HE’S NUMBER ONE!

By Giles

S
ince 2011, student enrollment in advanced classes at Mammoth High School has increased almost threefold. According to data provided by Mammoth High School Principal Chris Powell, Hispanic students are the leading contributors to that increase in participation. In April, Mammoth High School received the Gold Medal Award by U.S. News and World Report, which ranked MHS in the top 6 percent of high schools in California and 487th in the nation based on, among other factors, the percentage of students enrolled in college-level courses prior to graduation. According to Powell, 67 percent of this year’s graduating class will leave high school with college credit.

In 2016-2017, fifty-four percent of students enrolled in MHS identified as Hispanic. Mammoth Unified School District offers dual immersion programs in elementary school, but by middle school, classes (except for Spanish Language), are taught in English. According to AP Spanish Language and Literature teacher Carla Spencer, it’s important that teachers and administrators seek to dismantle the boundaries that often prevent students from

MHS SUPER STARS

Today: AP Spanish, tomorrow: the world!

By Giles

A

the April 28 Mammoth Unified School District (MUSD) Board Meeting, The School Board heard two presentations regarding proposed facility updates to Mammoth’s elementary, middle and high schools. Both presentations recommended district-wide improvements that exceed currently allocated funds for facility improvements. The presenters, principals of HMC Architects and financial consultant Dale Scott of Dale Scott and Company, recommended using a bond series to finance the projects. Taxpayers are still paying off a $14.1 million bond series approved by voters in 1998 for district-wide facility improvements and the construction of the Mammoth Middle School building. That bond won’t be paid off until 2026. In 2008, MUSD placed a $65 million bond series to fund construction of a new High School on the ballot, which failed.

Earlier this year, MUSD hired HMC Architects to work with district staff and students to create a conceptual design for improved school facilities, as well as a Facilities Master Plan to care for those facilities. According to MUSD Business Manager Brooke Bien, there is no Master Plan currently in place. Mammoth High School (MHS), which was built before Mammoth Lakes was incorporated, and Mammoth Elementary School (MES), which was constructed in 1982, both face deferred maintenance projects that exceed what is budgeted annually for facilities maintenance and operations. MUSD’s projected annual budget for 2016-2017 is $13,282,654. Some of those funds come from State and Federal grants, but most are gleaned from local property taxes. At the April 28 School Board Meeting, HMC representatives presented two conceptual designs with rough construction cost estimates.

Option one for MES included an 11,191 square-foot addition with a new library and three new science classrooms (except for Spanish Language) built in the 1990s, before Mammoth Mountain was open. For more photos of the reunion, see pgs.12-13.

MHS seniors and soon-to-be first-generation college students (from left to right): Mayra Garcia, Johnny Morales and Rosaura Garcia. They’ll enter college with credit, thanks to MHS teacher Carla Spencer.

A FACELIFT FOR MUSD?

Mammoth’s school district considers financing options for renovations

By Giles

MHS seniors and soon-to-be first-generation college students (from left to right): Mayra Garcia, Johnny Morales and Rosaura Garcia. They’ll enter college with credit, thanks to MHS teacher Carla Spencer.
Malled

Mono County Supervisor Stacy Corless proved this week that a background in journalism isn’t entirely useless. She also continues to demonstrate that she is not someone to be taken lightly. Don’t Mess with ‘Less.

On Monday, a photoshopped cartoon was emailed to various politicians and government employees. The cartoon depicted a feudal court scene, with the faces of Dan Holler, Leslie Chapman, Rusty Gregory, Stacy Corless, Fred Stump, Shields Richardson and oddly, incongruously, Town of Mammoth Lakes consultant Darin Dinsmore.

I had to get help with the Dinsmore identification since I couldn’t pick him out of a police lineup. Each character had a bubble by their head with a statement attributed to them. Because we live in an age of gutlessness, the sender did not identify himself.

While the cartoon was generally innocuous, Corless and Richardson received the worst of it, the sender implying both are sold out to Mammoth Mountain’s bidding.

Anyway, Corless did a little digging on the email address using a little-known search engine called Google. Google led her to a bidkassers.com website connecting the name in the email address to a real estate transaction in Plumas County. She then plugged the APN number of the property into a Plumas County parcel search, which led to an address in Bishop. The top result for that address: a person named Julie Sample. She then typed that address and Sample into a Google search which led to an ABC license issued to Ken Sample.

Corless is familiar with Ken Sample, as she said his name was on a 2016 document also signed by Sierra Center principals Paul Rudder and Drew Hild regarding a bank loan.

That Sample was Ken St., who has since passed. The partner in the Sierra Center Mall is now the Sample Family Trust. Ken Sr.’s widow is the decision-making partner for the Trust. It is unclear what Ken Jr.’s role is or if he is a member/beneficiary of the Trust.

That said, I called Ken Sample and told him he'd been identified as the sender of the email.

Sample: I don't have a comment.

Sheet: Obviously you have some comment, based upon the piece. Sample: The piece speaks for itself.

Which would seem to betray a knowledge of the "piece" in question. Rudder and Hild both said they didn't know anything about the cartoon or whether or not Sample was the source. To give them the benefit of the doubt, it’s tough to expect that Uncle Jed would know minute-by-minute exactly what Jethro was doing out by the "cement pond."

“Ritatem brunneis illud, quod ea melius agere.”

