

Golf tourney benefits Squaw Valley Institute

The third annual Local SVI Celebrity Golf Tournament is Sept. 22.

This year's tournament will be hosted by Uncle E of the X Games. Celebrity guests include Olympians Jonny Mosely, Nate Holland, Tamara McKinney, ski legends like Tanner Hall, Kevin Andrews, The Engerbretsons, Scott Gaffney and Eric Deslauriers Red Bull air force members, local politicians and leading educators such as Rob Leri of Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams. Mulligans will be available for purchase just in case. There will also be contests for closest to the pin and the longest drive as well as for any holes in one. Some of the sponsors will be holding their own fun contests at their sponsored holes.

The entry fee is \$125 per person or \$400 for a foursome. Money goes toward programs that Squaw Valley Institute has been bringing to North Lake Tahoe.

Go online to register.

Audit: CalPERS lacks strong

pension spiking controls

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

California's largest public retirement system lacks a routine method for detecting pension spiking, according to a new report released by state Controller John Chiang, and the pace at which it does check employers' payroll is glacially slow.

The report also blasted a pay tactic that auditors estimate will allow some public employees to legally boost their pay and increase their pension payouts by up to \$800 million over the next 20 years.

Chiang's report focused on 11 employers that contract with the California Public Employees' Retirement System to administer their pension benefits. While auditors found no instances of spiking – a practice that inflates an employee's salary through promotion or other means specifically to hike their retirement benefits – the review did reveal CalPERS' auditing unit is understaffed and doesn't use advanced technology to ferret out spiking.

In a statement accompanying the report, Chiang said CalPERS has a "generally passive approach to the problem" that invites abuse.

CalPERS President Rob Feckner countered that the \$300.7 billion fund is deterring spiking with information drawn from its 3-year-old computer system.

Read the whole story

Sandoval forms drought panel

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval on Thursday set up the machinery for Western states to join in finding the best ways to deal with the extended drought.

Sandoval said the Western Drought Forum has been created involving eight states. There will be an online library to collect case studies and best practices.

Read the whole story

Cities, counties rethinking military gear

By Kevin Oliver, KCRA-TV

Local law enforcement agencies across California are recipients of surplus military gear, but some have been suspended from the program because of missing military equipment.

Grenade launchers, bayonets and armored vehicles were given to a number of California police departments.

The Davis Police Department received a mine-resistant vehicle, but decided not to keep it after an uproar by citizens, who said it wasn't needed and who didn't want it in their town.

The Amador County Sheriff's Department and the South Lake Tahoe, Yuba City and Vacaville police departments also got

mine-resistant vehicles.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- September is National Library Card Sign-up Month. Show your card or sign-up for one at any El Dorado County library for a chance to win a frosty treat.
- The Three Feet for Safety Act takes effect Sept. 16 in California. Drivers must give bicyclists traveling in the same direction 3 feet of clearance when passing.
- Rick Brower will demonstrate flint knapping, the making of obsidian arrow points and the workings of carbide lamps (the invention that replaced miners' candles on their hats) on Sept. 20 at 11am. The free event will be outside the Lake Tahoe Museum in South Lake Tahoe. For more info, call 530.541.5458.
- There is a standup paddleboard fundraiser today for the South Tahoe Cancer League. It is from 8:30am-3pm at Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$45. Board rentals are an additional \$15. The fee includes lunch.
- The O'Neill Tahoe Cup Series' Tahoe Fall Classic 2014, a 22-mile paddleboard race and the longest inland distance paddle race in the world, is Sept. 14. Paddlers will go from El Dorado Beach in South Lake Tahoe to Kings Beach.

Expect garbage rates on South Shore to rise

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Refuse customers on the South Shore are likely to see their rates to go up by more than 3 percent starting Jan. 1.

The garbage company is asking for a 3.7 percent hike in South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County, and 3.5 percent in El Dorado County.

Terry Trease, STR's controller, told *Lake Tahoe News* the increase is needed to keep up with the annual spike in the disposal fee the company pays at the landfill, rising insurance costs, and adjustment to the interest rate on the outstanding \$10 million loan for the facilities.

Employees received a 2 percent pay hike on July 1. Workers also received raises two years ago. Trease said there were no raises during the height of the recession.

