Thrill of sledding can often mean a trip to the ER

By Kathryn Reed

SPOONER SUMMIT – Despite the sounds of fearful screams echoing in the woods, the sledders jumped off the plastic speed bullets to hike back up the hill.

Clearly, the thrill of spinning out of control on a plastic saucer is addicting.

Reza Rahinzadeh likes going fast over bumps. At 4, he has learned going backward keeps the snow out of his face.



Reza Rahinzadeh, 4, likes to sled fast with his Aunt Angie Winkler. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The Redding youth was visiting his Aunt Angie Winkler of South Lake Tahoe this month. She knew just the spot to take the youngster for his second sledding trip – to Spooner Summit.

Winkler said it's her favorite spot to sled.

Tucked off the side of Highway 28 at the junction of Highway

50, there is plenty of parking, it’s free to sled and the hill is plenty steep to get the adrenaline flowing.

Saucers of all colors, shapes and sizes abound. By the end of the season a pile of plastic debris sits at the bottom – signs of sledding gone wrong.

The Messore family from Laguna Nigel didn’t have to worry about buying an apparatus for their adventure. They were given items to slide on from the Stardust, where they were spending a few days. It was a recommendation from the concierge that got them up to Spooner.

Sledding opportunities abound throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. Some are free, some you pay to play.

However, this is one of those sports – if it can be called a sport – that often ends in the emergency room.

“Sledding can cause compressed fractures in backs due to people sliding down a hill and flying up and landing on their backs,” Cynthia Burkart, registered nurse and interim director of the Emergency Department and director of Occupational Medicine at Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Besides back compressions, we do see a lot of broken legs and this is usually caused when parents ride in the front of the sled and try to stop. There are no breaks and they can be hard to handle.”

The South Lake Tahoe medical facility doesn’t have stats on the number of sledding injuries doctors treat.

However, the Center for Injury Research and Policy in Columbus, Ohio, coalesced data from 1997-2007, which found there were 229,023 injuries serious enough for emergency room treatment for children younger than 19. This equates to about 20,000 hospital visits a year related to sledding – and that doesn’t include adults.

The total medical, legal and liability, pain and suffering, and work loss-related costs were more than $4 billion in 2007 for the 160,000 sledding related injuries for all ages, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

This group says most injuries are to kids younger than 14.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says sledding for ages 5-14 results in more than 15,000 trips to the ER each year. This compares to skiing and snowboarding for the same age group that sees 29,000 hospital visits.

“Sledding accidents can happen to people of ages and I suggest that if you are going to sled, make sure you are at least 100 pounds, go on a safe, gentle and small powdery slope,” Burkart said. “Make sure there are no objects, such as people, animals, trees or rocks around. In addition, be sure and go slow and it never hurts to wear a helmet.”

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Official: Beavers wiping out trees in Reno on Truckee River

By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

Kim Toulouse, a Nevada Wildlife conservation educator, checked the recent work of beaver on a large Fremont cottonwood along the Truckee River, near the National Automobile Museum in downtown Reno.

With the trunk girdled or eaten all the way around, he said

the 50- to 70-year-old tree is a goner. And the gnawed tree next to it is probably a goner, too. Then he spots the beaver's lodge across the river.

Seeing Toulouse's badge and uniform, Jay Hubbard, the museum's collections manager, approaches.

"Who do we talk to?" he asks, about the damaged trees. Is it the museum's responsibility? Or is the city responsible as it maintains the river path?

Toulouse said he doesn't know. But he said some trees along this stretch could still be saved if they were wrapped in chicken wire.

"You guys have a lot of volunteers," he said. "Here's some work that needs to be done."

No one is in charge of making sure the beaver population is kept in check along the Truckee River and its trees are wrapped, said Toulouse and Chris Healy, Department of Wildlife spokesman. And very little trapping is done within Reno and Sparks.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Expect it to be crowded



It’s definitely sunny and likely to be crowded today. Patience is the word Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, is using today.

Here is his ski report.

Mountain bikers solidifying voice in Tahoe region

By Kathryn Reed

Eight leaders emerged from a roomful of mountain bike enthusiasts to reignite the dormant cycling club TAMBA.

These eight are tasked with sifting through the bylaws of the Tahoe Area Mountain Bicycling Association; figuring out how to get the former board members off and new ones on documents; whether taxes have been filed and if not, then what; the structure of the organization; and where it goes from here.

More than 30 people met at Lake Tahoe Community College this month to talk about how to get the region’s mountain bike community can have one voice. Their desire is to have mountain bikers evolve out of their second-class status.



John Drum leads the December TAMBA meeting. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“We want to provide an organized, effective voice and one that represents all different riders,” said John Drum who has been facilitating the meetings.

Although nothing was decided this month, some discussion was on whether membership should come with a price – even if it’s nominal; the importance of having someone with financial know-how be on the board; being responsive to U.S. Forest Service requests for written input on trails and physical labor when needed; the likelihood of having several committees to deal with various interests; having a website that can be a central location for what’s going on; partnering with other groups when appropriate; and working on obtaining grants as well as funding from private companies.

Because this group isn’t just South Shore specific, it was noted that besides the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the Forest Service, the group will need contact with forest managers for at least the Eldorado and Tahoe national forests, too.

State landowners will also have to be part of the process.