-Danny DeVito as Frank Reynolds

JACK LUNCH

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But it’s pretty damn embarrassing to get caught insulting the same people you’re trying to win a contract from a week before the decision.

The second blow the Sierra Center team received this week came in the form of Swall Meadows resident Stephen Kalish. For those of you who don’t know Stephen, he’s a pretty smart guy.

Kalish said the Sierra Center lease was brought to his attention via an email to constituents sent by District 2 Supervisor Fred Stump. Kalish has been a commercial real estate owner and manager for the past 25 years in Santa Cruz (he owns 2 commercial buildings on a 1/2 acre parcel).

Kalish’ s opinion of the Sierra Center Mall lease proposal: "I think they’re [the County] being held up for highway robbery in a failed retail mall that’s inappropriate for County offices."

He said commercial retail space on the first floor typically rents for double what the upstairs space goes for.

Sheet: Aren’t the spectacular views of the Sherwins worth something?

Kalish: If I’m an employer, I’m not in favor of offering nice views.

Kalish also noted that the mall currently is advertising 20 spaces for lease. The vacancy and lack of demand should be reflected in the price.

Excerpt from his four-page analysis:

Fair rate of return. Given the lack of leasable alternatives in Mammoth Lakes, the County is faced with what I have to characterize as rent gouging. The County’s existing lease was negotiated with a Landlord that had paid over $21,000,000 for the building prior to leasing space to the County at an initial base rent rate of $2.00/SF. The current Landlord purchased the property, including the County lease, for less that $9,000,000. A proportionate reduction in base rent based on building equity would be less than $1.00/SF for a new lease with this ownership group.

Sierra Center Mall’s most recent proposal asked for $1.65/foot. But here’s the overriding consideration for the Supes, petty insults be damned. The latest offer from the Sierra Center calls for a one-time $16.5 million option to purchase after seven years.

Should the County become a landlord? Should the County recruit the Town over to the SCM to share the cost burden? Theoretically, the County could occupy 30,000-square feet and rent out the remainder of the building and turn a profit.

Theoretically, government could see just what it’s like to be in private business. The May 16 Mono Supervisors board meeting in Mammoth promises to be damn interesting. Must-attend.
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With musicians from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Pasadena Symphony

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May 19, 2017
7:30pm

St. Joseph's Catholic Church
Mammoth Lakes, California

Tickets $22 at the Door
or $20 in Advance
Kids 18 & Under are Free

To purchase or for more information, visit
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Special guests:
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Michael Hammers

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The Fugitive, A Perfect Murder, Holes, The Guardian

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Dear Editor:

I was with two friends on the day in March when the first AHCA failed to pass the House. “Honestly,” one of them said, “Trumpcare would be better than the s***show we have now.”

It was quickly established that neither of my two friends had ever been without private insurance plans. The discordance between our casual beer-drinking banter over ski wax… and the assumption of solidarity due to the...
rushed troops into a firefight without first garnering as much information as possible before putting lives at risk. AARP the American Cancer Society—more than 50 medical groups opposed the GOP bill. The president of the American Medical Association condemned the bill saying, “The bill passed by the House today will result in millions of Americans losing access to quality, affordable health insurance, and those with pre-existing health conditions face the possibility of going back to the time when insurers could charge them premiums that made access to coverage out of the question.”

Mr. Cook, when I looked at your homepage, I read that you received two Purple Hearts. I received a Purple Heart while serving with the 5th Special Forces in Vietnam in 1966. I was wounded during a firefight, hit three times by AK-47 rounds. Each round felt like I had been punched with a sledgehammer.

I was med-evac to a field hospital, laid out on a table. A nurse scissors off my fatigue. A surgeon’s knife sliced open my abdomen. No one asked my nationality, my rank, or if I had health insurance.

Ten years later, I married a fellow schoolteacher and we had a wonderful life together.

The strokes began a few years ago. Strokes are insidious; they paralyze limbs, diminish balance, amputate cognitive functions, and darken one’s future. My wife did not choose to have a brain tumor nor a series of strokes, to be trapped in a broken body with a shattered mind.

Fortunately, we had good health insurance. The doctors and nurses were great. They cared. I never gave up hope. Holding her hand in the hospital, I tried to will my wellness into her.

My wife passed away on September 5, 2015. I was with her when she exhaled her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather. Losing her final breath, a tiny puff of air that could not lift a feather.

Prior to the passage of Obamacare, some 45,000 Americans died annually due to their lack of health insurance [Harvard Study]. I cannot imagine the gut-wrenching dread millions felt hearing President Trump bragging, “…this is a repeal and replace of Obamacare…Make no mistake about it.”

Replaced with what? In the first draft bill to replace Obamacare, the Congressional Budget Office projected that 24 million people would lose their health insurance. The bill passed by you and your Republican colleagues is projected to be worse. And in the Rose Garden, they cheered.

Mr. Cook, you served 26 years in the Marines, do you ever remember hearing, “we leave anyone behind?” It’s one of the basic pillars of the Warrior Ethos: “I will never leave a fallen comrade.” Why would you choose to leave millions behind, replacing Obamacare with an “affordable and accessible” healthcare system that is only accessible, if you can afford it?

Make America Great, Leave No One Behind!

