based environmental group.

The focus of the lawsuit is a little-known arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture called Wildlife Services that has long specialized in killing animals that are deemed to pose a threat to agriculture, the public and – more recently – the environment.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas, asks that the agency's activities be halted until it prepares a new, more comprehensive environmental impact statement. The suit also calls for a halt to its aerial gunning of predators in federally designated wilderness areas.

"It's high time for the federal court to take a hard look at Wildlife Services' slaughter of the nation's wildlife on public and private land with our tax dollars," said Wendy Keefover, director of carnivore protection for the group.

Read the whole story

0'Rourke days from having signed contract with Yakima

The Yakima City Council is having a special meeting May 8 at 11am to discuss the contract with Tony 0'Rourke to take over the helm of that city.

0'Rourke has said he plans to buy a house in that Washington city – something he never did in his brief tenure in South Lake Tahoe. 0'Rourke started his job in Tahoe in August 2010. His contract was for three years.



Tony 0'Rourke

Until 0'Rourke gives his official notice to the South Lake Tahoe City Council, a formal process cannot be put in place as for who takes over next. However, normal protocol is for the No. 2 person at the city to be interim city manager. That would be Nancy Kerry.

The council will have to decide if it wants to hire a headhunter to look for a permanent city manager. The same person has done so for the last three city manager hirings. Last go-round Bob Murray and Associates came up with nearly 80 applicants, though the council only interviewed two.

An internal candidate can still apply, as was the case last go around when Gene Palazzo, then redevelopment manager, applied to be city manager.

It can cost between \$15,000 and \$30,000 for a headhunter to come up with a list of candidates.

The city could also post the job opening in various trade publications for a fraction of the cost.

– *Kathryn Reed*