South Shore residences burglarized

Houses in the Tahoe Paradise and Tahoe Mountain areas have been hit by a series of burglaries. They are occurring during the day when the residents are away from home.

El Dorado County sheriff’s investigators believe the same people may be involved in committing the crimes.

Anyone with information should contact Detective Matt Harwood at (530) 573.3015 or call Secret Witness at (530) 541.6800 to remain anonymous.

South Tahoe police ramp up enforcement Halloween weekend

As party-going ghosts and goblins celebrate Halloween, the Avoid the 6 El Dorado County coalition reminds everyone to keep the party off the road.

Roving DUI Saturation is planned this weekend as part of South Lake Tahoe Police Department’s ongoing effort to lower impaired driving in the region. The DUI patrols will be working on Oct. 31 while the little ones head out for trick-or-treating.

Nighttime is an especially dangerous time to be on the road, but Halloween weekend is often one of the deadliest times of the year for impaired drivers. According to the CHP’s Statewide Integrated Traffic Reporting System, 16 individuals died and 417 were injured on Halloween in alcohol Involved

Collision during the past five years.

South Lake Tahoe Police Department recommends these tips for a safe Halloween:

• Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;

• Before drinking, designate a sober driver;

• If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation;

• If you happen to see a drunken driver on the road, call 911;

• 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.

New tower to increase safety at Reno airport

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Flight safety has been improved and the future of aviation at Reno-Tahoe International Airport will take off following the opening of a new air traffic control tower, officials said Tuesday.

The Federal Aviation Administration's operation of the new tower started Saturday but was celebrated Tuesday at a ceremony outside the 195-foot-high structure.

“We have achieved a towering achievement,” said Krys Bart, president and chief executive officer of the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority.

The new tower – three times the height of the airport’s old tower, which was erected in 1957 – gives FAA controllers a much-improved view of aircraft on airport runways and ramps. From the old tower, parts of the airport were not visible.

Read the whole story

Dugard prosecutor wants to keep sex details sealed

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

The prosecutor in the Jaycee Lee Dugard case has filed court papers opposing an effort by The Bee and other media groups to unseal grand jury transcripts that include the kidnap victim’s testimony, saying the documents should remain sealed until a jury is sworn in for a trial.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson, in papers filed in advance of a hearing set for next Thursday, said unsealing the transcripts would expose Dugard to revelations of “extremely private and violent acts” committed by the defendants, Phillip and Nancy Garrido.

Release of the transcripts would also “only provide the defense with more fodder” to claim that the Garridos cannot receive a fair trial, he wrote.

“The more publicity of the specific details of this case, the more likely it will be that the Defendants will seek a change

of venue prior to trial," Pierson wrote.

Read the whole story

Gaines allowed to run for two seats on same ballot

By Susan Ferriss, Sacramento Bee

No, your ballot has not been misprinted: For some Sacramento region voters, Assemblyman Ted Gaines really is listed as a candidate for two different races this election.

The Roseville Republican is seeking his third term in the Assembly and running to serve the remaining two years of the Senate term of Sen. Dave Cox, who died in July.



Ted Gaines

Running for two offices in the same election is usually illegal in California, but Gaines' case prompted a rarely used exception to the rule.

Because the race for Cox's seat is a special election, it's distinct from the Nov. 2 general election – even though it's being held the same day, said Shannon Velayas, spokeswoman for the secretary of state.

Read the whole story

Global warming issue spans 2 ballot measures

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times

Fundraising for a ballot initiative to suspend California's global warming law has flagged, but oil companies and other business interests are pouring millions of dollars into a separate ballot measure that could dry up funds to implement the law.

Proposition 26 would require a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, rather than the current simple majority, to enact any regulatory fees such as those imposed on tobacco companies to fund health-related programs, on industries for toxic waste cleanup and on alcohol retailers for law enforcement.

Rules under the global warming law, which would require companies to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, take effect in January and could be vulnerable to legislative gridlock over fees.

Read the whole story

LTCC hires firm to search for president

By Kathryn Reed

After interviewing four teams, the Lake Tahoe Community College board picked Professional Personnel Leasing Inc. to find candidates to be president of the two-year institution.



Carl Ehmann and Robert Griffin spoke a bit at the Oct. 26 meeting; both saying LTCC is an easy sell to potential applicants. It goes beyond being located in South Lake Tahoe. It's the stability of the board, the way groups on campus interact, student life, and learning objectives.

For the $24,000 the Marin County firm will be paid, the team will also structure a transition process between interim President Steve Maradian and whomever is hired as the fourth full-time president of the 30-plus-year-old institution.

The representatives said the college being in the throes of the accreditation process should not have a bearing on the search.

