Memorial honors S. Tahoe’s young who died in combat

By Kathryn Reed

With snow on the ground and a chill in the air, the sun peaked through to shine a ray of light on those gathered for the somber occasion – the dedication of the memorial honoring South Lake Tahoe’s children who have died in combat.

Pfc. Brandon Williams, 21, died in October 2006 and Sgt. Tim Smith, 25, in April 2008.



A memorial honoring South Tahoe's youth who died in combat. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The memorial is on the same plot of land along Highway 50 where the children’s memorial is.

The plaque on the large granite boulder reads, “This memorial is dedicated to all from our community who gave their lives and have served our country from all branches of service. We thank you for your sacrifice and you can rest assured that we will support your families and friends. You have served as an example to all Americans by giving of yourself to the ideals

of freedom which is the basis on which our country was founded. May you rest in peace and forever remain in our hearts and in our prayers.”

It was Patty Smith, the mother of Sgt. Smith, who in August suggested a special place in town be set aside for the children in the community who died in combat. Mayor Kathay Lovell promised to have it done by Veterans Day. The dedication came one day before that deadline.

Smith, who quietly sat with son Tommy in the front row, spoke briefly – admitting to having visited the memorial several times before the Nov. 10 dedication.

Brad Williams, the father of Pfc. Williams, was out of town. On his behalf his brother, Brian, spoke about the legacy these young men have left behind.

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Votes trickle in with no change to S. Tahoe election results

More votes have been counted affecting the South Lake Tahoe City Council, but not who the three finalists are.

As of Nov. 9 at 2pm:

• Claire Fortier, 1,778 votes, 17.04 percent

• Tom Davis, 1,530 votes, 14.66 percent

• Angela Swanson, 1,330 votes, 12.75 percent

• Alice Jones, 1,203 votes, 11.53 percent

• Joy Curry, 1,193 votes, 11.43 percent

• Elizabeth Hallen, 1,083 votes, 10.38 percent

• Steve Cubby, 1,072 votes, 10.27 percent

• Adrian Gooch, 612 votes, 5.87 percent

• Georg May, 267 votes, 2.56 percent

• Doug Cichowicz, 135 votes, 1.29 percent.

Measure E, the city initiative to change the business license fee, was defeated by 50 votes.

– Kathryn Reed

Gaming win down on South Shore, barely up statewide

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Baccarat and sports betting helped Las Vegas Strip casinos register $580.5 million in gross win in September, a 2.8 percent increase over a year ago.

“The baccarat win kept us where we had positives,” said Michael Lawton, senior research analyst for the Nevada Gaming Board, which issued its monthly report Wednesday. Without baccarat, the win at Strip casinos would have been down 3.2 percent.

The board reported, however, that downtown Las Vegas casinos

suffered their 28th consecutive month of lower win figures, down 3.9 percent from a year ago. Gaming win is calculated before taxes and business expenses.

The board said statewide win was $917.8 million, an increase of 0.73 percent. Lawton said this was the first time since September and October 2007 the state has reported an increase in gross win for two consecutive months.

Read the whole story

MontBleu's parent company reports quarterly profit

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Las Vegas-based Tropicana Entertainment Inc. today said it earned $1.5 million in the third quarter, despite the deterioration of the Lake Tahoe and Laughlin markets in Nevada where it has three hotel-casinos.

The company, which emerged this year from the Tropicana Entertainment Holdings LLC bankruptcy, posted net quarterly revenue of $177.9 million. It's controlled by investor Carl Icahn.

There are no comparable numbers for the 2009 third quarter at the corporate level. The Tropicana Las Vegas hotel-casino was also spun out of the bankruptcy to unaffiliated investors and is not part of Tropicana Entertainment.

Tropicana Entertainment includes the Atlantic City Tropicana; Casino Aztar in Evansville, Ind.; Belle of Baton Rouge in Louisiana; Bayou Caddy's Jubilee in Greenville, Miss.;

Lighthouse Point in Greenville; and Horizon Vicksburg in Vicksburg, Miss.

Its properties in Laughlin are the Tropicana and the River Palms; while its Lake Tahoe property is the MontBleu Casino Resort & Spa.

Read the whole story

NDOT examining gusty Washoe Valley

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

One of the windiest places in Northern Nevada, Washoe Valley can be just plain scary.

Erik Wingfield of Reno certainly knows. He commutes through the valley daily to his job in Carson City. Driving there with his girlfriend during a recent storm, “it was just scary, period. It was blowing us all around,” Wingfield said.

The wind blew over a truck whose driver ignored an advisory to avoid the highway, Wingfield said.

“That person didn’t do what he needed to do,” said Wingfield, 29. “That’s what bothers me – the possibility of being crushed by a big truck that isn’t obeying.”

Jerry Howry has concerns as well. The Eastlake Boulevard resident says trucks often detour through his neighborhood during wind closures of the highway, even though they are supposed to use Old U.S. 395, or Bowers Mansion Road, on the valley’s western edge.

Read the whole story

Rubber mats ridding Tahoe of invasive clams

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Rubber mats laid atop beds of Lake Tahoe’s invading clams seem to have done their deadly job.

Last week, divers removed mats from two half-acre-sized swaths of clam-infested lake bottom. While data still are being analyzed, the test indicates the mats appear to be the most effective weapon against Tahoe’s Asian clam population, experts said Monday.

