

Tourism campaign designed to have Nevadans stay in the state

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval will travel throughout Nevada to promote a new effort to get residents to take vacations within the state, a sort of “buy local” program for tourism.

Sandoval and Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki announced the “Discover Your Nevada” program at a Reno park last week.



Nevada tourism officials want residents to vacation in the Silver State.

Photo/LTN

“The point is to encourage Nevadans to get out and explore our own state,” said Sandoval.

The state’s Commission on Tourism is asking residents to submit their favorite places throughout the state, which will then be voted on at the commission’s website.

Read the whole story

Californians may get opportunity to vote on death penalty

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Douglas Scott Mickey crept into the rural Placer County home of Eric Lee Hanson and Catherine Blount after midnight on Sept. 29, 1980.

Angry over a drug dispute he had with Hanson and looking for money, Mickey bludgeoned the sleeping 29-year-old man with a baseball bat and slit his throat ear to ear. He then turned his attention to Blount, 29, stabbing her seven times in the chest.

Convicted of both killings, Mickey has been on San Quentin's death row since 1983, fighting his case through the courts.

There is little chance that he will face lethal injection any time soon. Court battles have brought executions in California to a halt, and on Thursday a group of death penalty opponents said they had passed a milestone toward abolishing capital punishment in the state altogether.

The SAFE California Campaign said it has collected about 800,000 signatures to get a measure on the November ballot to transfer the sentences of death-penalty inmates to life without the possibility of parole.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County supervisor wants to get rid of death penalty

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Ron Briggs recalls turning 21 just in time to hoist an alcoholic drink in celebration of the 1978 victory of Proposition 7, his family's initiative that broadened the application of the death penalty.

At 54, the conservative Republican El Dorado County supervisor is no longer celebrating that win.

He is campaigning against the law he once believed would execute the worst criminals, a law he says went badly wrong. The law was well-drafted enough to survive court challenges, but its consequences are "horrible," Briggs said last week, sitting on the same land outside Placerville where his family came up with the initiative.

His father, former state Sen. John Briggs, led the campaign for Proposition 7, which broadly rewrote the state's laws regarding murder: increasing penalties for first- and second-degree murder; revising and expanding the special circumstances categories that require the death penalty or life in prison; and revising laws related to mitigating and aggravating circumstances.

John Briggs does not share his son's opposition to the death penalty but agrees that the death penalty is not working as the initiative intended.

“What’s not working is the application of the sentence,” he said. “Sentences aren’t being carried out.”

This month, Ron Briggs expects to help deliver initiative signatures to put capital punishment’s repeal on the ballot in November.

Read the whole story

3 men going to jail for selling wild deer meat in El Dorado County

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Three Stockton men have been slapped with jail time and steep fines for poaching and selling wild deer meat in El Dorado County.

The case resulted from an anonymous tip in May 2011 via the California Department of Fish and Game’s wildlife enforcement hotline, (888) DFG-CALTIP.

After a three-week investigation, state game wardens arrested Thongseuth Khounchanh, 58; Ti Sila, 51; and Bounleuna Sysenglath, 59; all from Stockton.

The arrest followed extensive surveillance that indicated the suspects were making multiple poaching trips per week, including killing bucks as well as pregnant does. They sold the deer meat to an established network of buyers.

Read the whole story

Regional transit ideas to be discussed

Tahoe Transportation District is having two public workshops next week to talk about transit options that would link the South and North shores.

Carl Hasty, executive director of TTD, told *Lake Tahoe News* nine proposals have been whittled down to three.

However, those proposals are not available online for people to review before the meetings. The only obvious information is for what is being called an aquabus.

No details of the meetings have been released to the media other than the dates-locations. The first meeting is March 6 at 6pm at 128 Market St., Stateline (the TRPA office); the second is March 7 at 6pm at 221 Fairway, Tahoe City (the Tahoe City PUD office).

The transportation board is expected to vote on a preferred alternative at the April meeting, then the environmental review process begins after that.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Whittemore case leaves political fundraising void

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

For decades, Harvey Whittemore was considered one of Nevada's key political fundraisers, thanks to his effective lobbying skills, powerful clients and seemingly endless energy.

But after his former partners accused him of embezzling money and the FBI began investigating his campaign contribution activities – highlighted Wednesday by federal grand jury hearings that could lead to felony charges – Whittemore is all but gone from Nevada's fundraising landscape. Many recipients of his efforts have dumped the money he raised for them in an effort to distance themselves from his troubles.

As the 2012 election cycle heats up, the void left by Whittemore's departure from high-profile fundraising activities will need to be filled by a list of other well-connected supporters, some political watchers said.

