

LTUSD tackling safety issues at school sites

By Kathryn Reed

Changing how a desk faces, putting a defensive item on a teacher's desk, playing over worst-case scenarios in one's head to know what to do just in case – those are some of the basic security measures being taken in Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

More substantive things are being done as well, and many are being implemented in coordination with local law enforcement.

LTUSD's school board was given an update on security within the district at the July 23 meeting.

Landscape modifications, window treatments, cameras, front entrance control, barriers to stop a vehicle from ramming a structure, signage – those are some of the easier items to tackle.

Another component to this is the technology needs of the district. The phone system is the same one Lake Tahoe Community College had that failed earlier this year and temporarily stopped voice communication. But the district's data delivery is even more antiquated, so that is a higher priority.

Al Frangione, who is leading the development of the security plan for the district, said the technology piece would cost \$1.5 million to do what he wants. There is about half of that dollar amount left from the Measure G facilities bond that could go toward IT.

Tuesday was about getting information, not for the board to make a decision on how to go forward.

What is happening

After the December 2012 fatal school shooting in Connecticut, a federal unfunded mandate came out saying the FBI needed to do some extensive training with local law enforcement to deal with school shootings or another crisis that would threaten students and staff.

Last week the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department used a West Slope school for a rigorous training.

LTUSD has been looking at how prepared it is in case there is a threat at a school.

"We looked at what are the threats and vulnerabilities and how do you rectify it," Frangione told the board.

What isn't public record is what all the weaknesses are so they cannot easily be exploited.

"The key thing is to get people to think about what they would do, especially by staff, so they can make a difference," FBI Agent Chris Champion said.

Staff will be receiving training before school starts next month and more intensive training will follow.

"It's probable staff is the first responders whether we like it or not," Frangione said.

A collaborative approach is being used, with multiple agencies involved in what is called REACT – Regional Emergency Action Crisis Team. But it was also noted that many of the groups don't regularly train together so each one might have a different set of protocols when it comes to dealing with an emergency.

With the South Shore being so small and staffing minimal, one department could not handle something like a Sandy Hook mass shooting.

Looking at prevention

Collaboration is also needed when it comes to various entities talking about what they perceive as a potential threat. It's not about profiling a student, or even an employee or parent, but instead putting pieces together.

The goal would be to try to get an individual help or defuse a situation before it became deadly.

Superintendent Jim Tarwater pointed out that in the last eight years he has found that parents are more difficult to reach.

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum spoke of how when he was with South Lake Tahoe Police Department in the 1990s he was the school resource officer at South Tahoe Middle School. It was at a time when gangs were infiltrating the school, and students and staff felt intimidated.

He said he's talked to teachers and that same feeling is coming back to STMS.

"Some kids are taking control again at the middle school," Van Arnum said. "It needs to be two pronged. You need to be tough, but you need to care."

He said building trust and relationships with students could help change how they behave. Programs like Police Activities League, after school boxing, weekend backpacking trips and a day on the slopes helped the kids bond with law enforcement and change the direction of their lives.

Today there is no officer at the middle school. And those programs are a thing of the past.

Highway patrol focusing on I-80 from SF to NJ

By Gary Richards, San Jose Mercury News

In the first crackdown of its kind, highway patrol officers from the Bay Area to New Jersey will join forces in an effort to prevent any fatalities on the 2,909 miles of Interstate 80 from Wednesday through July 31.

"For an entire week, that would be amazing," said Jaime Coffee, a spokeswoman for the California Highway Patrol. "I don't know if it has happened before."

Someone dies in a collision every eight days on I-80 in California.

Of those fatalities, 30 percent involved the failure to wear a seat belt, 27 percent are alcohol-related, 22 percent are speed-related and 4 percent are attributed to distracted driving.

From 2001 to 2011, there were more than 77,842 collisions, or an average of 21 crashes each day, and 498 people or nearly 50 a year killed on I-80 in the state.

The latest push, dubbed the "I-80 Challenge," was organized by the Iowa State Patrol after research identified an increase in traffic fatalities during the summer vacation period on the nation's main east-west route.

For California, summer also means heavier than usual traffic from San Francisco to Reno and Lake Tahoe. Agencies in Utah, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio and the more heavily populated eastern part of the country also say a surge in traffic can lead to more mayhem this time of year.

While I-80 is a key link between the East Coast and West

Coast, it often bottlenecks down to two lanes each way. And in less-populated areas, drivers often go too fast in their haste to reach vacation destinations.

“Speeders, sleepy drivers, too much traffic – those are my big worries,” said James Delgado, of San Jose, who makes several trips each summer to Reno and Lake Tahoe. “It would be good to see a few more CHP cars out there, too.”