A committee representing various segments of the campus will be selected at the Nov. 9 meeting to help create the blueprint for what the next president will look like in terms of credentials.

The plan is about a dozen candidates would be interviewed in the spring – coming to town at their expense – then narrowing it to five finalists. Those five would likely be brought back with expenses partly paid for by the college.

The next president could be on board in May or June to allow for a transition.

The vacancy was created when Paul Killpatrick left this past summer after not fulfilling his three-year contract.

El Dorado County budget cuts touch nearly every sector

By Kathryn Reed

The man who oversees the department that accounts for the largest expense on El Dorado County's ledger will face his five bosses Monday.

Sheriff Fred Kollar isn't planning to go into the Board of Supervisors room with guns drawn, but he also isn't about roll over and play dead even though he'll be retiring when the next sheriff takes office in January.



Fred Kollar

To close the $11 million deficit for fiscal year 2011-12 that begins July 1, the county wants to make half the cuts by the end of the year and the next $5.5 million in the first two months of 2011.

The Chief Administrative Office is proposing a 2.7 percent across the board cut for law and justice that would total $1.6 million. The sheriff's department would lose $1.13 million,

probation $264,725, district attorney $152,056, and public defender $74,388.

“The 2.7 percent is somewhat deceptive,” Kollar told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Through early retirement we are going to eliminate 15 positions, which exceeds $1.5 million, so really it is almost 6 percent.”

One thing Kollar knows he will lobby for at the Nov. 1 meeting is to have his old job, that of undersheriff, be put back on the books. When Kollar took over for Jeff Neves, who left office last December before his term was up, undersheriff was wiped off the books instead of just being unfunded.

He is crunching the numbers to see what more could be cut.

“Part of meeting the $1.2 million might be what our organizational structure looks like,” Kollar said. “I want to spend time with the new sheriff. These don’t have to go into affect until Jan. 1. I don’t want to do anything significant to the department and have the new sheriff undo it.”

Human Services Department

For Daniel Nielson, director of the Human Services Department, he is slated to talk to the board Nov. 3.

For now, the $400,000 proposed to be slashed from the Community Service Aging Programs would mean eliminating five of the seven sites where meals are served to seniors. The South Lake Tahoe and Placerville centers are being funded – for now – in this first round of cuts, Nielson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But the cuts mean 25 percent of the seniors getting a hot meal from one of the facilities on the chopping block would not get that meal. Instead, a frozen meal would be delivered, and perhaps once a week instead of five times. This is because health code mandates a hot meal be delivered at a certain

temp, and increasing the driving distance won't allow for that to happen.

Nielson is cognizant is will be a different type of delivered meal. The fresh food, like a salad, will be gone. He also knows the personal connection of the homebound senior and the meal deliverer is huge. But this program is a drain on the bottom line.

The suggested donation for a meal is $3 – eating it at a facility or having it delivered. In 2009-10, the average donation at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center was $1.81 and $2.66 in Placerville. The average collected for home delivery in South Tahoe was 83 cents in that same fiscal year and $1.59 in El Dorado Hills.

El Dorado County served 59,402 meals at its facilities in 2009-10, while 81,761 meals were delivered.

In South Lake Tahoe, there were 10,179 congregate meals served to 1,003 people and 19,547 meals delivered to 645 people.

Tahoe budget meeting

The county conducted an information meeting in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 25 about the proposed budget cuts. Seven members of the public (the city attorney, a council candidate, two county employees, two concerned citizens), three media reps and three county staffers were there.

County officials weren't too disappointed by the turnout considering the Placerville meeting had 30 people.

Concerns that night centered on worries the basin will take a harder hit. (Staff said supes wants to play fair.) Employees questioned their plight compared to managers. (Everyone will be hit, though negotiations are going on now with the county's 15 labor units so nothing is solidified.) Questions about the $540,000 promotions budget not being touched were raised. (The

pledge is being honored to reinvest at least half what is brought in with the hotel tax back into tourism.) Snow removal concerns were voiced. (It won't be impacted.)

"What is it that we don't get when we cut people?" Rhonda McFarlane asked.

Terry Daly, assistant chief administrative officer, said, "We are trying and looking at ways to minimize service cuts. We are working with others to eliminate redundancy. But you are right. If the board decides to cut the UC Extension and your child is in 4-H, that is the service cut."

The Board of Supervisors anticipates taking action on the proposed budget cuts Nov. 15.

Customer protest leads STPUD to change policy

By Kathryn Reed

The Angora Fire of 2007 continues to alter how entities in the Lake Tahoe Basin do business.

No longer do owners of vacant lots where houses once stood have to pay for water and sewer when they aren't using either.



