Wellness travel becoming a big business

By Kelli Kennedy, AP

It's one thing when hotels open fitness centers, but quite another when fitness centers open hotels.

Luxe gym Equinox is opening a hotel in New York's new Hudson Yards neighborhood next year in a move that embodies the evolution of wellness travel.

Most hotels have beefed up fitness options — you can book rooms with stationary bikes and rent workout clothes — but wellness travel has become much more than just keeping fit while on the road. Increasingly it's become the point of the journey. And it's bringing in big dollars.

Read the whole story

Telemark skiing may become Olympic sport

By Megan Hughes, In The Snow

The International Ski Federation (FIS) has officially proposed the inclusion of telemark skiing at the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022, to the International Olympic Committee.

The FIS have proposed the telemark parallel sprint and the mixed-gender team parallel sprint events to be included in the 2022 games.

Telemark racing differs from alpine ski racing in many aspects of course design.

Read the whole story

SLT pot laws may be bad news for existing shop



Cody Bass, owner of Tahoe Wellnes Cooperative, listens June 5 to the South Lake Tahoe council talk marijuana. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It's been a slow, strange trip for South Lake Tahoe officials as they navigate a path toward allowing recreational marijuana to be grown, sold and delivered here.

Enough progress has been made that the recreational marijuana ordinance should be presented to the Planning Commission on

June 14. However, time is ticking to get all the paperwork together by July 4 to qualify a tax measure for the November ballot.

Marijuana took up the bulk of the June 5 afternoon session of the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting. A couple closed session items were related to the topic, with one item labeled as existing litigation with Tahoe Wellness Cooperative and another titled anticipated litigation, which was also TWC related.

There was no reportable action from either. Councilmember Jason Collin, who was absent for the entire open session part of the meeting, showed up for the midday closed session item that dealt with anticipated litigation.

While it wasn't specifically agendized, the council finally took up the topic of what to do with TWC. The medicinal marijuana dispensary has been in business for more than nine years and is the last survivor of the three that opened about the same time.

The four electeds voted to allow Cody Bass, owner and founder of TWC, to keep operating a medicinal facility, however he will have to comply with any changes to the new ordinance that would affect his business.

This includes meeting zoning regulations. Where TWC is at in the front of the Bijou Center would be OK for selling the medicine going forward. However, cultivation and extraction would no longer be allowed based on how the ordinance looks today. These are two integral components to TWC's business.

Bass did not want to talk with Lake Tahoe News about the decisions made on Tuesday.

"You're putting a bullet through my business," he told the council. He equated the actions of the council to being in a Communist country where vested rights are not recognized.

The council as a whole also expressed frustration with unknown variables that exist surrounding Bass and the city. One is the ongoing litigation involving whether Bass has a valid permit to even be open. Another court hearing is slated for later this month, but that doesn't mean a decision will be forthcoming.

The other issue complicating matters is the ballot initiative Bass and his attorneys have brought forward for the November election that would essentially grandfather his business in and tie the city's hands in many ways. A lawsuit to its legality would be likely if it were to pass.

Bass told the council he would withdraw the initiative and drop the lawsuit if the city would sit down with him to come to a resolution that would allow TWC to stay open where it is and allow recreational marijuana sales.

Interim City Attorney Nira Doherty said the most conservative interpretation of election code is that the measure cannot be withdrawn, and therefore advised the council to not go down that path.

"Cody, we are not just thinking about you and Tahoe Wellness Cooperative. We are thinking about what is best for the community," Councilmember Brooke Laine said.

Bass would have the same opportunity to apply for one of the various recreational marijuana permits as anyone else.

The council had previously agreed to allow two adult-use retail businesses, two cultivators up to 5,000-square-feet of grow area, two microbusinesses, and unlimited testing facility/lab licenses.

A point system based on a variety of criteria will be used to determine who gets the permits. It will be a blind assessment, with identifying information redacted so the five-member judging panel doesn't know who the applicant is.

Locals will be given bonus points. However, the council had a hard time deciding what "local" means. They roughly decided on the boundary of Lake Tahoe Unified School District. However, this excludes those living on the South Shore of Douglas County. It was not explained why Nevadans shouldn't be allowed to own this type of business in South Lake Tahoe when they can operate any other type of business.

