

Buildings lost in King Fire; 76,376 acres charred



Lake Valley firefighters are on the front lines of the King Fire. Photo/Lake Valley Fire

Updated 10:15pm:

Assessment teams say structures have been lost in the King Fire, but how many has not been determined.

“As soon as it is safe, we will have damage assessment teams enter the area to complete a full assessment and determine the type and number of structures affected,” officials said in a statement.

The fire burning mostly in the Eldorado National Forest, with some in the Tahoe National Forest in Placer County, is at 76,376 acres as of 10pm Sept. 19. It remains at 10 percent containment. The King Fire has set a record for number of air drops with more than 500,000 gallons of retardant used.

A Pollock Pines man who is now in custody allegedly started it Sept. 13. How it was started has not been disclosed. Wayne Allen Huntsman pleaded not guilty Friday. Bail was set at \$10 million.

El Dorado County District Attorney's Office said Huntsman broke into a Pollock Pines house to call 911 Sept. 13 to report the blaze.

The fire spread moderately Friday with most of the activity in the north end between French Meadows and Hell Hole Reservoir.

Officials said, "The north end of the fire had an east wind of 18-20 mph with gust of 38, pushing the fire to the west. Single and group tree torching was observed. There was a spot fire approximately 2 miles ahead of the main fire front requiring resources to withdraw from the area. The east winds and the up canyon winds were in opposition, which helped moderate fire behavior through the mid and lower portions of the fire. Tonight the down canyon winds and east wind are expected to compliment each other. This could bring more active than normal fire activity tonight."

Four people have been injured, but details are not available.

As of Sept. 19, nearly 3,000 people were still on mandatory evacuation. There have been reports of people having their homes burglarized while they are displaced. An evacuation center has been established at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Camino. The latter is taking small pets, the former hasn't had anyone show up.

Highway 50 is open. Westbound traffic is one lane from Riverton to Pollock Pines. For up-to-date road information, click on the state icon at the top of the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

Smoke continues to be an issue in parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and in Carson City and Reno. According to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, air quality monitors in Carson City and Gardnerville are reporting levels of particulate matter in the unhealthy range due to smoke from the King fire in California.

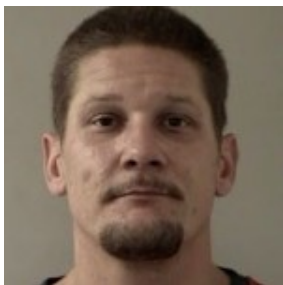
The Lake Tahoe Basin is not in danger and there are no evacuations in Tahoe. The U.S. Forest Service has issued an advisory for people to not hike or backpack in Desolation and Granite Chief wilderness areas. The McKinney Rubicon Trail has been closed. A closure notice has been issued for part of the Eldorado National Forest until the fire is out.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Arson suspect pleads not guilty

By Sam Stanton and Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

PLACERVILLE – Arson suspect Wayne Allen Huntsman made his first court appearance today over allegations that he set the devastating King Fire near Pollock Pines and had a not guilty plea entered on his behalf.



Wayne Allen
Huntsman

The 37-year-old suspect did not speak during the brief hearing, which was continued until Oct. 28. He spent part of the session looking

at the floor

Huntsman is accused of setting the blaze last Saturday that has grown to nearly 120 square miles and has destroyed at least some structures in the area.

Officials say the fire is costing \$5 million a day to fight.

Huntsman is being held on \$10 million bail, and his arrest generated a wave of emotion among area residents.

Read the whole story

Calif. water bill barely floating in Congress

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Secret California water bill negotiations have a “55 percent to 60 percent chance” of success during the fast-fading 113th Congress, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer said Thursday.

In her first extended public comments on the closely held water talks, Boxer voiced cautious optimism even as she criticized House Republicans for trying to exclude Northern California Democrats.

“I’m very hopeful,” Boxer told reporters. “I would say the discussions are going well.”

Some negotiators convened as recently as Sunday in an effort to narrow remaining differences, Boxer revealed. Like everyone else involved in the ongoing negotiations, she carefully

avoided discussing any specifics and declined to identify what the major sticking points might be.

But with so little time remaining, Boxer could find herself holding the key card in what she described as “pretty good, often intense” negotiations.