Kirk Stapp
Mammoth Lakes
MONO COUNTY HAS BIG BUDGET COSTS COMING IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

Unfunded Retirement Liabilities - calPERS wants 30 million
New Jail Development Grant - counties matching fund 2 million up front
Solid Waste Facility needs to be relocated - undetermined millions
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In the middle of all these needs on taxpayer dollars, the County is considering a new Office Building for County Workers that will cost: 45 MILLION* *with financing and double rent included

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- VOICE YOUR CONCERNS - May 16th Meeting @ Minaret Mall Suite Z

PAID FOR BY THE SIERRA CENTER
By Bodine

California lawmakers are trying to increase transparency of contractor hiring by municipalities and counties through Assembly Bill (AB) 1250. If the legislation, proposed in April, passes, cities and counties will have to foot the bill for the transparency measures. The bill targets personal service contractors who provide financial, accounting, engineering and legal services.

Dubbed the “De Facto Prohibition on Contracting Measure” by The League of California Cities, a lobbying group, AB 1250 would require a cost-benefit and environmental impact analysis prior to entering into or renewing any contract with a consultant. Additionally, an annual performance audit would be required of each contract, and the city or municipality would be required to create and publish a searchable database of the names, salaries and projected costs incurred as a result of hiring each contractor and carrying out their respective projects.

On May 7, the League stated in a letter to its members, that they will have to “meet a standard for contracting services that is unattainable.” The League claims that the legislation will have an undue impact on small to medium sized cities such as Mammoth Lakes and Bishop.

Dave Grah, Public Works Director for the City of Bishop told The Sheet that hiring a consultant for contract work is the best option for some projects. He said that Bishop does not have a big enough bankroll to hire a permanent, full-time employee every time there’s a job to be done.

Grah said that, on average, the City of Bishop enters into five to ten contracts with private consultants a year. He said AB 1250 would slow that process, but wouldn’t deter the city from continuing it. Grah said the extra time spent complying with AB 1250 could be detrimental to projects that involve applying for competitive grants, where expedient timing is crucial.

A source close to the author of AB 1250, Regina Byron-Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles), who wished to remain anonymous, said the impetus for the bill came from the haphazard spending and lack of standards for hiring contractors that Jones-Sawyer observed during the time spent as an employee for the City of Los Angeles.

The League calculates that if AB 1250 passes, cities could be liable for as much as $56,703 per contract in orientation, environmental review, cost analyses, and audit costs.

Further, The League estimates the cost of compiling and maintaining a database as prescribed by AB 1250 is approximately $25,915 a year. Some members expressed concern about other costs related to privacy concerns and lawsuits associated with posting the salaries of contractors on a public website. “The costs associated with this type of litigation will be significant,” the League stated in the letter sent to members on May 7.

City of Bishop Manager, Jim Tatum said the bill would reduce the autonomy of municipalities by adding another layer of bureaucracy and associated expenses.

In an email this week, Town of Mammoth Lakes Manager Dan Holler echoed Tatum’s concerns. Holler said that if AB 1250 passes and it becomes more expensive to contract work out to consultants. “I’m not sure if the bill really does much for transparency,” Holler added.

The bill is currently before the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
FACELIFT

continued from page 1

estimated total hard cost of construction proposed by HMC, the very roughly $26.6 million.

Two excludes the new science labs, for roughly $26.6 million.

Those figures will certainly change, but if the School Board selects each of the most expensive renovation options proposed by HMC, the very roughly estimated total hard cost of construction would be $56.2 million for all three schools.

This June, HMC will present each of the conceptual design options and rough budgets to the District Advisory Committees, comprised of parents and teachers. In August, HMC will return to the Board with a final Facilities Master Plan, which will be reviewed and approved at a Board meeting in September. Once a Facilities Master Plan is approved, the Board will contemplate funding options for the project, which, at this rate, could mean writing a bond series resolution, which the public would have the opportunity to vote on directly, most likely, in the June 2018 election. The Board will then issue a request for proposals from other architectural firms to design the buildings.

This is where consultant Dale Scott of Dale Scott and Company comes in. MUSD hired Scott to assess financing options for district-wide renovations. The 1998 MUSD school bond is paid off using a tax levied per $100,000 of assessed property value within the school district. Payments were set up so that property owners in the district pay a higher tax at the end of that bond’s lifetime than at the beginning, which Scott called “politically expedient, if not the most fiscally responsible strategy.” The 1998 bond must be paid off by 2026, but Mono County has agreed to consider spreading the remaining debt evenly over the next 11 years, so that the annual tax rate does not fluctuate, but remains at approximately $45 per $100,000 of assessed property value.

Scott presented a model for how MUSD could structure debt payments on both the 1998 bond series and a new bond series to finance the most expensive of HMC’s proposed renovations in phases, with some padding added in. He presented a scenario in which MUSD needed to borrow $59.7 million in principal. Scott assumed a 4.5 percent annual interest rate, to be paid off over 30-35 years. The bummier: MUSD would pay roughly $41.3 million in interest over the course of the loan, resulting in a total amount owed of about $101 million.

According to Scott, if MUSD opted for a 30-year repayment plan for the new, hypothetical bond series, residents would pay $110 per $100,000 of assessed value from 2020 to 2026 (a 240 percent increase over the current rate), and $60 per $100,000 of assessed value from 2026 to 2050. Alternatively, a 35-year debt repayment plan would result in a tax of $80 per $100,000 of assessed value through 2026, and $60 per the same through 2055.

Scott recommended conducting voter approval surveys on each design and cost estimate are approved by MUSD’s Board in Fall 2017, with the goal of finalizing a bond resolution for the June 2018 election ballot.

