

Calif.-Nev. may drop out of state community college tuition fee for some Tahoe residents

By Kathryn Reed

California and Nevada state senators are working to revive the good neighbor policy so students in the Lake Tahoe Basin would not have to pay out of state tuition to attend nearby community colleges.

State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, on Feb. 27 introduced the legislation – known as SB605. His counterpart in Nevada, state Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden, will soon be doing the same.

“We want to make sure youth in our community have affordable options for affordable education and then the opportunity to build careers and find jobs in the basin as well,” Gaines told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We hope we’ll be successful in both legislatures and provide some relief in a basin that doesn’t know borders.”

No one in Settelmeyer’s office responded to *LTN*.

The bill would limit the number of students crossing the state line to 200.

One of the reasons the bill has failed twice before is that lawmakers were concerned about how many students would take advantage of the good neighbor policy and what fiscal impact that could have.

The bills mirror each other, which has not happened before. The laws would benefit Lake Tahoe Basin students in specific ZIP codes, and involve Lake Tahoe Community College and

Western Nevada Community College.

This would be a six-year pilot program. Gaines said at the end of that time period officials would analyze whether the program was working, and if adjustments need to be made, including increasing or decreasing the number of students who may participate.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo has been at the forefront of trying to make this a reality. She credited the two lawmakers for being “champions” of the cause. The men represent Lake Tahoe in their respective legislatures.

The good neighbor policy has been in place before, but Nevada dropped it a few years ago. This means students going to Whittell High School cannot drive the three miles to LTCC, but instead must go over a mountain pass to the nearest community college in Nevada – at least if they don’t want to pay the exorbitant out of state tuition fee.

Gaines said his office has been speaking with the Association of California Community Colleges and has gotten support for the legislation.

Big 5 tops 4Q profit forecasts

By Associated Press

Big 5 Sporting Goods Corp. on Tuesday reported fourth-quarter earnings of \$2.8 million.

The El Segundo-based company said it had profit of 13 cents per share. Earnings, adjusted for non-recurring costs and

asset impairment costs, were 19 cents per share.

The results topped Wall Street expectations. The average estimate of analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research was for earnings of 16 cents per share.

The sporting goods retailer posted revenue of \$250.3 million in the period, which matched Street forecasts.

For the year, the company reported profit of \$14.9 million, or 67 cents per share. Revenue was reported as \$977.9 million.

Big 5 shares have declined 16 percent since the beginning of the year. In the final minutes of trading on Tuesday, shares hit \$12.35, a fall of 28 percent in the last 12 months.

T.J. Maxx hiking wages to minimum \$9/hr

By Lindsey Rupp, Bloomberg

Wal-Mart has company.

T.J. Maxx, Marshalls and other chains owned by TJX Cos. will be increasing the pay of U.S. workers to at least \$9 an hour beginning in June. That matches the level adopted by Wal-Mart Stores Inc. earlier this month. TJX, which also runs HomeGoods and Sierra Trading Post Associates, will boost wages to \$10 by in 2016 for workers with at least six months of employment.

The move signals that the labor market is getting more competitive after a slow recovery from the recession. Pay hikes will help employers lower turnover and reduce hiring and training costs, said Brian Yarbrough, an analyst at Edward

Jones in St. Louis. It's an approach Costco Wholesale Corp. and other successful retailers have already adopted.

"This is the way retailers need to go," said Yarbrough, who has a buy rating on TJX's shares. "Some of the best performers already pay higher wages."

TJX rose 3.3 percent to \$69.38 at the close of trading in New York, marking its biggest one-day gain in six months. Shares of the Framingham, Massachusetts-based company had climbed 7.6 percent last year.

Chief Executive Officer Carol Meyrowitz announced the move after a holiday quarter that exceeded the company's sales growth and profit estimates.

Read the whole story

Net neutrality vote didn't end the debate

By Jim Puzzanghera, Los Angeles Times

In approving strong net neutrality regulations, the Federal Communications Commission fulfilled a decadelong desire by public interest advocates, technology firms and Democrats to tighten government oversight of the Internet to prevent abuses by broadband service providers.

ANALYSIS But the agency's closely watched decision on Thursday didn't end the debate. Not even close.

The partisan divide over net neutrality – reflected in the FCC's party-line 3-2 vote – highlighted the passions on both

sides of the arcane technology policy concept and showed that final resolution of the issue still could be years away.

Here's what's coming next.

Only the five FCC commissioners and some agency staffers have seen the 317-page net neutrality order, which prohibits broadband providers from blocking, slowing or selling faster delivery of legal content flowing through its networks.

Read the whole story

2 South Lake Tahoe men randomly attacked

Three men are wanted in connection with an assault on two South Lake Tahoe men on Wednesday night.

The victims were just outside the Bottle Shop on Lake Tahoe Boulevard on Feb. 25 when they told police they were rushed in an unprovoked attack. One of the victims, a 36-year-old man, sustained significant head injuries, including lacerations to his face after having been beaten by the three suspects with fists. He was transported to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

"The victim is doing well at this time," officers said in a press release.

The description of the three attackers is limited because of the second 50-year-old uninjured victim's state of intoxication at the time of the investigation, police said. The suspects may be European; they were described as white males 6-feet-2-inches, the third spoke Italian. They had black hair, one was wearing a white jacket, and another was wearing

a blue jacket.

Anyone who has information is asked to call police at 530.542.6110 or South Lake Tahoe Secret Witness at 530.541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Gaming revenue up in Nev., down at Stateline

While the state gaming win was up in January, it was down at the Stateline casinos.

Throughout Nevada casinos brought in \$952.7 million, an increase of 7.75 percent from January 2014. The state Gaming Control Board released the numbers Friday.