The negotiators are trying to resolve significant differences between House and Senate bills that respond to California’s drought. The GOP-controlled House passed a far-reaching bill in February. It would roll back a landmark 1992 law that directed more water to protect the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, remove wild-and-scenic protections from a half mile of the Merced River and authorize new water storage projects, among other provisions.

Read the whole story

Marsh restoration compromise proposed



The Upper Truckee Marsh in April 2013. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

A possible project to come out the California water bond that is on the Nov. 4 ballot is restoration of the Upper Truckee Marsh.

On Thursday the California Tahoe Conservancy board heard a presentation about staff's recommendation for how to restore this approximately 500-acre parcel. The CTC owns this swath of land that borders the Tahoe Keys and Al Tahoe neighborhoods in South Lake Tahoe and goes from Highway 50 to Lake Tahoe.



The west and east sides of the marsh. Image/CTC

Four alternatives were studied in the environmental documents, with the Conservancy not having a preferred one. Now staff is recommending a hybrid. The final environmental impact report and environmental impact study should be out in late spring, early summer 2015. The soonest any work could start is 2017, and that would not be anything substantive, according to staff.

Residents in Al Tahoe have been vocal about their opposition to increasing recreation opportunities on their side of the marsh. Parking would be an issue, plus they questioned how this would be good for plants and animals. Their concerns were heard.

And at the Sept. 18 meeting many applauded the decision.

No elevated boardwalks or viewing areas will be erected on the east side of the marsh. Trout Creek, which runs on this side, will see some restoration work. In the future it will come into the marsh as one channel, but then will be allowed to meander through the marsh to Lake Tahoe without a defined route. This returns the waterway to how it functioned before settlers messed with it.

One person raised issues about flooding, questioning if enough analysis has been done to ensure tweaking the area even a few inches won't cause problems for residents.

On the west side of the marsh is where most of the visible changes will take place. This includes rerouting the trail at Cove East, changing how the lagoon off the boat channel functions and possibly relocating the Tahoe Keys Property Owner Association's corporation yard.

Preliminary Staff Recommended Alternative



Project include:

- Restoring and enhancing habitat
- Improving water quality
- Protecting Tahoe yellow cress
- Providing appropriate public access
- Preserving cultural heritage
- Avoiding flood hazards.

CTC staff is in the process of responding to the 65 public comments and 12 agency comments. However, many centered on enforcement of the area and not the actual alternatives.

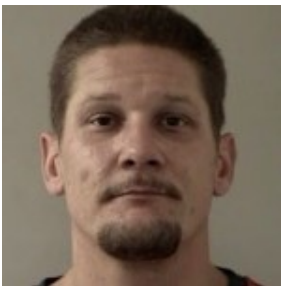
The east side has more issues with people being unruly,

letting dogs run wild, parties and trash. The Conservancy said it is looking into how to better address these concerns.

Report: Arson suspect called 911

By Siemny Chhuon, KXTV

A Pollock Pines homeowner was told by law enforcement that the arson suspect in the King Fire apparently broke into his home to call 911 after allegedly starting the fire.



Wayne Allen
Huntsman

"I can't understand what the guy was thinking," homeowner Ralf Lorenz said.

Lorenz wasn't home at the time. He was working in the Bay Area when the King Fire broke out Saturday on the steep embankment behind his home. His first clue that something wasn't right was when he got a call from his home security company that afternoon.

Authorities told Lorenz on Thursday that they had arrested 37-

year-old suspect Wayne Allen Huntsman. Thursday afternoon, law enforcement staged near the origin of the fire off of King of the Mountain Road. They had no comment about the case only saying it was an active crime scene.

Read the whole story

Nev. trucking firm's judgment in deadly Amtrak crash may grow

By Scott Sonner, AP

RENO — A Nevada trucking company could be forced to pay more than \$5.7 million if a judge formalizes a jury verdict that faulted one of its drivers for a fiery 2011 crash with an Amtrak train that killed six people and injured dozens.

A federal jury in Reno awarded \$4.5 million to Amtrak and \$210,777 to Union Pacific Railroad for damages resulting from John Davis Trucking Co.'s negligence when one of its trucks slammed into the side of a passenger train at a rural crossing 70 miles east of Reno. Conductor Laurette Lee, 68, of South Lake Tahoe was killed.