When it comes to taxing marijuana — recreational and medicinal — the city didn't make any headway.

"There are a multitude of things that need to be discussed before we determine how much tax to come up with," Debbie McIntyre, finance director, told the council.

It's possible a special meeting could be called to deal with the tax issue.

EDC sees new, old names win election

Updated June 6, 9:46am:

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County is going to have a new surveyor, treasurertax collector, and recorder-clerk — all because the current officeholders opted to retire.

Philip Mosbacher had no competition for surveyor in the June 5 primary election. K.E. Coleman (15,686 votes, 56.12 percent) topped Anne Billingsley (12,156 votes, 43.49 percent) for treasurer-tax collector. Janelle Horne (12,137 votes, 41.02 percent) and Todd White (10,436 votes, 35.27 percent) were the

top two finishers for recorder-clerk.

Anyone who received 50 percent of the vote plus one is the outright winner in non-partisan races. In races without a clear winner the top two vote-getters will battle it out in November — no matter their party affiliation.

Auditor Joe Harn and District Attorney Vern Pierson each faced challengers, and both secured enough votes to retain their jobs for another four years.

Harn beat Mike Owen, accumulating 16,284 votes, or 53.2 percent. Pierson faced opposition from Deputy DA Trish Kelliher. He beat her with 17,349 votes, or 56.55 percent. Neither Harn nor Pierson were available for comment.

Others returning to office are:

- Sheriff John D'Agostini who was not challenged.
- Assessor Karl Weiland was not challenged.
- Assemblyman Frank Bigelow, the Republican representing the 5th District. He had 60.14 percent, with 12,762 votes.

Measure A, the initiative in Fallen Leaf Lake that extends the \$660 annual parcel tax for another four years, passed with 79.17 percent.

All of the above numbers are based on 100 percent of the precincts reporting.

All results are preliminary until they are certified, which can take up to one month.

El Dorado County related individuals who were running for statewide offices include:

Former El Dorado County Superior Court Judge **Steve Bailey** is one of the two top vote-getters for attorney general. Bailey stepped down from the bench last August and

has since been battling **ethics violations**. With 99.4 percent of the votes counted, Bailey has 25.3 percent; with Xavier Becerra on top with 45.3 percent.

- State Sen. Ted Gaines, who represents Lake Tahoe in the state Legislature, is looking to move to the Board of Equalization. He will face Tom Hallinan in November. Gaines had 32.8 percent, while Hallinan pulled in 38.4 percent based on 100 percent of the votes counted.
- Rep. Tom McClintock far outpaced his competition in the 4th Congressional race with 52.1 percent and Democrat Jessic Morse garnering 19.9 percent. They will meet in November.

Voter turnout better than expected in EDC

By Susan Wood

About one-third of the registered voters in El Dorado County cast a ballot in Tuesday's primary — and that's considered good.

That's the general assessment leading into the final results for El Dorado County elections from a man who has spent much of his government career watching and analyzing them.

In the topsy-turvy world of elections, longtime county Registrar Bill Schultz has seen it all. He anticipated last week that the June 5 primary might see only a 17 percent voter turnout, however he said people showed up in droves on election day. Preliminary estimates are the turnout will be closer to 33 percent. There are 115,431 registered voters in

El Dorado County.

El Dorado traditionally brings out more registered voters to the ballot box in comparison to other counties.

"If you would've asked me a week ago, I'd say we'd probably have a low turnout — not as low as other counties — but low. But let me tell ya, it's been jam-packed all afternoon. A lot of younger people. That's good to see," Schultz told Lake Tahoe News. "It's going to be interesting."

Termed the "jungle primary," the two top vote-getters in a race advance no matter what party they fall in. That is assuming no one garnered 50 percent plus one. The change is intended to make the system more equitable.

"Every time there's a gubernatorial race, everyone wants to get their name on the ballot. It's bragging rights I guess," Schultz said.

As a county, more than 78 percent of registered voters in El Dorado County opted for a mail-in ballot. An elections worker at Lake Tahoe Airport late Tuesday afternoon indicated there was less voter traffic than usual.

Mail-in ballots have become increasingly popular over the last decade. They've also posed as an early indicator to final results.

New this year in California's system is the opportunity to register right up to election day. However, those are considered conditional ballots.