"Harvey's departure won't change anything," Las Vegas political consultant Sig Rogich said. "There are a handful of guys around the state who are significant fundraisers – we've raised a lot of money throughout the years. There still will be contributors out there. They'll just deal with a different individual."

But Pete Ernaut, president of government and public affairs at R&R Partners, a high-powered political consulting firm, said Nevada's fundraising environment has changed during the past decade. Candidates no longer rely on a few key people for their fundraising needs, he said. Instead, they look to professional companies to handle those tasks, he said.

"The era of the prominent fundraiser is over," said Ernaut,

who has managed campaigns over the years for a variety of candidates, including governors, members of Congress and judges. “The modern campaign is more sophisticated, more scientific and more organized, and these companies can provide call lists, fundraising events and distribute direct mail.

“They can do everything, not just bringing in big donations, but also reaching small donors.”

Read the whole story

5 snowmobilers accused of riding in closed area

Five men were cited by the U.S. Forest Service for riding snowmobiles in the Mokelumne Wilderness on the Eldorado National Forest.

The five riders, residents of South Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley, received mandatory notices to appear before the federal magistrate in Sacramento.

Per Forest Service policy the names of violators are not released when a citation has been issued. If they are arrested, the names become public information. The South Lake Tahoe man is 46-years-old, the Douglas County residents are ages 30, 41 and two 42-year-olds.

The wilderness area is accessed from the Blue Lake trailhead and the Forestdale area on Highway 88. The area is posted as closed to motorized use and maps are readily available.

“While on patrol, officers observed fresh snowmobile tracks passing directly underneath closure signs,” a USFS press

release said of last weekend's incident.

If convicted, the offenders would face a fine up to \$5,000 and jail time of six months. They were cited for wilderness trespass, not damaging the terrain.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Landromat fire ruins load of clothes

Instead of just drying clothes, a unit at a Laundromat in South Lake Tahoe charred a load on Friday.

A small fire at the laundry facility on Harrison Avenue in the Globin Building was contained to the dryer.

Fire Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* the fire started in the lint trap about 3:30pm March 2, damaging the clothes that were in the dryer.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Heavenly sued by second skier allegedly hit by employee while on the slopes

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

A second skier who was injured when a Heavenly Mountain Resort employee on a snowboard slammed into her has filed a lawsuit claiming the resort's owner is liable for its employee's "unsafe, out-of-control (snow) boarding."

Elisabeth "Elly" Benschop, 54, of Gardnerville was knocked unconscious and suffered a brain injury on Feb. 22 when Heavenly employee Andrea Ramos, 20, of Brazil crashed into her on the resort's Olympic ski run, according to the suit, filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Reno.

Another skier, Kimberly Bland of Florida, filed a similar lawsuit in December, claiming she was injured in January 2011 when Heavenly employee Daniel Barreno crashed into her while he was riding down the Olympic slope on his snowboard.

Russ Pecoraro, director of communications at Heavenly Mountain Resort, declined to comment on the two lawsuits, saying in an email: "Our company policy prohibits commenting on pending litigation."

The suit, filed by Minden lawyer Jay Sullivan, seeks damages topping \$75,000 to cover the emergency and medical costs, as well as legal fees and expenses. It claims that the resort has failed to hold liability insurance to cover its foreign

employees and has refused to take responsibility for its employees' actions.

"Vail and Heavenly are taking the position that Elly is on her own against Ms. Ramos, who is scheduled to return to her home country on March 15, 2012," the suit said, "and that Elly should try and collect her thousands of dollars in ambulance, ER and CT scan billings, plus future treatment and disability costs from young Ms. Ramos personally."

Read the whole story

4-legged deputy joins Washoe County Sheriff's Office

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office is looking forward to welcoming the newest member of its K-9 program, Akim.

Akim will arrive in Washoe County early this month. His partner will be Deputy Corey Solferino. They will work patrol and narcotics.

The sheriff's office acquired Akim thanks to a generous donation from a member of the Honorary Deputy Sheriff's Association who wishes to remain anonymous. Given the importance and effectiveness of the K-9 program, the donor wanted to make sure the sheriff's office would be able to replace K-9 Kraft who passed away unexpectedly last year.



Akim is the
newest member
of the Washoe
County
Sheriff's
Office.
Photo/Provided

The donation provided funds for the purchase of a new canine and all travel and training for Akim and Solferino. The donation included a protective vest designed specifically for canines.

Akim is a 17-month-old, sable Czechoslovakian Shepherd. He was born in Prague and brought to the United States to train for a career in law enforcement at the Vohne Liche Kennels in Denver, Ind. Solferino chose Akim as a partner from hundreds of potential dogs.

Solferino said he started by working with a number of different dogs in situations that would potentially show how the dog would react when out on patrol.

Solferino and Akim are scheduled to graduate from their Vohne Liche training March 9.