Dugard wants nothing to do with biological father

By Robert Salonga, Contra Costa Times

Jaycee Dugard and her family are not interested in attempts by Dugard's biological father to establish paternity, according to a family spokeswoman.

Dugard's biological father, Kenneth Slayton, initially expressed his desire to reunite with Dugard shortly after she resurfaced last fall following 18 years in captivity.



Jaycee Lee Dugard

A statement released today by Dugard spokeswoman Nancy Seltzer asserts that Slayton showed no investment in his daughter's life until her ordeal drew international attention.

When Dugard's mother, Terry Probyn, told Slayton she was pregnant, he showed no interest, according to the statement. It further says that Slayton had similar reaction upon learning of her kidnapping and during interviews with federal and local law enforcement officials.

Read the whole story

Stateline’s Villalobos files for bankruptcy

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Buried under gambling debts and a lawsuit accusing him of bribing pension fund officials, former CalPERS board member Alfred Villalobos has filed for bankruptcy protection.

The Chapter 11 reorganization petition, filed last week in Reno, creates a major new wrinkle in California’s lawsuit against Villalobos – and touches off a tug-of-war over his vast fortune.

Villalobos lost control of his holdings last month. Lawyers for Attorney General Jerry Brown, arguing that the Stateline man would squander his money supporting his “prolific” gambling habit, seized his assets in order to pursue a $95 million lawsuit against him alleging bribery and fraud.

Read the whole story

Reno firm helping clean oil covered beaches

By Lenita Powers, Reno Gazette-Journal

BeachTech, a Reno firm that sells beach cleaning machines, has been helping the city of Gulf Shores, Ala., remove tar balls

from its coastline and recently sold 10 of the machines to BP, its sales manager said today.

Scott Merrill, BeachTech's sales manager, said officials for BP, the British company that owned the Deepwater Horizon rig that exploded in April and touched off the worst oil spill in U.S. history, came down last weekend to see how effective the machines are.

"Last week, some BP honchos came down to see what we were doing and we got an order for 10 machines that night," Merrill said.

Read the whole story

Ex-Tahoe CCC employee wins retaliation lawsuit

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

A woman who spoke up for female California Conservation Corps members who were the targets of alleged sexual transgressions won a retaliation lawsuit Tuesday from the state agency that had fired her.

Margaret Grodzik won a $159,000 award from a Sacramento Superior Court jury, which also found that the CCC failed to reasonably accommodate the 66-year-old woman, who suffered from diabetes and a heart condition.

"Heroes come in all sizes and packages," Grodzik's lawyer, Jill P. Telfer, said after the verdict. "This one was a grandmother. She was tenacious. She went everywhere for help and exhausted every single avenue. Her last resort was the

courtroom."

Read the whole story

Lukewarm optimism echoes at real estate symposium

By Austin Fay

INCLINE VILLAGE – "At least, it appears the worst is over."

Economist Lawrence Yun gave a somewhat optimistic forecast to almost 500 agents from around the country during the multi-day National Association of Realtors' Resort and Second Home Symposium at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe in Incline.

Yun described the worldwide economic condition as a "100- or 200-year flood" that won't happen again for "at least another 100 years."



Lawrence Yun talks real estate numbers on June 14 in Incline. Photo/Austin Fay

“But right now we are in the midst of that flood and the waters are beginning to recede,” Yun said Monday.

International homebuyers from Brazil, India and China are expected to replace the baby boomers as the indispensable demographic in the U.S. resort and second-home market. About one-third of all international resort and second homes sales are to Canadians and Mexicans.

As long as people around the world see the U.S. as a symbol of financial security and are “putting American dollars underneath their mattresses,” the long-term prospects are sound, Yun assured the Realtors.

Yun is the chief economist of the NAR and has a decorated past, having been instrumental in the shift from a centralized economy to a market-based economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He also helped establish economics departments in Russian universities.

California’s outlook: Slow recovery

California’s median price for a single-family home could double as a barometer for the national resort and second-home market. There is a strong correlation between resort and second-home sales to primary residences in California. California is often referred to as one big resort in real estate circles.