Stateline casinos dropped 3.80 percent year-over-year, bringing in \$14,139,520. Lake Tahoe Hard Rock was open only three days, and then, not even three full days.

Revenue increases of 14.2 percent were recorded by Reno casinos and 25.8 percent at North Shore casinos.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Health care costs becoming more transparent

By Jason Millman, Washington Post

The obscure, seemingly random universe of health-care pricing is getting a little less opaque today. Some of the country's largest health insurers are coming together to reveal the prices they pay for dozens of medical services across the country in an effort to help consumers become savvier shoppers.

All the information can be found at Guroo.com, a site launched Wednesday morning that was built by a health-care nonprofit group with information from United Healthcare, Humana, Aetna and Assurant Health. The transparency effort is a nod to the growing trend of patients being asked to pay more out of their own pockets, as insurers try to manage their costs and steer customers toward preferred health-care providers.

"The rise in health-care spending underscores the need to make it more transparent and help consumers make more informed decisions regarding their care," said David Newman, executive director of the Health Care Cost Institute, which built the Web site.

Guroo's initial rollout will let patients compare costs for more than 70 common services, which includes things as simple as a doctor's visit, or something more complex like a knee surgery. These are prices for health-care services that patients may shop for ahead of time, as opposed to the cost of emergency room care.

Read the whole story

LTCC-county working to bring UCD to area

By Kathryn Reed

The University of California, Davis at South Lake Tahoe? It's being talked about.

El Dorado County wants a branch campus of UC Davis to possibly be located on the West Slope near the county line with Sacramento, or on Lake Tahoe Community College's campus, or both.

The Board of Supervisors on March 10 will be asked to approve staff time to pursue the campus. On Feb. 24, the LTCC board of trustees gave consent for President Kindred Murillo to work on such an endeavor.

"The No. 1 reason is that I think it would be wonderful for our students to go to a four-year college close by ... someplace where perhaps they could live at home," C.L. (Cherie) Raffety, county treasurer-tax collector, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I would just like it to be here in El Dorado County because in addition to being an outstanding education opportunity for our students, it also would contribute to the sustainable economic well being."

The advantage to having the campus in South Lake Tahoe is that LTCC has the land, expects to complete the university center in 2018 and has been making in-roads to offering a four-year degree.

"It could be a couple extension programs; maybe start with a few staff members here. I don't see it starting really big

because you need to have students,” Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It is something I could see easing into gradually, especially if you create a pathway from the high school, to the college into Davis. That would be my dream.”

A branch campus could start at LTCC and evolve into a separate campus. UC Davis was once a branch campus of UC Berkeley. It started strictly as agriculture when Davis was a dot on a map, and then evolved into the institution that it is today.

That ag component, though, is something Raffety believes the county could tap into – especially viticulture.

UCD is also known for its veterinary program. And with *Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care* in the process of building a permanent facility practically across the street from LTCC, this could be natural tie-in.

Davis already has a huge presence at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village, so the draw to Tahoe is already established. LTCC already has meetings with UCD scheduled for March to talk about being part of the university center.

With environmental studies being an important aspect of the curriculum at UCD and it being of utmost concern in Tahoe, Murillo foresees this being a natural fit.

Raffety said with this being the inaugural stage, it’s important to get feedback from the public about their opinions. She welcomes county residents reaching out to supervisors and calling her – 530. 621.5803. If the supes see value in pursuing this idea, then UCD would convene a professor committee that would analyze the pros and cons. It’s likely to be a slow, methodical process.

“It would happen as fast as UC Davis wants it,” Raffety said. El Dorado came up with the idea through the economic development committee. Raffety, who is a former board member of the Los Rios Community College district, is a huge advocate

of public education and of offering students as many options as possible.

Tahoe Nordic community remembers Murnane

By Melissa Siig, Moonshine Ink

The North Shore Nordic community is reeling after the death of Kevin Murnane, the general manager of the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area and a fixture in the Tahoe City community. He died Feb. 24 on the trails of the Nordic center, a place that he helped build into a world-class cross-country ski destination and a community gathering place that was central to both his life and the entire North Shore. Murnane was 44 years old.

“He was the glue for the Nordic community in a lot of ways,” said Brendan Madigan, owner of Alpenglow Sports and a close friend of Murnane’s. “He created a meeting point for the community at large. His influence will always guide that in how it moves forward.”

The Placer County Sheriff’s Office received a call about 5:30pm Feb. 24 from Murnane’s wife of 18 years, Valli, who said that he had not been seen since she left for work that morning and he left for a walk near their home on the Nordic trails. A neighbor had reported that the dogs were out, which raised alarm bells for Valli. The Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team was brought in, and more than 30 people set out on foot, bike, motorcycle, and ATV to search for Murnane.

Read the whole story

Placer County buys South Lake Tahoe hotel

There may soon be more open space in South Lake Tahoe along Highway 50. This is because on Feb. 24 the Placer County Board of Supervisors voted to buy the A&A Lake Tahoe Inn for approximately \$1.4 million.

The South Lake Tahoe hotel is one of many the city would like bulldozed because they add to an overabundance of hotel rooms, many of which are not being used as traditional hotels but instead as non-conforming residential units.

Placer crossed county lines for this purchase so it could obtain the tourist accommodation units from the site. By leveling the structure the county can obtain a 3-to-1 bonus on TAUs per the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Region Plan because it is in a stream environmental zone.

TAUs are a commodity the TRPA created to regulate growth. Many now say this commodity, as well as commercial floor area, hinder redevelopment by placing value on items that in many ways are artificial and are certainly not the norm in the construction world.

It's possible the California Tahoe Conservancy and Placer County would enter a land swap or purchase down the road involving this site.

The 34-unit hotel is at 3520 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*