

Calif. Indian casinos taking financial toll on Reno resorts

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

One of Reno's splashiest resorts is fighting to stave off financial disaster as Northern California Indian casinos continue to grab market share.

The Silver Legacy Resort was supposed to reinvigorate Reno's gambling industry when it opened 17 years ago. Its \$300,000 laser-light show, illuminating a 120-foot-high silver-mining rig looming over the casino floor, was hailed as a tourism draw for the whole city.

Instead, the resort is in danger of becoming the latest casualty of Northern California's tribal gambling boom. The Silver Legacy has scrambled in recent weeks to avoid default on a \$142.8 million bond.

The debt came due March 1, but repayment was extended for two weeks, to last Thursday. As the latest deadline passed, the downtown casino's owners said they were making headway on negotiating with bondholders to restructure the IOU.

While it appears the resort could stay open, it's a painful reminder for Reno of how its casinos have fallen victim to the explosion of Indian gambling. Ken Adams, an industry consultant in Reno, said Thunder Valley Casino in Lincoln is the main reason the Silver Legacy is in trouble.

While the weak economy has hurt, "the real story is Thunder Valley — it's that simple," Adams said Monday. "Thunder Valley and its peers took away a significant portion of the revenue from Reno."

Read the whole story

Study finds young Americans less interested in environmental issues

By Martha Irvine, Washington Post

They have a reputation for being environmentally minded do-gooders. But an academic analysis of surveys spanning more than 40 years has found that today's young Americans are less interested in the environment and in conserving resources – and often less civic-minded overall – than their elders were when they were young.

The findings go against the widespread belief that environmental issues have hit home with today's young adults, known as Millennials, who have grown up amid climate change discussion and the mantra “reduce, reuse, recycle.” The environment is often listed among top concerns of young voters.

“I was shocked,” said Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University who is one of the study's authors. “We have the perception that we're getting through to people. But at least compared to previous eras, we're not.”

This study, published online this month in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, looked at the life goals, concern for others and civic orientation of three young generations – baby boomers, Generation X and Millennials.

Read the whole story

5-year-old burglary ring busted

A search of an Incline Village residence resulted in the recovery of belongings from 11 burglaries that dated back to 2007, according to Washoe County sheriff's deputies.

Washoe County detectives worked a collaborative investigation with Placer County Sheriff's Office and Truckee Police Department that ended March 21 with a search warrant executed at a residence in the 100 block of Tramway Road in Incline Village.



Matthew
Stanaway

Detectives said they have identified property from previously reported vehicle burglaries, commercial burglaries and residential burglaries. The recovered property includes car stereo equipment, laptops, jewelry, sports memorabilia, flat screen televisions, GPS devices, credit cards, identifications, a guitar, snowboards and a bicycle.

The suspect, Matthew Stanaway, was arrested earlier Wednesday by the Placer County sheriff's deputies following the investigation into an overnight burglary in Truckee. Evidence from this theft was allegedly found in his car as well as in

his residence.

Detectives believe Stanaway was involved in a burglary ring that extended from Truckee through Lake Tahoe and into the Truckee Meadows. Detectives are actively investigating further leads which could result in other arrests and property recovery.

Stanaway faces extradition to Nevada on charges including possession of stolen property and an ex-felon in possession of a stolen firearm.

There will be a property viewing March 27 from 11:30am-2pm at the sheriff's Incline Village substation, 625 Mt. Rose Highway. Owners must provide a positive description of the items and a police report.

Anyone with information on this case, is asked to call (775) 328.3320 or remain anonymous by calling Secret Witness at (775) 322.4900.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

California's small businesses worried about state's economy

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

A majority of small-business executives remain pessimistic about California's prospects, weighed down by concern about the economy, education and health care, a new survey found.

Nearly two-thirds of executives surveyed by Small Business California, a San Francisco advocacy group, said the state is

headed in the wrong direction.

Fifty-six percent of respondents said they think California's economy will either remain unchanged or grow worse in the next three years.

