

K9 officers receive 3 days of intensive training in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A strong police presence was seen throughout various parts of South Lake Tahoe earlier this week.

Thirteen police dogs and their handlers from about a half dozen California law enforcement agencies were in town for an advanced training course March 4-6.



K9 officers spend three days training in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Matt Morrison

South Lake Tahoe Police Department's two dogs participated, too. This is the first time the department has hosted an advanced training. As host, the dogs and handlers attend for free.

The three-day class was taught by instructors from Vigilant Canine Services International.

While training is part of every day life, a course like this is more intense.

One session had the dogs at Lake Tahoe Airport working with helicopters from the CHP and Reno-Tahoe Helicopters.

"Dogs can get squeamish around loud noises and propellers," Sgt. Josh Adler explained. "This gets them acclimated."



SLTPD Officer Ryan Wagoner gets his dog used to the helicopter.

Dogs had to climb into the helicopter with it running.

"After that we exposed the dogs to tear gas. They aren't affected by it, but you need to know if they are or not," Adler told *Lake Tahoe News*. The officers all had masks on.

One scenario required the dogs to find a bad guy while tear gas was in the air.

Multiple searches were conducted throughout the training.

Dogs also had to work around firearms.

Annual certifications are required per Police Officer Standards and Training. The dog and handler must pass as a team.

Robber makes off with money from El Dorado Savings

An undisclosed amount of cash was stolen Thursday from the El Dorado County Savings Bank in South Lake Tahoe.

A man passed a note to the teller at 2:06pm March 7 that demanded the money. No weapon was visible.

He fled the Lake Tahoe Boulevard bank on foot.



Police are looking for this man. Photo/Provided

The suspect is on video walking down Bal Bijou Road just prior to the robbery. He was last seen fleeing the scene behind CVS Pharmacy.

The suspect was described as a white male adult in his mid-20s, slight to average build with scruffy facial hair, and a black patch of hair on his left cheek similar to a mole.

He was wearing blue pants, black jacket with leather sleeves similar to a letterman's jacket. He had a black hoodie, wore ski goggles and carried a Safeway reusable shopping bag.

Anyone with information is asked to call the police at (530) 542.6100.

CDC says ‘nightmare bacteria’ a growing threat

By Lena H. Sun, Washington Post

Federal officials warned Tuesday that “nightmare bacteria” – including the deadly superbug that struck a National Institutes of Health facility two years ago – are increasingly resistant to even the strongest antibiotics, posing a growing threat to hospitals and nursing homes nationwide.

Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said at a news conference: “It’s not often that our scientists come to me and say we have a very serious problem and we need to sound an alarm. But that’s exactly what we are doing today.”

He called on doctors, hospital leaders and health officials to work together to stop the spread of the infections. “Our strongest antibiotics don’t work, and patients are left with potentially untreatable infections,” he said.

Although the bacteria, known as Carbapenen-Resistant Enterobacteriaceae, or CRE, haven’t spread to the wider community – like some other germs – they are more dangerous, said Frieden, who described them as a “triple threat.”

First, the bacteria are resistant to all or nearly all antibiotics, even those of last resort, he said. Second, they kill up to half of patients who get bloodstream infections from them. And third, the bacteria can transfer their

antibiotic resistance to other bacteria within the family, potentially making other bacteria untreatable, as well.

For example, carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella*, which caused the NIH outbreak, “can spread the genes that destroy our last antibiotics to other bacteria, such as *E. coli*, and make *E. coli* resistant to antibiotics also,” Frieden said.

E. coli is the most common cause of urinary tract infections in healthy people.

In 10 years, the percentage of Enterobacteriaceae resistant to antibiotics increased almost fourfold, to 4.2 percent in 2011 from 1.2 percent in 2001, according to data reported to CDC. And the strain that caused the NIH outbreak has increased sevenfold in the past decade, according to a CDC report issued Tuesday.

During the first half of 2012, almost 200 hospitals and long-term acute-care facilities treated at least one patient infected with these bacteria. The CDC did not have statistics for fatalities.