There were side conversations at the convention about home prices becoming inflated again as the market begins to turn around. In the first quarter of 2008, $246,000 was the median price for a house sold in California. For the same quarter in 2009, it was $305,000 – a 21 percent increase.

The trend hasn’t reached Tahoe quite yet. In South Lake Tahoe, median home sales price in the first quarter of 2009 (excluding Tahoe Keys) was $326,000 (16 percent decline from 2008 median price of $390,000); the median home sales price in

the first quarter of 2010 was $317,500, a decrease of 3 percent from last year.

This trend indicates the decline in median prices on the South Shore is slowing.

As for the Tahoe City and North Shore (excluding Incline Village), median sales prices for the first three months of 2010 was $453,000 versus the same period in 2009 at $400,000. That's a 12 percent increase.

These statistics indicate the North Shore median home price is about 4 percent higher than the South Shore in the first part of 2010.

Deb Howard of Deb Howard & Co. was instrumental in bringing the symposium to Incline Village. She's been apart of the NAR since its inception eight years ago and is a 31-year real estate veteran in South Lake Tahoe.

When asked if elements of the keynote speeches were alarming or disturbing, Howard told *Lake Tahoe News* concerns of a supply shortage could spell inflated home prices.

"That's just one of those little sleeper things … with population growth, immigration, and the lack of financial support to develop, we're going to have a real collision, then here we go again," Howard said, in reference to her feeling of impending inflation in resort and second-home markets.

However, housing markets across the nation, including the resort and second-home markets, are plagued by excess supply.

Steve Goddard, president of the California Association of Realtors, has a different take on the state of the housing market of California.

"We're coming back and doing quite well now … the investors and the buyers have discovered that the California market has stabilized, and if they want to buy property, now is the

time," Goddard said, lightly pounding the lectern as he stood giving his blend of sales pitch and speech.

One could say now is the time to buy in Nevada too because of the abundance of foreclosures. Nevada is No. 1 in the nation in foreclosure rates, with one in every 74 homes receiving a foreclosure notice.

Linda Rheinberger, president of the Nevada Association of Realtors, spoke of her "new friends" Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The state is struggling to hedge its spiraling unemployment and foreclosure rates. Nevada's recovery is greatly intertwined with the national tourism and gaming industry. For the past two years gaming revenues have been in steep decline because of the recession as many of Nevada's visitors are holding onto their discretionary dollars much tighter.

TRPA reorganization comes with 5 layoffs

By Kathryn Reed

A shake-up at TRPA means five employees lost their jobs last week.

The reorganization is part of the strategic plan the Governing Board will be presented with June 24. The goals of the plan are threshold gain, operational efficiency, streamlining, and

community engagement/public service.

The other thing the board will entertain next week is a formal ethics policy – something the bi-state agency has never had.

Julie Regan, chief spokesperson for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, said management realizes the public perception is money can buy permits and help cut corners. She said the reality is this does not happen.

A formal ethics policy is designed to put in writing that there is no tolerance for favors and to outline consequences if perception turns to reality.

Other staff changes include Jerry Wells losing his title of deputy director and becoming special projects chief. He is spending half his time on the Regional Plan update and the other half on special projects like Homewood. His old job has been eliminated.

Executive Director Joanne Marchetta would eventually like to hire a chief operating officer.

With the elimination of four program managers and a long-range land use planner on June 10, the idea is every employee will work on thresholds. A new position of resource integration specialist will be created. Two new planners will be hired as well – one part of the reorg, the other because someone voluntarily left.

“With efficiency we want to breakdown the silos. Planning is now all in one department – short and long range. That is a departure from the past,” Regan explained. “We want people to think holistically. We are going to have to approach the environment in an integrated fashion.”

A cost-savings will be realized in the short-term, but in the long run the reorganization will not help the bottom line.

LTCC, Bijou Park fuel project to be done without chain saws

By Kathryn Reed

Thousands of trees will be removed from nearly 200 acres in the heart of South Lake Tahoe this month.

