

Ex-SLT firefighter pleads guilty to child porn

By Kathryn Reed

Nearly two years after being arrested on child pornography charges, former South Lake Tahoe fire Capt. Mark Wygant was in federal court in Sacramento on Dec. 16 to plead guilty to one charge.



Mark Wygant

A plea deal brought the original six charges involving sexual exploitation and attempted sexual exploitation of minors down to one charge of transportation of child pornography.

He will be sentenced at a future date. Wygant faces between five and 20 years in prison. Since his arrest in January 2015 he has been held in the Sacramento County jail.

"I am pleased that Mr. Wygant pleaded guilty to his crime and the punishment will now be in the hands of the criminal justice system," Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A flash drive was found in an unassigned locker at a city fire station containing more than 5,000 images of children engaged in sexually explicit conduct and more than 50 video files depicting child pornography, according to court records.

The crimes began in March 2011 and were ongoing until at least December 2014.

The 46-year-old resigned from the department in February 2015. During his employment with South Lake Tahoe he was living with his family in Chico.

NLTRA executive director calling it quits



Sandy Evans
Hall

North Lake Tahoe Resort Association is in need of a new leader.

Executive Director Sandy Evans Hall tendered her resignation, though it is not effective until July 1.

"My time here has been invaluable," Hall said in a statement. "In addition to career accomplishments, I have thoroughly enjoyed our local landscape by paddling the entire shoreline of Lake Tahoe, hiking all of the Tahoe Rim Trail and 180 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail."

She is returning to Colorado where she has family. Hall came to Tahoe in 2010.

Casino industry gradually charging for parking



Stateline casinos – for now – are leaving their parking lots open to everyone. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

What happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas.

When it comes to the casino industry Las Vegas is a trendsetter. And the latest trend is charging for parking at casinos.

“Paid parking is a topic we have recently been discussing at STAR. It’s not something that has a lot of understanding yet, but the point is over this last summer both Hard Rock and MontBleu began charging for parking periodically,” Mike

Bradford with the South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This action is something that historically was considered verboten. Now I think there is growing recognition there is probably a place for it."

Among the five Stateline casinos there is vast acreage covered in asphalt as well as multistoried parking structures. Today, it's usually free to park – even in valet, though tipping there is the norm. People not patronizing the casinos even park in those lots. Skiers are regularly at Harrah's to avoid the high-priced city owned garage at Heavenly Village.

The overflow of concert-goers for the Harveys summer concerts is what led Hard Rock and MontBleu to charge people last summer.

"What ended up happening is customers were using our parking lot and going across the street so it was displacing our casino guests," Marimille Dacia, MontBleu marketing director, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We charged \$20 cash and then gave \$20 credit to (use in the casino), so if you used our facility, you got your money back."

MontBleu charged during the outdoor concerts and the celebrity golf tournament. Dacia said at this time there is no plan to charge for parking on a regular basis.

No one from Hard Rock Lake Tahoe returned calls.

The MGM properties in Vegas were the first to charge; implementing the policy earlier this year. Last month, Caesars Entertainment, which owns Harrah's and Harveys, announced it was going to institute paid parking at its Southern Nevada properties.

"Our priority is to ensure that our hotel guests, local residents and Total Rewards loyalty members have an improved parking experience," Bob Morse, president of hospitality at Caesars Entertainment, said in a press release. "Guests who

stay, game and shop at our resorts have said that parking spaces and valet services have become increasingly scarce, so we believe that implementing a paid parking program while also investing in LED parking guidance systems will help address these issues.”

For now, at least four of the Stateline casinos do not intend to charge for parking on a regular basis. But the powers that be are keeping an eye on their counterparts down south.

“It is private property. The open parking in back is intended for guests of our properties, so if we wanted to do something, it would be within our rights to do so,” John Packer, spokesman for Harrah’s-Harveys, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Bradford, who operates the Lakeside Inn, said while his lot will remain free for now, the bigger discussion by STAR has been looking at the possibility of generating income from the lots for the greater good of the community.

“As we ultimately talk about how to fund local transit and how to make it work, parking is one of the pieces of that puzzle,” Bradford said. “There is no immediate direction to formalize that approach, but the evolution of forming that is possible.”

Maloff donation to WHS increases to \$3 million

South Shore philanthropist Lisa Maloff this week increased her donation to Whittell High School by \$500,000, bringing the total to \$3 million.

The Douglas County School District board on Dec. 13 accepted

the donation.

It was announced in **July** that Maloff would be writing the check to improve the football field and track at the Zephyr Cove school.

The price to do the work turned out to be more than district officials estimated. The increased donation will allow for the necessary work to be completed. This includes making the stadium ADA compliant, putting in turf, improving drainage, adding a six-lane synthetic track, building an announcer's booth and concession stand. The triple jump and long jump pits will also be improved.

The plan is to go out for bid this winter, with construction starting as soon as the snow melts.

"We probably will not be able to use the field next season so we will have to make arrangements to have home games at different facilities," DCSD Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Maloff is the widow of Bob Maloff. He co-owned and operated Lake Tahoe Inn and Timber Cove Lodge in South Lake Tahoe. Plus, he had other significant real estate dealings. Promoting wellness, activity, and fitness in the community have long been goals of the Maloffs.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Arrest made in Truckee rape

case

A man accused of raping a woman in Truckee last month was charged this week.