Coffee said the CHP will focus on drivers not wearing seat belts, those going too fast for conditions and anyone who has been drinking.

“Much of this will be educational,” Coffee said. “We’re just trying to get the word out about being safe this time of year.”

S. Tahoe homicide victim ID'd; suspect on the run

The man accused of killing 28-year-old South Lake Tahoe resident Julian Acevedo Salvador remains at large.

South Tahoe officers now say the fight early July 20 was just between the two men. It started with an argument, escalated to a fistfight and ended with Salvador being killed.

Detectives are continuing to collect evidence and information.

“Because the suspect is still unidentified and at large, and there are many witness and potential suspect interviews pending, it is important that specific details regarding the precise nature of how this event unfolded remain unreleased to the public at this time,” police said in a statement.

The name of the assailant is unknown. He is described as a white male in his mid-20s, about 5-feet-8inches, with weight proportionate to height.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Gene mutation linked to obesity

By Elizabeth Lopatto, Bloomberg

A genetic mutation linked to obesity in mice can cause weight gain without overeating, a discovery researchers at Boston Children's Hospital say suggests the gene may govern how the body uses energy.

Mice altered to silence the gene, called *Mrap2*, had to be underfed by 10 percent to 15 percent to keep their weight gain as low as normal mice, according to the study released yesterday in the journal *Science*. An analysis of 500 people found the equivalent human gene mutation in four people with severe, early onset obesity.

The mutant mice grew to twice the normal size and the weight gain was exaggerated further when they ate a high-fat diet. The finding suggests the body's mechanisms for energy use and weight gain among some obese people may be different than among skinnier peers.

"These mice aren't burning the fat, they're somehow holding onto it," Joseph Majzoub, the chief of endocrinology at Boston Children's Hospital and a study author, said in a statement.

Of the 500 obese humans whose genes were sequenced, the four

people with the mutation had become obese at an early age. Only one had a mutation that totally disabled the gene. That suggests the mutation induced in the mice is responsible for less than 1 percent of the obese population.

Obese people have too much body fat, which increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, and certain cancers, according to the National Institutes of Health. Obesity is calculated using body mass index, which is measured by height and weight. A person with a BMI higher than 30 is considered obese. That means a person who stands 5 foot 9 inches is obese if he or she weighs 203 pounds or more.

Democrats reluctant to challenge Sandoval

By Anjeanette Damon, Las Vegas Sun

Election after election, Democrats in Nevada have demonstrated they have the superior party apparatus.

Democrats can count the ways they have the upper hand in Nevada's political landscape: 100,000 more registered voters than Republicans; a well-funded, professionally staffed party organization; and a proven turnout machine.

Oh, and Democrats have demographics on their side, too, as Nevada's population has grown largely more Hispanic and more urban in the past decade.

So with all of that going for them, why haven't Democrats been able to cough up a candidate to take on Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval in next year's top-of-the-ballot race?

Read the whole story

Thunder rattles Tahoe, more on the way

Updated 3:30pm:

The U.S. Forest Service is reporting five small fires, all located between Echo and Monument. Not one is expected to spread much before crews can get to them to put them out.

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It was a restless night Monday for many people in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin with all the booming thunder and flashes of lightning filling the sky.



Lightning in South Lake
Tahoe on July 22.
Photo/Brandi Ledbetter Brown

Unsettled weather is going to be here for the rest of the week until it clears out on Sunday, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

Crews in Alpine County are working on a fire that started from

the lightning. It is burning near Jobs Peak. Firefighters are hiking in to the east-facing slope above the Fay Luther trailhead. U.S. Forest Service crews are hiking to Timmer Peak where a small blaze started near the same area where lightning struck a few weeks ago.

The rain was spotty throughout the region. South Lake Tahoe received 0.11 of an inch, Minden 0.07, and Truckee and Reno nothing.

Meteorologist Brian O'Hara in Reno said afternoon heat usually triggers the thunderstorms. It was an upper level disturbance that moved over last night that set up these boomers.

"There is still a chance of precipitation through the week. That system that is over us will be parking over the region for the next few days," O'Hara told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Flash flooding is possible in many locations, he said, but mostly the Weather Service is keeping an eye on Mineral and Mono counties. However, where the Bison Fire burned in Douglas County is susceptible to mudslides because there is no vegetation to absorb the moisture.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nutting wants all charges to be dropped

By Kathryn Reed

Ray Nutting, his attorney and supporters believe the felony and misdemeanor charges brought against the El Dorado County supervisor should be dropped.