The Angora Fire continues to shape policy in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/Kathryn Reed

An owner of a lot protested the continued fees. It brought about change this month by the South Tahoe Public Utility District board.

About 75 of the 254 lots that lost a house are still empty. But the owners kept getting STPUD bills. The board modified the regulation so the owner still has the water hookup and won’t have to pay for that again.

In the past when a house burned down South Tahoe PUD would suspend fees for two quarters. The thinking is in most structure fires people rebuild immediately. With something like a massive wildfire, not everyone rebuilds immediately, if ever.

It is customary for people with vacant lots that have never been built on to not pay any sewer-water fees until the connection is made. Water is turned on per fire codes when building begins. Sewer hookup is part of the final phase.

With quarterly sewer-water bills for STPUD about $200 per residence, this change in policy affecting the burn area will save those property owners a good deal of money going forward.

Vail Resorts buys second Tahoe resort – Northstar

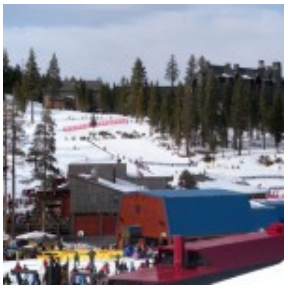
Updated: Oct. 25, 2010, 4:50pm.

By Kathryn Reed

Vail Resorts has expanded its footprint on the greater Lake Tahoe area with the announcement Oct. 25 of its acquisition of Northstar-at-Tahoe.

The Colorado-based company acquired the stock of the companies that operate Northstar-at-Tahoe from Booth Creek Resort Properties LLC and other sellers for $63 million. The Truckee ski area is on land owned by CNL Lifestyle Properties Inc. Vail now has a long-term lease, the details of which have not be disclosed, with CNL.

Sierra-at-Tahoe is not affected by the transaction. It is still owned by Booth Creek.



Northstar-at-Tahoe is now owned by Vail Resorts. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“We truly see this as a positive thing,” Sierra spokeswoman Kirstin Cattell told *Lake Tahoe News*. No changes are being

made to Sierra's management team.

George Gillett, chief executive officer, Chris Ryman, president and chief operating officer, and Betsy Cole, executive vice president and chief financial officer of Booth Creek, will no longer have management positions at Northstar. Julie Maurer, vice president of marketing and sales at Booth Creek, is now vice president of marketing with Vail Resorts, overseeing the marketing and sales of Heavenly and Northstar.

John Wagnon will remain as vice president of marketing at Heavenly.

A general manager, who still needs to be hired, will oversee Northstar much like Pete Sonntag was brought in this summer to run Heavenly.

Kelly Ladyga, spokeswoman for Vail Resorts, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We have been watching Northstar. It has been one of the fastest growing resorts in North America for the past few years. It has substantial and diverse terrain, and a new and modern base village."

Northstar, under the ownership of Booth Creek, had a renaissance in the last several years with terrain being added, along with lifts. The mid-mountain lodge was rebuilt after arsonists caused significant damage several years ago.

East West Partners, a company that is now in bankruptcy, developed the LEED-certified village.

A Ritz-Carlton opened mid-mountain last December with mixed results during the recession.

"There are no immediate plans for capital improvements (at the resort)," Ladyga said.

She would not comment if other acquisitions are in the works or being talked about. This is normal for the publicly traded company. However, it's possible news could be forthcoming

after the Dec. 3 annual stockholders meeting in Colorado.

Vail earlier this month bought Accommodation Station to be able to offer Heavenly skiers a lodging package.

Vail is used to having its properties being associated with high-end lodging. Beaver Creek has a Ritz and its other Colorado resorts have lodging that caters to a crowd with money.

Heavenly is Vail Resorts' only ski area to not be associated with a lodging component. Vail bought Heavenly Mountain Resort in 2000 from American Ski Company. It has pumped millions of dollars into the California-Nevada resort, with the latest infusion of cash going to a mid-mountain lodge that will open in February.

Vail was going to be the hotel owner at the now bankrupt convention center, but both sides ended that partnership before Randy Lane filed for bankruptcy a year ago. Rumors are still rampant Vail Resorts would like to run a hotel operation across from the Heavenly gondola in South Lake Tahoe.

Season passholders at Northstar, Heavenly and Sierra have a chance to ski all three areas this year. People who bought the Double Whammy pass will still be able to ski Northstar.

Ladyga said people with the $799 unlimited Double Whammy may exchange it for the $629 Epic pass, get a refund, and ski at all the Colorado resorts Vail owns in addition to retaining the right to ski at Sierra.

People who buy Heavenly's $349 season pass will be able to ski there, Northstar and Sierra this winter, Ladyga said.

The EpicMix, which Vail is introducing this season, will be available at Northstar in 2011-12.