Body found near Mount Rose summit

By Reno Gazette-Journal

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office confirmed it has found a body in the area of the Mount Rose summit. The sheriff's office used its RAVEN helicopter to move the body from where it was found to the highway so it could be transported. The Mount Rose Highway was briefly closed so the helicopter could land.

Authorities are not commenting on the cause of death or on the suspected identity of the dead person and said the case remains under investigation.

Read the whole story

Sheriff's department offers Placer County parents discounted drug kits

By Ed Fletcher and Bobby Caina Calvan, Sacramento Bee

It's not unusual for schools, in some instances, to test kids for drugs or alcohol, and home-testing kits have been available to parents for years.

But law enforcement and schools in Placer County are teaming up to make it easier for parents to keep tabs on their kids.

They’re offering parents home alcohol and drug screening kits at deeply discounted prices – all for sale at the Sheriff’s Department and the six high schools it serves.

While some suggest parents or guardians could hurt their relationships with their wards by asking them for a urine sample, backers say having the facts can spark an honest conversation.

Under the program, a 10-panel drug screening kit, which sells for about $40 in stores, will be sold for $10 at the Sheriff’s Department and at Granite Bay, Del Oro, Chana, Colfax, Foresthill, and North Tahoe high schools. Alcohol test strips sell for $2.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Keys Marina parking spaces to be increased

By Kathryn Reed

Parking may no longer be a hassle for people using the Tahoe Keys Marina, Fresh Ketch restaurant and Cove East nature trail.

This is because the California Tahoe Conservancy board at its meeting this month agreed to enter a lease agreement with the marina owners to build 91 shared use spaces.

The Conservancy owns 1.3 acres of land between the current parking lot and the trail. It’s that dirt area at the end of Venice Drive in South Lake Tahoe that could be paved over as early as this year.



The acreage behind the Tahoe Keys Marina sign is slated to become a parking lot. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“The existing footpath should not be affected,” Bruce Eisner of the Conservancy told the board Jan. 20.

The parking lot would be linked to the popular path that leads to Lake Tahoe.

Negotiations have been going on for a couple years to seal this deal. Although the marina owner still has to sign-off on everything, the Conservancy is confident a contract will be in place shortly.

In addition to adding parking to an area that is congested throughout much of the summer, a lane leading to the boat ramp will be dedicated to people needing inspections related to invasive aquatic species. Also part of the project are restrooms, day use amenities and landscaping.

Although there are no plans today to make any of the spaces at the marina paid, if that were to happen, language in the lease calls for the Conservancy to receive 20 percent of the proceeds.

The 30-year lease will not cost the CTC a dime. The marina

will pay for the planning, permitting, construction, and operation and maintenance of the facilities.

The board also on Thursday approved the lease agreement where the marina will pay the Conservancy $5,000 a year for the use of the 1 acre parcel on Venice Drive that is about halfway between Tahoe Keys Boulevard and Cove East.

With the agreement comes an option for the marina to buy this plot of land for $261,000. But the Conservancy does not want to sell it until after Jan. 1, 2015. This is because the state agency foresees using it as a staging area if work is done to the Upper Truckee River at this location.

If the river, which is being reconfigured upstream in stages, goes through a similar rebirth at the mouth of Lake Tahoe, then the footpath would be altered.

“The current path is merely a temporary path,” Eisner said of the big picture that involves restoration to the river.

The other component that is likely to affect Cove East and what is called the Upper Truckee Marsh is the environmental impact statement and environmental impact report on 525 acres that are scheduled to be released this spring. Four alternatives are proposed in those documents about what should be done with the property that is owned by the state.

The land is some of the most sensitive in the Lake Tahoe Basin, containing rare and threatened species.

Man headed to South Tahoe

found in Texas

By News 10

VACAVILLE – A 57-year-old man suffering from dementia has been safely located at the U.S./Mexico border, after being reported missing on Thursday. He was taken into custody by the Hudspeth County Sheriff's Office in Texas.

Jose Ruben Valdez was found about a half hour east of El Paso Texas near the border on Friday just before 1 p.m. U.S. Border Patrol officials detained him when he tried to cross the border, then notified the Vacaville Police Department that had been working to locate Valdez using modern technology to track his whereabouts, said Vacaville police spokesman Mark Mazzaferro.

The missing man's license plate was scanned when he approached the border checkpoint and border patrol agents received a hit that Valdez was a missing at-risk person.

Before being found Friday, Valdez was last seen by family members around 11pm Wednesday when he left his home in Anaheim to travel to a relative's house in South Lake Tahoe. He was able to contact loved ones from several different locations but told them he was lost. His family told police due to his dementia, Valdez may easily become confused or lost if left alone.

Read the whole story

Flu starting to strike South Shore residents

By Kathryn Reed

Flu season has officially arrived on the South Shore.

