

Warning – Electrical cords may pose danger

To the community,

We tend to take our electrical appliances for granted, but with age and extended use, they do wear out. Check the cords on your electric blanket.

Damage to cords under the bed is caused by objects crammed in for storage or by pets chewing on cords. This not only can cause a fire but can harm your pet.

Use of portable electric and gas heaters should be done with extreme caution. Be sure that distances from combustibles are sufficient and allow for adequate ventilation to prevent suffocation.

Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Opinion: How about more truth in politics?

By Jon Ralston, Las Vegas Sun

In the wake of last weekend's horrific shooting, many observers have weighed in with both trenchant and idiotic takes on what the incident means and doesn't mean.

There has been some wonderful stuff – George Will, the National Journal's Kathy Kiely and Josh Kraushaar, to name a few – along with gigabytes of left and right Jabberwocky. But

as I have reflected on the tragedy, while marveling at Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' resilience, my reaction has gradually metamorphosed from disgust to resignation.

As many have observed, Jared Loughner so far seems to be a lunatic who does not possess the intellectual moorings to be classified as a right-wing or left-wing maniac. As partisans on both sides discard their self-editing mechanisms to gain advantage, the issue of vitriol in the political discourse is much less relevant than many other topics. And I don't just mean the obvious ones – a renewed debate over limits that should be allowed so Second Amendment remedies are more difficult to carry out and a rare chance to look at how mental health funding, in Nevada and in the country, needs to be revisited.

Those will happen, they will be ephemeral, little will change. But what is dominating the colloquy now, from Capitol Hill to cable TV to the Twitterverse, are calls for more civility in politics, for a tamping down of incendiary rhetoric that may or may not have created an environment for Loughner to act but supposedly could trigger latent Manchurian assassins. And those calls spectacularly miss the point.

Don't misunderstand: There are careless politicians such as Sharron Angle who toss out flammable phrases such as "Second Amendment remedies" and "domestic enemies" and "Sharia law," without any regard to the violence that could spring from the small percentage of potentially unhinged folks out there. I never believed, as did some, that Angle was dog-whistling to the nuts; I just think she doesn't think.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Tips for personal financial resolutions

By Lou Scatigna

When the big ball dropped at midnight New Year's Eve, the calendar changed, but will you?

After two years of recession and recovery that is moving slower than molasses going uphill in January, I believe 2011 is the time for people to make some solid resolutions to change those old habits.

Most people think that their financial problems revolve around not earning enough money to make ends meet. The truth is, everyone can improve their financial health by using the following five tips, and they don't have to make a dime more than they are making today in order to feel more financially healthy.

Here are some tips:

* Calculate Your Net Worth – If you want to get healthy, you need a check up. Your net worth tells you how financially healthy you are right now, so you know where you're starting. Here's how you do it: Take a piece of paper and make two columns. On the left side of the paper list the value of all your assets and on the right side the balances of all your loans, using the totals from the end of 2009. Now, subtract your total debts from the total value of your assets and you arrive at your net worth, the exact amount of money you would have if you liquidated all your assets and paid off all your debts. The goal is to grow your net worth each and every year.

* Prepare a Budget – Take another piece of paper, and make two columns, one for monthly expenses and one for annual expenses. On top of the page list all your sources of income – wages,

interest, dividends, odd jobs, etc. Total up all your income. Now list every expense in your life as accurately as you can. Make sure you keep track of your cash expenditures, like those Starbucks coffees and lunches at work. Spend one month writing down every penny you spend. Now, total up all your expenses, and then subtract your expenses from your income. If you're in the hole, it's time to reduce your spending. If you're ahead, now you have an idea of how much you might be able to put away and save every month. The truth is that most families can cut 5 to 10 percent of their monthly expenses without too much trouble.

* **Manage the Money Together** – If you're married, it's imperative that you manage the money as a couple. In most families either the husband or the wife handle the monthly bills, but that often leads to miscommunication and overspending. Sit down together and pay the bills and discuss with each other how you can reduce the household expenses. Review bills for accuracy and resolve to pay down the balances as fast as possible. Review each investment account statement for performance and risk. Doing it together ensures fewer crises and more savings.