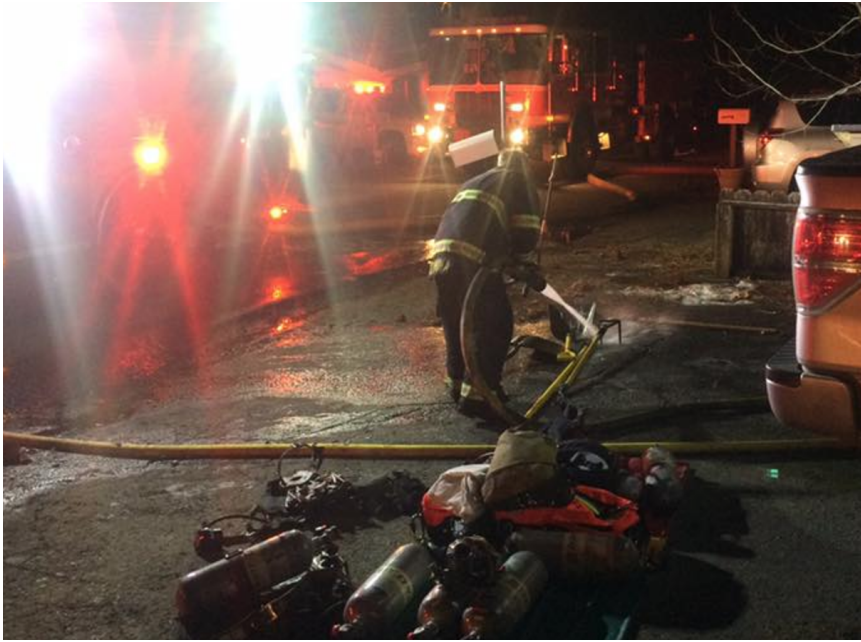
Douglas Scott Thomas, 25, of San Diego was apprehended in Boise, Idaho. He was booked into Nevada County jail on Dec. 14. The jail lists his job as a firefighter.

As of Dec. 15 he remained in custody, with bail set at \$100,000.

The incident occurred Nov. 14. The crime reportedly occurred when the victim was unconscious. She told officers about the crime that day.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Structure fire displaces 4 in S. Lake Tahoe



South Lake Tahoe crews at a Dec. 14 structure fire. Photo/Provided

Residents of a fourplex in the 700 block of Merced Avenue in South Lake Tahoe sustained minor injuries Wednesday from a fire in their unit.

The couple had escaped unharmed but then went inside to retrieve a pet and belongings.

Four people were displaced.

The fire started in the bottom unit. Damage is estimated at \$400,000.

The cause of the Dec. 14 blaze is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Dead forests create gold rush for tree cutters

By Thomas Curwen, Los Angeles Times

A low gargle echoes against granite cliffs and resounds in the wooded canyons.

Each pull of a starter handle and squeeze of a throttle is punctuated by the crack of splintering wood as another dead tree falls in a forest that's changing all too rapidly.

Estimates by the U.S. Forest Service put the number of dead trees in California forests at 102 million, broad swaths that officials call a wildfire and public safety risk. Declaring a state of emergency last fall when the count stood at 40 million, Gov. Jerry Brown ordered state agencies to clear the hazards.

"There is a Gold Rush for those of us who are willing to bust ass," says Niles Kant, who charges \$1,700 a day for his services.

Read the whole story

Trump's Nev. campaign ally criticizes climate

questionnaire

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal



Mark Amodei

A Congressman who served as the Nevada campaign chairman for President-elect Donald Trump said it was a mistake for the Trump transition team to ask questions that seemed to target employees who worked on climate change issues.

In an interview Wednesday, Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Carson City, said a questionnaire circulated at the Department of Energy suggests the incoming administration is putting the politics of climate change ahead of the issue of confronting it.

Both Amodei and Alan Gertler, vice president for research and chief science officer for Desert Research Institute, said data-driven research is critical to sound decisions on climate.

[Read the whole story](#)

Missing South Tahoe woman

found safe



Tara Dawn
Johnson

Updated 3:28pm:

A 46-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman who had been reported missing was found safe on Thursday, as was her dog.

A caregiver for Tara Dawn Johnson reported that Johnson left her apartment near Bonanza Avenue and F Street at about 10:30pm Dec. 14. Johnson was with her black and white Chihuahua Bert.

She was discovered walking in the area of Highway 50 and Al Tahoe Boulevard on the afternoon of Dec. 15.

“She was wet with the rain and cold, but otherwise seemed healthy. Johnson explained she had walked away of her own accord and found shelter on her own last night. There appears to have been no foul play involved in this case,” police officers said in a press release.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Weather related issues impact Tahoe travel

Expect delays on Highway 89 near Emerald Bay this morning.

High winds have caused a utility line to droop. Caltrans says the northbound lane is closed and there is no estimated time when it will reopen.

The line is near Cascade Road on the South Shore. This is where the Emerald Fire burned earlier this fall.

Other road related issues for Dec. 15 include chain controls being in effect on Highway 88 near Kirkwood, according to the California Highway Patrol.

A winter storm warning remains in effect for the Lake Tahoe Basin above 7,000 feet from 10am Thursday through 4am Friday. High winds are going to an issue for much of today.

Flooding along the Truckee River is possible. Authorities warn that 6 inches of water can knock a person down and 2 feet of water can sweep a car away.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report