

Vaccination rates up for Calif. kindergartners

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

More California kindergartners are getting their vaccinations before starting school, curbing a decadelong trend of falling immunization rates, new state figures show.

The shift comes as California experiences one of its worst whooping-cough outbreaks in generations. Health experts said several prior years of lax immunization primed the state for such an outbreak.

This year's rise in vaccination rates corresponds to the introduction of a new "personal belief" form that must be completed by parents who don't want to immunize their children. The result of a new state law, the form must be signed by a doctor who acknowledges telling parents about the risks and benefits of vaccinations; alternatively, parents can state that visiting a doctor violates their religious beliefs. The new form replaces a document that did not require a doctor's signature.

Read the whole story

Nevada a leader in

immigration reform

By Ana Ley and Amber Phillips, Las Vegas Sun

When President Obama gave Astrid Silva a shout-out last month, he did more than put a face on his new immigration plan.

He helped thrust Silva, and her home state of Nevada, into the national spotlight on immigration reform.

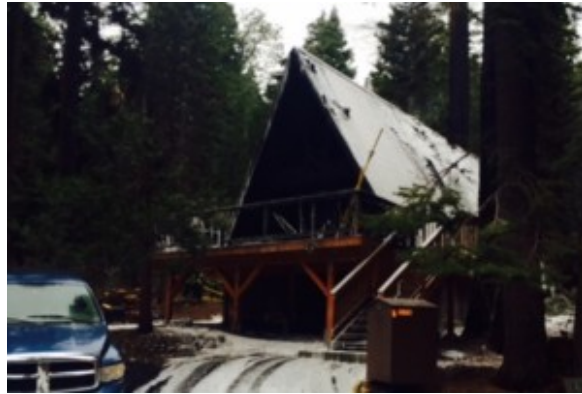
She has since used her political fame to sell the president's divisive executive action. Her latest push came before a Senate panel Wednesday, where she accused Obama's critics of "attacking America and everything that has made this country strong."

"When people challenge the president's authority, they're attacking me," Silva said. "They're attacking my mom."

Astrid is one of several Nevada players who are behind a movement that is intensifying attention on the state's unique immigration landscape. And what happens in Nevada could impact the national conversation about changes in policy.

Read the whole story

Storm causes house fire in Tahoe City



A tree falling on a house started a fire Dec. 11 in Tahoe City. Photo/Provided

Fire investigators are still trying to figure out how a tree falling onto a Tahoe City house started a fire Thursday morning.

“A tree fell through the house, hit the bed where someone was sleeping in the bed, moved the bed a few feet, and miraculously did not hurt anybody,” Dave Zaski with North Tahoe Fire told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Two adults and two kids were staying at the 1770 Washoe Way house that belonged to their friends. The family lost everything they brought with them. Neighbors helped by providing clothing. Sunnyside Resort put them up for free the night of Dec. 11.

No one was hurt and the fire did not spread beyond the one structure. However, the house sustained substantial damage.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Locals vow to stop Tahoe ridgeline development

By Ted Lipien, Eco Truckee

The proposal to build 112 multimillion-dollar luxury homes in a likely gated community at the top of the ridgeline of Lake Tahoe was clearly horrifying to dozens of residents who came to a meeting in Truckee on Dec. 9 to discuss strategies for opposing the proposed development by East West Partners.

Participants in Tuesday's meeting were angry and ready to fight for protecting Lake Tahoe's skyline.

Ann Nichols, who spoke on behalf of North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, said the ridgelines of Lake Tahoe and Martis Valley are one of the most outstandingly beautiful features of America and a basis for the area's popularity and economy.

Representatives of other local environmental organizations also expressed concerns about depletion of water sources on the Brockway Mountain. This could lead to an even greater reliance for water on Lake Tahoe, which is already shrinking from the effects of drought.

Nichols said most towns that have any kind of scenic value protect their ridgelines, including Sun Vally, Park City, Salt Lake City, Aspen, Sonoma and many others.

According to Bob Lyman of Agate Bay Water, "half of the water for Carnelian Woods comes from Carnelian Creek and underground springs." The headwaters for these sources are on the affected ridge line.