* **Learn More About Money** – The majority of Americans have little knowledge about finances, so they make costly mistakes. There are many books and websites that you can read to learn the basics about investing, buying cars and homes, insurance, the different types of mortgages, and credit cards. Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to your money.

* **Be Financially Responsible** – What do you really need? What do you really want? These days, it's difficult to have both, so we each need to evaluate our lives to determine what we can do without. Do you need to buy lunch at work every day, or does your break room have a kitchen where you could keep a loaf of bread and lunchmeat? Do we need 20 HBO channels, when there's never anything good on, anyway? We now live in frugal times and must adjust our behavior in order to survive and

become financially healthy.

Louis Scatigna is a certified financial planner, national radio talk show host and author of “The Financial Physician: How To Cure Your Money Problems and Boost Your Financial Health”.

Important – Keep gas meters clear of snow

To the community,

As we have seen in recent years, large amounts of snow can be potentially dangerous if we do not take certain precautions. The fire department would like to encourage all South Lake Tahoe residents to clear snow away from natural gas meters and propane regulators in the event they become buried.

You can avoid a deadly catastrophe by clearly marking all gas meters and regulators and maintaining their access during periods of large snow accumulations.

Thanks for helping keep our community fire safe.

Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Opinion: Advice for SLT

council regarding medical marijuana

By Steve Kubby

How safe are medical marijuana patients in South Lake Tahoe? What will the proposed new cultivation ordinance by the City Council mean for patients? What can the City Council do to actually help patients live without the fear of a violent home invasion by drug police? These are unanswered questions that are of enormous concern and critical importance to the medical marijuana community.

It's been nearly 15 years since the people of California wrote and passed Prop. 215, the Compassionate Use Act. You'd think that by now the medical marijuana community would feel safe, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Fifteen years after voters approved the medical use of marijuana, patients are still living in fear. Sadly, sick, disabled and dying patients are still under assault from hostile police and intrusive agencies such as the DEA and Child Protective Services.

Just the other day I helped a mother who was raided by police for growing 15 cannabis plants, which is over the California state limit. The police not only took all her plants and medicine, they reported her to CPS who took both of her children. Apparently, nobody told the police or CPS that the courts have ruled the state limit is unconstitutional and no longer in effect. Fortunately we found her an attorney and plan to raise money for her.

We worry about police who engage in juvenile and mean-spirited attacks on those who use medical marijuana. When officers are in positions of authority in law enforcement, we expect them to set aside any personal bias and exercise fairness and

restraint while interacting with members of the public.

We worry about a proposed cultivation ordinance that requires patients to publicly reveal their activities and location, thereby exposing themselves to home invasions by drug police or burglars. Patients have the legal right not to disclose that they use or cultivate cannabis and the City needs to respect their privacy.

We worry about a City Council that wants to force patients to jump through regulatory hoops and pay arbitrary fees, but won't provide patients with any actual protection in return. It's time for the City Council to look at what actually needs to be done to protect patients, instead of focusing entirely on regulating them.

For example, the council should consider doing the following:

1. Pass an ordinance that no city officials or police may cooperate or assist in any investigation involving the medical use of marijuana, unless factual evidence has been obtained showing non-medical diversion.
2. Notify the El Dorado County sheriff that we do not want DEA agents receiving any local police support for medical marijuana related investigations or raids.
3. Pass an ordinance that before any raid takes place, the police must confirm the person they are raiding is not a patient. If a raid is authorized and the person being raided can produce a letter from a physician which authorizes the use of medical marijuana, then that raid should be immediately terminated and investigated.
4. Pass an ordinance that protects bona fide patients from having their children taken from them by Child Protective Services, solely on the basis that cannabis is being consumed or cultivated in the home.

5. Request that the district attorney treat the shooting of a family pet by drug police with the same gravity as if the police had shot a human member of the family.

6. Notify the South Lake Tahoe police chief that the city wants medical marijuana to be handled by the Health Department, not the police. Since the Compassionate Use Act is codified as 11362.5 of the Health and Safety Code, not the Criminal Code, it only makes sense to have the Health Department replace the police. Thankfully, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department has done an outstanding job of respecting the rights of medical marijuana patients and dispensaries. However, we have a new Chief and the City needs to be sure to encourage him to follow the current policy.