"Clearly, they don't think the climate is very good," said Scott Hauge, Small Business California president. "The silver lining is that it's a little better than last year."

Small-business owners' pessimism reached its height in the 2009 survey, when more than 80 percent of respondents said California was on the wrong course.

That sentiment has steadily decreased in the three polls since, and some businesses are hopeful amid the anxiety.

[Read the whole story](#)

Feds threaten to seize property where South Lake Tahoe pot clubs do business

By Kathryn Reed

The federal government has written letters to the property owners of the three South Lake Tahoe medical marijuana dispensaries threatening to seize their property, fine them or send them to jail if they keep those particular tenants.



“The letter didn’t direct us to shutdown. It put the landlord on notice about the dispensary,” Cody Bass, who runs Tahoe Wellness Collective, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are open every day and we’ll remain that way. We have no intention to close.”

What his landlord Patty Olson does remains to be seen. In a terse conversation with *Lake Tahoe News* on March 21, Olson said she wants to talk to Bass about what his collectives in Sacramento and Berkeley are going to do. She could not explain how that would be relevant to what she, as the property owner in South Lake Tahoe, would do.

Darcy De Tarr of De Tarr Properties in Burlingame was sent a letter dated Feb. 27 from the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Sacramento that says, “This letter is formal notice that continued use of the property in violation of federal law may result in forfeiture and criminal or civil penalties. You should consult an attorney concerning this letter.”

De Tarr was not reachable and Gino DiMatteo, who operates City of Angels 2 on De Tarr’s property, did not return a phone call.

Kevin Khasigian, assistant U.S. attorney, who co-signed the letter with U.S. Attorney Benjamin Wagner, provided his number in the body of the letter to De Tarr. He did not return a phone call from *LTN*.

Erika and Matt Triglia run Patient2Patient and own the property.

“We are always concerned about being shut down, but we are committed to patients getting plant based medicine,” Erika Triglia told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She believes the three South Tahoe dispensaries are on the fed’s radar because city officials have legalized the

businesses by issuing them business licenses and having created an ordinance that will permit each facility.

City Attorney Patrick Enright said he was not surprised the letters were sent after the federal government sent the first batch of letters in October to larger collectives in bigger cities. But the city also was not given a heads up the letters were in the mail.

Enright said he does not foresee South Lake Tahoe being threatened by the feds even though the city has approved medical marijuana being cultivated, sold and possessed. The city is going with state law under the voter approved Proposition 215. It's the federal government that believes all marijuana is illegal.

Police Chief Brian Uhler echoed Enright's belief, saying he had been talking to federal authorities while the city was writing its ordinance.

El Dorado County Assistant District Attorney Hans Uthe had heard about the letters, but had neither seen one nor had his federal counterparts contacted him.

The letter to property owners says, "It is also a felony for a property owner to rent, lease or otherwise make a place available for cultivation or distribution of marijuana. Violation can result in imprisonment and a fine up to \$500,000; or a civil penalty of \$250,000 or twice the gross receipts, whichever is greater."

Lauren Horwood, spokeswoman for the Sacramento U.S. Attorney's Office, said follow-up with landlords would be done on a case-by-case basis. She said the intent of the letter was to get people to "comply on their own" and not have her office file a forfeiture complaint with the court.

Triglia doesn't believe the feds can do much more than write threatening letters at this point because of a lawsuit filed

late last year by NORML against the four U.S. attorneys in California, Attorney General Eric Holder and DEA Administrator Michele Leonhardt to keep them, as the suit says, “from arresting or prosecuting plaintiffs or those similarly situated, seizing their medical cannabis, forfeiting their property or the property of their landlords or threatening to seize property, or seeking civil or administrative sanctions against them or parties whose property is used to assist them.”

Triglia said, “We are here to help people and we’re going to continue to do that.”

Report: Nevada airports good for regional, state economies

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada airports are better economic drivers than those in nearly every other state in the country, a report prepared for Airports Council International-North America says.