During a primary or general election, the day of civic duty brings out its share of gaffes and unusual events. This primary witnessed El Dorado's neighboring Amador County run out of ballots because turnout ended up much greater than expected. According to the *Ledger Dispatch* newspaper, at least five polling places had none by 3pm, and voters had to be

turned away.

Problems existed in large counties as well. Los Angeles County experienced widespread confusion when printing errors left many voters off the rosters.

Novasel, Curtzwiler head for Nov. showdown



Either Sue Novasel or Kenny Curtzwiler will be the District 5 supervisor.

Updated June 6, 12:43am:

By Susan Wood

The two El Dorado County District 5 supervisor candidates on opposite ends of the political spectrum will face each other in November, a rematch of four years ago.

With all precincts reporting, incumbent Sue Novasel has 1,604 votes at 36.9 percent; while Kenny Curtzwiler is close behind

with 1,419 votes at 32.64 percent.

Both were being challenged by transportation planner Jeffrey Spencer, in third with 16.52 percent (718 votes), and former supervisor Norma Santiago at 13.73 percent, (597 votes).

Of the 19,624 registered to vote in District 5, 4,347 votes were counted. These are all preliminary numbers until the election is certified within one month.

For Novasel, her optimism that her lead would hold in the June 5 primary was well founded, especially since she's been here before with Curtzwiler. Four years ago the picture was a little different with a wider gap. This year there is about a 5 percentage point differential.

"I'm not surprised. Kenny had a lot more support than last time," she said after early returns. "This is actually where I thought I'd be."

A phone call to Curtzwiler was unreturned.

Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News* she was a little concerned with having another Democrat on the ballot (meaning Santiago) to possibly split the votes. The statewide election system — which has undergone a slew of changes in the last few years — now requires voters to cast their ballots along party lines, unless they are undeclared.

Incumbent Mike Ranalli, who is trying to keep his supervisorial seat in District 4, has 50.03 percent, with 3,599 votes. Because he had more than 50 percent plus one vote he will not have a race in November.

Scrutinizing Google's influence on elections

By Ronald Robertson, The Conversation

As the 2018 midterm elections approach in the U.S., Google's power to influence undecided voters remains overshadowed by Facebook's personal data crisis.

Facebook has "taken it on the chin" for its role in the 2016 presidential election, and organizations like the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica and the Russian troll farm known as the Internet Research Agency have dominated headlines. Yet, despite having a troubling history and collecting more personal data through more products than Facebook, Google has somehow managed to evade the public spotlight on this one. That may be changing.

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee recently sent Google a letter asking a series of questions about the company's personal data protections. As one of the researchers who helped discover that search engines can substantially influence users' voting preferences, I found the last question to be the most intriguing: "Are you aware of any foreign entities seeking to influence or interfere with U.S. elections through your platforms?" If Google's response to this question exists, it has not been made public.

Search engine influence

Since 2013, I've been involved in the design and execution of a long series of experiments that have demonstrated how search engines can influence undecided voters' candidate choices through nearly undetectable manipulations to search rankings. We labeled this powerful new form of influence the search engine manipulation effect. The way this effect works is simple: Favoritism for a particular candidate in election-related search rankings leads to people preferring that candidate. For example, a search related to an upcoming election might return results favoring candidate A higher than results favoring candidate B. That's called partisan ranking bias. Since people tend to click on and trust highly ranked results, more people will then trust and consume the information supporting candidate A. In turn, that consumption increases their preference for candidate A.

The most important aspect of this effect, however, is that most people can't detect the partisan ranking bias — and it's virtually impossible to defend yourself from influences you can't perceive. Fortunately, in three follow-up experiments, involving 3,600 participants, we demonstrated that alerting people to partisan ranking bias can help suppress the effect — though only laws or regulations actually preventing partisan ranking could eliminate the effect entirely.

Why focus on Google?

Google handles more than 60 percent of internet search activity in the U.S., and nearly 90 percent worldwide. Every year, this translates to trillions of queries related to people's private thoughts, concerns and questions.

