

New faces on DC school board, commission

By Kathryn Reed

Term limits guaranteed the lake would have new representation on the Douglas County School District board. Voters had the choice of three men; now it's down to two in November.

CPA Keith Byer of Glenbrook and retired teacher Michael Kiger of Stateline were the top vote getters June 14, with businessman Nicholas Shepack of Zephyr Cove taking third.

Byer (46.67 percent) and Kiger (30.34 percent) learned of the results when *Lake Tahoe News* called Tuesday night. Byer, a Republican, was woken up as he is in Portugal on vacation and deferred comment until later. Kiger, a Democrat, said, "It's all about our students and that is the most important thing."

Kiger came to the district about 35 years, having retired from Whittell High School as a math teacher about 12 years ago.

"One of the things I would like to stand for is I would like to have more communication from the board to the people in the community and to the parents because it is their school district," Kiger told *Lake Tahoe News*.

School board members cannot serve more than 12 years. Cindy Trigg had been representing the area for three terms.

Teri Jamin was also forced out because of term limits. In many ways she was like a second rep for the lake because she knew the area so well based on the number of years she worked for the city of South Lake Tahoe's planning department.

Running for her seat were Linda Gilkerson and Larry Lippmann. Lippman lost to Jamin in 2012. "That race will actually be on the November ballot, because it more than one candidate but

less than twice the number of open positions,” Douglas County Clerk-Treasurer Kathy Lewis told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It was eight years ago that Greg Lynn and Dave Nelson faced each other in the June primary for District 1 commission seat. Lynn prevailed in 2008. This time Nelson came out on top, with 56.1 percent of the vote. He lost by 354 votes eight years ago and won by about 800 this time.

Nelson told *Lake Tahoe News* the budget would be his primary concern when he takes office in January.

As for the debacle going on with the Stateline sewer district and the county, he said someone should have been watching the situation closer so the problems didn’t exist today.

District 3 Commissioner Doug Johnson did not seek re-election. Vying for his seat were Carson Valley residents Larry Walsh and Frank Godecke. Walsh prevailed with 58.41 percent.

Douglas County received 4,695 ballots by mail before election day. There are 26,138 registered voters. Turnout was 34.5 percent Tuesday in the county, whereas primary election turnout in Nevada is usually about 20 percent.

A law passed in 2015 says if a race has candidates from only one party, the primary winner will be on the general election ballot, but only needs one vote to win. Where there is a candidate from two or more parties, there will be runoff in November.

The law also says that in nonpartisan races a candidate who receives more than 50 percent wins outright with no need to proceed to the general election.

In all, there were 32 positions up in Douglas County on Tuesday. Many were for water and sewer districts, or seats in the valley.

In other races affecting Lake Tahoe:

- Kathy Lewis—unopposed for clerk-treasurer, incumbent.
 - Barry Penzel — unopposed District 5 supervisor, incumbent.
 - Karen Chessell — unopposed District 1 school board, incumbent
 - Neal Freitas — unopposed District 4 school board, incumbent.
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Warren Buffett's dicey power play

By Mark Chediak and Noah Buhayar, Bloomberg Businessweek

When Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway bought Nevada's main utility, NV Energy, three years ago, it inherited a lucrative customer base: the neon-lit, air-conditioned casino-hotels on the Las Vegas Strip. Now they're in the midst of a costly split. Lured by the prospect of cheaper, cleaner energy elsewhere, two of the Strip's biggest power users, MGM Resorts International and Wynn Resorts, told regulators in May they're willing to pay millions in fees to ditch NV Energy's services.

It's not uncommon for big power consumers to wrangle with utilities. But the situation is unique in Nevada, where a handful of casino-resorts exercises significant leverage. MGM and Wynn together account for more than 5 percent of NV Energy's sales in its southern territory. While losing existing casino customers is tough enough, even worse for NV Energy may be the precedent their departure sets.

"It's probably going to diminish the likelihood that you could

have a new casino go up and guarantee that it'll be a full-service customer of the utility," says Timothy Hay, an attorney who served on the Nevada Public Utilities Commission and as the state's consumer advocate.

Read the whole story

Virtual reality may threaten Nev. brothel industry

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

Electronics have treated Sheri's Ranch well. The cathouse in Pahrump, which claims to be the "unofficial brothel of CES," reports a 70 percent increase in business when tech employees roll into Las Vegas for the massive trade show each January.

But that cozy relationship might not last. Some in the brothel industry – Sheri's included – have expressed concerns that virtual-reality porn, which offers an immersive 3D experience, could pose a threat to business. On its blog in December, Sheri's Ranch wrote that the VR devices displayed at CES "may be one of the biggest challenges to the future of the legal prostitution industry."

