

Graffiti cleanup a success in South Tahoe

To the community,

On May 1, the Leadership Lake Tahoe organization from the Chamber of Commerce organized a graffiti coverage effort which resulted in the covering/removal of graffiti at 65 locations throughout the city. The program was well organized and there were no issues. As a matter of fact dispatch received calls from citizens thanking the city for this effort. This project will significantly contribute to our efforts to cover graffiti as soon as possible after it is reported. The weather and reduced manpower resulted in the amount of graffiti to become almost overwhelming.

Bob Albertazzi, SLTPD

Cracking down on Cinco de Mayo DUIs



To the community,

Cinco de Mayo has become a traditional time for many to celebrate California's rich cultural history. But it is also a night out with expected dangers when someone chooses to drink

and drive. Party hosts, bars and restaurants this year must be sure to plan and promote designating sober drivers in advance -- before the Fiesta begins.

The Avoid the 6 will be deploying additional Roving DUI patrols into the communities of South Lake Tahoe and Placerville in an effort to lower deaths and injuries with so many local establishments offering discounted drink offers in conjunctions with Cinco de Mayo promotional activities.

DUI related crashes have dropped in California thanks to increased sobriety checkpoints and special DUI enforcement campaigns. However, the No. 1 killer on our highways remains impaired driving, with 1,029 dead in 2008 and another 28,457 injured in alcohol involved collisions.

"Communities everywhere will see special events and night spots celebrating Cinco de Mayo this year," said interim SLTPD Chief Martin Hewlett. "Do your part this year and make your celebration memorable by designating non-drinking drivers before the first margarita is ever mixed."

El Dorado County Avoid the 6 DUI Taskforce will be deploying overtime patrols onto city streets while CHP will be saturating the freeways and into unincorporated communities looking for the signs of a drunken driver:

- Weaving out of the lane
- Wide turns
- Failing to go on a green light
- Driving below the speed limit
- Aggressive, reckless driving
- Drivers who appear drunk behind the wheel

Officers will be stopping errant drivers and checking for the

signs of intoxication, conducting field sobriety tests, arresting those who are intoxicated and impounding vehicles of those with suspended or no license.

“Drunken driving is simply not worth the risk. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for impaired driving can be significant,” said Christopher J. Murphy, director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. “Violators often face jail time, the loss of their driver’s license, higher insurance rates, attorney fees, time away from work, and dozens of other expenses. So don’t take the chance. Remember, if you are over the limit, you are under arrest.”

Avoid the 6 DUI Taskforce funding is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Shannon Laney, SLTPD sergeant

SLTFD testing hydrants for 2 months



To the community,

The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department will be performing hydrant maintenance on all of the city’s hydrants and flow verification tests on many of them throughout the city in

every neighborhood during the months of May and June. This requires the fire department to flow small amounts of water at every hydrant when performing simple maintenance and requires substantial continuous flowing when testing the capacity of the hydrant.

We will only flow the amount of water as needed to perform these tests. Due to system changes and normal usage of the domestic water system, the fire department must verify the ability of the system and its individual hydrants to deliver the proper amount of water to fight fires.

Every hydrant must be tested once every five years as required by the Insurance Services Office in order to verify the flows and maintain current records. When flow testing, the water lines can and do become disturbed causing water to be discolored in homes.

South Tahoe Public Utility District recommends that if this happens, open an outside faucet and run the water until clear. The water companies know that we are performing these tests and services.

The fire department understands that our actions may cause some inconvenience for our citizens but we are attempting to minimize the impact with this notice. Thank you for your patience.

South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Former STPUD board member

questions raising rates

Letter to the publisher,

I would like to apologize for an article I wrote last month entitled, "Hats Off to S.T.P.U.D.". The words I used in the article were misleading. I wrote, "The District is in a position to give its customers another zero percent rate increase." What I failed to say was, "They may or may not give us another rate freeze this year."

The purpose of that article and this article is to praise South Tahoe Public Utility District. The district is a \$50 million organization and their financial management is "AAA". There is not a better-run organization in the basin and that is why it would be very easy for them to freeze the rates again.

As you know, the district gave us some relief last year with a zero percent rate increase. They did it because the economy and the unemployment rate were bad. Well, things are still bad and I am hoping they will give us another break. I will be at the public meeting on May 6 to voice my opinion.

Capital improvements projects (CIPs) are put on hold when the rates are frozen. If the district does not get a 4 percent rate increase, then one or two of the 11 current CIPs will be put on hold. Some of these CIPs include: three BMP and erosion control projects, a 12-inch water line on Lake Tahoe Boulevard, two booster station upgrades and two water tanks.

Some of us would like to see the Iroquois Booster Station project put on hold along with the Grizzly Mountain Booster Station project and the Cathodic Protection Assessment project for a total budget reduction of \$2 million. If this were to happen, then the STPUD board could vote for a rate freeze.