U.S. District Judge Howard McKibben put the judgment on hold until Sept. 29 to consider adding up to another \$1 million or more in attorney fees and interest to the railroad companies' award.

The truck driver, a train conductor and four passengers on the California Zephyr died in the crash where a highway crosses the tracks on June 24, 2011.

Amtrak and Union Pacific sued, seeking damages of up to \$11 million from John Davis Trucking after the National Transportation Safety Board concluded in December 2012 that the wreck most likely was caused by an inattentive trucker with a history of speeding violations driving a tractor-trailer with faulty brakes.

Lawyers for the trucking firm told jurors during the four-week trial last month that Union Pacific Railroad officials manipulated or destroyed evidence that would have proved a malfunctioning crossing gate and signal lights were responsible for the crash.

Railroad attorneys presented video clips from a camera mounted on the locomotive that they said proved the truck driver, Larry Valli of Winnemucca, Nevada, ignored flashing lights, a functioning gate and repeated whistle blasts before slamming into the fourth car of the train after two locomotives and a baggage car already had cleared the crossing.

"It was almost like a rocket hitting, blew up and burned," Amtrak lawyer Mark Landman said. "We will never know what Mr. Valli was doing. One thing we know he was not doing was looking where he was going."

The biggest chunk of the award to Amtrak in the jury verdict returned Aug. 29 was for damage to three rail cars, \$2.5 million, along with \$1.2 million for medical costs for employees and passengers. Union Pacific's award included \$162,835 to cover costs of repairing the signal system damaged in the crash.

John Moore, a Reno lawyer for the railroads, filed a motion last week seeking more than \$756,000 in interest due to Amtrak and \$34,000 in interest due to Union Pacific. That alone would push the judgment past \$5.5 million, with attorney fees expected to total several hundred thousand dollars or more still to be determined.

The train bound from Chicago to Emeryville, California, was three hours behind schedule when it left Salt Lake City on the

day of the crash.

The children of the conductor Lee are among those who have filed separate lawsuits over the crash, naming Valli and John Davis Trucking as defendants. The passengers killed in the accident were: Cheuy Ong, 34, of West Jordan, Utah; Francis Knox, 58, and Karly “Annie” Knox, 18, of Seward, Neb.; and Barbara Bell, 60, of United Kingdom.

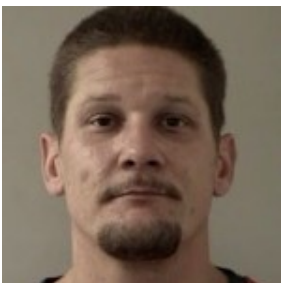
Arrest in King Fire; 10% contained; Tahoe safe

Updated Sept. 18 7pm:

By Kathryn Reed

An arrest has been made in the out-of-control King Fire near Pollock Pines.

Wayne Allen Huntsman, 37, was arrested Sept. 17 on a charge of arson – forestland. His bail was set at \$10 million.



Wayne Allen
Huntsman

The King Fire erupted Sept 13 and has since burned 73,184 acres and is 10 percent contained.

A criminal complaint was filed by the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office on Sept. 18 alleging Huntsman "willfully and maliciously set fire to and burn, and caused to be burned forest land" in what is now known as the King Fire. Aggravating factors have been added because two people fighting the fire have been injured.

Huntsman has a criminal past. In Santa Cruz County he has been convicted of assault with a deadly weapon and in Plumas County on property theft charges.

He is scheduled to be arraigned Sept. 19 at 1pm in Placerville.

How the fire was started has not been released.



Smoke from the King Fire makes for a colorful sunset at Cave Rock. Photo/Susan Wood

Fire update

"The fire is a not a threat to the basin at this time," Dave Zaski with North Tahoe Fire told *Lake Tahoe News* Thursday afternoon. There are also no evacuations in the basin. And Truckee is also not threatened.

The terrain that ignited last night was heavily wooded, whereas the areas close to Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley are full of granite.

"We are telling people to have an evacuation plan ready. If something goes bad, we will tell them," Zaski said.

