

S. Lake Tahoe man dies at Heavenly

A skier from South Lake Tahoe died at Heavenly Mountain Resort on Feb. 19.

Brian Scott Bitzer, 45, was found off of an intermediate trail on the California side of the resort, according to resort officials. He was pronounced dead at Barton Memorial Hospital. No other details were provided.

Bitzer owned and operated Altitude Painting.

He grew up in the East Bay and then went to college at CSU Chico.

Bitzer was an avid Raiders, Giants and Warriors fan; loved boating and skiing.

He is survived by his wife, Di; daughters Phoebe, Ronnie, and Natalie; parents Mark and Ronnie; sister Heather Davis (Wayne); brother Barry (Susan); sister-in-law Alisa (Peter) Fay; brother-in-law Rafael (Allyson) Alvarez; mother-in-law and father-in-law Dinorah and Bill Namache; nieces Allison Davis, Bailey Bitzer, Michelle Davis and Maddy Fay; and nephews Michael and Steven Bitzer, and Evan and Bryce Alvarez.

There will be a memorial service at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course in Stateline on Feb. 28 at 11am.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial college fund has been set up at Wells Fargo Bank for the Bitzer children who are ages 12 and 10.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Work force issues worry South Shore chamber



B Gorman, CEO of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, outlines the goals on Feb. 25. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Refining their mission to better be able to adapt to the changing work force, while fostering economic vitality are goals of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

At the annual membership breakfast on Feb. 25, CEO B Gorman outlined for the nearly 50 people gathered at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel what has happened in the last year at the South Shore chamber as well what is planned going forward.

Gorman touched on how baby boomers were joiners – from high school, to college and as professionals. Millennials aren't

the same. To get them involved in the business community is going to require a new way of looking at things.

Communication and technology need to be constantly re-evaluated, especially when it comes to businesses reaching customers. More targeted messages instead of a single delivery is what's needed, Gorman said.

Demographic changes will necessitate the need for "strategies of inclusion."

A major difference with younger generations, Gorman said, is they are choosing the place to live and the job is second.

But she also noted a number of local employers have jobs that go unfilled for months. It's about not having a work force with the necessary skills, according to Gorman.

What wasn't addressed was whether the vacancies pay a high enough wage to live in the basin.

In mid-March the chamber is doing a two-day business walk where merchants will be asked a series of open-ended questions to gauge what they would like from employees. The goal is to project out 10 years what businesses will need.

That data will be given to the Tahoe Prosperity Center to incorporate into a study it is doing. Lake Tahoe Community College is part of the project. At the end of the day the college wants to be providing the education component so the future work force has the skills employers are seeking.

The hope is the data will be coalesced by early fall.

All of this ties into the chamber having re-established its goals into four main areas:

- Advance leadership: Attract and retain effective business and community leaders. Leadership Lake Tahoe will be a key component of this.

- Governance: Drive policy and governance to create an environment where Tahoe businesses thrive.
- Economic vitality: Provide opportunities for sustainable and enhanced experiences for residents and visitors.
- Community: Foster a prosperous community as a highly desirable place to live, work and play.

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Other items to note:

- Sample the Sierra is moving to Sept. 17. A second restaurant week will be tied into the farm to fork event.
- The annual tourism conference is April 26.
- When asked what the chamber's view is on taking the loop road to a vote, Gorman said, "I highly doubt we'll see it on the ballot. I don't think it will be necessary for the chamber to take a position."
- The chamber has more than 650 members; 81 are new in the last year; there is a retention rate of 88.6 percent.
- A nationwide search is under way to replace Gorman. She will be leaving mid-year to start her own business.

Calif. cities miss January conservation targets

By Phillip Reese and Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

California residents broadly missed water conservation targets in January, and the state now has fallen behind the June through February conservation level mandated by Gov. Jerry Brown, the State Water Resources Control Board said Thursday.

The state's urban water districts cut use by 17 percent in January as compared to the same month in 2013, marking the worst performance since mandated cuts began last June. In December, residents managed an 18 percent savings.

Following years of drought, Brown last year ordered communities statewide to cut water use between June 2015 and February 2016 by an average of 25 percent compared to 2013. Through January, the state has cut use by 24.8 percent.

Read the whole story

Daylight saving time could end in Calif.

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Springing forward and falling back would be reserved for gymnasts under a California bill seeking to eliminate daylight saving time.

If you've ever awoken an hour early, showed up to work an hour late or groaned at having to reset all your clocks because of the biannual time shifts, Assemblyman Kansen Chu, D-San Jose, feels your pain.

"I heard some complaints last year from some of the senior citizens (in my district) and their care providers who say this one-hour difference really impacted their lives," Chu

said.

Assembly Bill 2496, which would end the practice in California, undoing a law that voters approved back in 1949 via Proposition 12.

Read the whole story

Appeals court upholds limit on sharing of tips

By Sudhin Thanawala, AP

SAN FRANCISCO – Businesses cannot collect tips given to waiters, casino dealers or other service employees to share with support staff such as dishwashers even if the tipped employees are receiving minimum wage, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday.

The 2-1 decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a 2011 U.S. Labor Department rule.

The 9th Circuit said the rule was “reasonable” and consistent with Congress’ goal of ensuring tips stay with employees who receive them.

The court overturned district courts in Nevada and Oregon. The 9th Circuit ruling would largely apply to states that require workers to get the state minimum wage on top of any tips. Seven states fall into that category, according to the labor department’s Wage and Hour Division: Alaska, California, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

It was not immediately clear what the impact would be on

backend workers in those states.