"Development on the ridge would impair the quality of the water," Lyman said.

It was clear from comments at the meeting that many Tahoe area

residents have no faith in the Placer County supervisors and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to enforce zoning limitations and adequate ridgeline controls. Some said their local representative as Placer County supervisor, Jennifer Montgomery, appears to share public concerns about the project and its negative impact on the environment.

Read the whole story

Storm not over, brings mixed precip to region

Updated 9:50am

Lake Tahoe Unified School District is closed today even though there is only a dusting of snow on the South Shore. This decision was made Thursday during the chaos of the power outage. Some people were left wondering how organized the district is in the event of an emergency.

Zephyr Cove Elementary school buses will only be stoping at the main stops this morning.

Lake Tahoe Community College is open.

A winter storm warning remains in effect until 1pm Friday. Four to 8 more inches is expected above 7,00 feet.

Mountain passes could present difficult driving conditions. Chains or four-wheel drive restrictions are in place for some highways. For up-to-date road information, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

Heavenly Mountain Resort is reporting 3 inches of snow, Squaw

Valley received 11 inches overnight and 16 inches in the last 24 hours.

More than 100 Liberty Utilities customers remain without power this morning; about 50 customers in North Lake Tahoe and approximately 65 customers in South Lake Tahoe, with 50 of those customers' power to be restored shortly.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Underhill to take command of EDSO Tahoe office



Lt. Matt Underhill will lead the Tahoe substation of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Young, active, outdoorsy and practically a native. Those are some of the attributes of the next lieutenant to run the Lake Tahoe office of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office.

"I don't really foresee changes," Lt. Matt Underhill told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I want to continue the legacy of Les (Lovell) and Pete (Van Arnum) and keep strong community ties and listen to the needs of citizens and respond accordingly. They are who we work for, who we should be listening too."

While Van Arnum retires at the end of the month, Underhill won't actually be in the Tahoe office for at least six months, maybe a year. He will be working on the West Slope, training for his new position.

He was just recently promoted to lieutenant, having been a sergeant in the Tahoe office. (Lt. Bryan Golmitz will be in Tahoe until Underhill takes over.)

"It's important to have someone from Tahoe in this position," Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*. "He has the right temperament to be a good leader, the guys respect him, and he's real approachable."

Underhill moved here when he was 1, then went through the local schools. He started his law enforcement career in San Diego in 1999 with the sheriff's department and then moved to that city's police department. In 2002, he started with EDSO. He wanted to come back to live in the mountains and raise his children here.

"Tahoe is my hometown. I plan to finish my career here," Underhill said.

What he likes about the sheriff's office is the variety of responsibilities the department is responsible for – including narcotics, SAR, boat patrol, all crime in the county and even

vacation rentals.

At 37, he is the youngest lieutenant to lead the Tahoe substation. This could open opportunities for further advancement. In the 1980s Tahoe had a captain; now they are all in Placerville.

With the promotion comes the removal of Underhill as commander of the South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team. A sergeant from EDSO is expected to take over those responsibilities later this month.

While Underhill is now well versed in narcotics, it's search and rescue where his passion lies.

"Search and rescue is close to my heart because I'm passionate about the outdoors," Underhill said.

Skiing, mountain biking and rock climbing are the favorite ways for him to play outside.

Wind taking down trees, power lines in Tahoe



Mother Nature took a swipe Dec. 11 at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Updated 8:25pm:

There are 3,500 customers in the Sierra Tract area without power. Liberty Utilities has no idea when power will be restored.

Updated 7:15pm: The lines are in the air and power to the South Lake Tahoe-Meyers area should be restored any minute, according to Liberty Utilities. **By Kathryn Reed** A tree more than 200-feet tall fell onto St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe on Thursday morning. City building officials are testing the integrity of the structure. From the outside the Jeffery pine looks worse – having broken – and the roof barely dented considering the force that was thrust upon it. Church officials got a call from the fire alarm company at 11:37am Dec. 11. Caution tape is surrounding the church. “We’ve had nothing to this extent before,” the Rev. Ben DeLeon told *Lake Tahoe News* as he sat in the dark at Grace Hall. The frozen pipes 10 years ago don’t compare to this. He sat looking a bit bewildered, knowing that Dec. 12 is one of the biggest services of the year – Lady of Guadalupe. With the number of