“The Economic Impact of Commercial Airports in 2010” quantifies the contributions of 490 commercial airports in the United States.



Reno-Tahoe
airport adds
to Nevada's
economy.

Photo/LTN

The analysis, prepared by Cincinnati-based CDM Smith, says airports multiply a community's economic output – particularly at a facility like McCarran International Airport. McCarran stands out because it has more airlines than most other airports, more employees to handle large volumes of customers and serves a tourism economy that includes hundreds of jobs spun off from airport operations.

The report says California airports produced the most economic output in 2010, at \$158 billion. That state's 29 airports provided 1.4 million jobs with an annual payroll of \$47.1 billion.

Nevada was ninth on the 50-state list, with economic output of \$40.5 billion. The state's five commercial airports provided 313,640 jobs with an annual payroll of \$11.8 billion, the report said.

But on average, Nevada's airports produced economic output of \$8.1 billion per airport, second only to Georgia, which had nine airports that produced \$8.9 billion per airport on average.

Georgia is home to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the nation's busiest.

The five Nevada airports included in the CDM study were

McCarran, Reno-Tahoe International Airport, North Las Vegas Airport, Elko Regional Airport and Boulder City Municipal Airport.

Read the whole story

Lovell calls it quits after 30 years with sheriff's office

By Kathryn Reed

Lt. Les Lovell's last day on the job is Thursday.

After more than 30 years with the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, he is turning in his badge – at least until the summer. Then he returns to the seasonal boat patrol with Larry Olsen, who was a detective with the agency until he retired last fall.

"Thirty-one years is a long time to give to an agency," Sheriff John D'Agostini said of Lovell. "He has done a fantastic job. I relied on him immensely for the knowledge and wisdom he has for the basin."



Lt. Les Lovell

is retiring
March 21.
Photo/Lisa J.
Tolda

Lovell, 52, started his career with the department in 1980.

"I just had such a varied career and wonderful opportunities that other law enforcement officers don't get. I did everything I could do," Lovell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He started in the jail, worked boat patrol, patrolled the streets, was a canine officer for 11 years, an undercover narcotics officer, investigated person and property crimes, graveyard watch commander, internal affairs, jail commander, and finishes as commander of the Tahoe substation after a little more than nine years.

At one time he had aspirations of moving farther up the ladder, but others thwarted those dreams.

In an unusual ploy, sheriff candidate Stan Perez essentially ran with Lovell as No. 2 even though it is an appointed position. Perez quit the race under a dark cloud in February 2010, giving Lovell an hour's notice this was about to happen.

Still, Lovell says he wouldn't change a thing about his career.

In 1989, Lovell was working undercover. He didn't look like the clean-cut officer he is today. His efforts helped bring down then Mayor Terry Trupp and 19 others in the federal investigation that was called Operation Deep Snow – so named because the drug of choice was cocaine. Lovell was an undercover cocaine buyer in the multifaceted case.

Two years later he was in the thick of the investigation of the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping. He had recently finished a stint with the DEA, so the leads he followed had to do with

drugs.

He supported Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe when it created the Fighting Chance program after Dugard was abducted in June 1991. Lovell also brought change to his department.

Lovell was there 18 years later when the call came that she had been discovered. He was there Sept. 6, 2009, when the community came together in a parade to celebrate Dugard's escape from captivity.

He missed the brunt of the Angora Fire in June 2007 because he was in a remote area of Alaska fishing. When the operator of the outpost powered up the generator to get online he saw Tahoe was on fire and told Lovell about it. He was back in Tahoe in a few days, but not before his wife, Kathay, had to evacuate.

In fall 2005, he graduated from the FBI Academy, and in May 2010 he graduated from the state's command college.

It was in 2009 that Lovell obtained his associate's degree from Lake Tahoe Community College.

"I was on the extended plan. I literally have hundreds of units," Lovell said of the degree he started in 1979.

