

Should schools teach social media skills?

By Aarti Shahani, KQED-TV

Taking selfies at funerals. Tagging pictures of teens drinking alcohol at parties. Kids (and adults for that matter) post a lot of silly stuff online – and although most of it is chatter, some of what might seem harmless leads to tragic consequences. But is it the job of schools to teach kids the dos and don'ts of social media?

At Lincoln High School in San Francisco's Sunset district, counselor Ian Enriquez teaches students three very big words: "Disinhibition, reputation, anonymity."

Enriquez is using a curriculum created by the non-profit Common Sense Media, a media watchdog group for parents that also offers resources for teachers.

Like many schools throughout the country, Bay Area schools hold workshops on cyberbullying, but don't have uniform practices for teaching social media etiquette beyond that. While teachers use platforms like Facebook as a tool to engage students in learning, ongoing instruction on digital citizenship itself is the exception, not the rule.

Enriquez, who counsels students on health, racism, homophobia, and other topics that aren't purely academic, believes the district should institute a mandatory social media curriculum.

Dennis Kelly, president of the United Educators of San Francisco, the local teachers union, says teachers are already drowning in work – especially now with Common Core. While social media is important, Kelly says, so are other things. "All students should learn to swim, but should it be school's responsibility to teach them swimming?"

Read the whole story

Batteries may solve Calif.'s energy problems

By Richard Harris, NPR

The California Public Utilities Commission has called on utilities and private companies to install about \$5 billion worth of batteries and other forms of energy storage to help the state power grid cope with the erratic power supplied by wind and solar energy.

The need to store energy has become urgent because the state is planning to get a third of its electricity from renewable sources by the end of the decade. And the shift in strategy could open up some big opportunities for small startups, including one called Stem.

Stem is housed in an abandoned showroom in Millbrae, Calif., just across the highway from San Francisco International Airport. And the company is not just aiming to help the state's power grid.

Read the whole story

Congress may be least productive in history

By Michael A. Memoli, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — By the numbers, this Congress is on track to make the infamous “do-nothing Congress” of the late 1940s look downright prolific.

Before the Senate adjourned Friday for an extended holiday break, the two bodies of the 113th Congress sent President Obama fewer than 70 bills for his signature. That compares to 395 enacted during the first year of the 80th Congress, which Harry Truman famously campaigned against for its inaction.

The showing has put the current Congress on track to become the least productive in history, likely beating the previous record-holder, the 112th Congress, during which 231 bills became law.

[Read the whole story](#)

Ex-Tahoe resident files suit against Calif., Idaho

By Keith Kinnair, Daily Bee

SANDPOINT, Idaho — A Sandpoint developer is suing the states of Idaho and California, and various public and private individuals for alleged constitutional rights violations.

Daniel Jay Tonnemacher is seeking up to \$2 million in damages, according to a lawsuit filed in Idaho's U.S. District Court on Friday.

Public records here and in California paint starkly opposing portraits of Tonnemacher. One image portrays Tonnemacher as a disgraced developer with a criminal record, while the other portrays him as victim of government persecution and corruption.

Tonnemacher, 63, said in the suit that he was falsely accused of an unspecified felony offense in El Dorado County about a decade ago and was unlawfully coerced into entering a plea of guilt.

He lived on the streets of South Lake Tahoe and Southern California when he wasn't incarcerated with unreasonably high bail, the suit said.

Read the whole story

Quagga mussel found in Southern California lake

By AP

VENTURA — Water district managers say an invasive and potentially destructive mussel appears to have spread to Lake Piru, marking its first appearance in Ventura County.

United Water Conservation District General Manager Michael Solomon tells the *Ventura County Star* on Monday that while he awaits official confirmation, all evidence shows that the quagga mussel is now in the lake that provides irrigation to

major county farms and drinking water to parts of Oxnard.

Water agencies in California have worked to fight off the quagga mussel, a prolific breeder that can clog pipes and machinery.

Susan Ellis of the Department of Fish and Wildlife says the mussel has invaded 26 California lakes and rivers since 2007, but Lake Piru is a rare case because it's not connected to the Colorado River.

