STHS ushers in new era with opening of CAT building

By Kathryn Reed

Walking into the Construction, Arts and Transportation Academy students could be heard saying, “Wow!” – “It smells good.” – “It smells weird.”

It was all of the above and then some Monday on the first day of instruction in the new building on the campus of South Tahoe High School.

With only one class – small engines – being taught first period, it was rather quiet. But a certain amount of excitement was evident from this group of freshmen.



Nathan Wieburg is the first student in the new building at South Tahoe High on Monday. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Nathan Wieburg was the first person through the door.

“It’s lots better. The shop was dirty, bolts were everywhere

and the desks were falling apart," Wieburg said as he descended the stairs to the auto shop.

With all the teachers who will call the CAT building their home bringing classes in for a tour prior to last week's spring break, the students knew where to go. The guys flew down the stairs – the first staircase in the district.

Security guard Troy Gregory was holding the door for each student.

The 17 students fill the stools before the four rows of tables. Some huddled by teacher Mike Patterson's desk to get a locker.

"They built this for you," he tells the students. "You need to help take care of it."

A little glitch is the wrong lockers arrived. For now students will share. When the correct ones arrive they'll each have one to store notebooks, safety glasses and coveralls.

Something new for Patterson is having a desk.



Teacher Mike Patterson, left, talks with students.

Adjacent to the classroom is the lab area for the small engine class. Behind the classroom is the mega-auto shop with mostly new devices. What could be saved from the old shop was. But next week Patterson is looking forward to being trained on the

state-of-the-art alignment rack.

It’s not just engines the group of guys handles. (This is the first year in a while no girls have signed up for the class.) Patterson is having them put in the shelf for their workbenches by figuring out which drawer to remove, the need for a No. 3 Phillips screwdriver and an 11mm wrench.

“I think it’s pretty cool. It’ s a lot newer and nicer. We’ll be able to do more,” said Kyle Rossi as he and Jason Elder worked on putting in the shelf.

Their tools fill the top two drawers. The bottom two and the cabinet are for engines and engine parts.



Kyle Rossi assesses what to do on his work station.

Patterson told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I think this sends a really important message that taking career technical education classes is important to the district. I think they sent the opposite message before.”

Despite the significance of this being the first building to open with the $64.5 million voter approved bond money, no district office personnel or school board members were there to witness the occasion.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District Director of Facilities Steve Morales had been at the school since 5:15am – but that

isn’t unusual.

“We still have some loose ends,” Morales said. But the smile on his face was similar to that of a new parent. Video distribution should be installed in the next few days and white boards will arrive in a few weeks.

With this building open three months ahead of schedule, it means the little theater is being demolished now. A sign warning about asbestos is on one door. The clanging of SMC Contracting workers can be heard on the other side of the chain link fence.

Lots of metal fencing will remain at the school. Those getting to the CAT building must go through the C Wing. In an emergency, all doors would be available to students in the CAT building.

Because ground will be broken in May on the media arts center, the school will remain a construction zone for quite a while. That structure will go directly in front of the CAT.

Snow removal protection for Tahoe-Truckee gains traction

Legislation by Assemblyman Ted Gaines, R–Roseville, that would protect vital snow removal funding in Sierra Nevada, passed the Assembly Transportation Committee with bipartisan support on Monday.

“Snow removal is critical to help keep our mountain communities like South Lake Tahoe and Truckee safe and prosperous during the winter months,” Gaines said in a

statement. “Not only do our roads need to remain passable at all times, but any cut to road funding in these areas would threaten public safety, the local economy and the ability for our kids to get to school in the winter months.”



Ted Gaines

Assembly Bill 2704 would ensure snow removal funding will be preserved if any allocation to local governments for road maintenance is suspended or rejected.

Last year, the Legislature narrowly escaped passing a redirection of Highway User Tax Account funds, which would have threatened money intended for local street and road maintenance.

Power on after vehicle takes out pole on Kingsbury Grade

By Kathryn Reed

A vehicle accident on Kingsbury Grade just after midnight Monday knocked out power to 2,300 customers.

All customers but the one located closest to the intersection of Kingsbury Grade and Terrace View Drive had power back on by 7:30am.

Businesses and residents on Lower Kingsbury Grade in Stateline are on a different transformer and therefore were not inconvenienced by the outage.

Fay Anderson with NV Energy said the impact broke the power pole.

The suspect fled the scene, but it’s not known in what direction. The Nevada Highway Patrol, which is investigating the accident, said it was a black four-door Lexus with California plates. A sergeant said there’s a good possibility alcohol was involved in the 12:30am accident.

Anyone with information is asked to call the NHP at (775) 688.2500.

Property tax scam warning in El Dorado County

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County residents are being advised to beware of mailers offering to reduce property taxes for a fee.

County Assessor Tim Holcomb said property owners can obtain the same tax relief without a fee by contacting the Assessor’s Office.