Enterobacteriaceae are a family of more than 70 bacteria, including *E. coli*, that normally live in the digestive system. Over time, some of these bacteria have become resistant to a group of antibiotics known as carbapenems, often referred to as last-resort antibiotics. During the past decade, CDC tracked one type of CRE from a single health-care facility to facilities in at least 42 states, according to a CDC news release.

Only six states – Tennessee, Minnesota, Colorado, Wisconsin, Oregon and North Dakota – require hospitals and health-care facilities to report CRE infections to state health departments.

The NIH outbreak sickened 19 patients, including the woman who brought the germ with her when she was transferred to the

Bethesda facility; 12 patients died. Seven of the deaths were directly attributed to an antibiotic-resistant strain of the bacterium *Klebsiella pneumoniae*.

When the outbreak erupted, the clinical center's infection control staff scrambled, walling off infected patients and tearing out plumbing. They swabbed equipment, walls, railings and patients to track and contain the bacterium. Despite these extreme efforts, the outbreak still ticked along for more than a year as the hardy superbug lingered on hard surfaces – and inside patients, among the sickest of the sick.

The seven patients who died of bloodstream *Klebsiella* infections had immune systems weakened by cancer, anti-rejection drugs given after organ transplants, and genetic disorders.

Almost all CRE infections occur in patients receiving care for serious conditions in hospitals, long-term acute-care facilities (such as those providing wound care or ventilation) or nursing homes.

These patients often have catheters or ventilators, which can allow bacteria “to get deeply into a patient's body,” Frieden said.

The germs themselves spread from person to person, often on the hands of doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals.

The CDC said the spread of the germs can be controlled with proper precautions and better practices. Standard infection control precautions include washing hands and dedicating staff, rooms and equipment to the care of patients with CRE. Prescribing antibiotics wisely can significantly reduce the problem.

Patients who are hospitalized can, and should, ask their doctors and nurses to wash their hands before touching them,

the officials said. And patients should not always demand antibiotics for their illnesses.

“Not all fevers require antibiotics. The more we use antibiotics, the more we encourage the spread of antibiotic resistance,” Frieden said.

Big 5 lease may save Y Factory Stores

By Kathryn Reed

With the Factory Stores at the Y signing a multi-year lease agreement with Big 5 Sporting Goods, the South Lake Tahoe center may be able to find solid financial ground.

“I’m still in negotiations with the bank and trying to get a loan modification. Certainly the Big 5 lease helps me. But nothing has been settled yet,” Shannon Casteel told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Casteel and her sister Nancy Irmer bought the center in 2004 from their brother Gary Casteel. Since Irmer’s death her family and Shannon Casteel have operated the center.

As reported last month by *Lake Tahoe News*, the center that is located on one of the four corners of the Y, was about to be auctioned off. That did not happen. Casteel is trying to save her business.

Casteel said she has been talking to Big 5 for five years about moving in. All the hurdles were cleared and the retailer already has keys to the building. They will be taking over the old Adidas spot.

"They are hoping to open before Memorial Day," Casteel said.

Calls to Big 5 headquarters in El Segundo were not returned. Other Big 5 stores in the area are in Minden, Carson City, Placerville, Reno and Sparks.

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* she got word March 6 that Big 5 is coming to town.

"It is very exciting news. I understand they will have a job fair in the next couple weeks," she said.

How many employees will be hired is not known.

While the Adidas store was not one of the top 25 sales tax generators in South Lake Tahoe, Kerry anticipates Big 5 being able to bring in the kind of numbers that would put it in the company of Grocery Outlet, DIY, Ross and Fresh Ketch. Those are some of the top 25 sales tax producers.

Sales, property and hotel taxes are the three main revenue sources for the city.

Kerry said when she got wind Big 5 was looking seriously at South Lake Tahoe she reached out to the company to see how the city could help.

"We are definitely doing everything we can to encourage retail. We don't want to be a roadblock to them," Kerry said.

On the April 2 City Council agenda will be an item to waive special use permit fees. Right now a prospective business may have to pay thousands of dollars to determine if the location they want to operate at falls within the parameters of the city's rulebook. Even if it doesn't, the fee, per today's

policy, must be paid.

Casteel is also in negotiations with other potential renters.