It's not that Lovell really wants to call it quits, but with how retirement dollars work, he has actually been losing money the last six months. Thirty years is the maximum someone can pay into CalPERS.

While he plans to spend time "vacationing" in Tahoe – something he hasn't done in the last 30 years, traveling to national parks, and fishing, he might not be done with having a title before his name.

"If it looks like there is a void in leadership for the (El Dorado County) Board of Supervisors, I might step up for that.

I don't want Tahoe not to have the representation it needs," Lovell said. (Norma Santiago will be termed out when the next election comes up in November 2014.)

Besides being in law enforcement for three decades, Lovell has been on the board of the Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled for nine years, an instructor at Lake Tahoe Community College for 12 years, and in Kiwanis for 10 years. Those endeavors he plans to continue.

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Lovell's departure is not the only change.

Pete Van Arnum has been promoted from sergeant to lieutenant. Van Arnum's position will not be filled. When there is a staffing shortage in Tahoe, a sergeant from Placerville will be sent down, D'Agostini said.

Randy Peshon, who had been lieutenant in the Tahoe jail for years, has been promoted to captain for the county's two jails. He spends most of the week in Placerville.

Lt. Terri LeDoux has taken over for him in Tahoe, however she is out on leave. D'Agostini would not say why she is off work.

Business on the upswing at Red Hawk Casino

By Claudia Buck, Sacramento Bee

The company that manages Red Hawk Casino in Shingle Springs reported last week that its performance is improving, despite the bumpy economy.

“While the economy in Northern California continues to suffer, especially in the Sacramento market, the Red Hawk Casino showed improvements,” said Tim Cope, president and chief financial officer of Lakes Entertainment Inc., in a conference call to discuss the Minneapolis-based company’s year-end earnings report.

Without disclosing details on gaming revenues or customer visits, Cope said Red Hawk, owned by the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, has made operational improvements, boosted customer traffic and aggressively ramped up its marketing efforts in the last six to 10 months.

“It’s a positive year for Red Hawk, which is reassuring to see from the tribe’s perspective and ours,” Cope said.

Read the whole story

Feds move to seize S. Tahoe assets allegedly scammed from Auburn tribe

By Denny Walsh and Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Federal agents are moving to seize 32 properties stretching from Sacramento to Hawaii to San Diego in an alleged kickback and money laundering scheme that they say drained \$18 million from the coffers of the tribe that runs the Thunder Valley Casino in Lincoln.

Documents filed by the Internal Revenue Service in U.S. District Court in Sacramento late Tuesday allege that Sacramento developer Bart Volen and two others systematically siphoned off millions from the United Auburn Indian Community while they oversaw the construction of office buildings that now serve as the tribe's headquarters.

The IRS is seeking to seize the properties – including condominiums in Hawaii, San Diego and South Lake Tahoe – that the agency says were purchased with money taken from the tribe in an overbilling scheme.

No criminal charges have been filed in the case, which targets Volen, tribal administrator Greg Baker and former tribal worker Darrell Hinz.

None of the three men could immediately be reached today.

Read the whole story

Reno air races ready to soar again

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Despite the deaths of 11 people, federal investigations and lawsuits seeking millions of dollars, organizers of the Reno air races are moving ahead with plans to hold the event again in September.

Emails announcing ticket sales for the 49th annual National Championship Air Races went out Tuesday, touting a “fun-filled racing experience.”

The announcement also promised a “world class memorial and tribute” for the 10 spectators who were killed, the 74 who were injured and the pilot who died when his World War II-era fighter plane slammed into two rows of box seats last year and left a hole 3 feet deep.

But, there is no guarantee that the races will go on as scheduled. Federal approval is still pending and legal challenges contend that strict new safety rules are needed before the races can be held.

“What I know at this point is that if they don’t make any modifications, they’re reckless,” said Anthony Buzbee, a Houston attorney who has filed a \$25 million lawsuit on behalf of the family of Craig Salerno, a Texas man killed in last year’s accident.

Read the whole story