On Monday, May 9, Bien gave The Sheet a tour of MUSD properties. Paint was peeling, floors were carpeted with discontinuous, donated carpeting, shingles were falling off of the roofs, and many windows were single-paned, which Bien says dramatically increases the cost of heating the buildings. Bien said proposed improvements include improved energy efficiency, replacing roofs, and renovating indoor spaces. She also said the district simply can’t wait until 2026 for new roofs or new boiler systems. “This is a space that we need to address now,” said Bien.

“Do we do everything we can with our existing facilities, and do we do a very good job. I couldn’t be more proud of what goes on inside of those schools … but the outside does not reflect what goes on on the inside,” said Superintendent Lois Klein in an interview. “We want a school that is functional, that we can be proud of, that respects the financially conservative needs of our community,” said Klein, who added that, at this point, MUSD’s board has not approved a bond resolution, nor is there any guarantee that a bond series will be the financial tool employed for these imminent maintenance projects.

Bien and Klein both said that the purpose of the Facilities Master Plan is to help MUSD budget maintenance projects in advance, so that the district is not required to take out another bond in 10 years, while it is still paying off the currently proposed improvements. She also said the district simply can’t wait until 2026 for new roofs or a new boiler system. “This is a space a lot of kids call home, and we have to hold school every day,” said Bien. “We don’t want a situation where there is a major leak or collapse and we can’t find the funds to fix it.”
enrolling in advanced courses.

Spencer started teaching Mammoth High School's first AP Spanish Literature course three years ago. Her students and co-workers cited her as a major reason for the increase in enrollment in AP courses. Spencer insists that it's the result of district-wide efforts led by the administration to eliminate what educators call "gatekeeping."

"There has been a tradition of setting up hurdles for kids to jump over to get into certain kinds of classes. This is especially true in college-bound courses. Over the last three years or so, we [teachers and administrators] have really been evaluating whether or not those make sense," said Spencer in an interview. Spencer offered the example of teachers assigning intensive summer homework for advanced placement courses. "A kid who has to work full time to support their family may not be able to afford to do that. That doesn't mean they won't succeed in the class or that they shouldn't be there."

According to Powell, half of all students at MHS are considered economically disadvantaged according to state standards. "For students whose parents have gone to college, those parents talk about college with their students. For families whose parents haven't, they can't in the same way, and it's our responsibility to reach out to those kids and make sure they know those opportunities exist for them," said Powell.

Prior to Spencer's tenure as the AP Spanish Language teacher, students were not encouraged to take the course until junior or senior year. Spencer saw an opportunity to challenge and engage skilled Spanish speakers earlier, and partnered with 8th grade teachers at Mammoth Middle School to create a placement exam administered to all middle school students at the end of 8th grade. Spencer then opened her AP Spanish class to sophomores who were co-currently enrolled in honors English.

In 2014-2015, Johnny Morales, Rosaura Garcia, and Mayra Garcia were the first sophomores to enroll in Spencer's AP Spanish Language course. All are native Spanish speakers. After taking AP Spanish Language and successfully earning college credit from their performance on the subsequent exam, the trio of friends decided to enroll in AP Spanish Literature and AP English Literature the following year.

"Miss Spencer really makes you feel confident, like you can do anything," said Morales, who is poised to be the Valedictorian for the class of 2017. "Every student brings certain gifts from home," said Spencer. "These kids, their gift from home is Spanish language, and it's a huge one. The AP test evaluates listening, conversation skills, reading, writing. The curriculum really honors what these kids come in with."

Rosaura, Mayra and Johnny will all graduate in a few weeks with college credit. All are attending college, though their parents never attended high school. Rosaura will be attending California State University at Northridge in the fall where she is interested in studying business, and Mayra will be attending Cerro Coso College with plans to transfer to a four-year school, and a long-term goal of becoming a veterinarian. Johnny plans to study genetics and plant biology, but is also interested in fashion design. "One of my favorite things about both AP Spanish Literature and English Literature was the poetry. It was really cool to read Shakespeare and Don Quixote at the same time. I think that if Miss Spencer ever leaves, it will be a great loss to the school."

"She was so much more than a teacher," said Mayra. "She really, truly cares about every student. She used to make us little care packages before tests," Rosaura said. "She was almost like our mom." Rosaura's younger brother Joaquin will be part of the first class of 9th graders to take AP Spanish Language with Spencer in the fall. "Really early in my teaching career... I met an adult who was about 25 years old, and he said, 'I really wish I had gone to college, but nobody ever told me I was good enough,'" said Spencer. "I just never want any student of mine to feel that way, that no one ever told them that path was there for them too."
Representatives from Southern California Edison (SCE) reached out to local media sources this week to assure residents living in areas beneath the agency’s dams that SCE is taking precautions to ensure that water levels remain safe despite predicted record runoff.

Rudy Gonzales, Government Affairs Representative for SCE, told The Sheet on Wednesday that there is “no increased risk to people who are living in the June Lake area” which sits below three dams as part of the Rush Creek Hydroelectric System—Gem Lake, Agnew Lake, and Waugh Lake all have dams which were built in 1917, 1916 and 1925, respectively.

Gonzales said that people living in the vicinity of Rush Creek should expect to see increased water flow as a result of spring runoff, which is projected to reach 200 percent of normal this spring.