"I can't say who because we have not signed the lease," Casteel said. "I have another major tenant that I am negotiating with right now. They would take the area from (the Big 5) store toward where Great Outdoors was."

She also said people are interested in renting the storefront on the corner closest to Emerald Bay Road.

The Big 5 lease is for five years, with an option for 20.

Vail Resorts earnings soar; making plans to increase summer activities

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

Vail Resorts on Wednesday announced visitation was climbing at its stable of nine ski areas, with net income jumping 30 percent during its second fiscal quarter, which ended Jan. 31.

Profits rose to \$60.6 million as resort revenue reached \$408.3 million, up 12.1 percent from the same quarter last year. Lift-ticket revenue climbed 14.3 percent to \$175.7 million for the quarter. Spending on ski lessons, dining and retail-rental also rose for the quarter.

Lodging revenue was up 2.8 percent, and with increasing room rates, the company's lodging earnings grew 43.4 percent for

the quarter.



Heavenly plans to upgrade its summer climbing wall to resemble Mt. Tallac.

Photo/LTN file

The company's three California ski areas – Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood – saw visitation climb 56.1 percent over the same period last year, which was marred with record low snowfall. The company did not release specific skier visit information, saying only that visitation through January improved from its mid-January report showing visitation up a mere 2 percent over the same period last season.

Vail Resorts chief Rob Katz said the second-quarter results represent a strong rebound from the slow start, which saw the company warn analysts of potentially less-than-expected income for the fiscal year. But when the snow arrived in time for Christmas, the company enjoyed a boost.

Also Wednesday, the company announced the largest capital spending in Vail Resorts' history, with \$130 million to \$140 million in resort expenditures for fiscal 2013, including \$47 million to \$52 million in maintenance spending.

Vail Resorts will spend \$25 million on the first phase of its Epic Discovery summer plan, which, pending federal approval, will see ziplines, ropes courses, climbing walls, alpine coasters, expanded hiking and biking trails and education

centers at all four of its Colorado ski areas, and Heavenly and Northstar areas in California.

Vail will spend \$10 million on improvements at its recently acquired Afton Alps ski area in Minnesota and Mt. Brighton outside Detroit. Those improvements include snowmaking upgrades and terrain parks.

Construction on the Peak 6 expansion at Breckenridge will begin this summer after five years of federal review. Vail is building a new 500-seat restaurant at Beaver Creek in preparation of the mountain's hosting of the 2015 World Alpine Ski Championships. Vail ski area will replace its four-pack Mountain Top Express chairlift with a six-person chair, increasing capacity by 33 percent.

Californians flock to Nevada to buy guns

By Cynthia Hubert and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

RENO – They stood in the crisp morning air clutching Red Bulls and bearing arms: Bushmaster rifles poking from backpacks, HK pistols nestled in cases, Colt semi-automatics propped on shoulders.

Thousands of people, many from California and some toting unloaded guns for sale, waited in line for nearly two hours across from Reno's glitzy Atlantis Hotel on a recent Saturday for the chance to buy and sell weapons. It is a right, they insisted, that never has been in greater jeopardy in America.

The crowd was the largest in memory for the Crossroads of the

West gun show in Reno, organizers said, and the reason was hardly a mystery. Gun advocates are nervous amid talk of proposed laws that could restrict their ability to buy and sell weapons and ammunition. Already, several noted, gun shops across the country are reporting shortages.



“Why are there so many people here today?” asked Ellis Davis of Susanville, just west of the Nevada border, marveling at a line that stretched a quarter of a mile around the convention center. “Because they want to take away our gun rights.”

The push for federal gun legislation is designed in part to deal with disparities among states with stricter gun laws and those that allow for purchase of a wider array of weapons with far less scrutiny.

Disparate gun laws make it easier for residents of California, for example, to travel to Nevada to buy just about any weapon they choose without undergoing background checks. The issue is a topic of discussion in Congress and among state lawmakers across the country.

California’s laws are among the most stringent in the country. Only seven states, including California, ban the sale of large-capacity magazines. Eleven states, California included, require waiting periods of up to two weeks between the purchase of a gun and the transfer of the gun. The other 39 have no waiting periods.