The latest mailer, from Property Tax Assessor Records Corp., offers to help homeowners obtain a homeowner’s exemption or value review, according to an Assessor’s Office news release.

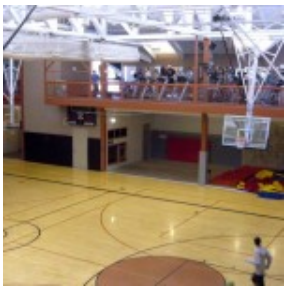
Read the whole story

Douglas County Parks and Rec tries to do more with less

By Kathryn Reed

Even though nearly $1 million has been cut from the Douglas County Parks and Recreation budget in three years, expansion and improvements are always being considered.

Kahle Community Center in Stateline would like to develop its open attic space that is sitting unused. This would add about 2,000 square feet to the 22,000-square-foot gym.



Kahle Community Center is busy most hours of the day. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Different ideas have been talked about through the years, including a dance or boxing studio. More recently, having a commercial grade Wii fitness area has been bouncing around.

“We’d like to convert it to a specialized fitness facility,” said Scott Morgan, director of the parks department. “It would

be a significant enhancement.”

Like most things, funding is the issue.

Morgan believes the clientele exists on the South Shore for such a facility that might appeal more to teens and young adults.

Even though part of the multi-level facility is 15 years old, and another section is 10, it looks in good condition. In the middle of the day people are playing basketball, running on the indoor track and pumping iron.

A few years ago Ray Sidney with Big George Ventures paid to have a lid put on the 800-square-foot gymnastics area.

Morgan said the number of users at Kahle has not changed much as the area has been hit by a sagging economy. In fact, he said, “Business is booming.”

Still, the parks department is taking a $350,00 hit for the next fiscal year. The department lost $300,000 for the current year and the same amount for the previous year.

“Mainly you see a reduction in service levels in our park facilities,” Morgan said. “No longer is there a nighttime ranger in all of our facilities.”

That person was responsible for making sure lights came on when they were supposed to and sprinklers weren’t soaking a field where people expected to play.

Hours have been cut, including at Kahle.

Eighteen people are expected to lose their jobs in the next fiscal year, with 3.3 full-time positions cut. In the 2009-10 budget Morgan had to cut 5.4 full-time jobs and 7.4 in 2008-09.

Tennis courts are not getting their regular maintenance.

However, a $10,000 donation from the Zephyr Cove Tennis Club will allow for a crack and color coat on those courts once the snow is melted.

At Lake Tahoe, the parks department runs Kahle, Zephyr Cove Park, the park at the top of Kingsbury Grade, and the Round Hill bike path. There are 14 facilities in the Carson Valley.

Douglas County has until May 17 to finalize its 2010-11 budget that begins July 1. Commissioners last week could not decide how to trim more than $2 million.

Smoke-free Nevada casinos?

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

Perhaps no executive understands the dilemma the Nevada gaming industry is facing over smoking in casinos better than Jeff Siri, CEO and president of the Club Cal Neva in downtown Reno.

A few years ago, cancerous tumors were removed from his bladder. Siri, a nonsmoker, thinks they were caused by the second-hand smoke he had been exposed to during his career.

“I am the only person in my family who has ever had cancer,” Siri said. “So, it has to be something in the environment and not something hereditary.”

Yet, Siri takes a firm pro-smoking stance when it comes to Nevada’s Clean Indoor Air Act of 2006, which allows smoking in casinos but bans it in almost all other locations.

Read the whole story

LTCC to interview 10 for VP position



By Kathryn Reed

Ten candidates will be interviewed Thursday and Friday for the position of vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services for Lake Tahoe Community College.

Until this year there had been a dean for Academic Affairs and one for Student Services. With Lori Gaskin's departure at the end of last school year, Susan Middleton added Academic Affairs to her list of job duties.

Middleton is retiring at the end of this school year. The college is staying with one person doing both jobs, which is a cost savings of more than $100,000.

Several of the candidates are from out of state. It is not known if any are local.

The interview panel hopes to narrow the list to three finalists by the end of the day Friday.

The college board at its April 13 meeting came up with a few different dates in April and May to interview the finalists, with nothing locked in.

The idea is to have someone on board so there is a seamless transition.

Records of lax parole supervision emerge in Garrido case

By San Stanton, Sacramento Bee

For nearly a year after Phillip Garrido was put on supervised parole in California in 1999, parole agents never bothered to visit him at home.

They did not perform the standard parolee interview, assess him or check his living arrangements, as is routine.



Phillip Garrido

And although GPS monitoring showed he was spending large amounts of time in his Antioch-area backyard, there's no evidence parole agents ever investigated why.

That yard is where authorities say he kept Jaycee Lee Dugard captive for 18 years after allegedly kidnapping her in 1991 when she was 11.