SCE is installing several pumps next week to Gem and Agnew Lakes via helicopter as a redundancy measure, Gonzales said. “We don’t anticipate needing the pumps,” said Gonzales, noting that their installation is merely a “precaution.”

At the Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, May 9, the Board discussed breaking into new markets, expanding advertising for the fall season, record Transient Occupancy Tax revenue and the continuing issue of Mammoth's air service.

MLT Executive Director John Urdi discussed MLT’s promotion of a “Locals’ Flight Discount” with Alaska Airlines, which offered 20 percent off flights to Los Angeles and San Diego, with JetSuiteX, which offered 15 percent off flights to Burbank, and with United, which offered 10 percent off flights to anywhere United flies, according to www.mltindustryinsider.com.

Those flight deals have now expired, but Urdi was unable to tell The Sheet when they expired as of press time.

Urdi described an underwhelming response to the locals’ discount promotion, saying at the board meeting that there were 594 codes issued for the discount “and redemption was far less. Thirty-five people actually took advantage of the discount…”

The Sheet asked Urdi on Wednesday, May 10 how the codes were issued, how the discount was promoted, and who was chosen to receive the discount codes. “I don’t have all the complete information on this program but will reach out once we do,” Urdi responded in an email on Thursday, May 11. “The numbers I mentioned the other day are not confirmed.”

Urdi said at the board meeting that Alaska Airlines is not a huge fan of doing promotions where they see that low of redemption.

Michael Ledesma suggested that Mammoth was “still in a situation where a lot of us are understaffed, and not going to be able to fly anywhere.”

The Board also discussed hosting representatives of “Gaydio,” a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) FM and digital radio station which calls itself the “world’s biggest gay radio station” with a reach of 553,000 listeners per week in the United Kingdom and Western Europe, according to the numbers Gaydio sent to Michael Vanderhurst, Director of International Marketing for MLT.

MLT was approached by Visit California, the Golden State’s official tourism bureau, and Black Diamond, MLT and Mammoth Mountain’s “agency of record” in the UK, said Vanderhurst. Black Diamond employs a “dedicated travel trade person and a dedicated public relations media person,” said Vanderhurst. “Their job is to promote and talk about Mammoth Lakes as a year-round destination within their market.”

MLT’s share of the contract, which is renewed on an annual basis, is about $20,000, he told The Sheet. Mammoth Mountain covers the other half.

A team of five will visit Mammoth from May 20-21, with two on-air personalities who will do a remote feed, two producers, and one account manager with Black Diamond.

The purpose of the trip is to “highlight the spring skiing experience.” Broadcasters will receive lessons and lift tickets compliments of Mammoth Mountain, be hosted by The Westin, and have several meals in Mammoth and June Lake, which MLT will pay for. Visit California will pay for their travel expenses from the UK, said Vanderhurst, and for their travel while in California. The visit to Mammoth is part of a three-destination trip which also includes San Francisco and Yosemite National Park.

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Representatives from Southern California Edison (SCE) reached out to local media sources this week to assure residents living in areas beneath the agency’s dams that SCE is taking precautions to ensure that water levels remain safe despite predicted record runoff.

Rudy Gonzales, Government Affairs Representative for SCE, told The Sheet on Wednesday that there is “no increased risk to people who are living in the June Lake area” which sits below three dams as part of the Rush Creek Hydroelectric System—Gem Lake, Agnew Lake, and Waugh Lake all have dams which were built in 1917, 1916 and 1925, respectively.

Gonzales said that people living in the vicinity of Rush Creek should expect to see increased water flow as a result of spring runoff, which is projected to reach 200 percent of normal this spring.

SCE is installing several pumps next week to Gem and Agnew Lakes via helicopter as a redundancy measure, Gonzales said. “We don’t anticipate needing the pumps,” said Gonzales, noting that their installation is merely a “precaution.”

At the Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, May 9, the Board discussed breaking into new markets, expanding advertising for the fall season, record Transient Occupancy Tax revenue and the continuing issue of Mammoth’s air service.

MLT Executive Director John Urdi discussed MLT’s promotion of a “Locals’ Flight Discount” with Alaska Airlines, which offered 20 percent off flights to Los Angeles and San Diego, with JetSuiteX, which offered 15 percent off flights to Burbank, and with United, which offered 10 percent off flights to anywhere United flies, according to www.mltindustryinsider.com.

Those flight deals have now expired, but Urdi was unable to tell The Sheet when they expired as of press time.

Urdi described an underwhelming response to the locals’ discount promotion, saying at the board meeting that there were 594 codes issued for the discount “and redemption was far less. Thirty-five people actually took advantage of the discount…”

The Sheet asked Urdi on Wednesday, May 10 how the codes were issued, how the discount was promoted, and who was chosen to receive the discount codes. “I don’t have all the complete information on this program but will reach out once we do,” Urdi responded in an email on Thursday, May 11. “The numbers I mentioned the other day are not confirmed.”

Urdi said at the board meeting that Alaska Airlines is not a huge fan of doing promotions where they see that low of redemption.

Michael Ledesma suggested that Mammoth was “still in a situation where a lot of us are understaffed, and not going to be able to fly anywhere.”

The Board also discussed hosting representatives of “Gaydio,” a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) FM and digital radio station which calls itself the “world’s biggest gay radio station” with a reach of 553,000 listeners per week in the United Kingdom and Western Europe, according to the numbers Gaydio sent to Michael Vanderhurst, Director of International Marketing for MLT.