President Obama and the Congressional Gun Violence Prevention Task Force are calling for, among other things, requiring background checks for every gun sale. Today, many people buying firearms do not undergo such checks because federal law requires them only when someone buys a gun from a licensed

dealer.

Obama's team also is calling for legislation that would crack down on illegal gun trafficking and "straw purchasing," in which a man or woman with no criminal history buys guns for someone who is barred from owning them. Lawmakers have yet to lay out specifically what type of legislation might be effective in stopping the practice.

And they are pressing to reinstate and strengthen a federal ban on assault weapons that can fire many shots in a short time. That ban expired in 2004, and efforts to revive it have failed repeatedly.

Leading the charge on Obama's behalf is Rep. Mike Thompson, a St. Helena Democrat and gun owner who is a former co-chair of the Congressional Sportsman Caucus.

Thompson, a hunter and combat veteran who carried an assault rifle in Vietnam, argues that tough restrictions in individual states are not enough to prevent criminals from getting guns. Californians flock to gun shows in Nevada, he said, where in private sales background checks are not required. He contends some of those guns turn up at crime scenes.

Statistics from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives back him up. The federal agency traced the source of 50,000 weapons used in California during crimes from 2009 to 2011 and found that roughly a fourth of those guns came from outside the state. Nevada and Arizona were, by far, the leading suppliers, accounting for roughly a third of out-of-state weapons used in crimes.

National background checks and other federal restrictions, Thompson said, would "make it real tough" for criminals, people with documented mental problems or anyone else to procure weapons outside their home states.

But not everyone is supportive. Historically, Nevada residents

and their leaders, particularly those outside of Las Vegas, have resisted gun control efforts.

In response to fears that Obama will unilaterally dictate who can own a gun, Jim Wheeler, a Republican Nevada assemblyman from Gardnerville, has introduced a bill that says the state attorney general must defend anyone arrested as a result of a presidential executive order that violates the Second Amendment.

"To me, about any law is too many laws," Wheeler said.

Stockton killings spurred action

Before Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut there was Cleveland Elementary in Stockton.

In 1989, a drifter who had attended school in South Lake Tahoe armed himself with an AK-47 rifle and peppered Cleveland Elementary with bullets that killed five children and wounded 30 others. A year later, California passed its ban on possession of semi-automatic assault weapons. Since then, state lawmakers have tightened restrictions in a range of areas, from who can buy guns to how and where they can be purchased.

In California, gun buyers must obtain their weapons from a licensed dealer and wait 10 days to get them. That "cooling off" period helps prevent gun violence committed in the heat of emotion, advocates argue.

In addition, names of gun buyers in California are checked against the National Instant Criminal Background Check System database. Federal law bars various people, including felons and those with documented mental illness, from buying weapons.

Serial numbers of guns purchased in California are registered with the Department of Justice, which allows police to trace them if they are used in crimes.

On the heels of the Sandy Hook shootings late last year, some state legislators want to get even tougher on gun owners.

Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, is carrying a bill that would make it harder to alter military-style weapons to be loaded with high-capacity magazines.

Other proposed measures include a tax on ammunition sales, an expansion of the definition of banned assault weapons, and a requirement that residents obtain a permit before buying ammunition.

The permit proposal, which police argue could help lead them to illegal weapons, is among the most controversial. Currently, only Sacramento and Los Angeles have ordinances barring ammunition sales to people with criminal records.

Yee cited studies showing that states with the toughest gun laws, including California, have the lowest per-capita rates of gun-related deaths.

"It's a fact that gun laws work and weak laws result in the loss of innocent lives," he said. "Clearly, there is a direct correlation between common-sense gun laws and fewer gun-related homicides."

A different mind-set has set the standard for gun ownership in California's neighbor to the east, where Nevada residents are governed by some of the most liberal weapons laws in the nation.

There, private citizens can go to gun shows and yard sales and legally buy and sell weapons to other state residents. No background checks are required, nor are guns registered with the state, with the exception of Clark County, which includes Las Vegas.

And unlike California, Nevadans can buy and sell machine guns capable of firing a large number of shots in rapid succession.

