Poll: Climate change responsible for wild weather

By Seth Borenstein and Emily Swanson, San Francisco Chronicle

After hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria blitzed the nation, most Americans think weather disasters are getting more severe and see global warming's fingerprints.

A poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 68 percent of Americans think weather disasters seem to be worsening, compared to 28 percent who think they are staying the same and only 4 percent who say they are less severe.

And 46 percent of those who think it's getting worse blame man-made climate change mostly or solely for the wild weather, while another 39 percent say it's a combination of global warming and natural variability.

Read the whole story

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3 EDC students infected with viral meningitis

By CBS-13

Health officials say three high school students in El Dorado County have been infected with viral meningitis.

The El Dorado Union High School Districts says the three teens are students at Ponderosa High School. Health officials are

now taking a look at where the kids traveled in the school and are working to inspect those areas.

Read the whole story

Added pain at Calif. gas pumps starts Nov. 1

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Jose Medina has Nov. 1 circled on his calendar, because "that's the day the gas goes boom."

More to the point, it's the day that a 12-cent increase in the base gasoline excise tax goes into effect statewide.

Senate Bill 1 was signed into law earlier this year by Gov. Jerry Brown, who vigorously supported the measure that will raise more than $52 billion over the next decade to help pay for extensive road-improvement programs statewide. Public transit and other transportation programs likewise will benefit.

Read the whole story

FCC ends decades-old rule to

keep TV-radio under local control

By Brian Fung, Washington Post

Federal regulators have voted to eliminate a longstanding rule covering radio and television stations, in a move that could ultimately reshape the nation's media landscape.

The regulation, which was first adopted almost 80 years ago, requires broadcasters to have a physical studio in or near the areas where they have a license to transmit TV or radio signals. Known as the "main studio rule," the regulation ensured that residents of a community could have a say in their local broadcast station's operations.

This month's vote by the Federal Communications Commission lifts that requirement. With the rise of social media, the agency said, consumers now have other ways to get in touch with their local broadcasters.

Read the whole story

Tensions rise after wolf kills cow in California

By Ryan Sabalow and Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

A wolf has killed a California rancher's cow for the first time in more than 100 years, raising tensions in the newly reclaimed wolf country in California's rugged northeastern corner.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed that a member of the so-called Lassen Pack killed a heifer Oct. 13 on private property in western Lassen County. Data from a GPS collar worn by the pack's breeding female showed it had been on-site for at least six hours the night the 600-pound yearling was killed. Wildlife officials said wolves were seen at the carcass the following morning.

When state wildlife officers were investigating the kill, the wolf hung close, on a forested slope a few hundred yards away.

Read the whole story

Scientists: Jack Frost nipping at your nose ever later

By Seth Borenstein, AP

Winter is coming … later. And it's leaving ever earlier.

Across the United States, the year's first freeze has been arriving further and further into the calendar, according to more than a century of measurements from weather stations nationwide.

Scientists say it is yet another sign of the changing climate, and that it has good and bad consequences for the nation. There could be more fruits and vegetables – and also more allergies and pests.

Read the whole story

Housing scarcity forces ski companies to do something

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

Ski resort companies are shouldering more responsibility for workforce housing after years working in the background with community partnerships.

In Telluride, Colo., resort owner Bill Jensen spent $6 million this year on homesites and revamping an empty apartment complex for employees. Aspen Skiing spent $4 million on 40 tiny homes it plans to park in a former KOA campground it bought in Basalt. Vail Resorts, which promised $30 million for employee housing in 2015, is planning a new apartment complex in East Vail to join its new housing partnerships in Summit County, although it has run into resistance from residents concerned with traffic and environmental impacts.

Employee housing was becoming a critical problem in the mid-2000s, but then the economic recession hit and locals with their own housing started working for resort companies. But as the economy improved and locals found jobs elsewhere, resort companies started looking farther afield for workers and that required housing.