The water district told me that a 4 percent rate increase

would raise the average bill by less than \$10. This doesn't sound like much by itself, but when we add the increases for food, gasoline, electricity and gas, the number get real ugly real fast.

When I was on the board last year, we froze the rate in 2009 with plans to increase the rates in 2010 to 4.5 percent. We did this because we thought the economy and the unemployment rate would be better in 2010. It looks like we will have to wait another year for the economy to rebound. Another rate by the STPUD board would be a clear message that they sympathize with our community.

Please join us on May 6 at 6pm at the public meeting at the water district.

Ernie Claudio, South Lake Tahoe

Gratitude for Earth Day event's success

To the community,

As the Earth Week comes to a close, we feel a sense of pride for our community. Not only has our community grown in sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, but you continue to support the Tahoe Truckee Earth Day event. As the sun gods smiled upon us, as the music played through the village and the Trashion Show was underway- we looked out into the crowd of thousands and were so pleased at the community support for this event.

We want to personally thank everyone who has been and is still

involved with the Tahoe Truckee Earth Day event, and all the many events that happened that week, including SYRCL's Wild and Scenic Film Festivals, Squaw Valley Institute's speaker and Slow Food Tahoe's event at Bistro 22. We are proud of our volunteer committee, business partners and sponsors that made these significant community events a reality. Without the generosity and hard work of our many volunteers, the Tahoe Earth Day Foundation couldn't do what we do. In addition, the Squaw Village Neighborhood Company has been an essential part of the success of this event, and we are so thankful for their support over the years.

In honor of the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day, we encourage you to examine what you can do individually to help make a change. Whether simply supporting local farmers by purchasing locally, or cutting down on the daily paper towel usage at home – we can all make a difference even in very small ways.

Please save the date for the 41st year of Earth Day – and we hope to see you all again on April 23, 2011.

Lisa Cashel and Emily Williams, co-chairs Tahoe Truckee Earth Day

Democrats to host McClintock's challenger



To the community,

Vote-by-mail ballots for the June primary election will be sent out in the next couple of weeks. These propositions aren't on many people's radar yet.

Primary and mid-term elections have notoriously low turnout. This year the tea-partyers are riled up and ready to vote. Let's match that with progressive energy and votes both this June and again in November. Remember, your vote is vital.

And mark your calendar. Clint Curtis, the Democratic candidate for Congress will address the LTDC meeting on May 12, 6:30pm in the Loft above the Blue Angel Cafe, 1132 Ski Run Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. Come and meet the candidate.

Judy Williams, President, Lake Tahoe Democratic Club

Imploring the importance of water conservation



To the community,

The Department of Water Resources reminds the public that May is "Water Awareness Month," a time to appreciate and carefully use the water resources essential to California's special quality of life.

"Water is vital to California's people, animals, ecosystems and economy," noted DWR Director Mark Cowin. "As warm weather and vacation season arrive, the need is greater than ever to use water wisely and practice water conservation."

DWR, in partnership with the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), will continue to run the "Save Our Water" program. The program, which was created by Gov. Arnold

Schwarzenegger's 2009 drought declaration, aims to educate Californians about easy ways to conserve water indoors and outdoors. Visit the website at www.saveourh2o.org.

Sierra snowpack and winter rainfall increased in much of California in early 2010. As April ended, Sierra snowpack water content statewide topped 130 percent of average for that time of year. But the state still is recovering from three consecutive dry years. Some major reservoirs are lagging below average.

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the key Northern California storage reservoir for the State Water Project (SWP), stands at just 56 percent of average.

Reflecting these conditions, SWP deliveries for 2010 currently are estimated at 30 percent of the amount requested by the SWP contractors.

If wet weather patterns continue, a slight adjustment to 35 or 40 percent in the final SWP allocation for 2010 could occur.

Water Awareness Month originated during California's 1987-1992 drought to help educate consumers on using water resources efficiently.

During the recent three dry years, many regions activated drought restrictions and intensified their water conservation efforts. As of April 2010, 67 local water agencies in California mandated water conservation while 56 other agencies urged voluntary conservation practices.

In May, DWR will publish its 2009 Update to the California Water Plan, the most comprehensive report available on water issues, including supply and demand, conservation, global warming impacts and water resource

management. Persons interested in reading the report can access it online at www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/cwpu2009.

During May 4-7, DWR officials will participate in ACWA's annual Spring Conference. The association represents about 450 public water agencies that deliver more than 90 percent of California's water supply.

DWR staff will engage in several special Water Awareness Month events at several locations around the state.