"How might this technology affect Nevada's brothel industry in the next five to 10 years?" spokesman Jeremy Lemur asked. "Since virtual prostitution wouldn't be illegal or unsafe because the participants aren't really having sex, will a Nevada brothel's secure, legal setting and reputation for an STD-free environment become irrelevant in the future world of VR technology?"

Read the whole story

Intrigue besets management of Tahoe sewer district

By Evan Maxwell, Reno Gazette Journal

A sewer district on the shore of Lake Tahoe is either a secretive organization controlled by powerful corporate interests or a completely transparent public service agency that has efficiently toiled for six decades to keep the lake pristine and crystal clear.

Or something in between.

Douglas County Sewer Improvement District 1 collects and treats commercial and residential sewage from casinos, hotels, resorts and 600 residences on the Nevada side of the lake.

After years of exceedingly quiet but apparently efficient operation, DCSID became embroiled last month in a dispute with Douglas County government that has now mushroomed.

The dispute involves the proper disposal of millions of gallons of sewage every day, all of which must be exported outside the Tahoe Basin.

However, the dispute now also involves a certain amount of political intrigue, “rogue citizens,” ethics complaints, anonymous legal clients represented by prominent attorneys, some of the biggest corporate names in Northern Nevada, and three state agencies.

Read the whole story

Lack of houses for sale drives up listing prices

The lack of inventory is helping drive housing prices higher in the greater Lake Tahoe region.

The median sales price for all homes sold in El Dorado, Placer and Sacramento counties in May was \$345,000, according to Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage. This is an increase of 7.5 percent from a year ago.

El Dorado County had the highest median at \$430,000, then Placer at \$422,00, and Sacramento at \$310,000.

Combined, there were 4,474 listings in the three counties in May. This reflects a decrease of 27 percent from 2015, according to Coldwell.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Fatal Truckee accident blamed on drugs, speed

Drugs and alcohol contributed to a fatal accident in Truckee last month, according to Truckee police officers.

Toxicology reports that just came back show Patrick Smiley,

36, had a blood alcohol level of 0.24 – three times the legal limit. He also had marijuana and barbiturates in his system, officers said.

“We know that any of these drugs can cause impairment” Sgt. Robert Womack said in a press release, “but we also know that these particular drugs have a synergistic effect, causing even more impairment when taken in combination. Any loss of life is tragic but these preventable deaths are especially painful.”

A passenger suffered major injuries and was airlifted to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Smiley was driving on Glenshire Drive at Old Highway 40 on May 8 when he crossed the centerline into oncoming traffic and crashed. Officers said he was going 65 mph in a zone recommended for 30 mph. He died at the scene.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Budget earmarks \$4.4M for CalFire investigations unit

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Next year's state budget will include \$4.4 million to set up a personnel unit inside CalFire that will oversee internal investigations and employee discipline, according to details, as well as train managers and personnel staff to avoid future problems.

Scandals that have buffeted CalFire for two years prompted Gov. Jerry Brown to propose the Professional Standards Program over objections from the state firefighters' union, CalFire

Local 2881. Union leaders worried it would create an incentive to drum up charges or exaggerate minor infractions to justify the 14 positions attached to the program.

The budget represents a compromise.

Read the whole story

Blood donors needed after Orlando massacre

United Blood Services Nevada is asking for donations to replenish its inventory after sending blood to Orlando.

UBS has locations in Carson City, Reno and Sparks. Make an appointment by calling 877.827.4376.

Units of blood in Orlando have been depleted in the wake of the worst mass shooting in U.S. history. On top of that, federal law prohibits men who have had sex with another man in the past 12 months from donating blood.

Forty-nine people died Sunday at a gay nightclub in Florida and 53 more were wounded by a lone gunman.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hiker rescued near Caples Lake

A 60-year-old hiker who went missing Sunday night in the Caples Lake area was found this morning at 6.

The name and hometown of the hiker have not been released.

The report came into to El Dorado County Sheriff's Department on June 12 at 9pm. The person had been last seen near the Caples Lake trail at Silverfork Campground.

Search teams were out all night. They found the cold, tired hiker by the trail on June 13.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Shore educators grapple with mental health issues throughout K-12 spectrum

Publisher's note: *This is one of several stories about mental health issues in the Lake Tahoe Basin that will be running through October.*

By Terra Breeden

In Lake Tahoe Unified School District, 42 children were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital for suicidal tendencies this past

school year.

The growing problem of mental health-related issues in children and teens has education officials on both sides of the state line scrambling to become de facto experts in a field that until a few years ago was not on anyone's radar.

"In my experience there has been an increase in mental illness," Nancy Cauley, principal of Zephyr Cove Elementary, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "There needs to be more time taken to examine what we need to do as a community to support these students."

