

South Tahoe officers on the prowl Halloween weekend

As party-going ghosts and goblins celebrate Halloween, the Avoid the 6 El Dorado County DUI Task Force reminds everyone to keep the party off the road. Two extra DUI saturation patrols will be out in force with extra officers looking to stop and arrest drunk or buzzed drivers.

Additionally, every patrol officer and traffic officer on routine patrol countywide will be on alert for the telltale signs of impairment.

“There isn’t a Halloween costume clever enough to hide an impaired driver who’s made the poor decision to get behind the wheel,” South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Laney said in a press release. “Whether you’ve had one too many or way too many, it is just not worth the risk. Remember, buzzed driving is drunk driving.”

Nighttime is an especially dangerous time to be on the road. But this weekend and Halloween night is one of the deadliest times of the year for impaired drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 48 percent of all highway fatalities across the nation on Halloween night (6pm Oct. 31 to 5:59am Nov. 1) in 2009 involved a driver or a motorcycle rider with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent or higher.

DUI checkpoints along with regularly scheduled high visibility DUI enforcement serves as a proven deterrent with the goal of removing impaired drivers and heightened awareness of the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

The Avoid the 6 DUI Task Force recommends these simple tips for a safe Halloween celebration:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin.
- Before drinking, designate a sober, non-drinking' driver.
- If you're impaired, take a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation.
- If you happen to see a drunken driver on the road, don't hesitate to call 911.
- And remember, friends don't let friends drive drunk. If you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

Funding for this operation is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

North Shore ski resorts putting Tahoe on the map

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – “It is finally Lake Tahoe's time.”

Those are the words of Squaw Valley CEO Andy Wirth. His peers Bill Rock, COO of Northstar, and Art Chapman, president and chairman of JMA Ventures, concur.

The three shared the stage Thursday during the 59th annual membership lunch for the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. More than 100 people listened to the three executives talk about Squaw-Alpine, Northstar, and Homewood, respectively, and

what it means in terms of Lake Tahoe competing with destinations in Utah and Colorado.



Andy Wirth of Squaw speaks Oct. 27 as Art Chapman of JMA and Bill Rock of Northstar listen.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“What a great time to be in North Lake Tahoe,” Rock said. He said this is the most interesting place to be in all of North America when it comes to the ski industry.

Vail Resorts bought Northstar last year and this summer infused \$30 million into the resort. When KSL Capital Partners bought Squaw last year it pledged \$50 million in upgrades in five years.

Homewood Mountain Resort, which turns 50 next year, is ready to spend millions as well. JMA is awaiting the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s potential approval of its overhaul of the resort at the Dec. 14 meeting before it can go forward.

While the three consider each a friend and competitor, they recognize upgrades to one resort enhance the overall experience for visitors. They also know with the multitude of resorts in the greater Lake Tahoe area that skiers seldom stick to one property during a weeklong vacation. Even locals

like to ski more than one place, as evidenced by the popularity of combo passes.

With Vail Resorts owning Northstar and Heavenly, it has the Tahoe Value Pass.

Wirth said sales of the Tahoe Super Pass – which gives riders access to Squaw and Alpine – are three times greater than what was anticipated.

Homewood and Kirkwood Mountain Resort also have a combo pass.

KSL's partnership with JMA, which had been the sole owner of Alpine Meadows, is expected to be finalized within two weeks so the new firm called Squaw Valley Ski Holdings Inc. will run Squaw and Alpine. The last hurdles are for the California Tahoe Conservancy to approve a lease agreement today and the U.S. Forest Service to do the same in a matter of days.

Wirth pre-empted a likely question about what happens with White Wolf, the property owned by Troy Caldwell that separates (links?) Squaw and Alpine. Caldwell was at the lunch, but didn't speak.

"We are working on ways to accomplish great things on a long-term basis," Wirth said. He added that the resort has a good relationship with Caldwell. After all, Caldwell owns KT-22.

Wirth brushed by the fact Squaw is in talks with the U.S. Forest Service that might lead to access changes.

"There may be an announcement in the next three weeks," Wirth said without elaborating.

Wirth and Rock praised those who operated Northstar and Squaw until last year, recognizing they laid the foundation that allows the new owners to elevate the level of skiing beyond what it has been in Tahoe.

South Tahoe investigating residential pot grows

In the first month of South Lake Tahoe's online Report a Grow program, a search warrant was served that turned into a child endangerment case and the seizure of more than 90 marijuana plants, and eight other properties were inspected and found to be in compliance with codes.

Those eight were told about the need to obtain a permit by Dec. 20 to be in compliance with the city's Residential Medical Marijuana Cultivation Ordinance.

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department provides the following list of observations that could be indicative of marijuana growing operation:

- Strong marijuana odor or skunk-like smell around the residence.
- Excessive condensation on the windows or on the exterior of the residence.
- Brown discolored ooze seeping from the inside out.
- Black tarps or dark covering around the majority of windows.
- Ventilation holes cut into the home.
- Humming noises associated with ventilation fans.
- Signs of power meter tampering. Most marijuana grows draw a significant amount of electricity which would require altering the amperage output for the home.
- Suspicious activity including excessive foot traffic in and

out, plastic pots with stems and/or numerous bags of fertilizer and soil with no signs of outdoor gardening. Loading or unloading of equipment from the residence during nighttime hours.