Read the whole story

Man ends his life outside S. Tahoe hospital

Barton Memorial Hospital was on lockdown earlier this month after a man shot himself outside the emergency room.

CEO Clint Purvance on Oct. 24 sent a letter to staff about the suicide that had occurred nine days earlier. In part it said, "… a lockdown was ordered to allow law enforcement and security to assess the area's safety. It was determined that it was an isolated incident and there was no threat to the hospital, staff, or physicians. The hospital was cleared after 90 minutes."

Barton workers were alerted to the unresponsive male at about 1:50am Oct. 15. When they went outside he was already dead. It's not known how long he was there before medical crews arrived.

Barton deferred comment to law enforcement.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler said, "Sorry, no info."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Unmasking the many faces of homelessness in Tahoe

By Susan Wood

CAMP RICHARDSON – "It could happen to anyone." The words of

Kasandra, a Tahoe native attending South Tahoe Middle School, resonated with about 120 captivated listeners sitting on both floors of the building.

It was as if the hush over the audience allowed hearing a pin drop at a stunningly quiet Valhalla Grand Hall.

Kasandra has been homeless.

A handful of speakers from Tahoe and Sacramento on Oct. 26 shared amazing stories of resilience, survival and inspiration in overcoming homelessness in their lives. While a Grand Hall blaze burning in the fireplace provided a homey feel, the intimacy and bravery of these people made the Faces of Homelessness a reality to many.

The event was put on by the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless. It is a nationally recognized program that literally provides a human face to homelessness.

Like other communities, South Lake Tahoe grapples with the issue; having opened a warm room two winters ago. With an overwhelming number of guests considered local, the goal is to get these residents through the harsh winter months.

It’s much more difficult to deem homeless people as “the other” when they’re standing right in front of you. On Thursday night they were pouring their hearts out with the goal of bringing an understanding to the living condition.

With Kasandra, she recalled fondly a time when her family lived in a two-bedroom duplex, until life’s unpredictable circumstances took over. Something changed “all in one night.” A big fight between her parents sent her father to jail. He was the breadwinner and couldn’t remain so when he got out.

With a straight face, the young girl remembered her family moving in and out of different living arrangements – staying at Campground by the Lake, walking around and napping in the

Stateline casinos and at her mother's friend's place.

Surprisingly, but in the true nature of a Tahoe kid, Kasandra didn't mind some nights outdoors because "I love the wilderness." She got a few smiles with that declaration.



Marissa Muscat on Oct. 26 talks about homelessness on the South Shore. Photo/Susan Wood

She's not alone

Another youth opened her story with a rhetorical question about: "What is normal?"

Erin Cox might have related to some degree with Kasandra's outdoor experience – except that living indoors felt like staying outside.

Given that Lake Tahoe's elevation is situated at more than 6,000 feet, the South Tahoe High School senior remembered being so cold living in a shed with no insulation or plumbing that she experienced a panic attack.

Her mother, who endured a debilitating illness since the girl was 5, "was violently ill." The circumstances kept the family in an unfortunate web of poverty. Even though Erin ended up in Child Protective Services and has ultimately found an outlet in playing volleyball, she knew her mother loved her.

Seeking a father's love

This was more than Wesley Colter of Sacramento could say about his upbringing. All he ever wanted was acceptance from his raging, alcoholic father.

What appeared to be a "normal" childhood from the outside – full of material goods and the nice house – turned out to be anything but. His father made it known that his son got in the way.

He characterized his interaction with his father as "neglect" when he did something right and "attention" when he did something wrong.

And then there were the times as a child when life was totally out of his control. Once when left alone by his father, he was sexually assaulted – a secret he kept for 25 years.

"It changed me forever," Colter said.

The trauma set into motion a downward spiral that sent Colter living in the streets as a teenager, fighting, stealing vehicles and taking drugs. He consequently got involved with the wrong crowd.

