

South Shore businesses seek tools for success

By Kathryn Reed

A brainstorming session of more than 70 business owners and employees on Tuesday uncovered a wealth of topics designed to make the South Shore more successful.

At the annual Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce breakfast Jan. 28 much of the focus was on tapping into what the people in the room want for the coming year.

The chamber plans to host three industry lunches in 2014, with the first being in April. It will focus on health and wellness services that complement traditional medicine. The other two lunch topics may come from ideas generated this week.



B Gorman, CEO of Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, talks Jan. 28 about plans for this year.

Photo/Provided

Chamber officials were also looking for ideas for Tech Tuesdays, a segment the business group introduced last year.

While the events are geared toward chamber members, most are open to non-members at a higher price.

Businesses want to know how to manage their information off-site, how to recover after a disaster, more about Excel, search engine optimization, constant social media updates, and the basics of databases.

They also want more in-depth sessions on recreation, events, how to retain good employees in the shoulder season, how to increase their business' value, low-income housing, nonprofits, how to engage other businesses in an event, aging infrastructure, federal health care regulations, how businesses can adapt to climate change, and soft skills.

The various tables were also asked to talk among themselves about challenges they overcame in 2013 and successful best management practices.

Paula Lambdin, who works for Golden Sierra, complimented Brent Truax of the Landing Resort Hotel on how well his employees are trained. They noticed her government license plate and were very attentive.

"At some properties I don't get the time of day," Lambdin told her tablemates.

Truax said his philosophy is to hire personalities as much as it is to hire people with experience.

Eric Swartz with Peak 1 Group brought up the importance of managing online reviews and that positive and negative comments deserve a response.

Truax's rule is to respond to 80 percent of the negative comments and 20 percent of the positive.

Barb Tenney at Après Wine Co. uses comments as a teaching moment with employees. The positive ones get forwarded to everyone, while a one-on-one talk occurs with the person who is the subject of a less flattering review.

B Gorman, who runs the chamber, said new this year would be

political endorsements. The group is starting with the California side. There is a South Lake Tahoe City Council race, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, Lake Tahoe Unified, Lake Tahoe Community College, South Tahoe Public Utility District, potential local initiatives, possible tax issues and other county positions on the ballot.

As with past years, a group will make excursions to Sacramento and Carson City to lobby lawmakers.

The chamber is also planning a trip to Park City April 2-5. Promotional material says, "During our visit to Park City, we will be looking at innovative ideas and strategies in the areas of transportation, walkable main streets, mixed use redevelopment as well as affordable living and performing arts."

Flames consume South Lake Tahoe house



Flames destroy a house in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 29.
Photo/Denise Haerr

Flames were still shooting into the night sky Wednesday after

a house erupted in flames in the early evening.

Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* it is a difficult fire to fight. It's a modified A-frame that was being remodeled. He expected crews would be out there quite a while.

All city resources were at the blaze on Long Valley Avenue in the Bijou Pines neighborhood, along with firefighters from Lake Valley and Tahoe Douglas.

The fire started about 7pm Jan. 29, with flames still shooting in the night sky at 8:30pm.

"The lots are small and close together with lots of trees," Denise Haerr, who lives in the neighborhood, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Thankfully, it's been raining all day."

At 9pm, she added, "The flames are still leaping within the home. We are so thankful for the firefighters protecting our neighborhood."

Meston said no one was home when the fire started.

Haerr said she never saw anyone at the house.

It is too soon to know how the fire started.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Driver plows stolen vehicle into Grace Hall

By Kathryn Reed

Julie Smith-Tunnell is accused of stealing her second vehicle

in two months.

The most recent time ended with the vehicle going into the front of Grace Hall at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe.

"We found her lying down behind a rock about 30 feet from the collision," police Lt. Brian Williams told *Lake Tahoe News*. He added that the 40-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman was lying on the keys, but denied being the driver.

The vehicle had been stolen from the second floor of Harveys in Stateline where employees park.

The owner of the vehicle on Saturday night realized his backpack with the keys inside of it had been stolen from the employee lounge. He took the bus home, leaving his vehicle there. But when he returned Sunday the Yukon was missing.

He then found out his Yukon had been driven into Grace Hall on Jan. 26 about 1am. Smith-Tunnell was reportedly traveling down Lyons Avenue toward Highway 50 at a high rate of speed when the crash occurred.

The vehicle and building sustained significant damage.

The force of the GMC Yukon Denali hitting the structure knocked goods off the shelves that are given away by Bread & Broth each Monday. There was concern the Jan. 27 meal would have to be canceled or moved to a new location.

