

'Mini-Mousehole' to benefit Truckee pedestrians, cyclists



A tunnel for non-motorized traffic will improve safety in Truckee on Highway 89.
Photo/Caltrans

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

There's a "light in the tunnel" for the Truckee-Tahoe area's numerous bicyclists and hikers, who have long had to negotiate Truckee's 25-foot-wide, 1928 Mousehole tunnel on Highway 89.

A smaller tunnel just for them was punched through east of the Mousehole last week, and a paved pedestrian/bike trail through it, connecting West River Street and Deerfield Drive, is expected to be finished early next summer.

Although the tunnel phase is now completed, Truckee and Caltrans officials advise that much work still needs to be done before it will be safe for the public to travel through.

Read the whole story

Plastic: It's what's for dinner

By Amy Quinton, Capital Public Radio

A study has found plastic or fibrous debris in the guts of nearly one of every four fish sold at fish markets in California and Indonesia. The research raises concerns for human health.

UC Davis researchers sampled fish and shellfish from Indonesia and California. They thought the results would vary widely given the difference in recycling and wastewater treatment between California and Indonesia.

Instead, the amount of debris was the same. But in Indonesia most of the debris was plastic, in California it was fibers. The fibers could be microplastics or synthetic fibers that come from wastewater in washing machines.

Read the whole story

Burden of health care costs shifts to workers

By Noam N. Levey, Los Angeles Times

American workers saw their out-of-pocket medical costs jump again this year, as the average deductible for an employer-provided health plan surged nearly 9 percent in 2015 to more than \$1,000, a major new survey of employers shows.

The annual increase, though lower than in previous years', far outpaced wage growth and overall inflation and marked the continuation of a trend that in just a few years has dramatically shifted healthcare costs to workers.

Over the past decade, the average deductible that workers must pay for medical care before their insurance kicks in has more than tripled from \$303 in 2006 to \$1,077 today, according to the report from the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust.

That is seven times faster than wages have risen in the same period.

Read the whole story

New Calif. water bond seeks to plug funding holes

By Rory Carroll, Reuters

California environmentalists plan to file a new water bond proposal with the secretary of state next week, a measure backers say will provide critical money for programs that were under funded by the \$7.8 billion bond passed by voters last year.

The exact amount of the new water bond has yet to be determined but will be less than \$5 billion, Jerry Meral, director of the California water program at the Natural Heritage Institute, told Reuters this week.

If backers can collect the necessary number of signatures, the proposal will be put to voters during the November 2016

election, when voter turnout is expected to be high.

Read the whole story

Survey: Big drop in uninsured Nev. kindergartners

By Michelle Rindels, Reno Gazette-Journal

An annual health survey of Nevada kindergartners shows a big drop in the percentage of children without health insurance, a change that researchers attribute to more use of Medicaid benefits.

The seventh annual report from the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, showed 7.6 percent of kindergartners were uninsured last school year, down from 12.6 percent a year earlier.

The survey found that the number of children receiving Medicaid rose about 5 percentage points year-over-year to 31.3 percent, while the number of children with private insurance dropped about 1.5 percentage points to 48.4 percent.

Read the whole story

Study: Technology doesn't

make smarter kids

By Joy Resmovits, Los Angeles Times

More time spent on technology in the classroom doesn't necessarily help kids do better in school, a new study has found.

In fact, above a certain threshold, an over-reliance on technology might actually detract from learning.

"Limited use of computers at school may be better than no use at all, but levels of computer use above the current ... average are associated with significantly poorer results," states a new report released late Monday by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

"Students who use computers very frequently in school don't outperform students who use them moderately, even when we modify for social background," OECD's education director, Andreas Schleicher, said in an interview.

Read the whole story

Nev. drought forum ends with call for collaboration

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY — Gov. Brian Sandoval's three-day drought forum ended Wednesday with a push for more collaboration and fewer lawsuits about water.

Forum facilitator Lewis Michaelson said the feeling was that the right move is taking small steps in changing the law, not making major innovations.

The governor's drought committee meets Monday to start making recommendations to get Nevada prepared to handle future droughts. The state has had dry winters for the past four years.

Read the whole story

Employers: More overtime could have downsides

By Yuki Noguchi, KQED-TV

The Labor Department is considering changing rules that define who qualifies for overtime pay and who does not, and businesses say it would have far-reaching consequences that may not be good for workers.

Currently, the rules say you have to make less than \$23,660 a year to be eligible for overtime, but the Labor Department's proposal would more than double that required salary level to \$50,440. That would mean an estimated 6 million more people would be eligible for overtime pay.

Worker advocates say the current rules open up millions of workers to abuse. Many earn relatively low salaries but are asked to work many extra hours without pay because they're exempt from overtime rules, says Vicki Shabo, vice president of the National Partnership for Women and Families. She says some research shows women, who would make up about 3.2 million

of those workers, would especially benefit.

Read the whole story

Homicide suspected in West Slope fire deaths

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

Three bodies have been found in a burned West Slope vacation cabin owned by a family missing for 10 days, and the incident, initially thought to have been caused by wildfire, is being investigated as a homicide and arson, authorities said on Thursday.

The bodies have not been identified, but Adam Buchanan, who owns the cabin, was reported missing the same day the fire broke out, along with Molly McAfee and their 8-year-old son, Gavin, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department said.

Firefighters were initially called to fight what was believed to be a wildfire near the family's cabin in Garden Valley on Sept. 13, El Dorado County Sheriff's Department spokesman Sergeant Todd Hammitt said on Thursday. They soon learned that the fire started at the residence, and realized it had been intentionally set, Hammitt said.

Read the whole story

Not guilty plea in bear killing case

Gilbert Wetenkamp of South Lake Tahoe pleaded not guilty this morning to one misdemeanor count of unlawful taking of an animal.

He is accused of shooting a black bear to death on July 9.

The 2½-year-old bear was shot in the backside with buckshot from a shotgun. It was sprawled on its back at the base of a tree off Pioneer Trail near Minniconjou Drive in the unincorporated area of South Lake Tahoe.

On Sept. 25 the judge granted Wetenkamp representation by a public defender. His next court date is set for Oct. 23.

The maximum penalty if convicted is one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report