As in California, the loss of 20 young children in the Sandy Hook shooting has prompted some Nevada lawmakers to call for stricter regulations. The proposals making their way through the state Legislature include requirements for statewide gun registration and an excise tax on guns and ammunition that would fund mental health treatment.

But in Nevada, such measures are anything but slam dunks.

Wheeler, the Gardnerville assemblyman, said he doubts stricter gun laws will pass in Nevada anytime soon, noting that a law streamlining who can carry a concealed weapon just cleared a state Senate committee.

"The culture is different," he said, describing an independent streak that drives Nevadans to find their own way. Most gun control efforts, he noted, originate in urban areas.

"I grew up in L.A. In California, you have a lot of huge cities. We don't. We have one huge city, one medium-sized city and the rest are small."

Californians flock to Reno show

Outside the Reno Convention Center, where dozens of gun and ammunition dealers hawked their wares at the Crossroads of the West gun show last month, the buzz also was about laws.

Waiting for the doors to open, Ellis Davis, the Susanville resident, sported a baseball cap with the words, "Keep Guns In The Right Hands: YOURS." He opined that the nation has more laws than it needs, especially with regard to guns.

"It's not me shooting and robbing people," said Davis, a retired corrections officer. "It's the criminals. We've got a right to protect our homes and our families."

Based on attendance at the Reno show, many Californians share his view. At least a third of the cars parked around the convention center carried California plates.

Californians can buy weapons from dealers at such events, but by law are supposed to have them shipped across state lines, where the guns are processed through registered dealers. In private transactions, Nevada sellers by law cannot knowingly sell guns to Californians.

But many at the Reno event acknowledged that, especially in private transactions, both parties sometimes look the other way.

"There's no law that tells me I can't sell to someone from California," said one Nevada resident hoping to pick up some cash for a semi-automatic weapon he carried in his backpack. "It's not on me if they drive over to the communist side with this thing. It's on them." He declined to give his name.

By noon on the first Saturday of the Reno gun show, about 5,000 people had purchased tickets – more patrons than typically show up over the entire two-day event, said organizer Todd Johns.

"This is about the busiest show we've ever had," Johns said. At other shows in the Western United States, "attendance has doubled and even tripled" in recent months, he said.

Despite the large crowds, the scene was calm as patrons filed into the convention hall. Those carrying guns turned them over to security personnel, who checked to see they were unloaded and disabled the triggers with plastic attachments.

Once inside, many gun owners bolted for the ammunition lines, while others perused dozens of tables featuring new and used guns, antique knives and gun-themed T-shirts and jewelry. Cowboy hats, camouflage wear and NRA caps were in abundance, along with \$7 beers sold just outside the room.

Private sellers huddled, trading information about weapons and exchanging cash, while more than two dozen licensed dealers did a brisk business selling shotguns, handguns and semi-

automatic rifles. Routinely, the licensed dealers asked for proof of Nevada residency.

Nevada resident Joe Potseaga was among those trying to cut a private deal. Like others, he worked the room with a semi-automatic rifle slung around his back and a cardboard sign advertising it for sale.

Potseaga, who said he takes part in sanctioned shooting competitions, sold a pistol to a fellow Nevadan. He said he respects the law when conducting private sales, and believes most others do the same.

"I wouldn't just hand it over for cash to someone from California," even if the price were right, he said.

Potseaga said his pistol buyer produced identification and "compelling proof that he is not a criminal and could lawfully own a weapon." The compelling proof? "His word," Potseaga said.

Prosecutions can be challenge

Graham Barlowe has spent a career enforcing California's gun laws as an agent for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. He contends the controls break down if California residents can drive a few hours and flout the state's gun laws.

"Different states have different standards," said Barlowe, Sacramento's agent in charge for the ATF. "It's impossible for the states with more restrictive standards to maintain them if someone can get around them by going to another jurisdiction."

Some California residents use creative methods to buy guns and avoid processing delays, including procuring fraudulent Nevada driver's licenses, he said.

In one pending federal case, a San Bernardino County resident is accused of buying 22 handguns at pawn shops in Las Vegas

over a year using a fraudulent Nevada identification card. The man was caught after he listed his California address when registering the gun.

