

Holiday home tour benefits Assistance League

Assistance League of Sierra Foothills' fifth annual Homes for the Holidays tour in El Dorado Hills and surrounding area is Dec. 6-7.

This is an opportunity to get an idea for your own holiday decorating. The tour features six homes throughout El Dorado County including QT Farm, a sustainable and elegant fiber farm producing sheep, alpaca, goat, rabbit and llama wool. Also on the tour is a French country home, replete with vintage and natural holiday décor amidst sweeping panoramic views of the American River.

In addition to the six featured homes, Pottery World in El Dorado Hills will be sharing their secrets for creating stunning holiday decor with holiday floral demonstrations to help you create some magic of your own.

The tour is from 10am-5pm each day. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. Tickets can be purchased at: Pottery World - Rocklin and EDH California Welcome Center - EDH Caffè Santoro-Cameron Park (Merrychase Drive and Safeway Center) Folsom Chamber of Commerce – Folsom El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce – Placerville.

Trio of art exhibits at LTCC

Three art exhibits will be open to the public through Dec. 5

at Lake Tahoe Community College.

All three will launch with an artist's reception and talk on Oct. 2 at 5.

In the Haldan Art Gallery inside the library building are the works of Candace Nicol in her show "Postures and Parts: Construction of the Male Nude." The artist's reception will be Oct. 2 from 5-7pm, with an artist talk at 5:30pm. Gallery hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11am-5:30pm, and Fridays 11am-2:30pm.

In the foyer of the Duke Theatre artist Amy Hackleman's "Grey Matter" is open now through Dec. 5. The artist's reception is Oct. 2 from 5-7pm. Hackleman is a local artist who teaches photography classes at LTCC.

Showing in the Student Art Gallery in the Main Building is the Winner's Exhibition now through Dec. 5, 2014. This exhibit includes award-winning student artwork from the 2014 Annual Student Art Exhibition, plus some new works by the winning artists. The Artists' reception is Thurs. Oct. 2 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Calif. pot legalization efforts under way

By Lisa Leff, AP

SAN FRANCISCO – A national marijuana advocacy group took steps Wednesday to begin raising money for a campaign to legalize recreational pot use in California in 2016, a move with potential to add a dose of extra excitement to the

presidential election year.

The Marijuana Policy Project filed paperwork with the California secretary of state's office registering a campaign committee to start accepting and spending contributions for a pot legalization initiative on the November 2016 state ballot, the group said.

The measure would be similar to those passed in 2012 by voters in Colorado and Washington, the first U.S. states to legalize commercial sales of marijuana to all adults over 21.

California, long the national leader in illegal marijuana production and home to a thriving, largely unregulated medical marijuana industry, is one of the 21 other states that currently allow marijuana use only for medical reasons. The drug remains illegal under federal law.

"Marijuana prohibition has had an enormously detrimental impact on California communities. It's been ineffective, wasteful and counterproductive. It's time for a more responsible approach," Marijuana Policy Project Executive Director Rob Kampia said. "Regulating and taxing marijuana similarly to alcohol just makes sense."

The Washington, D.C.-based group also has established campaign committees to back legalization measures in Arizona, Massachusetts and Nevada in 2016.

Voters in Oregon, Alaska and the District of Columbia will weigh in on marijuana legalization in November.

In 2010, California voters rejected a ballot initiative seeking to legalize recreational pot. The measure, just like the medical marijuana law the state approved in 1996, was the first of its kind. But along with opposition from law enforcement and elected officials, Proposition 19 faced unexpected resistance from medical marijuana users and outlaw growers in the state's so-called Emerald Triangle who worried

legalization would lead to plummeting marijuana prices.

Marijuana Policy Project spokesman Mason Tvert predicted no such divisions would surface this time around.

Citing his group's experience in Colorado and the advantage of aiming for a presidential election year when voter turnout is higher, Tvert said legalization supporters would use the next two years to build a broad-based coalition and craft ballot language that addresses concerns of particular constituencies.

"Obviously, it's a whole different landscape in California, where it will cost probably as much or more to just get on the ballot as it did to run a winning campaign after getting on the ballot in Colorado," he said.

League of California Cities lobbyist Tim Cromartie, whose group opposed the state's 2010 pot legalization initiative and until this year fought legislative efforts to give the state greater oversight of medical marijuana, said Wednesday that it was too soon to say what kind of opposition, if any, would greet a 2016 campaign.