With respect to news, search engines are a bigger source than social media. Although an often cited 2016 Pew study found that a majority, 62 percent, of U.S. adults got news on social media, the devil is in the details. If you unpack that statistic, you'll find that 18 percent do so "hardly ever." Added to the 38 percent of Americans who "never" got news on social media, the same study suggests that social media is a negligible source of news for 56 percent of Americans, also a majority.

Think about it: When you need to fact-check something or learn more about a topic, what do you do? You Google it. This fact

is supported by a recent international survey that found that 74 percent of participants reported using search engines to fact-check information they found on social media. The same survey found that 68 percent reported that the information they found while searching was "important to influencing their decisions about voting."

What does Google think?

Google's executives rarely make public responses to critiques of its search system. But in 2015, my colleague Robert Epstein published an article in *Politico* — entitled "How Google Could Rig the 2016 Election" — and that did the trick. Google's head of search at the time, Amit Singhal, responded with his own article, calling Epstein a conspiracy theorist, stating that "there is absolutely no truth to Epstein's hypothesis that Google could work secretly to influence election outcomes" and that "Google has never ever re-ranked search results on any topic (including elections) to manipulate user sentiment."

Singhal's first claim is hard to believe, unless you dismiss our research, our replication, and the independent research built on our findings. Search engines do have the capacity to shift people's opinions, including who to vote for.

His second claim, that Google "never ever re-ranked search results," also doesn't quite hold up: The EU recently fined the company \$2.7 billion for ranking its own services higher in search results than its competitors.

Defending democracy

Another one of the Judiciary Committee's questions to Google also struck a chord with me: "How do you monitor the ability of foreign entities to influence and interfere with U.S. elections?"

This question struck me because I've been developing systems for exactly this purpose — preserving search rankings and

analyzing them for systematic differences — for several years. In the course of this work, however, I've come to believe that freeing the democratic process from technologically enabled influences is virtually impossible without the cooperation of modern tech giants.

Facebook is now offering to collaborate with academic researchers who can measure and perhaps lessen or prevent undue influence on elections, and Twitter is doing something similar. Related efforts are also bringing transparency to other platforms like YouTube and Reddit. When will Google get on board?

At an upcoming conference, I will present the latest system I've been designing with Christo Wilson, a leading scientist in the field of algorithm auditing, for monitoring search rankings for partisan bias. With a little assistance from Google, no more than Facebook is offering, accurately monitoring or preventing search engine influence in the 2018 elections is actually a feasible goal. Without the company's help, things look bleak.

Although Google is an advertising business, its core is composed of creative and intelligent individuals who care deeply about the impact their work has on the world. This is evidenced by the recent letter signed by more than 3,100 Google employees protesting the use of their work in warfare technology. Nearly a dozen Google workers went so far as to resign in protest.

Perhaps the day is fast approaching when Google will step up, as Facebook, Twitter and Reddit have, to help defend democracy from the new world of computational propaganda. Perhaps there is already a letter circulating internally and gathering signatures. With state and federal primary elections already underway, let's hope so.

Ronald Robertson is a doctoral student in network science at

Vail Resorts to run Lakeland Village condos in SLT

By Kathryn Reed

Vail Resorts is about to have a greater presence in South Lake Tahoe as the company takes over the management and day-to-day operations of Lakeland Village on Oct. 1.

The lakefront condo development has been run by Aqua Aston Hospitality for the last nine years.

"Vail is a top notch company. It's hard to compete with them. Their niche is mountain resort environments," Ron Armijo, president of Lakeland Village home owners association board of directors, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "(Vail) is going to be part of the Lake Tahoe fabric for a long time. We want to be part of that. We meld very well with the goals and values that Vail has to offer."

What all Vail will bring to the table has not been disclosed. What Armijo likes, though, is the potential for ski deals and summer adventures at Heavenly-Kirkwood-Northstar, all Vail properties, for Lakeland guests. He also cited the 67 mountain weddings at Heavenly last year, adding, "They need a place to put all those people."



while it And the was recommendation of Lakeland's Management Rental Advisory Committee (RMAC) to go with Vail all well, not o f the homeowners are happy with the decision.

Already gone is Jerry Bindel, who was general manager of the property for 19 years. He resigned earlier this year after the board voted to go with Vail. He is now with Forest Suites.

"We always worried we would lose Jerry. He knows everything about all parts of Lakeland," Sheila Starcevich told *LTN*. She and husband Howie Friedman have lived full time at the property since 2002.