In another case, a woman working for a Carson City brothel bought four identical handguns in Nevada then drove to Sacramento, where she reported them stolen.

"The guns started turning up in the hands of gang members," Barlowe said.

Prosecuting illegal gun cases can be a challenge, said Barlowe, because of limited resources in district attorneys' offices and the conservative bent of juries in states where gun laws are more lenient.

"The jury of their peers is in Nevada," where the sales take place, he said, and most likely would have differing views about guns than Californians.

"It's very hard. You are just not going to see a large number of prosecutions."

Benjamin Wagner, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California, said his office has recently prosecuted cases involving "straw buyers" purchasing guns for criminals.

"We are very much aware that there are firearms that flow from Nevada to California in violation of federal law," Wagner said. But his office mostly focuses on major gun traffickers.

In recent weeks, Thompson has been busy selling his package of gun measures to constituents and news media in California and colleagues in Washington. He said he believes Americans are ready for tightening laws that curb gun violence while "protecting the Second Amendment right to own firearms."

"I am working to make sure Congress acts, and I am confident we will act," he said.

Yet he knows the proposals will be a tough sell to many around the country.

“If you do a lot of background checks, a lot of this stuff will take care of itself,” Thompson said. But, he added, “I’m not going to give up my guns, and I’m not expecting anyone else to give up theirs.”

Joe Potseaga and his cousin Andrew aren’t buying it.

Like many at the Reno show, they said they resent politicians who want to intrude into matters they feel are already addressed by the Constitution.

“We love our country dearly,” said Andrew Potseaga. “But it’s none of the federal government’s business knowing what kinds of guns people have.”

U.S. relaxes air travel carry-on prohibitions

By Jad Mouawad, New York Times

The Transportation Security Administration said on Tuesday that it would allow airplane passengers to bring pocketknives, golf clubs and other sports items aboard in carry-on bags, loosening some of the restrictions created after the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

The agency said the new rules, which align with international

standards, would allow its security agents to “better focus their efforts on finding higher-threat items such as explosives.” Box cutters and razor blades are still prohibited in carry-on bags.

Passengers will be permitted to carry pocketknives with blades shorter than 2.36 inches long and 0.5 inches wide. Knives with a locking or fixed blade, or those with a molded grip, will still be prohibited.

The new rules will also allow passengers to bring on board previously banned sports equipment like lacrosse and hockey sticks, pool cues and ski poles, as well as no more than two golf clubs. Novelty and toy baseball bats measuring less than 24 inches, or weighing less than 24 ounces, will be permitted as well.

The new policy was announced by John S. Pistole, the agency’s administrator, at an international aviation safety conference held in Brooklyn. Pistole has sought to move the T.S.A. from a one-size-fits-all model to a more tailored approach that focuses on threats and risks. The agency introduced new programs, for instance, that allow some frequent fliers to go through special safety lines at designated airports if they have been cleared in advance.

The changes, however, attracted sharp criticism from flight attendant unions. The Flight Attendants Union Coalition, which represents five labor groups and 90,000 people, said the decision was “poor and shortsighted.”

Stacy K. Martin, president of the Southwest Airlines flight attendants’ union, Transport Workers Union Local 556, said that while a small knife posed little threat to pilots locked in the cockpit, the new policy created unnecessary risks for cabin crew. “This policy was designed to make the lives of T.S.A. staff easier, but not make flights safer,” she said in a statement.

The new rules take effect April 25.

Nevada employees slow to find cost-savings

By Andrew Doughman, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – While it's easy to quip that state government should be more efficient, actually finding the savings is another matter.

An annual report shows state employees found a little less than \$10,000 in savings under a program launched last year that rewards employees for cost-saving ideas. Of the six ideas submitted, only one was implemented, according to the report obtained by the *Sun*.

The Department of Motor Vehicles approved one request to use the U.S. Postal Service free technology in place of the department's current practice of sending a return receipt for certified mail envelopes.

Assemblyman Paul Anderson, R-Las Vegas, said that's likely because few employees know about the program through which they can submit cost-saving measures and receive a cash reward for their ideas.

Anderson plans to introduce a bill this year to encourage state agencies to spread the word about the cost savings program.