- Visible security cameras around the residence.
-

Douglas County beefing up DUI enforcement

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office will be participating in several high-visibility traffic enforcement details over the Nevada Day/pre-Halloween weekend.

During the late evening and early morning hours of Oct. 28-30, deputies working in conjunction with deputies of the Lyon County Sheriff's Office will conduct increased DUI enforcement patrols on the highways and roadways within Douglas County.

National traffic studies have shown that increased targeted patrols provide an increased risk of detection and apprehension, thereby reducing the number of impaired drivers willing to risk driving while impaired.

This stepped-up enforcement will continue into the following weekend as well; Nov. 4-5.

This enforcement detail is partially paid for by a grant from the Nevada Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety.

Loomis hires former S. Tahoe official to be town manager

By Joyia Emard, Loomis News

Loomis' new town manager considers Loomis a "gem."

"People are down to Earth here. Loomis is like a gem in the middle of metropolis," said

Rick Angelocci, who began as the Loomis town manager on Oct. 13. He replaced Perry Beck who retired on Sept. 30.

Angelocci, formerly the assistant city manager and community development director for the City of South Lake Tahoe, will be paid \$110,000 per year, plus a \$300 per month car allowance. Beck's pay after 11 years on the job was \$116,000.

According to a report written by Beck, the council began the search process in May and received 127 applications. The search was narrowed down to seven interview candidates and then four finalists.

"He's a good fit for Loomis. He has lots of experience and can help with planning issues. He's very friendly. You feel like you've been talking to an old friend," said Mayor Rhonda Morillas.

Councilmember Gary Liss said he is very supportive of Angelocci, as are other council members.

"It was pretty clear by the time we got to the final candidates – Rick stood out in my mind," Liss said.

Read the whole story

Gaines earns high marks for votes against taxes

State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, scored 100 percent on the California Taxpayers Association's 2011 Voting Record. Gaines was one of 30 state legislators out of the 120 Assembly and Senate members to receive the top score.

"I am honored to stand with taxpayers in the fight against the overspending crisis that plagues Sacramento," Gaines said in a statement. "As a small business owner, I am familiar with the hurdles and burdens hardworking taxpayers face every day. California should be creating opportunities for individuals and businesses to thrive, not stifling their growth with excessive taxes and onerous regulations."



Ted Gaines

CalTax's legislative report card is designed to hold lawmakers accountable for their actions and to inform taxpayers how their lawmakers represent them on key issues. Founded in 1926, CalTax is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect taxpayers from unnecessary taxes and to promote government efficiency.

The 2011 Voting Record is based on a compilation of the highest priority bills on which CalTax took a position. Most

bills used to evaluate and grade voting records dealt with tax increases or those that threatened taxpayer protections.

Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento and Sierra counties.

Traffic to online gambling sites skyrockets

By Delen Goldberg, Las Vegas Sun

Online gambling was the fastest growing category of web activity during the month of September. Analysts at comScore Media Metrix, an Internet audience measurement service, attributed the spike to the kickoff of the NFL season and sports fans placing football bets.

Online gambling sites received 9.7 million visitors, comScore analysts reported. That's far fewer than the 82 million who logged onto education sites or the 35 million who browsed news sites, but it accounts for a 13 percent increase from the previous month, a bigger jump than in any other category.

PokerStars ranked first among the pack with 1.1 million visitors (an 11 percent increase), followed by UPickEm.net with 993,000 visitors (a 36 percent increase), FullTiltPoker with 753,000 visitors, SimSlots Inc. with 655,000 visitors (a 5 percent increase) and Wooga.com with 520,000 visitors (an 85 percent increase).

Read the whole story

CTC considering 40-year agreement with ski company

California Tahoe Conservancy and Squaw Valley Ski Holdings Inc. are expected to enter a 40-year lease on Friday so the resort can continue to operate on 402 acres of CTC owned property.

The ski entity – formed last month to run Alpine Meadows and Squaw – is getting all of its contracts aligned so they are for the same length of time.

When the CTC bought the Ward Peak area more than 20 years ago Alpine was using it as a ski resort. So the use is not changing. (CTC bought it from Southern Pacific.)

The CTC board is having a special meeting for this one item on Oct. 28 at 8:30am at its offices on Third Street in South Lake Tahoe.

– Kathryn Reed

Nothing common about S. Tahoe's lakeview project

By Kathryn Reed

While the hum of men and their machines permeate the air, so does the anticipation of what Lakeview Commons will be when

the work is completed in a month.

The \$6 million project in South Lake Tahoe on the waterfront at El Dorado Beach is winding down. A TRPA extension is allowing dirt to be moved through Friday, though that may need to be extended into next week. (Usually dirt in the basin can't be moved past Oct. 15.)

The eyesore is gone and the dream of a team of community activists is nearly a reality.