When the economy took a turn, STR reduced the employees' pension contribution from 10 percent to 3 percent. It is now at 4½ percent.

The Waste Management Joint Powers Authority this week discussed the potential rate hike. This board – made up Nancy McDermid from Douglas County, JoAnn Conner of South Lake Tahoe and Norma Santiago with El Dorado County – is the first to vote on any potential increase. Then the three take the proposal to their respective boards. The JPA board members will vote at a special meeting on Oct. 23. It could not happen

Sept. 10 because rate review was not complete.

An independent consultant is tasked with analyzing STR's proposal and then making a recommendation to the JPA board. It is possible the recommendation would be for a lower rate increase; seldom is the outcome a higher rate. That person will dissect STR's revenues and expenses, factor in allowable profit and then make a recommendation.

"A certain percentage of our costs go up no matter what we do," Trease told the JPA board. "We've cut operations as much as we can. We are trying to do more with less."

STR, per its franchise contract, may ask for a rate increase every three years. In the interim years rate hikes are based on the Consumer Price Index, with fuel costs being one of the main factors. Rates increased at the start of this year for all three jurisdictions: 2.78 percent increase in South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County, and 2.73 in Douglas County. Per month, this equated to 69 and 79 cents for city and El Dorado County residents, and 45 cents for Douglas residents with one 32-gallon can.

Part of the rate review will be to analyze STR's proposal to alter the loan it has to pay for the South Lake Tahoe plant. The current interest rate is 1½ percent, but it's a variable rate. With projections calling for interest rates to escalate after the new year, the company wants to obtain a more secure rate so it plans to lock in a rate of 3 percent for a three-year period. (The loan will be paid off in 10 years.)

Trease told *LTN*, "This gives us protection."

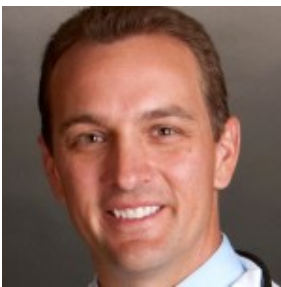
He said they looked at going for a longer term fixed rate, but those rates were between 5 and 6 percent. Before the 1½ percent was secured, STR was paying 4 percent. It is trying to stay below that number.

Opinion: Vote no on Prop. 46

By Clint Purvance

Backers of California Proposition 46 claim it will protect the patient and reduce patient harm. While the initiative argues patient safeguards and seems well-intended, the proposition is flawed and costly. If passed as written, Proposition 46 would discourage doctors from working in California, jeopardize patient privacy, and increase patient and government healthcare costs.

Proposition 46 is a broad initiative with three separate issues bundled into one ballot measure. Written and funded by trial lawyers, it quadruples the limit on malpractice awards, or “non-economic” damages, made against physicians. After 40 years of unsuccessful attempts to increase lawsuit limits through legislation, attorneys want California voters’ support and added two seemingly less controversial issues: mandatory use of a statewide prescription database and random drug and alcohol testing on doctors.



Clint Purvance

Consider why Proposition 46 shouldn't be passed:

Higher healthcare costs

Increasing lawsuits and jury awards puts more money in lawyers' pockets and raises healthcare costs. When lawsuits increase, insurance rates go up and these costs trickle down to the patient.

California's non-partisan Legislative Analyst found Proposition 46 would cost state and local government up to "several hundred million dollars annually" on government health care. The Legislative Analyst staff estimates healthcare for California patients would increase \$9.9 billion per year – approximately \$1000 annually for a family of four.

Doctor Shortages

Hefty lawsuits lead to higher risks and costs which encourages physicians to seek work across the state line or elsewhere. Ninety percent of Barton physicians practice in California. We have made significant efforts to recruit high quality physicians, but Proposition 46 amplifies California's physician shortage and jeopardizes patient's access to services. Ultimately, higher costs and reduced healthcare access especially burden low-income families, senior citizens and residents in rural communities like South Lake Tahoe to receive high quality care.

Privacy violations

Proposition 46 also requires physicians and pharmacists use a statewide database that tracks patients' prescription drug information before dispensing certain controlled substances. CURES, the government run database, is currently used, but plagued by technological shortfalls and understaffing issues. With potentially millions of database inquiries annually, Proposition 46 lacks solutions and funding to upgrade the database and address patient security. Other risks of a government-controlled prescription database include patient privacy, potential hacking, and inappropriate access.