Lynne Lyman, California director of the Drug Policy Alliance, said her group expects to play a major role in the legalization effort and already has started raising money. Lyman said the goal is to have an initiative written by next summer. She estimated that a pro-legalization campaign would cost \$8 million to \$12 million.

Even though California would be following in the steps of other states if a 2016 initiative passes, legalizing recreational marijuana use there would have far-reaching implications, Lyman said.

"When an issue is taken up in California, it becomes a national issue," she said. "What we really hope is that with a state this large taking that step, the federal government will be forced to address the ongoing issue of marijuana

prohibition.”

Swarm of earthquakes shakes Mammoth

By Veronica Rocha, Los Angeles Times

The more than 600 earthquakes that have struck the Mammoth Lakes region over the last 24 hours are an indication of tectonic, not volcanic, stress, an expert said Friday.

At least 109 of the earthquakes were magnitude 2.0 or greater, with smaller quakes making up the bulk of the activity, said David Shelly, a seismologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Volcano Science Center. At least six, however, were greater than magnitude 3.0.

The largest, a 3.8 temblor six miles from Mammoth Lakes, occurred at 9:21pm Thursday.

Read the whole story

Public gets glimpse of S. Tahoe recreation plan

By Jessie Marchesseau

About 30 people gathered at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center on Sept. 25 for a public open house to review the

recently released draft of South Lake Tahoe's first Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan.

The plan, which has been in the works for more than a year, is collaboration between El Dorado County and South Lake Tahoe. During this time coordinators have gathered more than 1,200 surveys and questionnaires from residents indicating what they believe should be the community's park and recreation priorities.

The draft is available to view on the city's website, but this was the first public presentation of it.



Consultant Cindy Mendoza on Sept. 25 presents the recreation plan highlights.
Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

At a long table on one side of the gymnasium sat four of the six core project team members: Norma Santiago, Angela Swanson, Vickie Sanders and Lauren Thomaselli, and five of the 11 master plan advisory committee members: Andrew Strain, Steve Yonker, Scott Valentine, Ty Polastri and Garrett Villanueva.

Thomaselli, Swanson, Strain, Polastri and Santiago each took a few minutes to speak to attendees about the plan, the process and their personal visions before handing the podium over to Cindy Mendoza, a project manager with planning and design firm MIG.

Mendoza has been helping the committee and team members develop the overall plan. She broke down some of the survey data for attendees revealing, for example, how 94 percent of residents agreed that trails, pathways and mobility were the most important areas needing improvement. One aspect she found surprising, however, was that people indicated they wanted these bike trails and paths not so much for recreation purposes, but for getting where they needed to go such as work and the grocery store.

Mendoza, in conjunction with the project team and advisory committee took these survey results and combined them with economic data, environmental concerns and recreation opportunities to create this master plan vision statement:

We envision an accessible, interconnected, and sustainable system of diverse, year-round recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Our world-class parks, facilities, trails, and programs inspire and engage recreation enthusiasts, shape our community, connect us to our natural environment and support our shared future in the South Shore.

The master plan breaks down projects into three main categories: quick wins, short-term projects, and long-term initiatives. Long-term initiatives are the lowest on the priority list and/or the larger, more time-consuming projects; these have a six- to 10-year time line. Short-term projects will have a two- to five-year timeframe, and quick wins are projects that can be done within the next year, offering instant gratification and a feeling of getting the ball rolling.

“We do feel like quick wins are demonstrating action,” Thomaselli said.

Some of these projects which can already be seen around town are the improvements to the Al Tahoe sports fields which were

completed this summer and the extensive resurfacing of city bike trails. Dirt is also piling up at the Bijou bike park which will undergo construction next spring.

Listed as short-term priorities are a number of projects including restoration of Regan Beach, improvements to Bijou Golf Course and implementing water efficiency programs.

Making the long-term list is the renovation of the recreation and swim complex, an outdoor amphitheater or events venue, and a new park for county residents among other things.

Even though the plan's vision statement calls for "year-round recreation opportunities," any mention of winter activities or improvements was noticeably missing from the evening's presentation. When asked about this oversight, Polastri said the city is going to try plowing the bike paths this winter. Beyond that, Mendoza said the focus would be more on providing people with indoor activities during the winter such as using the recreation and swim complex.

During open discussion, attendees brought up several other seemingly overlooked recreation concerns such as the Bijou skate park, fishing opportunities, rock climbing access, softball fields and sledding hills. Mendoza explained that most of these items did not show up as priorities in the public surveys, but encouraged participants to submit their concerns on questionnaire sheets available at the door.