Deaths in Nevada linked to flu

By Angela Chen, KOL0-TV

The Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health confirms there have been recent deaths in Nevada and around the nation associated with severe complications of the flu.

However, Center for Disease Control and Prevention officials say it's not a severe outbreak here and that this flu season is typical.

They also said that while the activity is currently considered low in the United States, it's also important to know that the incidence of cases is likely to peak in February.

Read the whole story

Health insurance elusive for many Californians

By Ken Carlson, Modesto Bee

A much smaller percentage of California residents receive health insurance through an employer than was the case 25 years ago, a report said.

Data compiled by the California Healthcare Foundation showed that 54 percent of residents received coverage through their jobs last year. That's down from 63 percent in 1988.

Despite its reputation for sunny beaches and affluent lifestyles, California has more residents than any other state who live without insurance to pay for medical bills, which restricts their access to doctors and makes them vulnerable to financial ruin if they get sick.

Although more residents have resorted to public health programs, 1 in 5 Californians under age 65 have no insurance, the seventh-highest uninsured rate in the nation.

Read the whole story

MV Transportation to receive nearly \$1.5 mil.

By Kathryn Reed

When all the settlement payments are made MV Transportation will get \$1,475,965.89.

The Fairfield-based transportation company sought \$3 million when it filed a lawsuit against the now defunct South Tahoe Area Transit Authority. The company contended it was owed \$2 million for services rendered and another \$1 million in lost revenue.

MV ran the South Shore bus service BlueGo starting in summer 2009. (Tahoe Transportation District has since taken over the operation of the bus service.) STATA severed the three-year contract after the first year. MV sued. STATA filed for bankruptcy. Settlements were officially reached in November.

The largest check is being written by Feldman McLaughlin Thiel LLP – for \$650,000. Mike McLaughlin, when the firm was Feldman Shaw, was the attorney for STATA before it filed for bankruptcy.

Neither McLaughlin nor Feldman would talk to *Lake Tahoe News* about the settlement because the details of the firm's negligent legal advice are under a federal seal.

The directors' insurance settlement is \$450,000. The suit against the individual board members of STATA was dropped. But collectively, because of their decisions to keep running the bus system without the funds to do so, the group is being held responsible. The STATA board never reduced service, racked up bills and ended up bankrupt. MV at the time was calling for a reduction in service.

The following are the settlement payments, according to court documents, that have been made to MV:

- MontBleu – \$48,500
- The Ridge – \$40,000
- Douglas County – \$100,000
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – \$25,000

- Lakeside Inn – \$16,652
- South Lake Tahoe – \$57,500
- Harrah's-Harveys – \$100,000
- Horizon – \$21,500
- Tahoe Transportation District – \$36,771.75
- Board of directors – \$50,000.

This totals \$495,923.75.

Others creditors besides MV will be receiving some money, too.

Incline man found dead on front porch

Washoe County sheriff's deputies are investigating a suspicious death in Incline Village.

Christopher Elliott, 46, was found dead on his front porch on Northwood Boulevard at 4am Dec. 22.

The cause of death is pending an autopsy.

"It does not appear as if a firearm or cutting device was involved in this incident," investigators said in a press release.

No suspects are in custody.

Anyone with information should call (775) 328.3320 or Secret Witness at (775) 322.4900.

Highest paid Placer County employee retiring

By Ed Fletcher and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Placer County's Dr. Richard Burton was the region's highest paid public official in 2012, earning nearly \$340,000. Throw in his benefits, and his total compensation reached nearly \$460,000.

Burton wasn't doing just one job, according to Nancy Nittler, the county's personnel director. He had two key Placer County posts as public health officer and director of the Health and Human Services Department. After seven years in the health officer post, he added the HHS director title when the previous director left a decade ago.

The Placer County doctor is one of 22 city and county employees in the Sacramento region who earned more than \$250,000 in total pay last year, according to a *Sacramento Bee* review of data from the State Controller's Office.

Read the whole story