California Department of Water Resources

Barton CEO paints bleak picture for health care

By John Williams

How is America's health care reform going to affect the health care marketplace? That's the big question being asked by hundreds of health care providers across the nation just like Barton Health.

According to the California Hospital Association, there are 54 million Americans – including 7 million Californians – who are without health care insurance. As a nonprofit health care provider, Barton Memorial Hospital is dedicated to treating everyone who comes in the door, regardless of their ability to pay. Our goal is to provide high-quality care for everyone by offering affordable, medically necessary care consistently in all of our facilities.



John Williams

However, with the uninsured population steadily on the rise, coupled with Medicaid policy changes, cutbacks in public and other subsidies, and a downturn in the number of fulltime residents and visiting tourists, health care for Lake Tahoe has been on rocky ground for the past year.

This unfortunate trend is expected to continue through 2011. Failure to support the local providers could cause our health system to dwindle in services offered, significantly impacting uninsured people and our entire community.

Take a moment to imagine South Lake Tahoe without services like an emergency department to treat unexpected, life-threatening conditions or a family birthing center to attend to delivering moms and their newborns.

Picture our community without the Barton Community Clinic, which sees thousands of uninsured and underinsured patients each year.

Would employers be able to recruit qualified candidates for positions if a solid health care foundation were not in town?

Discounted health programs like wellness lab draws, discounted EKGs, free health screening and H1N1 vaccination clinics would no longer be available. Patients would be required to travel significant distances for all their health care needs. Barton would not be here to provide financial assistance to help pay for medical care for those who cannot afford medical coverage.

When painted, the health care picture in South Lake Tahoe

without a local community hospital is bleak. Unfortunately, the current reform is not going to strengthen the position of our health care providers. In fact, most hospitals may still see a larger financial hit with further deterioration in their balance sheets. Budget cuts to California's Medi-Cal program in 2009 have put patients and our hospitals at even greater risk.

Already in the works are further decreases in reimbursements for Medicare and more than likely Medi-Cal. The new Medi-Cal reimbursement cuts are further eroding an already under-funded program. Medi-Cal ranks last in the nation in payments to health care providers. California's community hospitals lost \$2.8 billion in 2007 from inadequate payments for care provided to Medi-Cal patients and that loss continues to climb.

Adding to the financial strain, the current federal budget calls for payment delays to doctors and hospitals. For some hospitals, such delays meant laying off health care workers, suspending services and perhaps closing altogether. Barton Health has been forced to look at cost containment including some cuts to employee benefits, layoffs and consolidation of services. These fiscal measures were necessary to ensure that Barton Health continues to function as a viable, competitive health care provider offering the highest level of quality care possible and employment for 925 community members.

Health care reform is needed to help broaden the reach of access to medical services for all Americans. At Barton, we are dedicated to working with the current reform bill for the benefit of our community and our hospital. We plan to consistently look at our services and streamline where there are opportunities, in an effort to survive the volatile climate of health care in our country and provide comprehensive services to our community. We will continue to seek grants and take advantage of rural health benefits, so that we can continue our dedication to enhancing performance

and customer service, continue to recruit highly-trained physicians and purchase the latest technology.

John Williams is chief executive officer for Barton Health. He is also on the board of directors of the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California.

TVES thankful for performing arts instruction

To the community,

Tahoe Valley School's Performing Arts Program would like to thank Tiffany Carter and Marcia Sarosik for the instruction and direction with the first Tahoe Valley Performance of "Red Riding Hood."

Along with the assistance from Ethan Niven and Emery Mulligan, 60 students studied acting, singing and dancing with the final performance of "Red Riding Hood" being performed to a packed house on April 8.

Students will continue developing their performance skills until June, with a final "Mini-Glee style" performance.

A special thank you to the Lake Tahoe Education Foundation for its generous support of Tahoe Valley's Performing Arts Program, which will continue again next year with performing arts being integrated into the regular curriculum as well as with the on-going after school program.

Mark Romagnolo, principal TVES

TAP wants to turn votes into \$7,500



Friends of Tahoe Arts Project,

Please help Tahoe Arts Project receive \$7,500 from Raley's. Between now and May 12 go to the website below and vote for Tahoe Arts Project. You can vote once a day. They are giving out five cash awards to the organizations with the most votes.

Here's how:

1. Click [here](#) to read our proposal and to get to the Raley's login screen.
2. If you already have a Raley's login, enter your email address and password, click on Sign In, then click on Vote Now. If you do not have a login, register [it's quick and easy] then login and click on Vote Now.
3. Save the link to your favorites or "bookmark" it so you can easily vote every day.
4. Vote today and every day from now until the end of the contest on May 12. Only one vote allowed per day per email address.
5. Please forward this to everyone on your email list.

Thank you for supporting the arts in South Lake Tahoe.

Peggy Thompson, executive director Tahoe Arts Project