The fuels reduction project is concentrated on the campus of Lake Tahoe Community College and across Al Tahoe Boulevard at Bijou Community Park. Work will not interfere with graduation or the upcoming disc golf tournament.

Nor should it disturb neighbors. This is because the loud hum of chain saws won't be audible.



The equipment used in 2009 at Cold Creek is being used this year. Photo/Danielle Banchio

"There are two standard pieces of equipment. One is a harvester. That does the job of what a gentleman and a chain saw did. It is mechanized equipment. An automated saw cuts the

tree at the base and lays it on the ground," explained Danielle Banchio of North Valley Resource Management. "The forwarder is the second piece of equipment. It follows the harvester through the stand and picks up the logs. It looks like a mini logging truck."

The ground disturbance is kept to a minimum because a skidder is not used.

College officials were told the equipment often attracts spectators because it is still unique.

The only disruption to the college should be some of the trails behind it near Trout Creek will be off-limits while crews are working. Equipment will be brought in on South Tahoe Public Utility District roads when possible to reduce the need to be in the college parking lot.

"We will get some of the logs and use them at the Ledbetter Terrace," Sue Niehoff, vice president of Business Services said.

Work could start this week, next week at the latest. Completion is expected to take at least three weeks.



Trees at Lake Tahoe Community College will come down this month. Photo/Kathryn

Cross Check Services, a logging company in Olympic Valley, will be cutting the trees. No more than 500,000 board feet is expected to be culled from the 190 acres. Some of the smaller trees will be used for firewood.

Banchio, who is a registered forester, was hired by the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department as the consultant. Her firm based out of Taylorsville is responsible for designing the project, deciding what treatment to use, and writing the environmental documents for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and CalFire.

“We are conducting thinning from below. We will start with the smallest, most suppressed trees with a live green crown,” Banchio said. “There aren’t many ladder fuels. We are not seeing 6-foot Manzanita. In that area we need to thin the tree crown.”

The idea is in a wind-driven fire, like Angora in 2007, the flames jump from treetop to treetop because the crowns are so close together. Projects like this one are designed to reduce that threat. If a fire occurs, ideally it stays on the ground where it is easier to fight and spreads less quickly.

Money for the project is coming from federal stimulus, Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, and a U.S. Forest Service grant.

Banchio, who is in her third year of working with South Lake Tahoe, expects the city’s fuel reduction projects to be completed in 2011.

Half pound pot confiscated, 2 arrested

By Kathryn Reed

A routine traffic stop in South Lake Tahoe ended with a free night's lodging for a couple guys from Utah.

The problem for them is the lodging was at the county jail Tuesday night.



Officer Jake Herminghaus speaks to a suspect on June 15. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The two are accused of having a half pound of marijuana in their possession – a felony.

Officer Jake Herminghaus said he smelled marijuana coming from the vehicle when he pulled the two over behind the Denny's at Highway 50 and Al Tahoe Boulevard about 12:30pm June 15.

Herminghaus said that kind of find isn't unusual, but it doesn't happen every day either.

An ounce of marijuana sells for about $300, so the value of what the two Utah guys reportedly were transporting was about

$2,400.

Thousands of ballots not counted in June primary

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

It’s the flip side of vote-by-mail ballots.

As the number of people voting by mail balloons in California, another trend is growing, too: Thousands of California ballots went uncounted in last Tuesday’s election because they arrived too late – after polls closed at 8 p.m.

“It’s very sad to see,” lamented William E. Schultz, El Dorado County’s registrar of voters. “I think that probably the Legislature should think about having a five-day window for ballots to be received, and as long as the county has not certified the election … to give the voter a right to have his vote counted.”

Read the whole story

El Dorado sheriff’s candidates sharpen focus for

November

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County sheriff’s election runoff between John D’Agostini and Craig Therkildsen will offer much clearer alternatives than the primary.

With a half-dozen candidates and a welter of issues – gangs, budgets, concealed weapons, patrol strategies and more – primary voters needed a spreadsheet to keep things straight.

D’Agostini and Therkildsen, however, offer distinct – if not opposing – visions in the runoff.

Read the whole story