7. If a patient is suspected of being in violation then the city should ensure that the first response will be a letter, then a visit, and if no response, a citation. The City should have a clear policy that the first response NEVER includes a SWAT team kicking down your door in the middle of the night and tossing a concussion grenade into your living room..

The City Council must take these issues seriously and understand the gravity of the situation faced by medical marijuana patients who must rely upon a medicine that inevitably brings them into conflict with misguided and hostile members of law enforcement.

See for yourself what these raids are about and why patients live in such fear of the police. Here's the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwSwvUaRq>.

Steve Kubby is a South Lake Tahoe resident who helped write Proposition 215.

Opinion: Was Saturday's rampage really unimaginable?

By Laurie Roberts

On Saturday, Gov. Jan Brewer stepped before the podium outside the old state Capitol to speak to a nation looking at us, and perhaps to us, for answers. Like every Arizonan, she was shaken. Like all of us, she was shocked and straining to understand how such horror could happen in our beloved state.

“(It is) an unbelievable tragedy that the people of Arizona experienced today,” she said. “One of which, of course, in our worst nightmares we ... never could have imagined would have taken place.”

Couldn't we?

On Monday, Brewer will step before the podium and open the 2011 session of the Arizona Legislature. A Legislature that has slashed funding for the seriously mentally ill. A Legislature that has loosened gun laws to the point that any nutball can legally walk around with a pistol in his pants.

We don't yet know what role, if any, the actions of the Legislature played in what happened on Saturday. But if ever there was a time to re-examine the cliff we are headed toward, this tragedy certainly provides it.

“We're the Tombstone of the United States of America,” Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik said on Sunday and really, who could disagree.

The first bill filed for the legislative session that gets underway Monday is Senate Bill 2001, which would allow faculty members to pack heat on Arizona's college campuses and to heck with what the police think about the idea. The bill's sponsor,

Sen. Jack Harper, R-Glendale, didn't return a call to talk about it in light of this weekend's events.

Laurie Roberts is a columnist for the Arizona Republic.

Read the whole story

McClintock has choice words for U.S. Forest Service

Publisher's note: Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, delivered the following remarks Jan. 7 on the House floor about National Forests and the U.S. Forest Service. McClintock represents the California side of Lake Tahoe in the House of Representatives.

Much of my district comprises forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Over the last two years, I have received a growing volume of complaints protesting the increasingly exclusionary and elitist policies of this agency.

These complaints charge the Forest Service, among other things, with:

- Imposing inflated fees that are forcing the abandonment of family cabins held for generations;
- Charging exorbitant new fees that are closing down long-established community events upon which many small and struggling mountain towns depend for tourism;
- Expelling long-standing grazing operations on specious grounds – causing damage both to the local economy and the federal government's revenues; and

- Obstructing the sound management of our forests through a policy that can only be described as benign neglect, creating both severe fire dangers and massive unemployment.

Practiced in the marketplace, we would renounce these tactics as predatory and abusive. In the public service sector, they are intolerable.

Combined, these actions evince an ideologically driven hostility to the public's enjoyment of the public's land – and a clear intention to deny the public the responsible and sustainable use of that land.

Most recently, the Forest Service has placed severe restrictions on vehicle access to the Plumas National Forest, despite volumes of public protests. Supervisor Bill Connelly, chairman of the Butte County Board of Supervisors, writes that, "The restriction applies to such activities as: collecting firewood, retrieving game, loading or unloading horses or other livestock, and camping." He writes, "The National Forests are part of the local fabric. The roads within the National Forests are used by thousands of residents and visitors for transportation and recreation. These activities generate revenue for our rural communities, which are critical for their survival."

This is not a small matter. The Forest Service now controls 193 million acres within our nation – a land area equivalent to the size of Texas.

During the despotic eras of Norman and Plantagenet England, the crown declared one-third of the land area of Southern England to be the royal forest, the exclusive preserve of the monarch, his forestry officials and his favored aristocrats. The people of Britain were forbidden access to and enjoyment of these forests under harsh penalties. This exclusionary system became so despised by the people that in 1215, five clauses of the Magna Carta were devoted to redress of

grievances that are hauntingly similar to those that are now flooding my office.

The attitude that now permeates the U.S. Forest Service from top to bottom is becoming far more reminiscent of the management of the royal forests during the autocracy of King John than of an agency that is supposed to encourage, welcome, facilitate and maximize the public's use of the public's land in a nation of free men and women.