The labor department has previously banned employers who use tips to fulfill their hourly minimum wage requirements from distributing those tips to employees who don't regularly receive tips.

"The premise is the tip is never the employer's," said Reuel Schiller, a labor law professor at the University of California, Hastings in San Francisco. "The employer doesn't have the power to take that from the waiter and give it to a dishwasher because it's not the employer's money."

Supporters of the rule would say the employer should pay the dishwasher higher wages or charge customers to pay the dishwasher instead of having other staff subsidize the dishwasher's pay, Schiller said.

The 9th Circuit considered two lawsuits in its ruling – one brought on behalf of plaintiffs including restaurant and lodging associations in Washington, Oregon and Alaska and the other by two casino dealers against Wynn Las Vegas.

The casino dealers said Wynn was taking their tips to share with other employees. The restaurant and lodging associations said the federal rule would prevent back-end staff from sharing in tips.

Paul DeCamp, an attorney for the restaurant and lodging associations, said there was a decent chance one of the plaintiffs would appeal.

"The real world impact of this sort of regulation that the Department of Labor has issued is important for people to understand," DeCamp said. "The people who are hurt most by the 9th Circuit ruling are the people in the kitchen, the cooks, the dishwashers, the prep cooks and so on."

Michael Weaver, a spokesman for Wynn Resorts, said Wynn was

studying the ruling to decide its next steps.

Calif. gas prices expected to jump overnight

By James F. Peltz, Los Angeles Time

The slide in California's gasoline prices could abruptly end Friday, with prices possibly jumping 30 cents a gallon due to seasonal changes in the state's refinery operations, a consumer advocacy group predicted Thursday.

Prices often climb in California this time of year because refineries switch from the winter blend of fuel to the more expensive summer blend required in the state.

The average price of regular unleaded in California was \$2.306 a gallon Thursday, down 24 percent from \$3.03 a year ago, according to AAA.

Read the whole story

Sandoval withdraws name from high court consideration

By Michelle Rindels, AP

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval said Thursday he is not interested in being considered for the U.S. Supreme Court at this time, and he has told the White House so.

The Republican governor issued a statement the day after the *Washington Post* reported the White House was considering him as a potential replacement for the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

Senate Republicans have said they will not consider a nominee from President Obama during an election year.

"Earlier today, I notified the White House that I do not wish to be considered at this time for possible nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States," Sandoval wrote. "The notion of being considered for a seat on the highest court in the land is beyond humbling, and I am incredibly grateful to have been mentioned."

He offered no reason for his decision but said he also expressed his position to senators Harry Reid, Dean Heller and Mitch McConnell.

The Senate's vetting process for any nominee is expected to be viciously political, if hearings take place at all. Sandoval's mention was thought to be a way around Republican senators' resistance to considering an Obama nominee.

Republican Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada last week suggested the next justice could be a Nevadan. He said Thursday he hopes Sandoval's name will come up again later.

"As a friend and former colleague of Governor Sandoval's, I believe he is eminently qualified for this position," Heller said. "But, I support his decision to withdraw his name from consideration for the Supreme Court vacancy. I hope the next president will consider him in the future."

Sandoval, 52, is a former federal judge and popular second-

term governor.

Caesars cuts net loss in fourth quarter

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Caesars Entertainment Corp. said Tuesday the casino company's net loss declined in the fourth quarter but the Strip gaming giant termed the year a success following the bankruptcy filing of its largest operating division.

The company, which operates nine resorts on or near the Strip, said net revenue for quarter that ended Dec. 31 was \$1.12 billion, an increase of 8.7 percent. The company's net revenue for all of 2015 grew 14.7 percent to \$4.5 billion. Caesars said its net loss in the quarter was \$76 million, compared with a loss \$262 million a year ago.

Caesars CEO Mark Frissora said in a statement the company had its best full-year of operating results since 2007.

Caesars Entertainment Operating Co., which the company placed into a Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization 13 months ago, was excluded from the reported results. The operating unit includes nearly two dozen regional casinos, including Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

Read the whole story

McClintock to face Democrat challenger

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

Rep. Tom McClintock, a longtime lawmaker and favorite of conservatives in California, has repelled repeated challenges – the latest in 2014 from a fellow Republican.

McClintock, of Elk Grove, easily overcame an intraparty showdown with military officer Art Moore. Now, he faces a more traditional opponent in Democrat Bob Derlet, a professor emeritus at UC Davis who formally launched his uphill campaign Monday

Derlet, 66, is new to politics, and the 4th Congressional District's lopsided Republican registration likely will make things difficult for him.

Read the whole story

Sandoval being considered for Supreme Court

By Mike DeBonis and Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post

The White House is considering picking Gov. Brian Sandoval to fill the current vacancy on the Supreme Court, scrambling political calculations in what is expected to be a contentious confirmation battle in which Senate Republicans have pledged to play the role of roadblock.

President Obama is weighing the selection of Sandoval, a centrist former federal judge who has served as governor of Nevada since 2011, according to two people familiar with the process. Though the review process is in its initial phases and it is unclear whether the governor could ultimately emerge as the president's pick, even the prospect of his nomination poses a difficult dilemma for Senate Republicans who have promised not to consider any nomination before November's elections.

After the *Washington Post* published news of Sandoval's consideration Wednesday, GOP leaders insisted that Obama nominating a Republican would make no difference.

Read the whole story