Winds are also expected to decrease and the humidity level should be good for fighting the fire this evening.

The fire is moving east toward Desolation Wilderness. It has moved into Placer County. As of Thursday morning it was almost at Hell Hole Reservoir. The U.S. Forest Service has issued an advisory for people to not hike or backpack in Desolation and Granite Chief wilderness areas. The McKinney Rubicon Trail has been closed. A closure notice has been issued for Eldorado National Forest until the fire is out.

While no structures have been lost as of Sept. 18, thousands of residents are temporarily displaced as fire threatens them. As of Thursday night, 12,000 single residences and 9,000 other minor structures are in the path of the fire.

Because of evacuations advised for the areas of Kyburz and Silver Fork, Silver Fork Elementary School will be closed Sept. 19.

Highway 50 is closed from Pollock Pines to Riverton. For updates from Caltrans, click on the state icon on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.



The fire is moving north from Pollock Pines into popular wilderness areas. Hell Hole Reservoir is at

the top, then Loon Lake to
the right, and Union Valley
Reservoir near the center.
Map/Google Images

On Wednesday, Gov. Jerry Brown issued an emergency proclamation for El Dorado and Siskiyou counties because of the King and Boles fires. The Boles Fire is the one that swept through the town of Weed and continues to burn.

Smoke is expected to continue to be a problem for Truckee, Carson City and Reno areas. Washoe County is reporting unhealthy air quality and recommending people not go outside, especially people with respiratory issues, older people and the very young.

The evacuation center is at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Camino, where small animals are welcome. Another Red Cross evacuation center is located at 6530 Wentworth Springs Road in Georgetown. Late Thursday afternoon the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center opened as an evacuation site. Lake Tahoe Humane Society has provided cages for small animals because the West Slope ran out of them.

The Ironman race on the North Shore this weekend is still scheduled. The air show at Lake Tahoe Airport on the South Shore is also still happening, only now the admission is free.

Nearly 3,700 people are working the King Fire with 327 engines, 15 helicopters, 49 dozers and 80 water tenders. Crews from Lake Tahoe are at the fire.

Officials say it is costing \$5 million a day to fight the fire.

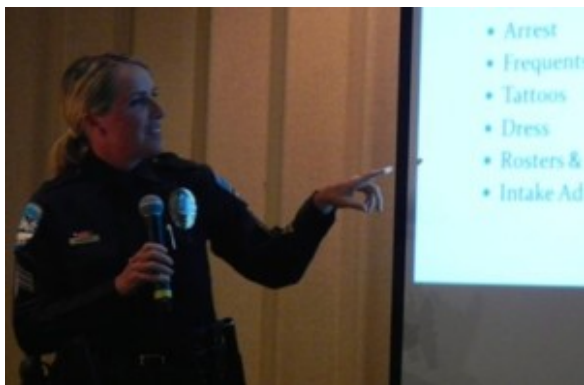
S. Lake Tahoe cops busy dealing with gangs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Gang members are among us – in schools, at stores, in our neighborhoods. They get recruited at the elementary level and often don't leave until they're killed.

While these facts seemed to come as a surprise to many members of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe, the reality is gangs are nothing new to the Lake Tahoe Basin. Every year law enforcement tries to figure out how to get a handle on the situation, and how best to educate kids, parents and the public at large. And every year media writes about it.

There are 26 known gangs in South Lake Tahoe, with about a half dozen of those being inactive. And there are 159 documented members in those gangs. Sureño – aka Southside 13 in Tahoe, Norteño – aka Eastside Familia, Juggalos, OMG (Outlaw Motorcycle Gang), TNB (Trust NoBitch), and Cyclones are some of the more active gangs locally.



South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Norrgard on Sept. 17 talks about local gangs. Photo/LTN

Blue, red, 13, 14, TNB, ESF – see those colors, numbers or letters and know it's gang related. Thirteen comes from M being the 13th letter in the alphabet. M is for Mexico and the Southerners. The letter N is the 14th letter and represents the Northerners.

South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Norrgard and Detective Nick Carlquist gave an overview of the local gang situation to Soroptimist on Sept. 17 at Harveys.