The planners are adamant that the South Lake Tahoe of the past which had a tendency to do a lot of planning but never carry through on those plans is no more.

"We are great at planning," Santiago said, "but now we have a group of committed people that are good at implementation."

The projects already under way or completed appear to be a step in the right direction. However, financial funding for most of the short- and long-term projects is still unaccounted

for, though Thomaselli said she is confident if the plans are in place, the funding will come through.

The public has until Oct. 10 to submit comments and opinions on the master plan draft. The plan is online.

Letter: Reasons to vote for Measure F

To the community,

I've served on Lake Tahoe Community College's board of trustees for the college's entire 40-year history. I was also one of a core group of community members who, starting back in the 1960s, worked together to bring a community college to our town. I am asking for your support this November for Measure F, a bond measure that will revitalize and modernize our aging college while delivering real value to South Lake Tahoe. It will also make it possible for a four-year college education to be earned right here at home.



Roberta Mason

The Measure F bond will cost about \$75 per year for the average homeowner. That is a real cost to taxpayers, but it's a reasonable price to pay -- about the cost of two cups of

coffee per month. Even better, that cost offers a great return on investment: more construction jobs, more students coming to campus and purchasing goods and services in town, and increased property values, to name a few. This \$55 million bond can be leveraged into approximately \$107 million through matching state funds and grant opportunities. So for their \$55 million, community members and business owners will potentially see nearly double that amount come into our community -- a much-needed economic shot in the arm for Tahoe.

I was there when the ground broke at LTCC's current campus, and I can now see clearly how time and mountain weather has eroded it. Measure F monies will maintain and modernize LTCC's 25-year-old campus, replacing outdated and failing electrical, heating and cooling systems, technology, and parking lots, trails and walkways. Leaky roofs will be repaired, and buildings will be made safer. Science labs and classrooms will be upgraded so students have the best learning environment possible. Measure F also provides for a new public safety training center, where our fire academy cadets and emergency personnel throughout the region can receive world-class training. This Center will also provide a hub during crises such as wildfires, earthquakes, and other disasters, so emergency officials can coordinate their efforts and save lives. There are a number of other projects the bond will also provide for: I encourage you to go to online www.ltcc.edu/measref to see the complete bond project list so you know exactly what your dollars will bring to life on our campus, and in our community.

While providing access to four-year degrees wasn't the original mission of the community college system in California, many community members and business owners have encouraged LTCC to pursue offering baccalaureates. We heard them loud and clear at the college's 20/20 Vision session last fall. The state also recognizes that need. California is simply not producing enough college graduates to provide the

work force it needs. The UC and CSU systems, while certainly high quality, are out of reach financially for many of our young people. If we want to employ our youth and educate the highly-skilled workforce California needs now, then the community college system must help. That's why it's launching a pilot program to begin offering four-year degrees once the governor signs SB 850 into law. We hope LTCC will be chosen for this program – we're in a good position to be tapped for it. But if not, then Measure F provides for a university center on campus where a partner university can come in to jointly provide four-year degrees. No matter the outcome, LTCC will be poised to provide students and parents what they're demanding -- access to a baccalaureate degree that's affordable, and local.

The community college system's mission is changing as it responds to real-world issues facing California. With your help on Nov. 4, Lake Tahoe Community College can play a part in solving these issues while providing a modern, world-class institution to our town. Please vote Yes for Measure F – for our town, our future, and for our kids.

Roberta Mason, South Lake Tahoe

Cascade Fire nearly contained at 20 acres

Updated 9:55pm:

Significant precipitation and decreased winds have helped firefighters suppress the Cascade Fire burning near Snow Lake in the Desolation Wilderness.

Based on infrared data, the estimate of the fire's size has been reduced to 20 acres.

With significant precipitation in the weekend forecast, the incident commander plans to begin releasing resources Saturday.

The fire poses no threat to structures at this time. No evacuations and no road closures are in effect.

Full containment is expected soon.

Bayview Trailhead and Campground and TaylorCreek Sno-Park on Highway 89 remained closed. Previously closed trails are open as is the parking lot at Vikingsholm.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, but it was human caused, according to the U.S. Forest Service. This wildfire is not related to the King Fire.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Burglary suspect arrested in Truckee

A suspected burglar entered a Truckee residence Sept. 23 when the owner and her infant were home.

The suspect fled the Estates Drive house when confronted by the woman.