The numbers are nothing to be alarmed about, according to Barton Health officials, but it’s also not too late to get a flu shot. It’s also early in the season, with the full onslaught far from being close.



Washing hands washes away germs.

One person this month had to be admitted to Barton Memorial Hospital because their influenza was so bad.

Barton reported zero cases of flu in November, 12 in December and 21 nearly three weeks into January.

This compares to the 2009-10 season that saw 71 cases in September, 159 in October, 79 in November, 44 in December, and 52 in January.

These are not the total number of flu cases in the South Lake Tahoe area, but the number of people with flu who went to Barton’s urgent care or emergency room.

“The majority of the cases that we are seeing in California

are in the population that is under 65. That group is not the group that usually gets super ill with the flu," said Darcie Carpenter, director of Emergency Management and Infection Control for Barton Health. "It's our working age population that is coming down with it this year."

Usually people older than 65 and younger than 4 are hit the hardest.

Although no one has pinpointed the reason for the switch in age groups getting sick, Carpenter said fewer people went to flu clinics this season offered by El Dorado County and Reno.

Barton urgent care will be offering vaccinations Feb. 9 from 2-5:30pm for $20. Local doctors also have the vaccine.

Last year people were urged to get the regular flu shot and the H1N1 vaccine. This year that strand has been combined into the regular shot so it's only necessary to get poked with a needle once.

Carpenter suggests doing all the basics to try to stay healthy – eat properly, get exercise, enough sleep and wash your hands.

"You can never wash your hands enough," Carpenter said.

She also says stay at home and don't share your germs at work.

Elimination of LTCC position fuels distrust among staff

By Kathryn Reed

Unrest is brewing at Lake Tahoe Community College among staff, the board and the president.

One classified employee on Jan. 21 told *Lake Tahoe News* privately, “Morale has always been in the toilet, now it’s in the sewer.”

College board member Kerry David isn’t surprised staff would be disgruntled based on continued cutbacks by California, increased workloads and years without raises.

“Morale in higher education is tanking across California when you look at the proposal the newly elected governor has put on the table,” David said.

The best-case scenario as proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown for LTCC is $650,000 in cuts. The worst case is more than $1.7 million cuts for the next school year. What compounds the problem is the outcome may not be known until June, weeks before the 2011-12 budget must be approved and takes effect July 1.

(The board is meeting with state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, on Monday in Sacramento to discuss the budget.)

Although budget constraints and the uncertainty that looms plays a role in creating an atmosphere of gloom, interim President Steve Maradian is not helping the situation, according to some LTCC employees.

Upon his recommendation, the board at its last meeting unanimously did away with the position of the Title III project manager. This in turn means Craig Brinkman is without a job. He was putting the Datatel software system in place.

“First of all, it is a personnel matter. To me it was not a performance issue. It was a position not needed by the college

to get the work done," Maradian told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Maradian brought in three firms to assess how Datatel is working. Two were independent. According to Maradian, all said the college needed better technical support to make the grant funded software upgrade come to fruition. That is why he recommended doing away with the job held by Brinkman.

At the Academic Senate meeting Friday afternoon on the campus of the South Lake Tahoe two-year institution, Senate VP Steve Adams was adamant in his belief the dismissal of Brinkman was not handled correctly.

"When things happen this way, it affects all of us," Adams said at the meeting.

He and fellow instructor Jon Kingsbury are upset College Council did not know about it beforehand. Shared governance is what they kept reiterating. Shared governance gives a voice to faculty and staff before the board takes action.

LTCC board policy 5.12 Subsection B states, "Except in unforeseeable emergency situation, the Board of trustees shall not take action on matters significantly affecting staff until it has provided staff an opportunity to participate in the formulation and development of those matters through appropriate structure an procedures."

Although the Academic Senate did not vote on the matter related to this situation, Kingsbury and Adams briefed the more than two dozen people in attendance that their opinion is the board did not follow proper procedure. The Academic Senate is expected to address the board at the Jan. 25 meeting.

Maradian left the Academic Senate meeting before all of this was said. Reached by *LTN* by phone afterward, the president adamantly stood by this being a personnel matter, which would mean it would never go to College Council or Academic Senate.

As to whether the Jan. 11 agenda item was worded correctly, Maradian said, it was written per what attorneys advised. The item reads, “Public Employee Discipline/Dismissal/Release: Project Manager, Title III, and Interim Manager, Information Technologies.”

Some interpreted this as the firing of the person, not the elimination of the position, which is what the board voted on.

David said, “This is not something that happened overnight.”

People speaking at the Academic Senate meeting said it was a surprise when the agenda was posted.

Maradian said with all the meetings involved with people assessing the program he couldn’t see how anyone would be surprised by what transpired last week.

The college board meetings and College Council meetings are available on podcast on the college’s website.