One Soroptimist member talked about having just served on a jury that convicted Cesar Caro in the 2012 gang related shooting on Bonanza Street. He could get 25 years to life when he is sentenced in October.

Carlquist said there is a link between guns being easy to obtain in Nevada and marijuana accessible in California. The two are often traded without any money exchanging hands.

"Where there are gangs, there are weapons and where there are weapons, there are drugs," he said.

While there are a slew of crimes tied to gangs, in South Lake Tahoe assault with a deadly weapon and vandalism are the predominant issues.

In state Penal Code it doesn't use gang, but instead considers this behavior street terrorism.

"They will recruit anyone," Norrgard said.

She said the more a gang member is feared and can intimidate others, the more respect that person garners in the group. And gang members are both genders. Females are often the ones to carry the drugs and weapons.

The officers said without the community's help it's impossible to get the gang-bangers off the streets. People need to pay attention to what kids are wearing, scribbling on paper, tattooing on themselves; letting officials know about

graffiti; and having an awareness in neighborhoods, and when out and about. But they also cautioned not to intervene. Anonymous calls about suspected gang activity may be placed to Secret Witness at 530.541.6800.

King Fire explodes to 70,000 acres; Hwy. 50 closed



Smoke clouds from the King Fire appear to be on fire.

Photo/Toogee Sielsch

The King Fire outside of Pollock Pines has swelled to 70,944 acres. It remains at 5 percent containment.

Highway 50 is closed from Pollock Pines to Riverton.

Because of the steep terrain it has been difficult for firefighters to get a handle on the blaze that is now in its sixth day of raging through the Eldorado National Forest.

The dense forest, though, is also home to a number of permanent residents and U.S. Forest Service cabins. There are 2,007 single residences and 1,505 other minor structures that are threatened. All of those people living there have been temporarily displaced. A slew of mandatory and voluntary evacuations remain in place.

The evacuation center is at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Camino. Another Red Cross evacuation center is located at 6530 Wentworth Springs Road in Georgetown. Lake Tahoe Humane Society has provided cages for small animals because the West Slope ran out of them.

On Wednesday, Gov. Jerry Brown issued an emergency proclamation for El Dorado and Siskiyou counties because of the King and Boles fires. The Boles Fire is the one that swept through the town of Weed.

Smoke is expected to continue to be a problem for Truckee, Carson City and Reno areas. Washoe County is reporting unhealthy air quality. Thunderstorms are in the forecast for the next three days.

Nearly 3,700 people are working the King Fire with 299 engines, 15 helicopters, 49 dozers and 68 water tenders. Crews from Lake Tahoe are at the fire. The cause remains under investigation.

Grant: 'Create a tourism, hospitality and recreation program'

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News asked the two Lake Tahoe Community College District 5 candidates a series of questions. The responses are being run in the order LTN received them.*



Name: Robert "Bob" Grant

Profession/work experience: Educator, professional director and conductor. I have taught 25 years with Lake Tahoe Unified School District at the high school and elementary levels. I was a co-writer of the grants for STHS. I taught as adjunct faculty at both Lake Tahoe Community College and Western Nevada College. I was also the director and conductor of "Ebenezer Scrooge" at Harrah's for 23 years as well as directing over 100 theatre productions in the region.

Age: 54

What organizations, committees or groups are you or have you been involved with?: I am a founding member of the Performing Arts Boosters Association (PABA) and worked on the committees for both the Measure A and Measure G bonds. I have served as the choir director of Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church since I was 17. I have also been involved with the AB86 Adult Education Project in conjunction with LTCC and currently serve as president of the STHS Site Council. I am a curriculum writer for the University of California Curriculum Integration Project and have written collaborative career/core curriculum that is used statewide. I also serve on visiting committees for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges accrediting and learning about schools in other areas.

What is your educational background?: I have my bachelor's degree from Sacramento State University and advanced credentials in elementary and secondary education from Sierra Nevada College. I also hold a certification in arts, media and entertainment.

Why do you want to serve on the college board?: Since I was in high school, I was interested in elected office, especially school boards. I was the student representative to the Lake Tahoe Unified Schools board for two years. I also ran for that office in the general election when I was 18. I am interested in increasing the collaboration with both the school and college districts. I believe my experiences in both institutions provide a unique perspective that would add to the effectiveness of the board. I believe it is crucial to keep student-centered and make decisions that are in the students' best interests.