Read the whole story

Foothill wineries working hard to keep frost from vines

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – As winter lingers at Lake Tahoe, grape growers at lower elevations in El Dorado and Amador counties are hoping spring weather becomes the norm.

Most of the vineyards are still dormant, with the Chardonnay grapes just beginning to bud. It's that bud break combined with freezing temperatures that can destroy a harvest.

Thin-skinned grapes like Pinot Noir are more vulnerable to inclement weather, too. Cabernet grapes tend to survive nasty weather because they bud late.



No frost damage on these El Dorado County vines. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Madrona Vineyards owner-winemaker Paul Bush has been posting regularly this month to Facebook about the cold temperatures.

An April 12 post says, “On the drive home, I did happen to see a wild dogwood tree blooming. Technically, it did snow on the dogwood today. And if you believe the old wives’ tale that once it snows on the dogwood it won’t freeze again in the spring, then we should be in the clear. I must say I am not superstitious, but I’ve never seen this wives’ tale to fail.”

Bush has a weather station in his Placerville vineyards. He keeps a close eye on air and leaf temperatures, and wind speed.

Raymond McKay at Chateau Rodin said buds were not coming out 3.5 weeks ago when he pruned. The Chardonnay is now beginning to push – which means the green is coming out.

The earlier vines are pruned, the earlier budding occurs.

“One advantage to being on a slope is you have constant air drainage. Frost only does damage when it’s still,” McKay said. He has 17.5 acres in Placerville.

That’s why vineyards in low lying areas or in valleys often use wind machines to stir the air so frost can’t settle on the vines. Frost can cause damage at about 31 degrees after about 30 minutes. It’s the hours of 3-5am that are most worrisome as the mercury falls to its lowest point.

Amador County has the low Shenandoah Valley. Wind machines are more apt to be whirring there than in El Dorado County. With so much Zinfandel planted in both counties, those hearty vines are doing fine. No reports of severe damage have come in.



Boeger's grounds are in full bloom.

Greg Boeger said he and his colleagues in the wine business wouldn’t begin to breath easy until the second week of May when the threat of a freeze should be long gone.

“It’s been really exciting,” Boeger said of the spring weather. He owns Boeger Winery in Placerville. “For the most part to date we have dodged a bullet.”

He’s been running sprinklers on the higher elevation vineyards to protect against frost. Sprinkler systems raise the temperature in the vineyard.

Charlie Jones, vineyard manager at Lava Cap Winery, said, “During a hard frost late in the spring, a winery could lose half of its fruit or more.”

Rain isn’t a concern; it’s the temperatures.

Richard Stading, owner-winemaker at Auriga Wine Cellars in Camino, is hoping all the moisture will mean a bountiful harvest like what occurred in 2005, 2007 and 2009.



Richard Stading

“A lot of white wines will probably come in early. The reds will probably be good if we wait,” Stading said.

Jon Knox Springmeyer 1950-2010

A celebration of life is scheduled for 2pm April 24 in Gardnerville for fourth-generation Nevada native and Douglas High School graduate Jon Knox Springmeyer, 59, who died April 10, 2010, at his home in Carson City. He was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 2005.

Born April 25, 1950, on Carson City to Melvin “Buzz” and Marjorie Johnson Springmeyer, both of whom were early Carson Valley settlers.

While growing up on the family’s J Lazy J Ranch, he helped his father run cattle up to South Lake Tahoe. It was during this time that his love of the outdoors and his appreciation of Native American culture emerged.



Jon Knox Springmeyer

A 1968 graduate of Douglas High School, Mr. Springmeyer went on to earn a business degree at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1972. It was at UNR that his cowboy charisma attracted the attention of Bonnie Connolly. After meeting on a blind date, the two quickly became inseparable and were married in 1971 following a two-year courtship.

After graduating from the McGeorge School of Law in 1980, he established a private practice in Carson City, where he quickly developed a reputation for treating his clients as close friends. Later Mr. Springmeyer joined his long time friend and mentor, John Reiser, at Reiser & Associates Insurance. He cared deeply about helping others, both in his professional and personal life and was always available to offer advice and guidance.

“Jon was a man every person should strive to be more like and we are all better people for having had him in our lives,” said friend Steve Sperry. “He will be missed more than can be imagined.”

Mr. Springmeyer’s hobbies included camping, archery, muzzle loading and attending Burning Man. He loved entertaining his friends with anecdotes and practical jokes.

“Jon would focus his attention on those around him, and always welcomed visitors,” said son Erin. “He loved life and fought for every moment he had with his friends and family.”

In addition to his wife of 38 years, he is survived by his mother Marjorie; sons Erin (Diane) and Ryan (Rachel); and daughter Sara.

The celebration of life is at the home of Kelly Connolly, 2276 Pinenut Road, Gardnerville, NV 89410. Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society in Mr. Springmeyer’s name. For more information, visit www.cancer.org.