The day after the board meeting, *LTN* received an email from an anonymous source that in part says, “(Maradian) has now LIED to the Board about following publicly available policies for the termination of a staff member – Craig Brinkman. It’s a mess and there is rampant talk of a vote of no confidence against the president and the Board. The staff is afraid to speak up for fear of being the next to see their name on a public agenda for dismissal.”

On top of the strife between Maradian and LTCC, he had problems just before leaving Los Angeles City College.

The Los Angeles City College paper in November 2010 talk about a sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a male student against Maradian while he was president of the college. It was settled out of court.

Garrido’s attorney asks for delay in trial

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Phillip Garrido’s public defender is seeking a postponement of his scheduled mental competency trial, saying an overwhelming amount of evidence still must be reviewed and that she is still studying whether to ask that the trial be moved out of El Dorado County.

A jury trial is set to begin Feb. 28 to determine whether Garrido, the accused kidnapper of Jaycee Lee Dugard, is mentally competent to stand trial.

But public defender Susan Gellman, in court documents filed Thursday and made public today, indicated that she will ask for a postponement at the next hearing in the case, which is set for Feb. 3.

In the court documents, Gellman said she continues to receive discovery evidence from prosecutors, the latest a package on Jan. 7 that “contained several hundred pages of documents, as well as a video that is almost six hours in length.”

Read the whole story

Correctional officer threatened in grocery store

On Jan. 21 at about 3:50pm, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department received a 911 call from a correctional officer who is employed by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. The officer, who was off duty and shopping for groceries at Raley's at the Y was reportedly approached from behind and shoved by a prior inmate, Patrick Solomon.

Solomon, 46, of South Lake Tahoe called the correctional officer by name and continued with a verbal barrage for some unknown reason, officers said.

Solomon reportedly resisted arrest and had to be taken to the ground by Officer Jake Herminghaus. Solomon received minor lacerations to his head and was transported by ambulance to Barton Memorial Hospital for treatment.

Solomon has a violent history with local law enforcement and was charged with battery on a custodial officer and resisting arrest, both misdemeanors in California.

Reno calls for change to be able to compete

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette Journal

Nevada must improve its struggling education system and develop a skilled workforce if it wants to attract business and create new opportunities for long-term economic growth and diversity, those at an economic forum hosted by UNR on

Wednesday said.

The forum, held as part of the Reno Gazette-Journal's Reno 2020 project, convened a panel of experts that will lead teams charged with formulating action plans for four issues deemed crucial to improving the local economy.

The four areas are education, innovation, green energy and the state's fiscal structure. Each team will present its findings Feb. 2, during the second part of the forum.

"We have a dropout epidemic," said Heath Morrison, Washoe County School District superintendent and leader of the 2020 education team. "The vast majority of Nevadans looking for work today don't have a high school diploma. And by 2020, 50 percent of people looking for work will need education higher than a high school diploma."

Young educated people, as well as a business-friendly environment, are important in developing imaginative, cutting-edge startups that eventually grow as billion-dollar enterprises, said Darik Volpa, Understand.com CEO and leader of the 2020 economic innovation team.

Read the whole story

Residents get upclose view about Tahoe transportation

By Kathryn Reed

It was a who's who of transportation gathered in one room to disseminate information in a casual format.

Tahoe Transportation District officials assembled the players who affect transit in the Lake Tahoe Basin for two nights of open houses. Wednesday's was in South Lake Tahoe, Thursday's was in Tahoe City.



People learn about Lake Tahoe transportation issues on Jan. 19. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Meandering through the foyer of Duke Theatre on the campus of Lake Tahoe Community College, citizens were engaging the decision-makers, planners, consultants and agency employees about what is coming down the pike as well as what they would like to see happen.

Scott Morgan with Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department was paired with Peter Eichar of the California Tahoe Conservancy to talk about bike trails.

At the far end was Karen Fink with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency dispensing information about what is being done to reduce green house gas emissions.

In between them was Donaldo Palaroan with El Dorado County talking about the quarter mile of Class 1 bike trail that will be laid this construction season from Lake Tahoe Boulevard to Echo View Estates on Sawmill Road. The Echo View Estates to

Highway 50 portion comes in 2012.

“We figured fewer people would come if there were talking heads,” Carl Hasty, TTD executive director, said.

No speeches were made. People could come and go at their own pace, reading the material or talking to representatives.

People had to literally rub elbows for much of the night Jan. 19. This format allowed people who might not like to speak in a formal setting or in public to ask questions one-on-one with people who had the answers.

Other representatives at the open houses included people from the jurisdictions where the meetings were located (South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday, Placer County on Thursday), BlueGo and Tahoe Area Regional Transit, U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Caltrans.

Information about water transit and the Highway 50 loop road were available ,too.