"We can at least pass the message to the agencies to pay more attention to this," he said. "We need to empower those on the frontlines."

Former Sen. Dean Rhoads, R-Tuscarora, led the way in overhauling the state's merit reward program during the 2011 legislative session with the idea that state employees would come forward with ideas if they had a personal financial incentive to do so.

The state's "Good Government, Great Employees" award gives an employee or a group of employees up to 10 percent of any savings that result from their idea. The new law also requires reporting of what ideas employees submitted, why agencies adopted or rejected those ideas, and the savings accrued.

The bill wasn't controversial. In 2011, nobody testified against the bill, which had bi-partisan sponsorship. It passed unanimously.

Everybody liked the idea of reducing waste in government, but actually finding savings through the program has so far proven difficult.

"We can do more," said Sen. Debbie Smith, D-Sparks, one of the 2011 sponsors. "Our employees are the ones who know best where and how we can save money."

She testified to a legislative committee in 2011 that she hoped employees would come forward with proposals that save "hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars."

The estimated savings so far: \$9,453.

Smith said part of the reason why those savings haven't materialized is marketing. Employees might not even know about the program.

But employees also may not want to attach their name to a savings proposal that could potentially embarrass their boss.

"We have to have an environment where employees are entirely comfortable putting their findings or ideas in writing," Smith said.

A similar program in North Dakota has saved the state at least \$540,000 since the program's inception in 1994, according to a report obtained by Anderson.

Like Nevada, the program had minimal savings during its first year, but the savings grew each year as more employees submitted ideas. Many were small ideas that saved on administrative costs, including buying paper in bulk, using computer systems to save on paper, renegotiating contracts and bringing services in-house.

Those first year savings drive down future year costs, allowing departments to request fewer dollars for their budgets or put dollars to better use, Anderson said.

"It's very basic stuff, but they can spread it across agencies," he said.

Anderson adopted the idea for his bill from the North Dakota program.

South Shore trying to unchain itself from economic blight

By Kathryn Reed

For years, people on the South Shore have gathered to give voice to what they want their community to evolve into. Tuesday night was another opportunity to do more of the same.

But it was also a chance to hear from a diverse group about how some of those ideas are now projects in the ground – like Lakeview Commons and Van Sickle Bi-State Park.



Shawn Butler with the California Tahoe Conservancy talks about the bike trails his agency is working on, as well as how Van Sickle Bi-State Park provides easy access to the outdoors to the main bed base on the South Shore. Photo/LTN

A slew of speakers on March 5 updated the nearly 200 people gathered at Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe about the completed projects, those that are about to begin, what is in the planning stages and what is in the visioning stage. They included:

- B Gorman – Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce
- Joanne Marchetta – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
- Nancy Kerry – South Lake Tahoe
- Kim Kerr – El Dorado County
- Brandy McMahon – Douglas County
- Russ Pecoraro – Vail Resorts
- Shawn Butler – California Tahoe Conservancy
- Patrick Rhamey – Edgewood Companies

- Lew Feldman – Feldman McLaughlin Thiel (law firm)
- Christian Strobel – Basecamp Hotel
- Chris Proctor – Barton Health (physical therapist)
- Bob Sullivan – South Tahoe High School
- Karen Borges – Lake Tahoe Community College
- Carl Hasty – Tahoe Transportation District
- David Zehnder – Economic & Planning Systems (Sacramento consultant who did loop road financial study).

Their topics ranged from the South Lake Tahoe-El Dorado County recreation plan that is in its infancy, to the two area plans for the South Shore on the respective state line that are on the fast track, to Heavenly ski resort turning the mountain into a year-round playground, to retail being built at the hole this summer with a design that will complement Heavenly Village, to Barton Health eyeing property in Douglas County for a center for orthopedics, to South Tahoe High and Lake Tahoe Community College elevating K-14 education to a level not seen here before.

The overwhelming message was that the South Shore needs to embrace that it is one community and one economy with a focus on recreation.

Collaboration – public and private – was stressed. What that looks like and how much compromise will be necessary in the name of the greater good is a discussion for another night.