Parishioner Paul Camacho organized a crew to clean up the mess and secure the building as well as it could be. Dave Walker with the city's building department said it was OK to let people inside.

"We were very relieved we were able to go ahead and serve dinner," Beverly Sass, church secretary, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This Friday we have our biggest fundraiser for the school, the 20th annual crab feed. We are able to go ahead and do

that. Then we'll reassess things next week and replace the damaged beams."

Smith-Tunnell was arrested on charges of stealing a vehicle, possession of stolen property and driving without a license. In November she was arrested on a stolen vehicle charge. She remained in jail Jan. 29 on \$51,500 bail.

Sgt. Pat Brooks with Douglas County Sheriff's Department said it would be up to the district attorney if Smith will face charges in Nevada.

Williams said auto thefts have been occurring at least every other week since the temps dropped. He said people are leaving them in their driveways to warm up and then someone swipes them.

Plenty of tickets available for Sochi Games

By Mason Levinson, Bloomberg

Sochi may attract the fewest American visitors to a Winter Olympics in 20 years amid terrorism concerns, a lack of luxury hotel rooms and difficulties procuring visas, according to U.S. tour operators.

Russia's plan to spend \$50 billion on hotels and other infrastructure to convert a small city on the Black Sea into a year-round resort hasn't resulted in enough high-end hotels, and the existing facilities have raised prices by 121 percent for the event, according to trivago.co.uk, a U.K. website.

Russia's Olympic organizing committee said that 30 percent of tickets remained unsold three weeks before the Feb. 7 opening ceremony. The Vancouver Games in 2010 wound up selling 97 percent of its seats. With few international flights directly into the Sochi airport, and most Westerners requiring visas, a last-minute rush is unlikely, tour operators say.

Sochi has planned to sell 1.1 million tickets, according to an International Olympic Committee marketing document, meaning about 330,000 remained available as of the latest update from the organizing committee.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe parolee back behind bars

A South Lake Tahoe resident who was just released from prison could be headed back there.

Dismas Womack, 47, was arrested early Wednesday morning in the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe.

The SWAT team arrived in its souped up mine resistant ambush prevention vehicle, which is used in high risk-situations.

"We found firearms and ammunition in his residence," police Lt. Brian Williams told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is a violation of his parole.

Womack had been in court this week regarding a restraining order that his ex-girlfriend has against him. Williams said Womack violated the court order and a warrant was issued for his arrest and to search his residence.

Womack was being held without bail at the El Dorado County Jail.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. police reluctant to set pot rules

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

In 2010, as Colorado lawmakers were creating America's first state-licensed and regulated medical marijuana industry, fellow police officers at a Colorado Drug Investigators Association conference jeered a state law enforcement official assigned to draft the legislation.

Some of the sharpest barbs came from visiting narcotics officers from California. While Colorado moved forward with pot industry oversight, the narcotics officers who berated Cook were right – at least about California, where trying to regulate America's largest marijuana economy has become a perennial political loser. A key factor has been intense law enforcement opposition itself.

In California, police have forcefully opposed any legislation seen as legitimizing a marijuana industry. Their opposition reflects a belief by many police officers that medical marijuana businesses are profiteering shams that were never authorized by California voters.

Training seminars offered for police by the California Narcotic Officers' Association suggest there is no such thing as medical marijuana and that state voters were hoodwinked

into approving its use so people could legally get stoned.

Read the whole story

January in Tahoe more suited for tanning

By Kathryn Reed

The storm forecast to roll into the Lake Tahoe Basin today is not going to quench the land's thirst, but it might alter the record books.

Going into the week, this has been the second driest January on record for South Lake Tahoe with 0.17 inches of precipitation. However, those records only date to 2000. The driest was in 2003 when 0.03 inches fell. No. 3 was 2001 with 0.40 inches.

In Tahoe City, where records have been kept for more than a century, this too is the second driest January with 0.35 inches. It is tied with 1985. The driest was in 1991 with 0.08 inches.



It was so warm at the Ritz-

Carlton Lake Tahoe on Jan.
25 that people were
lathering on sunscreen and
taking off clothes.
Photo/LTN

Rain is what is forecast for lake level starting today, with a winter storm watch in effect for the basin for a 24-hour period starting Thursday at 4am. One to 2 feet of snow is possible above 8,000 feet, according to the National Weather Service in Reno, 1 foot above 7,000 feet, and 6 inches at the lake.

A “quick punch” is how Jessica Kielhorn with the Weather Service described the storm. A lingering shower may persist into Friday.