Work on
Lakeview
Commons in
South Lake
Tahoe should
be done in
November.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Hand-cut rock quarried from the Carson City-Mound House area is still being placed. But most of the terraced area closest to Lake Tahoe is done. What was once a steep hill of unattractive dirt is now seating for those who want to stare into the emerald water.

While the beach was always popular with tourists, especially with Campground by the Lake being on the other side of Highway 50, it's likely locals will frequent this area in the future.

Even in its raw form, the beauty is evident. From the highway

the transformation is not obvious. The dirt that can be seen at street level will be covered with paving stones.

The 27 picnic tables and 20 barbecues still need to be installed. A double built-in barbecue with cooktop is near the boathouse. This will be open to the public.

In that area will be a stone gas fire pit with seating area. The city or its concessionaire will power up the pit.

While it has not been decided if the construction fence will come down for the winter (fine tuning needs to be done in the spring), it is from the water that the renewal of this area is most dramatic.

This has become a one-of-a-kind place on the South Shore.

"It takes a team," Steve Jessop with Clark and Sullivan construction firm told *Lake Tahoe News* during a private tour Wednesday. "It's been a fast-paced project."

While the project is a year late because of legal issues, the city has been pleased with the company's professionalism and speed (especially with winter lasting into June) to accomplish what it has to date.

Jim Marino, who is overseeing the project for the city, is a bit like a kid showing off a new toy. And he's a bit like a proud father showing off his adopted baby. After all, he has not been part of the project since Day 1.

Walking through the site Marino talks about how he envisions events being staged at Lakeview Commons – concerts, kids programs – he sees no limit to the possibilities.

Not in the original design was power at the beach. This was added so if events were to be staged there, electricity is in place.

While the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency allowed overhead

lights at Sand Harbor and Tahoe City Commons, the bi-state regulatory agency nixed that from Lakeview Commons. So, instead, the lights are built into walls.

Other lights will be installed in the railing at the east end of the project. A stainless steel railing that is part of the structural wall still needs its cedar cap. Under that cap will be LED lights.

Native plants, under the direction of landscape architect Brett Long, are still being put into the ground. Part of the landscaping is designed to help stabilize the slope.

As with any project, surprises and changes were part of the process. Concrete footing were buried – and had to be removed. Marino said they could have been there since the 1940s or '50s.

The boathouse

Finishing touches are being put on the bi-level building that will provide food up top and house non-motorized boats below. Cooking apparatuses will not be installed so the concessionaire does not compete against local businesses, Marino said.

It's expected the city this winter will put out a request for proposal seeking a concessionaire to run the whole operation. There is still some question as to what the original deed that gave the property to El Dorado County says is an allowable use in terms of for-profit entities. Recreation and open space are what the original group of property owners from the 1920s wanted the land to always be used for.

In the beginning when Lakeview Commons was just a concept the idea was for the boathouse to store boats for the public. It may be that boats could also be rented from there – canoes, kayaks, paddleboards – nothing with a motor.

It has been built to LEED gold standards. Solar panels should help generate enough electricity that it will be self-sustaining.

Bathrooms are part of the facility.

Across Lakeview Avenue the existing restrooms will be demolished next year and new ones built with a Department of Boating and Waterways grant.

What's next?

The steel railing is the end point of phase one. Phase two goes to Rufus Allen Boulevard and will include a cantilever bridge. While TRPA is OK with that, it will be Caltrans that needs to be convinced an encroachment permit should be granted and that the bridge is a good idea.

A grant from the California Tahoe Conservancy supplied the funding for phase one. But the \$2.4 million to \$2.7 million needed for phase two remains elusive.

Nor is there money to complete the improvement on the campground side of the highway. All of this at one time was called the 56-acre project – because it is 56 acres. El Dorado County owns 40 of those acres, which is leased by South Lake Tahoe. The city owns the remainder.

Peter Eichar with the Conservancy said the ball is the city and county's court in terms of how things proceed. With the state agency without dollars, it is not in a position to help at this point.

A dilapidated pier is swimming distance from shore. One day the city wants to replace it. While safety and aesthetic reasons call for its removal, TRPA rules are such that if a pier is removed, the owner has two years to replace it or they lose the right to do so. The city doesn't want to take that chance.

It's possible as the city plots out its list of capital improvement projects each year, that phase two of Lakeview Commons will become a priority. Some of the council members will be touring the site today.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

4.8 temblor felt in South Lake Tahoe

It was an earthquake, not a burglar trying to get in – is what South Lake Tahoe police dispatchers told people Wednesday night.

An earthquake measuring 4.8 struck 23 miles northwest of Truckee in Plumas County at 11:37pm Oct. 26.

People are reporting they felt it as far away as Redwood City – 276 miles from the epicenter.

In South Lake Tahoe it was a slight rocking that lasted for a few seconds.

A series of aftershocks have been recorded by the U.S. Geological Survey in the Whitehawk area – a 1.9 at 11:41pm, a 2.4 at 11:51pm, and a 1.5 at 11:54pm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report