MLT was approached by Visit California, the Golden State’s official tourism bureau, and Black Diamond, MLT and Mammoth Mountain’s “agency of record” in the UK, said Vanderhurst. Black Diamond employs a “dedicated travel trade person and a dedicated public relations media person,” said Vanderhurst. “Their job is to promote and talk about Mammoth Lakes as a year-round destination within their market.”

MLT’s share of the contract, which is renewed on an annual basis, is about $20,000, he told The Sheet. Mammoth Mountain covers the other half.

A team of five will visit Mammoth from May 20-21, with two on-air personalities who will do a remote feed, two producers, and one account manager with Black Diamond.

The purpose of the trip is to “highlight the spring skiing experience.” Broadcasters will receive lessons and lift tickets compliments of Mammoth Mountain, be hosted by The Westin, and have several meals in Mammoth and June Lake, which MLT will pay for. Visit California will pay for their travel expenses from the UK, said Vanderhurst, and for their travel while in California. The visit to Mammoth is part of a three-destination trip which also includes San Francisco and Yosemite National Park.
The Great Unwashed

A madcap comedy about a handsome but hapless 20-something forced to flee the city and hide out with a tribe of hippies after witnessing a brutal murder by a gang of criminal hairdressers.

Space Detective

If you like sci-fi and anime, this is the film for you! With a unique aesthetic that puts raw, processed, punk-rock-esque live-action imagery into a richly detailed futuristic fantasy environment, this film noir parody follows an exiled space detective who returns to help an old flame but finds himself tangled in a web that threatens the very fate of the entire galaxy!

Neighborhood Food Drive

A group of awful idiots fail at throwing a party over and over.

passes & tickets ON SALE now!

www.MammothLakesFilmFestival.com
Mammoth Mountain Ski Area’s first Ski Patrol Reunion brought participants from all over the country to reminisce about years of serving guests and saving lives at Mammoth. Over 280 guests attended the weekend of events, which included a meet and greet at Eagle Lodge, a BBQ and “museum” at Main Lodge, and, of course, toboggan races.

The event also raised money for a future reunion, to be held in 2020, and for recently injured current Mammoth patroller Michael “Butcher” Shumate, who was involved in an accident on Thursday, May 4. “There was not even a hesitation for what we’re going to do” in donating some of the funds raised by a silent auction at the reunion to Shumate, said organizer Ian Scott. “We tend to take care of our own in any way we can.”

Scott told The Sheet that there was a “mini Ski Patrol reunion” which gathered at Renown Medical Center in Reno, NV to visit Shumate, who is currently on the road to recovery after undergoing surgery. Shumate is a veteran first responder both for Mammoth Mountain Ski Patrol and Mammoth Lakes Fire Department. Anyone wishing to aid in his recovery can donate at Mammoth’s Main Lodge patrol room or by visiting www.gofundme.com/the-butchers-fund.

Above: Future patroller Vinson Seibert (son of current patroller Matt Seibert) shows he’s got it—that’s a sense of humor. Below: Dan McConnell and Steve Searby at Eagle Lodge.
Middle row, photos left to right: Kelly Miller (l) and Emily White (r). Ric Larsen (left, ’86-’92) and Treve Jones (right, ’84-’94). Bottom row, photos left to right: Ralph Patterson (left, ’85-’87) and Ed Spradlin (right, ’85-’88). “Cupcake” (right), Jim Jacober (middle), and West Vance (right). Gerard Oliveira (left, director of Boys in Blue films) Buck Wahl (middle) and Jon Rumble.

Top row, photos left to right: Oriol Sole Costa (’78-’88) and Carol William. Don and Pam Rake, who between them have 58 years of working at Mammoth Mountain. Bill (’62-’67) and Christy Merotta. Photo below, left to right: Dave Levy (one of Mammoth’s only “snowboard patrollers”), Josh Feinberg and Scott McGuire.
**BARS & MUSIC**

**Happy Hour**
- The Liberty Sports Bar and Grill. Pursuit of Happiness Hour, 3-6 p.m. $1 off all beers, $2 off wines. $2 off specialty drinks. $5 Flatbread.
- Outlaw Saloon. Monday All Night Happy Hour: 4-Midnight, Tues/Fri 4-6 pm.
- Happy Hour @ Sushi Rei. 4-5 p.m. daily. Half off apps and $5 hand roll.
- Happy Hour @ The Bistro at Snowcreek. 4:30-6:30 p.m. daily.
- Smokeyard weekend Happy Hour 4-6 p.m. in the bar only.
- Giovannis Happy Hour, daily 4-6 p.m. Large pizza and a pitcher of beer gets you free wings.
- Morrison’s Happy Hour Daily 4-6 p.m. $50 for two-person three courses, 3 teas and more. Info: 760.872.2127.
- Giovanni’s Happy Hour, daily 4-6 p.m. Half price sushi
- Morrison’s Happy Hour Daily 4-6 p.m. $50 for two-person three courses, 3 teas and more. Info: 760.872.2127.
- Smokeyard weekend Happy Hour 4-6 p.m. in the bar only.
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**TOWN STUFF**

**Friday, May 12/ Saturday, May 13/**
- **Wilderness: Relations of People and Place**, author John Hausdoerffer for reading and signing. Range & River Books, free. 7 p.m.
- **Independence Farmers Market** 4-7 p.m. @ The Mairs Market parking lot. Free. 437 Old Mammoth Rd.
- **Make sun prints for Mother’s Day** with Mono Arts Council @ Mammoth Lakes Library. 12:30 p.m. Ages 8 and up.