“There are definitely lots of visibly dead clams,” said Kim Boyd, an invasive species specialist with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District. “It looks very promising.”

The mats, measuring 10 feet wide and 100 feet long, kill clams by robbing them of oxygen and nutrients. The mat were laid on the lake bottom last July at Marla Bay and South Lake Tahoe’s Lakeside Marina.

Read the whole story

Early storms spur eager skiers to book rooms in Tahoe

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

An increase in early-season bookings for winter ski vacations has hoteliers and property managers in the Lake Tahoe region – who have struggled the past few years to fill rooms at profitable rates – optimistic about the upcoming ski season.

And a rise in bookings from international clients gives even further hope that tourism may be returning to the region.



Snow started falling early Nov. 7 at Kirkwood. Photo/Provided

Don Cauley, general manager of Vacation Station at Incline Village, says bookings are tracking up 10 to 15 percent this year compared to 2009. Reservations for the company's 100 cabins, condominiums and rental homes at Incline Village dipped between 35 and 40 percent beginning in 2008. Occupancy is running higher, Cauley notes, but profits still are down because of lower room rates.

"We are giving up revenues in order to get people to come back," Cauley says. "We are recovering somewhat, but we are nowhere near where we were two or three years ago."

Reservations for ski vacations also are on the rise at Resort at Squaw Creek. Les Pederson, director of sales and marketing, says December bookings are up 23 percent over 2009, while first quarter 2011 bookings are up 40 percent.

“That is encouraging,” Pederson says. “Eventually snow will really get into the equation – this time of year we start to do the snow dance. But so far, so good.”

Bill Cottrill, director of sales and marketing for Embassy Suites Lake Tahoe, located a stone’s throw from the Heavenly Mountain Resort gondola, says bookings spiked with the arrival of snow in mid-October. Snowstorms typically result in a flurry of reservations, he says, and bookings tapered off with last week’s warm weather.

“The pickup we got for the first quarter was amazing,” Cottrill says. “There is a certain level of calls we handle, and when you throw a snow or rainstorm in there that will impact the wintertime. It brings a spike in phone calls. But as soon as it gets back to sunny weather, calls dip back down to a typical pace.”

Read the whole story

How one district shuffled principals to save schools

By Pat Wingert, Newsweek

A new principal with no experience seems an odd choice to turn around a long-failing school. But that’s exactly whom most superintendents around the country end up hiring—largely

because no one else applies for what seems like a thankless job. It's no surprise that most don't succeed. The obvious solution, concluded Peter Gorman, the school superintendent in Charlotte, N.C., was to persuade skilled educators to take on these rescue missions. But how could he get the district's most effective principals, already ensconced in successful schools, to agree to transfers to the worst-performing ones? And what about the inevitable howl of protest from the communities they'd have to leave behind?



The answer is an ingenious school-turnaround strategy that is garnering praise from education-reform advocates like U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and the Aspen Institute. It's also giving the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district a serious shot at winning the coveted $2 million Broad Prize for Urban Education later this month.

Since the passage of George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001, school districts have been under intense pressure to identify and overhaul failing schools. This year the Obama administration raised the stakes by giving states a record $3.5 billion—about seven times the previous amount—to transform the nation's 5,000 worst schools. In addition, winners of the administration's Race to the Top school-reform competition—including North Carolina—need to overhaul their bottom 5 percent to secure their full share of the $4.3 billion in prize money. (North Carolina should get $400 million.)

Read the whole story

Totals change, 3 finalists don’t in SLT council race

More votes have been counted affecting the South Lake Tahoe City Council, but not who the three finalists are.

As of Nov. 6 at 5:45pm:

• Claire Fortier, 1,776 votes, 17.05 percent

• Tom Davis, 1,529 votes, 14.68 percent

• Angela Swanson, 1,325 votes, 12.72 percent

• Alice Jones, 1,202 votes, 11.54 percent

• Joy Curry, 1,192 votes, 11.44 percent

• Elizabeth Hallen, 1,080 votes, 10.37 percent

• Steve Cubby, 1,070 votes, 10.27 percent

• Adrian Gooch, 610 votes, 5.86 percent

• Georg May, 266 votes, 2.55 percent

• Doug Cichowicz, 135 votes, 1.3 percent.

Measure E, the city initiative to change the business license fee, was defeated by 48 votes.

– Kathryn Reed

DCSO warns of scams hitting businesses

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is warning business owners to be cautious of another scam targeted at service-type businesses like hotels and restaurants.

A suspect contacts the business via email or phone call, and attempts to make reservations for multiple overnight stays or meals for a large group, then requests to pay for the hotel/meal reservations in advance.

The suspect requests to send the business a check issued for more than the cost of the hotel/meal reservations, and directs the business owner to deposit the check, deduct the cost of the services plus a "processing fee", then send the remainder – usually several thousand dollars – back to the suspect.

This is a new twist on an old ploy where a suspect agrees to purchase an item that is listed for sale in an online classified ad (usually listed on e-Bay or Craigslist) by paying more for the item than it is listed for. Payment is made via check, and the suspect directs the seller to deposit the check and send back the overage. The check is then later discovered to be fraudulent, and the victim is out the money they sent back to the suspect.

Sheriff Ron Pierini reminds the public to be wary of scams. Methods used by scam artists vary, but the intended result of separating you from your money remains a constant. Most important, never deposit funds from any unconfirmed source, nor pay money to an unknown/unsolicited entity based upon some promise of monetary gain or return.