trees falling everywhere in the Lake Tahoe Basin because of the high winds, the tree could not immediately be removed. The church was placed on a waiting list, though a company was expected out some time Dec. 11. A tree also took out three staff vehicles in the staff lot at South Tahoe High School. Lake Tahoe Unified let students out early on Thursday and has already canceled classes for Friday. At 5pm Dec. 11 Liberty Utilities said the outage in Woodfords and Markleeville caused by down lines will likely be out for six hours. Waves are so high on the lake that people have not been out surfing. Some reports are of 7-foot waves. Most of the South Shore is without power because the Meyers substation is out. This is causing 8,800 Liberty Utilities customers to be in the dark. Liberty provides power for the California side of the basin as well as Alpine County and Truckee. The main and back-up lines at Marshall Trail going to the Meyers substation went down, but the poles are standing. Crews are on the scene. The estimated time for power to return is by 7pm. South Lake Tahoe offices and Barton Memorial Hospital are operating on generators, as are all the Stateline casinos. The Flight Deck restaurant at the airport is doing a brisk business because the fryer is working and sandwiches don't require heat. Lights are on near the state line, with the Starbucks having a consistent line. NV Energy provides power on the Nevada side. Thousands of customers are still without power, with no estimated time of power to come back. "We try to get people back in service as quick as we can. It's like any other construction job; you never know what might come up," Karl Walquist with NV Energy told *Lake Tahoe News*. On the Nevada side, the biggest outage is on Kingsbury Grade, which is affecting 1,500 customers. In Glenbrook, 321 customers are without power; 145 in Zephyr Cove along Lakeview Drive and Pharris Lane; and 45 on Winding Way between Zephyr Cove and Glenbrook. Carson City and Reno are also having trouble because of the weather. Winds in the basin were heavy throughout the night and have continued into Thursday morning, but calmed down by mid-afternoon. Rain started to fall on the

South Shore about 10am. The winter storm warning is still in effect from 1pm today through 1pm Friday. Utility crews are expecting more power outages as the wind continues and rain turns to snow, especially because this is a warm storm so the snow will be heavy.

More Americans feel like they will never get out of debt

By Jonnelle Marte, Washington Post

Americans are feeling more grim about their debt.

Nearly one in five consumers with loans said they think they will never be able to finish paying off their debt, according to survey released Wednesday by CreditCards.com. That is double the nine percent who said they felt that way last year.

The card comparison Web site polled more than 1,000 people in early December and asked them what age they expected to be debt free, after factoring all of their consumer debt, including credit card bills, car loans, student loans and other types of loans like mortgages. On average, people said they didn't expect to be done paying off those loans until they were 53.

But the doubling of the share of people who say they will never be debt free is a sign that people are growing more pessimistic about their ability to pay what they owe, says Matt Schulz, a senior industry analyst for CreditCards.com. That could be a reflection of how people feel about the economy, he says. Many people are struggling to pay down student loans. And even people who are working may feel stuck

in low paying jobs or in jobs that don't match their skills.

Read the whole story

Nev. awarded share of federal preschool grant

By Trevon Milliard, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada is one of 18 states splitting \$226 million in federal grants to develop public preschool programs in 2014, according to an announcement by the U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in a press call Tuesday.

Half of the 36 states that applied were named grant recipients.

"This investment in young children is a game-changer for the next generation of Nevada's students," state Superintendent of Public Instruction Dale Erquiaga said.

But Nevada will be given a relatively small piece of the pie. At \$6.4 million, its Preschool Development Grant for the first year is about half the \$12.6 million average.

Read the whole story

Smoke from controlled burns visible in basin

Smoke that is visible on Spooner Summit and the Twin Peaks area near Sawmill Pond is from controlled burns operated by the U.S. Forest Service.

“Please be assured that Forest Service crews are monitoring these and other areas and all of our prescribed fires are under control,” Lisa Herron with the USFS said in a statement. “Also, we are currently in a low fire danger period and precipitation is on the way.”

Lake Valley Fire has a small burn in the Onnontioga area.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report