**Saturday, May 13/**
- **MMSAs Unbound Terrain Park Party** See sidebar next pg.
- **Eastern Sierra Audubon Society Costa Bird Walk** 8:30 a.m. @ The BLM/Forest Service Office on Pacu Lane in Bishop. Learn to identify birds, contribute to list of species observed.
- **Fish Free at Mt. Whitney Hatchery** 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery. Kids 15 and under fish free. Info: 760.937.0499.
- **Altrusa of the Eastern Sierra Garden Tea Party** 12-3 p.m. at The United Methodist Social Hall, 205 N. Fowler St., Bishop. $40, includes 3 courses, 3 teas and more. Info: 760.872.2428.
- **Sunday, May 14/**
  - **Kayak/Canoes Mono Lake with the Sierra Club** Meet 6 a.m. @ Mono Union Bank, or 8:45 a.m. at Navy Beach. Contact Melissa Swan @ 760.937.0499.
  - **Outlaw Saloon, Live Music** Performers will all share stories. Begins 3 p.m. at 621 W. Line St. Suite 204. To reserve a seat, call 760.872.2446.

**Monday, May 15/**
- **Public Meeting Regarding Mammoth Stamp Mill Site Closure** @ The Auditorium in the Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center. From 5-7 p.m. representatives from the Inyo National Forest will field questions about the closure and share findings. Info: 760.876.4444.

**Tuesday, May 16/**
- **Furry, Feathered, Friends Gallery Reception** @ Mono Arts Council 5-7 p.m. 437 Old Mammoth Rd.

**Wednesday, May 17/**
- **Defending our National Monuments.** Join FOI & Sierra Club for presentations on protecting National Monuments. Monday: Lone Pine Smokehouse, 7 p.m. Tuesday: Crowley Lake CC, 6:30 p.m. and Wednesday: Whitney Fish Hatchery. Kids 15 and under fish free. Info: jora@friendsoftheinyo.org.
- **Bodie 601 plays The Liberty Bar.** Meet 8 a.m. @ Navy Beach. Contact Melissa Swan @ 760.937.0499.
- **Altrusa of the Eastern Sierra Garden Tea Party** 12-3 p.m. at The United Methodist Social Hall, 205 N. Fowler St., Bishop. Tickets: $40, includes 3 courses, 3 teas and more. Info: 760.872.2428.
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**May 15-17/**
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- **Furry, Feathered, Friends Gallery Reception** @ Mono Arts Council 5-7 p.m. 437 Old Mammoth Rd.
Mammoth Unbound after party
Celebrate the 2016–17 season and 20 years of Mammoth Unbound with a free sunset cruise through Main Park and Glitzer Trail, a rail garden in lower Main Park, plus a hike-park for mini shredders. DJ Rodney-O will be spinning tunes at the Lower Lodge Sundeck, where there will be beer specials, a BBQ, and cupcakes.
Event Schedule:
4-6 p.m. DJ Rodney-O on the Main Lodge Sundeck, BBQ & drink specials (available for purchase), cupcakes, birthday bash, cornhole, and on-snow beer pong.
4:30–7 p.m.: Chair 6 After-hours Sunset Cruise.
7 p.m.: Unbound Express Chair 6 Closes.
8 p.m.: Tusks Bar Last Call.
Mammoth Hospital free childbirthing course series
From May 17 to June 21, Mammoth Hospital will host a series of free, weekly childbirthing classes, with a different topic scheduled for each week. Classes are offered in both Spanish and in English. Participants will gain confidence in their body’s ability to give birth, learn from doctors and nurses alongside other couples, and learn about pain relief and the birthing process.
The schedule of classes is as follows:
5/17- Nutrition and OB Basics
5/24- Natural Childbirth
5/31- Birthing Center Tour
6/7- Breastfeeding
6/14- Anesthesia
6/21- Pediatrics and Postpartum
Library Summer Book Club
The Mammoth Lakes Library is re-instituting a Brown Bag Lunch Book Club this summer (June, July, August, and September). As you’ll remember, we met on one day per month over lunch to discuss a book from the library collection. If you are interested in participating, please email mlbro@monocoe.org with a day of the week and the month of the month that would work for you.
Sierra Adventure Summer Camp
Registration now open for Inyo County Superintendent of Schools Sierra Adventure Summer Camp. The camp is open to all Inyo County students in grades 5 through 7. The camp is a 5 day overnight camp at the Sierra Adventure Center near Big Pine. Participants will learn survival skills, hike, do archery, star-gaze, and do crafts.
Boys camp runs from June 19-23, and Girls camp runs from June 26-30. Camp costs $28, and the deadline for registration is May 20. Bilingual registration workshop to be held at Bishop Elementary School on Friday, May 5 from 2:15-4 p.m.
Info: Hilary Behr at 760.878.3262 ext. 2311 or hbehr@icso.us.