"The minute they placed a meth pipe to my mouth, I immediately felt a part of," he said. "Addiction ruled my life."

The tribal experience sent him to prison at age 19. He was thrown behind bars as an "unsuccessful transition" nine times.

He finally turned his life around when he sought counseling, assistance from community resources, faith and a sober lifestyle.

Since he spent most of his life wanting to relate to others, it was only natural he would find a new lease on life helping others make the journey out of despair as he did.

Colter became a drug and alcohol counselor – the brightening light at the end of tunnel.

The darkness of the past

David Husid, today a vice president with Cottage Housing in Sacramento, knows all about the destruction of substance abuse.

His journey from his middle class life started with him feeling "special" because he was adopted. That was until he turned to drugs and alcohol later in life. He enjoyed the social aspect of it, but deep down sensed it could ruin his life. He left the San Francisco Bay Area – blaming the region for his condition. He moved to Sacramento. His problem only followed him. Husid hid the addiction from his wife, whom he cheated on in a drunken stupor.

With a "one-strike, you're out" mentality, she threw him out of the house and onto the street.

"What happened to my life?" he asked himself, while preparing to leave the house. The question turned out to be prophetic to what came before him.

Husid was running a high-dollar money-laundering scheme and substance abuse fed a manic need to be successful. But crime only pays for so long.

He was sentenced to six years in Folsom State Prison, where it took his hardened cellmate to wake him up.

"Dave, what have you done with your dash?" the cellmate asked, referring to the symbol on a tombstone. It was the man's way of saying that he was wasting "a once promising life."

Husid, now with degrees and drug and alcohol counseling certifications, was crying.

Feeling a connection

Many tears flowed, and some attendees shook their heads at what they were hearing. Many stared in disbelief at how stacked the odds were against those sharing – sometimes illustrating a consistent pattern among the adults identified as homeless at one point in their lives.

Homelessness can be a symptom to a greater pain – not the root cause of troubles.

The hosts and brainchildren of the evening – physician Marissa Muscat and rabbi Evon Yakar – were visibly moved by the connection between each homeless survivor and community members.

In the middle of the sharing, Yakar circled the large room to ask what one word comes to mind in hearing the stories. The responses ranged from “brave” and “desperation” to “family” and “support.”

Muscat, the local coalition’s executive director, choked up while she shared about a homeless hospital patient at Barton.

“Jorge” had asked himself at the peak of his troubling life: “How did I get here?” He was laid off from work and through challenges ended up on the street. She recalled their three-hour conversation at the end of his bed.

Today, he has turned his life around. His story inspired Muscat into action that resulted in her work for the coalition.

“I’m so proud to be part of this community,” she said.

Under Muscat’s directive, the Tahoe coalition is seeking space for a facility to house up to 25 individuals. At least 2,000 square feet is required, in which case, the coalition will pay $1- to $2 per square feet in rent depending on size and utilities. Interested parties may contact Muscat at tahoewarmroom@gmail.com.

Last year’s warm room on the South Shore, which operated December through April, served an average of 27 guests nightly. The bulk of them were aged between 31 and 50. With 108 coming in, men more than doubled the number of women. Seven families with children younger than 18 were provided motel rooms.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that on a single night in January 2015 California’s homeless numbered 115,738. That figure accounted for 21 percent of the nation’s homeless population.

Man who threatened Tahoe officials going to prison

Former South Lake Tahoe resident Ty Robben will be going to prison for the next seven years for making threats to public officials.



Ty Robben

Robben, whose full name is Todd Christian Robben, received the maximum sentence on Oct. 27.

On Sept. 25 he was found guilty in Sacramento County Superior Court of eight felonies involving threats and attempted

threats against El Dorado County judges, a lieutenant from the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, an investigator from the State Bar, the city attorney from South Lake Tahoe, and a local attorney who represented the defendant on a misdemeanor appeal.

All the El Dorado County judges had recused themselves.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report