The drought of 1976-77 is often compared to what is going on now in California and Northern Nevada. One reason is because now, like then, a high pressure sat over the states that diverted storms elsewhere. The current ridge is 4 miles high and 2,000 miles long.

A silver lining compared to the 1970s is the advent of snowmaking. The overnight temperatures have allowed snowmaking operations to continue most nights through the dry spell. Heavenly Mountain Resort this week opened more terrain on the California side.

Plus, resorts will bring snow from other parts of the mountain to fill in bare spots that have been skied off. And the groomers are also earning their checks this season by ensuring runs are not slabs of frozen hardpack.

But daytime temperatures this month have been balmy. The mean maximum temperature so far for January in South Lake Tahoe has been 51.7 degrees – a record. In 2012 the mean maximum temp for January was 48.8 degrees, 47.3 degrees in 1986 and 47.2

degrees in 2003.

The highest temp for a January was recorded at 61 degrees in 2011. So far South Tahoe has hit 58 degrees as a high this month.

In Tahoe City the mean maximum temp is also at a record this month at 46.9 degrees. The previous record of 46.8 degrees was set in 1961, with 1986 being 46.6 degrees.

The record high for a Tahoe City January was set in 1927 at 60 degrees. This month it's gotten up to 55 degrees.

While the water content for the Sierra was at 20 percent of normal when it was measured earlier this month, it will be less than that when the next readings are taken Jan. 30.

Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed 2014-15 budget calls for \$618.7 million for water efficiency projects, wetland and watershed restoration, groundwater programs, conservation, flood control, and integrated water management.

"As we work on emergency actions to manage through one of the driest winters on record, we are also taking proactive, long-term steps to prepare California for future droughts and flood," Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird said in a statement. "Each decade brings improvements, but also significantly highlights what we can do better. The California Water Action Plan gives us clear focus and vision for the next five years."

The governor's budget also would allow Department of Water Resources to better monitor the groundwater resources that provide more than one-third of California's supplies in dry years, and supports the development of a state backstop for sustainable groundwater management practices by the State Water Resources Control Board, should local efforts to do so not materialize.

Former Raley's exec going to prison

David John Magana, a former advertising director for Raley's, was sentenced Jan. 28 to three years and 11 months in prison and ordered to pay more than \$2.9 million in restitution for defrauding the grocery store chain out of more than \$3 million.

The 47-year-old Newcastle resident pleaded guilty in February 2013 to the charges. Two other defendants pleaded guilty and were sentenced in December. Jason Allen Smith, 47, of Foresthill was sentenced to three years and one month in prison and ordered to pay \$1.6 million in restitution. Martin Stewart Cullenward, 60, of Cool, was sentenced to three years and five months in prison and ordered to pay \$1.4 million in restitution.

According to court documents, from at least May 14, 2007, until Sept. 28, 2010, the three devised several schemes to defraud Raley's. In one scheme, Magana demanded that a printing company and a paper company pay Cullenward unnecessary commissions in order to keep doing business with Raley's. The unnecessary commissions were disguised as additional charges within their regular invoices to Raley's. Magana approved for payment all of the inflated invoices, and Cullenward paid Magana a kickback after he received the "commissions."

Magana and Cullenward sold significant quantities of Raley's paper inventory to third parties at a discounted rate. They falsely reported to Raley's that the paper had been used in the normal course of business.

“Mr. Magana, along with his co-conspirators carefully crafted a scheme to take control of millions of dollars of company money for personal gain,” IRS-criminal investigation acting Special Agent in Charge Shannon Hodges said in a statement. “Not only did he defraud his employer, but the everyday customer. Those who line their pockets with profits from these schemes should know they will not go undetected and will be held accountable.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Profits climb for El Dorado Savings

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Placerville-based El Dorado Savings Bank reported a profit of \$9.83 million for all of 2013, up 9 percent from \$9.02 million in 2012.

Fourth quarter 2013 net income totaled \$3.68 million, up sharply from \$2.8 million in the year-ago period.

Total assets as of Dec. 31 were \$1.86 billion, up \$47 million from the previous year.

Read the whole story

2 people hurt in Placerville apartment fire

By KCRA-TV

An early-morning apartment complex fire in Placerville that injured two people is being investigated by police.

The fire broke out just after 5am Jan. 28 at the complex at 2661 Woodridge Court.

Two men were found outside the apartment building with burns when officers arrived at the scene. They were taken to UC Davis Medical Center for treatment.

[Read the whole story](#)