Why should people vote for you over the other candidate?: I believe my many years as a South Lake Tahoe resident and my experiences as both a student and instructor at LTCC provide an understanding of the college and community partnership. My experiences in dealing with education funding and policy at both at the local, county and state levels will allow me begin

to be an effective board member immediately.

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing Lake Tahoe Community College and how will you deal with it?: Enrollment seems to be a concern at the college. New legislation that limits repeatability of classes has changed the demographics of the LTCC student. The college provides a world-class education and we need to increase our marketing efforts and connections with prospective students to keep the enrollment growing.

How will you be voting for the bond the college has on the ballot and why?: As a supporter of both Measure A and Measure G, and a grant writer for some of the projects at the high school, I have seen both the economic and prestige benefits of the infrastructure spending. Dignitaries, educators and political leaders have all come to see not only the facilities at STHS, but I have seen the changes in learning and innovative curriculum that the bond inspired. I believe the college and the community would benefit in the same ways. There were jobs created by the construction and upgrading, and even when the contracts could not be fulfilled by locals, the economic benefits of housing, food and restaurants, building supplies and other collateral extras were realized.

What is working well at the college and what isn't; and how would you go about changing what isn't working?: There are many programs that are working well at the college. Dr. [Kindred] Murillo is a strong leader and is very adept at moving the college's vision forward. The EMT and fire science career programs are very strong and very much in demand. The core academic programs are exemplary and prepare students for the rigors of four-year colleges and beyond. The fine and performing arts create a cultural anchor for the students, staff and community. I believe that programs should be reviewed regularly and assessed for viability. Programs that are not as strong may undergo revision and possible integration with other pathways. Sharing appropriate resources

with the community and possibly the unified school district would help to eliminate waste and redundancy.

What programs are not offered that should be?: Although the college has pieces of this curriculum, I believe the college should create a focused tourism, hospitality and recreation program that is centered on the needs of the South Lake Tahoe workforce and encourage entrepreneurship and sound management techniques. The program should focus on guest services, but also provide the infrastructure needed to sustain business, the environment, and our way of life.

What classes have you taken at LTCC?: I began taking classes at LTCC after I graduated high school (when the school was next to Taco Bell) and received an A.A. degree before moving on to Sacramento State. Since that time I have been in many theater productions and have taken the full gambit of Spanish courses they have to offer.

What other involvement have you had with LTCC?: As I stated earlier, I am currently part of the AB86 Adult Education program and have worked with the LTCC staff on the SB1070 Career Pathways Program ensuring there are clear connections for students that encourage them to continue their education throughout their lives.

What should be the role of higher education in South Lake Tahoe?: The role of the college is threefold: To prepare students for higher education and training experiences, to improve the quality of life in our community through education, and to be a hub of culture and enlightenment.

What do you believe should be the financial priorities of the college?: The priority has been and should remain the students of the college. Funds should be allocated as close to the student as possible to maintain academic excellence. This means investing in and acquiring the best faculty and staff available and providing funds for infrastructure, marketing

and growth. The college should always be looking for redundancy and overlap in operations and program, and redirect funds towards the students.

Being on the board requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: I have been on many committees and boards that work well together. I believe I have a problem-solving type of personality and often try to coalesce ideas and strategies to make them palatable and effective for everyone. I would not hesitate, however to vote in the negative if I believed the decision was not in the best interests of the students or the college.

How much time can you commit to carry out trustee duties?: I believe I have ample time to devote to the board and the college. My children are grown, my wife is very supportive of the time commitment and serving as trustee would be an honor not a "time-burden." I am willing to devote all the time it takes to be an effective trustee.

What do you think is the most important mission of LTCC?: Student success. Whether that means training for a job or career, acquiring basic-skills, getting ready to move to a four-year university, or developing a better life for yourself and your family. LTCC is a place where that can happen and does happen everyday.

Tell the voters something about yourself that they may not know: I was honored by a proclamation from the governor of Nevada for my work in the arts. And, if I may, I am proud of the fact that all my children and now my granddaughter have attended LTCC.