Three days later Truckee police officers arrested Angel Torres of Truckee on charges of outstanding burglary warrant, possession of a controlled substance, possession of stolen

property and burglary. Bail was set at \$100,000.

Officers said they located stolen property consisting of numerous prescription pills that are scheduled as a controlled substance. Further investigation revealed these items were taken in a different residential burglary.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

King Fire at 74% containment

Updated 9:10pm

Rain has helped the more than 7,700 firefighters bring containment of the King Fire to 74 percent on Sept. 26.

Since the fire began Sept. 13 at the hands of an alleged arsonist 97,009 acres that have been charred.

The fire is moving northeast from its origin of Pollock Pines.

The Tahoe National Forest has issued a road closure which includes the Foresthill Road, Forest Service Road 22, and the Western States and Tevis Cup trails.

There are 289 structures still threatened, but mandatory evacuations have been lifted. Twelve houses have been lost and 68 out buildings. The shelter in Camino has closed.

Smoke drifted into the Folsom and Rancho Cordova areas. It was in the unhealthy category Friday, according to Sacramento County health officials.

A low-pressure system is supposed to be over the area through Sunday, which will bring rain and humidity levels that are ideal for firefighting.

Crews are fixing any damage that was done by firefighters. To stop the spread of nonnative weeds a vehicle rinse station is being used.

CFire crews are beginning to return to their home stations. Six firefighters have been injured on this blaze.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Cops to collect more personal data without public notice

By Ali Winston, Center for Investigative Reporting

LOS ANGELES – Without notice to the public, Los Angeles County law enforcement officials are preparing to widen what personal information they collect from people they encounter in the field and in jail – by building a massive database of iris scans, fingerprints, mug shots, palm prints and, potentially, voice recordings.

The new database of personal information – dubbed a multimodal biometric identification system – would augment the county’s existing database of fingerprint records and create the largest law enforcement repository outside of the FBI of so-called next-generation biometric identification, according to county sheriff’s department documents.

On Sept. 15, the FBI announced that the Next Generation Identification System was fully operational. Now that the central infrastructure is in place, the next phase is for local jurisdictions across the country to update their own information-gathering systems to the FBI’s standards.

When the system is up and running in L.A., any law enforcement official working in the county, including the Los Angeles Police Department, would collect biometric information on people who are booked into county jails or by using mobile devices in the field.

This would occur even when people are stopped for lesser offenses or pulled over for minor traffic violations, according to documents obtained by the Center for Investigative Reporting through a public records request.

Officials with the sheriff's department, which operates the countywide system, said the biometric information would be retained indefinitely – regardless of whether the person in question is convicted of the crime for which he or she was arrested.

The system is expected to be fully operational in two or three years, according to the sheriff's department.

All of this is happening without hearings or public input, yet technology companies already are bidding to build the system, interviews and documents show. Officials would not disclose the expected cost of the project or which companies are bidding but said it would be a multimillion-dollar undertaking.

The new system is being readied as the public has become increasingly concerned about privacy invasions by the government, corporations and Internet sources. Privacy advocates worry the public is losing any sense of control over the widespread collection of data on its purchases, travel habits, friendships, health, business transactions and personal communications.

At the same time, cities and counties across the country are facing renewed scrutiny for accepting the transfer of military technology from the Pentagon. The national biometric database is part of the transition of military-grade technologies and

information-gathering strategies from the Pentagon to civilian law enforcement. During the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past decade, the U.S. military collected and stored biometric information on millions of civilians and militants.

In 2008, President George W. Bush required the Defense, Homeland Security and Justice departments to establish common standards for collecting and sharing biometric information like iris scans and photos optimized for facial recognition. Law enforcement agencies have been testing mobile systems for documenting biometric information, including a facial recognition program uncovered in San Diego County last fall.

Authorities in California already collect DNA swabs from arrestees booked into county jails, a practice upheld last year by the U.S. Supreme Court and this year by a federal appeals court in California. Dozens of other states also collect DNA samples from arrestees.

Documents from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department show its database will house information on up to 15 million subjects, giving the department a major stake in the Next Generation Identification program, a billion-dollar update to the FBI's national fingerprint database and the largest information technology project in the history of the U.S. Department of Justice.

For privacy advocates, the development of the Los Angeles biometric system without any public oversight or debate and an indefinite data retention policy are causes for concern.

Jeramie Scott, national security counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said it's critical for the public to be aware that this new technology is being rolled out, because the information held by law enforcement poses unique threats to privacy and anonymity.