Nutting didn't say a word during his arraignment Monday in El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe. Before the hearing he sat with his wife and cadre of supporters, getting up at times to confer with his attorney, and mostly looking sullen.

Instead of entering a plea, defense attorney David Weiner told Judge Tim Buckley that he intended to file a 995 and a demurrer.

The legal proceedings challenge whether there is enough evidence to try Nutting and essentially ask for the case to be dismissed.



Ray Nutting, back left on phone, with wife, Jennifer, wait with supporters July 22, while his attorney, David Weiner, left foreground, goes over paperwork. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Weiner has until Aug. 15 to file the paperwork. The prosecution has until Sept. 9 to respond to it. Buckley will hear both issues on Sept. 20 in South Lake Tahoe.

"We are aware of the negative impact on the county and related government entities with this case hanging around," District Attorney Vern Pierson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We are doing

everything we can to move it along as expeditiously as possible.”

Nutting, 53, faces four felony counts regarding money he received from the state to clear brush from his 350-acre ranch on the West Slope. (His brother owns an adjacent 350 acres.) He is accused of not reporting the money and voting on contracts that affected him monetarily.

After those charges were leveled in May, the district attorney and state Attorney General’ Office filed seven misdemeanor charges against Nutting regarding how he got his \$55,000 in bail money. He is accused of taking loans from county employees.

The bail was the subject of most of Monday’s hearing because Weiner wanted his client to be released on his own recognizance. The state said the \$55,000 bail should remain in place.

Buckley said the money for the bail should be returned to the people it came from and that Nutting would have until Friday to post a reduced bail of \$20,000.

Study: Sex ed reduces teen birth rate

By Rebecca Klein, Huffington Post

California’s teen birth rate has dropped nearly 60 percent as a result of expanded sex education programs, according to a report released by the California Department of Public Health last week.

The report -- which was based on data collected until 2011 -- revealed that the California teen birth rate reached a 20-year low that year. While in 1991, there were 70.9 births for every 1,000 teens aged 15-19, in 2011 this number decreased to 28 births per 1,000 teens.

Teen birth rates fell across all ethnic groups, according to the report. The Hispanic teen birth rate dropped from 73.6 in 2001 to 42.7 in 2011 -- although Hispanics continue to be the group with the highest teen birth rate. Teen birth rates for African-Americans, Whites and Asian-Americans also decreased significantly.

Several factors contributed to the falling birth rates, the department said in a press release. One factor was the state's school sex education program, which law requires to be comprehensive and medically accurate. The report also credits community-based education programs that provide sexual health information to teens and their parents.

"We do believe that our programs are behind these numbers," Karen Ramstrom, the chief of the program standards branch at the California Department of Public Health's maternal child and adolescent health division, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

"California's innovative strategies and community partnerships aimed at lowering teen pregnancy are helping young women and men make responsible choices," Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the CDPH, said in a press release. "We must not be complacent; we must continue to promote teen pregnancy prevention programs and strategies in all communities."

As Think Progress noted, California's teen birth rate decreases are part of a national trend. The national teen birth rate dropped nearly 50 percent between 1991 and 2011, NBC's Today Health reported.

The nation's southern states continue to have some of the highest teen birth rates, Think Progress pointed out --

partially due to a lack of comprehensive sex education programs in many of those states.

6-year-old drowns at Jenkinson Lake

A 6-year-old boy drowned at Jenkinson Lake near Sly Park on Sunday.

Trip Demetri of Latrobe had gone missing about 4pm July 21. He was visiting the lake with his dad and sister. The siblings had been playing in the water.

The boy was found underwater about 10 feet from shore. He was pronounced deceased at the scene.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tolliver gets in fistfight after winning celeb golf tourney

“Apparently tempers flared, but it was a personal matter that was quickly resolved.”

That is how Phil Weidinger, the public relations honcho for the American Century Championship golf tourney, described the

fight between tournament champion Billy Joe Tolliver and another guy.



Billy Joe
Tolliver

Douglas County sheriff's Sgt. Pat Brooks told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I don't have any details yet."

Sheriff's deputies regularly patrol the grounds of Edgewood Tahoe during the tournament. But golf was long over when the confrontation occurred.

Sources have told *Lake Tahoe News* that about 8:30pm July 21 Tolliver got into a fistfight with someone regarding his son.

During a post-tournament interview, Tolliver said, "I've got five kids. But only Bubba was here. Bubba got reprimanded by the marshals in the playoff. Hey, kid get off the golf course. Hey, that's my kid. Relax, yell at me. I told him to stand over there."

The extent of the injuries to both men is unknown. It took sheriff's deputies to separate them.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*