The underlying theme is the South Shore is failing – economically and environmentally – and something (or several things) need to change to make the area vibrant.

With the fall being beautiful and snow coming early, people have been coming to Tahoe in greater numbers than they did a

year ago. South Lake Tahoe's transient occupancy tax is up 25 percent from October 2012 through January 2013 compared to the same four months a year ago. And the number of room nights rented in January was up nearly 40 percent compared to 2012.

But as was noted at the October forum, the South Shore is losing market share to other entities.

When it was time for each of the 18 tables full of residents, business owners and interested South Shore-ites to talk among themselves they were tasked with coming up with an idea or concept of utmost importance, explain why and how it will have an economic impact on the region.

They ranged from:

- All parties need to be accountable
- More than one project every 10 years must to be completed
- Establish an outdoor music festival that isn't in a parking lot
- Increase transportation beyond Stateline to the Y
- Create year-round employment for college educated people
- Bridge the divide between the various areas of the South Shore
- Find money for projects
- Increase community pride
- Get more people involved
- More trails and make them useable year-round
- Connect to the outside world – nationally and internationally – to get people here
- Become an arts and culture center

- Create a dynamic draw based on what Tahoe already has to bring people here.

This was the second economic forum in five months. Organizers – the Tahoe Prosperity Center, Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and South Lake Tahoe – plan to have more in the near future.

Film studio created to market Tahoe-Reno

By Anne Knowles, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority wants to be in motion pictures – and it's created a studio to help make it happen.

The RSCVA has launched Film Reno Tahoe to market Reno, Lake Tahoe and other Northern Nevada locations for television and film production and to act as a satellite to the Nevada Film Office in Las Vegas, says Chris Baum, RSCVA's president and CEO.

As part of that effort, the RSCVA has established Reno Tahoe Studios, a 300,000-square-foot facility comprising six stages and office space inside the cavernous and often empty convention center on South Virginia Street in Reno.

"We have a half-million-square-foot building that is not utilized on a regular basis. It's like having a church for Easter Sunday only," says Baum. "Halls one and two are the busiest, and three through five are not used as much. If we have the space and it costs us \$1.95 to reposition it, why not?"

Baum says the building's high-ceilings make it easy to hang lights and equipment, and its space can be configured into any number of sets, making it ideal for film and TV production. He and his team have already started showing it off.

"We've brought in film and TV producers and toured them through the facility and they told us it's better than what they use elsewhere," says Baum. "There's also catering on site, offices, break-out rooms."

Baum says Northern Nevada is ideal, too, because of its varied landscapes and city streets that can double for New York City, Washington, D.C., even London. And proximity to Hollywood is a selling point, too, since studio executives can fly in, check on productions and fly home in the same day.

The division announced their first coup last week. The musical group Savvy, which has been featured in a Starz show called "The Wannabes," is filming the pilot for a new show in northern Nevada locations later this year and plan to continue filming here if the show is picked up.

"They have a good track record, and it is basically a spin off so it will be easier to sell," says Baum. "We've also had a number of film producers in town who are looking at the area for several films, but they're waiting to see if the incentives pass."

The "incentives" is Senate Bill 165, now being considered by the Nevada Legislature, a bill with the goal of attracting film and TV production to the state.

A similar bill was floated last session and did not pass, and this legislation, too, has its opponents. But Baum thinks it's the right mix of inducements and restrictions needed to attract business here to the overall benefit of the state.

The bill offers what Baum calls middle-of-the-pack incentives – perks not as generous as some other states offer but

substantial enough that, when coupled with the state's other advantages, will attract movie makers. The bill, for example, requires 60 percent of a film or TV show be shot in Nevada and stipulates a 23-to-27 percent rebate tax incentive. Productions outside Las Vegas, for example, get an additional 2 percent in order to encourage production outside the Strip.

"The way you structure these things make all the difference in the world," says Baum. "You need to make them revenue neutral like this is." The bill was drafted with the help of Jeffrey Spilman, a consultant and film and TV producer Baum knows from his days with the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Baum, who joined the RSCVA last year, created the Detroit Film division and helped grow Michigan's movie and TV production revenues from \$6 million to \$320 million in two years.