"Biometric data is something you cannot change if it is compromised," Scott said. "There are privacy and civil

liberties implications that come from law enforcement having multiple ways to identify someone without their consent.”

Scott, whose organization has sued the FBI to release information related to Next General Identification, added: “It becomes a one-sided debate when law enforcement alone is making that decision to use new technologies on the public.”

Hamid Khan, an organizer with the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition who studies police surveillance, said the arrival of Next Generation Identification means Los Angeles is now a frontier in the battle for privacy.

“Now our whole bodies are up for grabs,” Khan said.

The multimodal biometric system under development by the sheriff’s department will collect four out of the five “inputs” used by the Next Generation Identification program – fingerprints, mug shots, iris scans and palm prints. Voice recordings are the fifth input.

The L.A. system is designed to transmit and receive data to and from the FBI and the California Department of Justice, which has its own biometric database.

Originally announced in 2008, Next Generation Identification is being rolled out across the country this year after pilot projects were carried out in Michigan, Maryland, Texas, Maine and New Mexico. About 17 million facial records already were integrated into Next Generation Identification as of January.

Earlier this year, residents and city officials in Compton were outraged that Los Angeles County sheriff’s officials had experimented with a cutting-edge aerial surveillance tool known as wide-area surveillance without any prior public notice.

“A lot of people do have a problem with the eye in the sky, the Big Brother, so in order to mitigate any of those kinds of

complaints, we basically kept it pretty hush-hush," sheriff's Sgt. Douglas Iketani told CIR earlier this year.

Sheriff's Lt. Joshua Thai, who is in charge of implementing the county's new biometric database, said the department currently is collecting only fingerprints and has used mobile devices since 2006 to check the fingerprints of people stopped on the street against the county's records.

Thai said biometric information would be collected from people only when they are arrested and booked, but the mobile devices would be used to verify individuals' identities in the field.

"It could be somebody gets pulled over for a traffic violation and he or she does not have a driver's license on him or her, and the officer is just trying to identify this person," he said.

Thai said the goal of the project is to help law enforcement officers better identify the people they contact and avoid wrongful arrests. "What we're hoping is that based on the mug shot is that that will compensate some of the biometrics to maybe better identify this person," Thai said.

The sheriff's department declined to release information on which companies were already bidding to install the new system.

According to federal guidelines for the storage of biometric data in Next Generation Identification, information on an individual with a criminal record will be kept until that person is 99 years old. Information on a person without a criminal record will be purged when he or she turns 75.

The FBI's guidelines for keeping biometric data on individuals, regardless of whether they have criminal records, "amounts to an indefinite retention period," said Peter Bibring, a senior staff attorney with the Southern California ACLU. If the Next Generation Identification database simply

were an update to the FBI's existing fingerprint database, Bibring said the project wouldn't be problematic.

However, he said the biometric database "significantly expands the type of data law enforcement collects and creates a more invasive system" that may encourage police officers to make more stops in the field to gather photographs and biometric data for the new database.

Experts say the collection and storage of biometric information creates challenges for the legal system and personal privacy – challenges that have not been adequately considered in the planning and implementation of Next Generation Identification.

Bibring said the new database, if paired with facial recognition-enabled surveillance cameras, could drastically increase law enforcement's ability to track a person's movements just as license-plate readers track vehicles.

"The federal government is creating an architecture that will make it easy to identify where people are and were," Bibring said. "It threatens people's anonymity and ability to move about without being monitored."

Scott, of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said FBI documents obtained by the center make it clear that uncertainty lingers about who has access to the biometric data that will be stored in the new federal database, and he has doubts regarding the security of such information.

Dozens of Southern California law enforcement agencies have been using mobile fingerprinting devices in the field for roughly a decade. Gang officers routinely submit fingerprints, mug shots and photographs of tattoos and unique scars of suspected gang members to the statewide CalGang database, which contains information on over 130,000 individuals statewide.

The national biometric database also has come under fire from privacy advocates and civil libertarians because it is being implemented without a thorough study of its impact on privacy – which is required by federal law.

“They need to do this before any pilot programs, of which they’ve done two for facial recognition and iris recognition,” Scott said. “They’re not meeting their legal obligations, which is now being followed up by state and local authorities.”

Khan, of the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, said such sensitive information in the hands of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department raises further questions about oversight and information security.

“When we look at the multiple contractors and subcontractors and who will have access to this information,” he said, “the whole issue of identity theft comes to mind.”