After all, that was the vision for the Forest Service set forth by its legendary founder, Gifford Pinchot in 1905: "to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run."

In May of 2009 and April of 2010, some of my California colleagues and I sent letters to the Forest Service expressing these concerns. I have also personally met with senior officials of that agency on several occasions in which I have referenced more than 500 specific complaints of Forest Service abuses received by my office.

All that I have received to date from these officials are smarmy assurances that they will address these concerns – assurances that their own actions have belied at every turn.

It is time for Congress to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the abuses by this increasingly unaccountable and elitist agency, to demand accountability for the damage it has done – and is doing – to our forests' health, to the public's trust, to the government's revenues and to the nation's economy – and to take whatever actions are necessary to restore an attitude of consumer-friendly public service which was Gifford Pinchot's original vision and for which the U.S. Forest Service was once renowned and respected.

Youth driving Olympic sports options

By Bill Marolt

There was an aura of excitement at Copper Mountain last month for the Visa U.S. Halfpipe Grand Prix. That excitement was echoed last week when organizers of the FIS Freestyle World Ski Championships at Deer Valley and Park City Mountain Resorts confirmed slopestyle skiing on the schedule.

The weekend at Copper mixed halfpipe skiing and snowboarding for the first time at the Grand Prix with back-to-back events at a resort where skiers and snowboarders routinely drop into the halfpipe together. Hopefully, they'll be doing the same at Sochi in 2014.

Freeskiing's stars, including Americans Jen Hudak and Simon Dumont, are chomping at the bit for their Olympic moment – a decision which could come later this winter from the International Olympic Committee. The athletes echoed each other in their pride of being part of the Grand Prix and enthusiasm to show off their sport for the IOC.

In a very progressive move this fall, the IOC gave an informal nod to halfpipe skiing, plus both slopestyle skiing and snowboarding, subject to evaluation after this year's World Championships. The organizers of Snowboard World Championships in La Molina, Spain have also added slopestyle. And a combined Junior World Championships in New Zealand in August featured freeskiing and snowboarding in the same event.

The three potential Olympic events mirror what is taking place at virtually every winter resort. Tens of millions of kids

around the world are spending their on-mountain time in feature-filled terrain parks, riding over obstacles and dropping into pipes. It's a credit to the IOC for recognizing the relevance of these sports to the real world of skiing and snowboarding.

The integration of skiing in addition to snowboarding into the already popular Revolution Tour [halfpipe, slopestyle, cross] is resulting in the biggest fields ever for that series with 1,200 entries to the four event series selling in less than two hours including 500 slopestyle snowboarding spots in seven minutes. Sales of twin tip skis and participation by skiers and riders in pipes and parks are growing at a rate of around 10 percent a year.

It's simple. This is what kids like to do at resorts today. And whether you're a skier or snowboarder, you feel the same level of excitement. It doesn't take long being with these athletes to see their passion and professionalism. This is the same passion kids around the world want to see and feel at the Olympics.

Bill Marolt is president and CEO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association.

Opinion: Why is Palin chiding first lady's child obesity plan?

Publisher's note: *The following editorial is from the Jan. 3, 2011, Las Vegas Sun.*

Sarah Palin, the former Republican vice presidential candidate, never misses an opportunity to take a potshot at President Barack Obama. Because Palin is weighing a run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2012, partisan attacks against the Democratic administration's policies are to be expected. And although Palin typically ends up making a fool of herself when she tries to take on the president, she nonetheless really topped herself recently when she mocked first lady Michelle Obama's popular anti-obesity campaign.

On a recent episode of her television reality show, "Sarah Palin's Alaska," Palin had this to say while on a camping trip: "Where are the s'mores ingredients? This is in honor of Michelle Obama, who said the other day we should not have dessert."

It's not the first time Palin has sought to ridicule the first lady's anti-obesity campaign, and it's not clear exactly what Palin was referring to on the reality show, but news accounts said that Obama recently said, "The problem is when things get out of balance, when dessert is practically a food group." For months, many Republicans and conservatives have walked on eggshells, fearful of criticizing Palin. But apparently, even for them, there are only so many Palin inanities they can take.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who has struggled with his weight and is believed to be eyeing a run for the GOP presidential nomination, was the first Republican of note to criticize Palin's remarks. "Michelle Obama's not trying to tell people what to eat or trying to force the government's desires on people, but she's stating the obvious: That we do have an obesity crisis in this country," he told a radio host. "The first lady's campaign is on target. It's not saying that you can't or should never eat a dessert."