Reduced patient safety

The third issue, mandatory drug testing on physicians, is a valuable patient safeguard, but many medical facilities, including Barton Health, use drug screening protocols to protect patients from impaired employees and clinicians. Proposition 46 itself is not well defined and allows any person to make a substance abuse accusation, which could suspend doctors for months or years during a lengthy investigation.

In my 10 years at Barton, medical errors and poor delivery of care haven't been linked to impaired physicians. We've made substantial strides in patient safety and found initiatives on improving processes have prevented unintentional human errors and greatly improved patient safety.

Join Barton Health and the California Hospital Association; American Nurses Association, California; California Teachers Association and over 500 state and community organizations across party lines and vote "no" on Proposition 46. To continue to provide our community with consistently exceptional care, we appreciate your support and hope you will vote against Proposition 46 in November.

Clint Purvance is chief medical officer for Barton Health.

Study: Younger generation doing plenty of reading

By Kathryn Zickuhr and Lee Rainie, Pew Research

Younger Americans – those ages 16-29 – especially fascinate

researchers and organizations because of their advanced technology habits, their racial and ethnic diversity, their looser relationships to institutions such as political parties and organized religion, and the ways in which their social attitudes differ from their elders.

This report pulls together several years of research into the role of libraries in the lives of Americans and their communities with a special focus on Millennials, a key stakeholder group affecting the future of communities, libraries, book publishers and media makers of all kinds, as well as the tone of the broader culture.

Following are some of the noteworthy insights from this research.

There are actually three different “generations” of younger Americans with distinct book reading habits, library usage patterns, and attitudes about libraries. One “generation” is comprised of high schoolers (ages 16-17); another is college-aged (18-24), though many do not attend college; and a third generation is 25-29.

Millennials’ lives are full of technology, but they are more likely than their elders to say that important information is not available on the Internet. Some 98 percent of those under 30 use the Internet, and 90 percent of those Internet users say they use social networking sites. Over three-quarters (77 percent) of younger Americans have a smartphone, and many also have a tablet (38 percent) or e-reader (24 percent). Despite their embrace of technology, 62 percent of Americans under age 30 agree there is “a lot of useful, important information that is not available on the Internet,” compared with 53 percent of older Americans who believe that. At the same time, 79 percent of Millennials believe that people without Internet access are at a real disadvantage.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Barton Health's Medical Imaging Department has been awarded a three-year term of accreditation by the American College of Radiology.

- Squaw Valley Institute's Monthly Movie Night Series in partnership with the Tahoe Art Haus Cinema begins Sept. 20 with "Wild Reverence" about the plight of the American steelhead. There will be 6pm and 9pm showings, with a director Q&A to follow. For more info and to buy tickets, go online.

- The annual Tahoe Sierra Century Bike Ride is Sept. 13 with riders using highways 89, 267 and 28, along with surface streets. There are 30-, 60- and 100-mile routes, all starting and ending at Squaw Valley. Motorists are reminded to "share the road" with cyclists and maintain at least 3 feet of distance when passing.

- To track the fall color progression this season in the Eastern Sierra, go online.

- Gov. Jerry Brown issued a proclamation declaring September as California Wine Month and encourages tourists from around the world to come "sample our vintages and enjoy the many other attractions that our several distinct wine regions have to offer."

Despite drought, ski gear-clothing sales rise

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

While California suffered through the driest winter on record, ski gear and winter clothing sales rose nationwide last season thanks to frigid temperatures in other parts of the country, according to an industry trade report.

Businesses that sell snow gear and winter apparel reported \$3.6 billion in sales in the 2013-14 ski season, up 7 percent over the previous season, according to an annual report by the Snow Sports Industry Association.

Although the snowpack in California's Sierra Nevada fell to less than 15 percent of the season average, snowfall and frigid temperatures elsewhere, particularly in the South, helped boost sales of winter clothes, gloves and hats, the report said.

The sale of ski equipment rose 2 percent last winter, while the sale of winter clothes jumped 4 percent and accessories like hats and gloves shot up 14 percent, the report said.

Read the whole story