"Almost all the long-term employees are leaving," Friedman said. "Housekeeping is down to a skeletal crew."

Of the 260 units on the property that fronts Highway 50, about 165 are rented through Aston, another 30 or so use a different rental firm or do it themselves, and the rest are owner-occupied or second homes.

Aston is looking to have an off-site office where it would continue to manage condos for people who don't want to leave their company. No one from Aston's corporate headquarters in Hawaii returned calls. People on property would not talk on the record with *LTN*.

"My position is to maintain the strength of Lakeland Village in the community. To break it apart into multiple companies doesn't make a lot of sense, but it's up to the owners," Armijo said. "There is a lot to consider. It's not just the numbers; it's the amenities, the way we want the property to be managed and operated."

The management company is responsible for staffing the front desk and housekeeping, and maintaining the pools, hot tubs, and grounds.

Issues with Aston had more to do with people at corporate than with local staff. One issue was over site-wide internet, something the management company wouldn't pay for or install. An eleventh-hour addendum to Aston's offer once they go wind Vail was the preferred company came with a deal to install internet.

"It seemed to us that they were charging for things that either didn't need to be done or that they were outright not doing — like the annual deep cleaning which costs a lot, but the units didn't look that much cleaner," Virginia Glenn told Lake Tahoe News of Aston. She and husband Norm have had rentals at Lakeland for a handful of years and he's on the RMAC.

The entire management agreement process has not been smooth. It started more than a year ago with Aston and Vail the only to apply. According to the board president, bids go out every three years, with this being the first time there was competition.

Since then multiple emails and letters have been exchanged between owners, the board, board committee, and Aston — with some of them described as "nasty."

Still, the majority is happy to have Aston gone, which is why the company was voted out. Even so, it was not a unanimous vote of the board to hire Vail.

Vail entered the local lodging market in 2010 when it bought Accommodation Station, which at the time was the third largest property management company on the South Shore. It was since been renamed Lake Tahoe Lodging Company. Last year Vail took over the property management of Zalanta, the condos across from Heavenly Village.

Vail was not forthcoming with how things will work at Lakeland. Employees and owners not on the board said the same thing about Vail, adding that workers have been told they will have to reapply for their jobs and that many of the long-time staff fear their salaries will be substantially reduced even if they have a job.

Kevin Cooper who runs the PR department locally for Vail Resorts merely told *LTN*, "Our teams are working closely with the Lakeland Village team, and we look forward to a smooth transition of operational responsibilities."

Lesli Carlson, manager for corporate communications for Vail, also didn't answer *Lake Tahoe News'* questions and responded with equal amount of fluff.

Here are LTN's unanswered questions for Vail Resorts:

- Is it true Lake Tahoe Lodging Company will be running things?
- Will you bring the entire operation to Lakeland, keep it off-site or have two locations?
- Do you know how many units you will be operating at Lakeland? How many units do you have through LTLC?
- I understand Vail operates under a three-tiered level, renting out "gold" properties first. True? Can you explain how this works?
- Is there a certain criteria to be listed with Vail or can any Lakeland unit be in the rental mix?
- Will Vail keep the front desk?
- · Will Vail keep the employees? Bring in new people? Do people have to reapply for their jobs? Will wages/benefits stay the same? How many employees will you have at Lakeland? Will you bring in a general manager?

• Why was Vail interested in running this lodging property?

Mental, emotional benefits to alone time in nature

By Brad Daniel, Andrew Bobilya and Ken Kalisc, The Conversation

Today Americans live in a world that thrives on being busy, productive and overscheduled. Further, they have developed the technological means to be constantly connected to others and to vast options for information and entertainment through social media. For many, smartphones demand their attention day and night with constant notifications.

As a result, naturally occurring periods of solitude and silence that were once commonplace have been squeezed out of their lives. Music, reality TV shows, YouTube, video games, tweeting and texting are displacing quiet and solitary spaces. Silence and solitude are increasingly viewed as "dead" or "unproductive" time, and being alone makes many Americans uncomfortable and anxious.

But while some equate solitude with loneliness, there is a big difference between being lonely and being alone. The latter is essential for mental health and effective leadership.