A representative at the meeting from Nevada State Parks said his relationship with TAMBA when it was more active about a

decade ago was tremendous and he hopes for the same from those who were assembled that night.

Kevin Joell, who wants to be part of the inner workings of TAMBA, has been involved with cycling groups for 15 years. The Reno resident is interested in ensuring mountain bikers have access to trails. He has worked directly with Nevada parks in the past.

Pam Lefrancois of Kings Beach has been an advocate for cyclists for years through various clubs. She has worked on the North Shore trail management plan.

She said trails in her hometown were recently revamped and turned out great.

“We all share the same trails,” Lefrancois said after the meeting. This is one reason she wants to be involved – to make the region better for mountain bikers.

The eight individuals who will work to bring structure to TAMBA are: John Drum, Pete Fink, Ben Fish, Nils Miller, Lauren Lindley, Kevin Joell, Kevin Crifasi, and Mike Lefrancois.

They will meet in early January, with a public meeting scheduled for Jan. 26 at 6pm at LTCC in South Lake Tahoe.

Ski report: Sunny and cold



The sun is out, but it sure isn’t warm right now. Dress accordingly.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Rent or buy? – a skiers' dilemma

By Brett Prettyman, Salt Lake Tribune

There comes a point when every more-than-once-a-year skier faces the same question:



Is it time to buy a pair of skis or a snowboard?

Economics is at the core of the question. Would you feel you got your money's worth on what many consider a serious investment?

The answer depends on whom you ask.

"Everybody likes to add it up and see how many times they would need to rent to equal the cost of buying their own," said Brenton Sondrup, the rental manager at Christy Sports in Millcreek.

That magic number, depending of course on the cost of the skis you are eyeing, is somewhere between 12 and 15 trips to the slopes.

There is a blizzard of other questions to consider when weighing the pros and cons of renting or buying.

With technology constantly changing for skis, how long will it be before a skier starts feeling old school on the lift with his or her own gear? Will you spend more on your equipment to get it tuned and waxed, or can you do it yourself?

Most rental fleets are updated at least every other year and usually offer a wide range of price and skill options. Shops review every item when it comes back from being rented and perform maintenance before renting it out again.

For many people, the biggest concern with renting equipment is the fit of the boots.

Molly MacGregor of Dave's Skis and Boards in Lake Tahoe suggests buying only boots. "Boot technology does not change that often, but skis change yearly. If you buy boots, then you can rent nice skis and they come tuned/waxed every time and you can always get the latest and greatest," she said. "I bought skis just two years ago and I already want new ones. My boots will last forever."

Read the whole story

Moseley gives up skates to return to skiing

By Jeffrey Weidel, Marin Independent Journal

This might not have made the Christmas wish list, but it could be one to add if you plan to be anywhere near Squaw Valley over the holidays.

Former Olympic gold medal skier Jonny Moseley, who grew up in Tiburon, will be skiing throughout the Christmas holidays at

Squaw Valley ski resort and the public is welcome to join him, starting Wednesday. Moseley will be on the hill Thursday and Friday, as well as Sunday through Dec. 30.



Jonny Moseley

His return to the snow comes after a long run on ice. Moseley was eliminated from the television show “Skating with the Stars” after lasting until the next-to-last episode on the nationally televised ice skating competition broadcast. His partner was former pairs skater Brooke Castile. The finale (without Moseley) is set to air Monday.

One of the great things about anyone with a Christmas wish to ski with Moseley is that the price is right – a few turns on the slopes is free of charge (after the purchase of a Squaw lift ticket of course).

The daily tours meet each day at the top of the Funitel at 2pm and typically include 20-25 people at the start, and end several hours later with about half that number. An après ski gathering with Moseley takes place afterward at the Olympic House.

Read the whole story

Cave Rock boat launch implements holiday hours

The boat launch facility at Cave Rock will be closed Christmas Day. The boat ramp will operate on a reduced schedule from 8am-2pm on New Year’s Day.

Only Tahoe issued watercraft seals will be accepted at the entrance booth on New Year’s Day. No inspections will be performed, so visitors are asked to obtain an inspection seal prior to Jan. 1.

Normal Cave Rock operating hours throughout winter are daily from 6am-4pm.

Ski report: More snow is coming down



It’s snowing lightly this morning on the South Shore. No wind for a change.

It should be a great day to be on the slopes of Lake Tahoe.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

State Parks: Washoe Meadow sustains minimal damage

By Kathryn Reed

Furor by neighbors over what appeared to be a tree removal process gone awry led California State Parks and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency officials to survey the area last week.

Officials from both agencies toured Washoe Meadow State Park to look for any long-lasting damage created by the contractor who was doing over the snow tree removal.

“What they saw is none of the ruts caused by the contractor’s activity would deliver sediment to the stream,” Tamara Sasaki, senior environmental scientist with State Parks, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Dec. 21. “Agency representatives observed ruts in three locations and areas where the equipment operated without any impact to soil or vegetation. They saw little soil compaction, which was a good thing.”

Some ruts were found in non-sensitive areas outside the meadow and wetlands, Sasaki said. The state will restore that 200-foot stretch after the snow melts.

TRPA and State Parks officials plan to revisit the area once the snow is gone from the South Shore park to “reassess the impacted area.”

“Then State Parks will do any remediation or anything that needs to be taken care of in 2011,” Sasaki said.