Read the whole story

Squaw explains issues during holiday week

To the community,

Squaw Valley was blessed with a wonderful holiday period including an abundance of bluebird days, fresh snow and amazing mountain conditions. Unfortunately, as we welcomed the holidays and more snow to the mountain, the resort was challenged by electrical, transportation and weather related issues that created inconveniences for those of you who were on the mountain. With this note, I want to acknowledge these challenges and openly and directly inform you of exactly what took place.

First, most notably, Squaw Valley experienced brief power outages on Dec. 30 and 31. Experiencing a problem of this nature during one of our busiest and most important times, and during relatively cold temperatures, is a disappointment for our customers, our team members, and our management team. This was a very unique situation, as the staff at NV Energy put it, and an occurrence that did not meet any of our expectations or standards. The following is an important summary of what took place including our team's response.

On Dec. 30 at about noon, the power lost one "leg" from the bottom of Headwall to the upper mountain. We immediately pursued contingency plans to activate backup power, and contacted the power company, NV Energy. A fuse located on a power pole operated by NV Energy near Granite Chief Road had failed. It took us 30 minutes to locate the fuse following the failure, at which point the power company was already en route. Upon arrival, the power company repair crew replaced

the fuse, which they found had melted. We were advised, based on the state of the melted fuse, that failure was attributable to a defective fuse and was not related to the mountain's infrastructure or operations. To ensure that guests could get their lift ticket's value, we ran the lifts for an additional 20 minutes in the afternoon that day.

The same fuse failed again on Dec. 31 at 11am. Again, our team immediately mobilized backup power supplies and generators. NV Energy was on site within 30 minutes. A decision was made to replace the fuse with a larger set, which had to be sourced and delivered. The process took about 30 additional minutes. Again, we ran the lifts later that afternoon and provided vouchers for those particularly affected by the outage. NV Energy has made modifications to this "leg" that ensures this failure will never be replicated. Furthermore, we have requested replacement of the fuses in the other two legs of power with the same larger size to prevent any future problems. As an additional precaution, Squaw Valley will be engaging NV Energy and other specialists to conduct a thorough review of our power lines, our internal infrastructure, and our operational methodology to ensure that the potential for future failures is minimized.

Secondly, on Dec. 30, the entire North Lake Tahoe road system was overwhelmed by traffic, including our local area. Snowstorms put the county's already stressed road crew in a position whereby they weren't able to widen Squaw Valley Road, a critical function which allows us to build three lanes to support ingress and egress from the resort along this roadway. Additionally, at the end of the day, a malfunctioning traffic light on Highway 89, toward Truckee, exacerbated an already maxed out roadway system. On the next day, Dec. 31, our own road crews took the initiative to widen the roads to create three lanes. While this is outside of our responsibilities, we did this in an effort to alleviate the stress and problems of the previous day. I was informed by many contacts that the

entire region's roadways were problematic during this time. I can assure you that our team will continue to work with local and regional transportation authorities on this issue to ensure that it does not happen again.

Finally, the snowfall that has made for incredible skiing and riding experiences, coupled with significant wind events, has required our Ski Patrol to literally work harder than ever during their snow safety missions. The number of days that we've experienced delayed lift openings is directly related to the extraordinary weather, including wind and record-breaking early season snowfall. Patrol conducted snow safety on 15 days during December, and Squaw Valley experienced 189 percent of average snowfall during the month. Together, November and December have delivered more snowfall than anytime during the previous 40 years. You can be assured that our team will continue making every effort to open the mountain as early as possible; however, we will always operate the resort with your safety and the safety of our team members as our primary concern.

We appreciate your patience as we strive to overcome these challenges and seek to improve every facet of the resort's operations. Thank you for taking the time to review this information, and I sincerely hope that this summary provides you with some insights into our operations over the holiday period.

Thank you for choosing Squaw Valley USA.

Best regards,

Andy Wirth, Squaw Valley president and CEO