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 20 percent of children ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition. These conditions include mood disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders. Although the South Shore is a small community, the wave of mental health problems affecting youth is a big concern.

At South Tahoe High School, Nicole Bergner works as an intervention counselor and gives extra support to higher needs students.

"I see a lot of students with anxiety, depression and trauma-related fallout from family issues," Bergner said.

Even with the increasing awareness, figuring out the cause of mental health problems in youngsters is tough. Cauley speculates that the recent economic recession may have affected children as much as adults.

"The economic downturn of 2008 had a huge impact on the emotional well-being of children," Cauley said. "When a parent loses their house, job or income it affects the child. Stability is important and it plays a big part in a child's emotional well-being and how they respond in the classroom."



“Teachers and counselors do what they can to support students and families, but it’s hard in a rural community with limited resources and social workers.”

– Teri White, Douglas County School District superintendent

Nicole Zunino, the intervention counselor at South Tahoe Middle School, told *Lake Tahoe News* that social media is also a cause of mental health issues in youngsters. On social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram, impressionable children are hit with a barrage of images and advertisements, coercing them to compare themselves to others and influencing their self-esteem.

The rise in school shootings nationwide has created fear on campuses and contributes to student mental health issues such as anxiety disorders, as well.

“I wonder why we are seeing so much anxiety and what comes to mind is that this generation is seeing school shootings regularly and we are living in this time of fear,” alternative education counselor for LTUSD Amy Jackson said.

Jackson told *Lake Tahoe News* that after her young son experienced a school shooting drill, which is now a commonly practiced training drill at schools, he was fearful, and later, wanted to talk about it.

The reasons for mental health issues are vast and they effect children differently depending on the child's age.

"With younger children, there might be more issues with their family environment and with older children it tends to be more peer-related," Terri White, superintendent of Douglas County School District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lake Tahoe teachers and faculty are trying to identify the problems that arise at different ages. But in elementary schools, recognizing a mental health issue can be especially difficult.

"Elementary kids hide it pretty darn good," Jackson said. "The little guys need counseling, but these mental issues can be hard to identify. You don't see the symptoms until middle school or high school."

Identifying a mental health problem is much easier when the child is an adolescent. However, by this age, the perils of anxiety or depression can be far greater.

"For us, the thing we see with adolescents is suicidal tendencies and trying to deal with their problems by turning to risky behavior," White said.

Lake Tahoe education officials are doing whatever they can to combat mental health problems in schools. At STMS, faculty members conduct six prevention groups a week to help students cope with anxiety and depression. In the weekly meetings, students are taught to regulate their emotions instead of acting out. Relaxation techniques, deep breathing exercises and "I"-statements are utilized to assist children in dealing with their mental health issues.

"Teachers are the first line of defense," Nicole Zunino, intervention counselor at STMS, said. "They are the eyes and ears of the school. We pick students with patterns of behavior and academics to place in these groups"



10 warning signs of mental health issues in teens

- Being sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Drastic change in behavior or sleep habits
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still
- Seriously wanting to harm or kill oneself
- Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight
- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason.

Source: *NAMI*

For children with mental health problems, it's important for parents to be involved. Recognizing their child's harmful behavior and providing support is the first step. LTUSD education officials work closely with students, but stress the importance of parental participation.

"We try to get parents involved because the outcome will be better," Zunino said. "We also work really closely with agencies in town like Barton Health.

LTUSD students with known mental health problems are given personalized counseling and support from intervention counselors like Bergner and Zunino. LTUSD also provides specialized education programs to ignite their interest in school subjects and divert them away from harmful behavior.

"We are very good at customizing a student's education," Jim Tarwater, superintendent of LTUSD, said. "We have certain programs that will hook a kid and have stories where kids have had 180 degree turn-a-rounds."

In Douglas County, schools have a hard time providing counseling for students with mental health issues. Currently, there are no mental health counselors on staff. There simply aren't enough resources available for DCSD schools to provide on-campus counseling.

"If we have children who are struggling with mental health, we refer them out and connect them with outside agencies like the Tahoe Youth & Family Services," White said. "But that can be difficult because of health insurance."

White hopes to rectify the lack of support and provide more in-depth care to students with mental health problems. DCSD has applied for a social worker grant through the Department of Education and has plans to work with Project AWARE, which provides social workers to schools through a partnership with UNR and the Department of Education.

“Teachers and counselors do what they can to support students and families, but it’s hard in a rural community with limited resources and social workers,” White said.

At Zephyr Cove Elementary, Principal Cauley says that regardless of limited resources, children with mental health-related problems are given individualized support at the school.

“When we are made aware that a child needs mental health support we work with the parents and community to help that child,” Cauley said. “No matter what a child has, we always work with every possible team member to ensure that student is successful in school.”