We study and teach outdoor education and related fields at several colleges and organizations in North Carolina, through and with other scholars at 2nd Nature TREC, a training, research, education and consulting firm. We became interested in the broader implications of alone time after studying

intentionally designed solitude experiences during wilderness programs, such as those run by Outward Bound. Our findings reveal that time alone in nature is beneficial for many participants in a variety of ways, and is something they wish they had more of in their daily life.

Reflection and challenge

We have conducted research for almost two decades on Outward Bound and undergraduate wilderness programs at Montreat College in North Carolina and Wheaton College in Illinois. For each program, we studied participants' experiences using multiple methods, including written surveys, focus group interviews, one-on-one interviews and field notes. In some cases, we asked subjects years later to look back and reflect on how the programs had affected them. Among other questions, our research looked at participant perceptions of the value of solo time outdoors.

Our studies showed that people who took part in these programs benefited both from the outdoor settings and from the experience of being alone. These findings build on previous research that has clearly demonstrated the value of spending time in nature.

Scholars in fields including wilderness therapy and environmental psychology have shown that time outdoors benefits our lives in many ways. It has a therapeutic effect, relieves stress and restores attention. Alone time in nature can have a calming effect on the mind because it occurs in beautiful, natural and inspirational settings.

Nature also provides challenges that spur individuals to creative problem-solving and increased self-confidence. For example, some find that being alone in the outdoors, particularly at night, is a challenging situation. Mental, physical and emotional challenges in moderation encourage personal growth that is manifested in an increased comfort

with one's self in the absence of others.

Being alone also can have great value. It can allow issues to surface that people spend energy holding at bay, and offer an opportunity to clarify thoughts, hopes, dreams and desires. It provides time and space for people to step back, evaluate their lives and learn from their experiences. Spending time this way prepares them to re-engage with their community relationships and full work schedules.

Putting it together: The outdoor solo

Participants in programmed wilderness expeditions often experience a component known as "Solo," a time of intentional solitude lasting approximately 24-72 hours. Extensive research has been conducted on solitude in the outdoors because many wilderness education programs have embraced the educational value of solitude and silence.

Solo often emerges as one of the most significant parts of wilderness programs, for a variety of reasons. Alone time creates a contrasting experience to normal living that enriches people mentally, physically and emotionally. As they examine themselves in relation to nature, others, and in some cases, God, people become more attuned to the important matters in their lives and in the world of which they are part.

Solitary reflection enhances recognition and appreciation of key personal relationships, encourages reorganization of life priorities, and increases appreciation for alone time, silence, and reflection. People learn lessons they want to transfer to their daily living, because they have had the opportunity to clarify, evaluate and redirect themselves by setting goals for the future.

For some participants, time alone outdoors provides opportunity to consider the spiritual and/or religious dimension of life. Reflective time, especially in nature,

often enhances spiritual awareness and makes people feel closer to God. Further, it encourages their increased faith and trust in God. This often occurs through providing ample opportunities for prayer, meditation, fasting, Scripture-reading, journaling and reflection time.

Retreating to lead

As Thomas Carlyle has written, "In (solitary) silence, great things fashion themselves together." Whether these escapes are called alone time, solitude or Solo, it seems clear that humans experience many benefits when they retreat from the "rat race" to a place apart and gather their thoughts in quietness.

In order to live and lead effectively, it is important to be intentional about taking the time for solitary reflection. Otherwise, gaps in schedules will always fill up, and even people with the best intentions may never fully realize the life-giving value of being alone.

Brad Daniel is a professor of outdoor education at Montreat College; Andrew Bobilya is an associate professor and program director of parks and recreation management at Western Carolina University; and Ken Kalisch is an associate professor of outdoor education at Montreat College.

Vail Resorts on ski resort buying spree

By Matt Pepin, Boston Globe

Vail Resorts, the Colorado-based owner of ski areas around

North America, is continuing its expansion on both coasts and in Colorado.

Vermont's Okemo Mountain announced Monday morning that it has entered into a purchase agreement with Vail Resorts that also includes New Hampshire's Mount Sunapee and Colorado's Crested Butte. Vail also bought Stevens Pass ski area in Washington state. The sales are expected to be completed this summer.

Vail owns Heavenly, Kirkwood and Northstar in the Tahoe area.

Read the whole story