Town Stuff

Upcoming
7:30 p.m. Performances of Dvorak and Wolfgang by Symphony conducted by Hiechiro Ohyama. Students from Mammoth Lakes Public Schools will also perform. For tickets ($20), go to www.easternsierrasymphony.org. See ad, p. 3.
Deadline for Registration for Sierra Adventure Camp. See sidebar.
Saturday, May 20
Photo Sale @ Mammoth Lakes Library. Framed prints, matted prints and just prints. 12:30-5:00 p.m. 30 percent of all sales goes to the Mammoth Lakes Friends of the Library.
Red Carpet Event for the Mammoth Lakes Rotary Foundation Scholarship. Featuring Andrew Davis (director and producer: The Fugitive, Holes, and more), 5:30-8:30 p.m. at Mammoth Lakes Outlet Mall, 3390 Main St. Suite O. Tix: $45 individual, $80 couple, includes hors d’oeuvres & cocktail. Info: www.roundrobinroche.com. See ad, p. 3.
Sierra Club hike to Ainslee Spring and Round Fire Burn. Meet at 8 a.m. @ the dirt road loop, 0.3 miles down Lower Rock Creek Road from the Paradise Fire House. Info: Jerry at jerryzat@gmail.com.
June Lake Clean-up Day. Meet 10 a.m. Gull Lake Park. Volunteers who show up get a June Lake Brewing gift card and lunch.
Thursday, May 18
Ladies Garden Tea Party at High Country Lumber. 6:30-9 p.m. at High Country Lumber in Bishop. All participants will take home a small herb garden starter kit. Free Event.
Bishop Chamber of Commerce Networking Luncheon. Noon, location TBA. For tickets ($15) and info, call 760.873.8405.
Friday, May 19
Eastern Sierra Symphony Spring Concert @ St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Mammoth Lakes. Start at 7:30 p.m. Performances of Dvorak and Wolfgang by Symphony conducted by Hiechiro Ohyama. Students from Mammoth Lakes Public Schools will also perform. For tickets ($20), go to www.easternsierrasymphony.org. See ad, p. 3.

At the Movies
Minaret Cinemas
Guardians of The Galaxy 2 (PG-13): The Guardians continue their intergalactic search for Peter Quill’s parents in this movie adaptation of a Marvel Comic. Giffted (PG-13): Chris Evans stars as an uncle raising his niece, a math prodigy, as a single parent.
For movie times, call 760.934.3131 or visit mammothlakesmovies.com. Custom-ad, p. 3.
Sierra Nevada Resort & Spa

For Sale

**MAMMOTH ROCK N’ BOWL**

Mammoth Rock & Bowl/Mammoth Rock Brasserie has the following positions available: Bowling Desk Employees, Service Bartender, Brasserie Hostess. Contact Kevin O’Conell 760.964.4200

East Side Bake Shop is hiring counter associates for the spring/summer season. Locations are in Lee Vining, Mammoth Lakes and Mammoth. Please call 760.964.2696. Restaurant experience preferred

**NOW HIRING Front Desk Associates and Housekeepers.** Competitive Pay plus bonuses. Send resume to Hotel@hausmammoth@gmail.com or call 760-934-2414

**Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546**

For Sale

**Major Brand Gas & Diesel w/ Mini Mkt. and Smoke Shop, Deli, Quick Serve Restaurant and Real Estate. A Room for Rent.** Located in Home, W/privacy. Within 1 block of Village to Shuttle Utilities included W/D Internet available Seeking Dog Friendly Individual. Non Smoking. $280.00 per month. 760-967-6715 1 Gateway to Eastern Sierras & Resorts. $2,750.00 Net cash flow $450,000. James Wells, Agent (951) 314-7943

Hiring Cocktail Server. Housekeeping/Quality Control: Specialist Inspections, stocking, organization, ordering, training and supervision of housekeeping and maintenance staff for busy resort.$10.34 - $16.27 hourly + health + 401k + PTO

The Restaurant at Convict Lake is looking for a part time receptionist. Must be available during the season, stocking, organization, ordering, training and supervision of housekeeping and maintenance staff for busy resort.$10.34 - $16.27 hourly + health + 401k + PTO

Help Wanted

**FOOTLOOSE SPORTS** is looking for an experienced Bike mechanic for full time seasonal summer employment. The ideal candidate will have 2 or more years of experience as a mechanic in a retail bike store. Must have solid basic skills, experience with brake bleeding, running, eCommerce with electronic shifting. UBI or BBI certification preferred but not required. Email your resume to footloose@footlooseports.com Attn: Zach

**Convict Lake Resort- HOUSEKEEPING QUALITY CONTROL SPECIALIST- Inspections, stocking, organization, ordering, training and supervision of housekeeping and maintenance staff for busy resort.$10.34 - $16.27 hourly + health + 401k + PTO

**Morrison’s Restaurant and Bar** is hiring servers. If interested email Lisa Fairfall to apply. Lisa@convictlake.com

**Food Cache Cafe** Full time position available ISO a cashier/smoothie barista , food & beverage experience preferred but not required. $10-$11.25hr DOE, line cook needed, full or part-time available, morning and afternoon shifts available, stop by the cafe for an application. 452 old mammoth on ste 106.

**Pizza Chef/Delivery Driver/Casher** Z Pizza Mammoth is hiring full and part time. Apply online at www.zpizza.com, or by email - mammothslices@gmail.com

For Sale

**Yard Sale**

Yard Sale at Reverse Creek Lodge, 4479 Hwy 158, June Lake Loop, Sat., May 13, 2017, 10am to 3pm. Fantastical items, fabulous deals, .99 bottle! Proceeds go to 12th child in family for college education.

**For Hire**

**Z-ZIPPIERS** Quality work, speedy service. Snowboards, parkas, pants, packs & duffels. Heros, too! Call 760.873.4499.

**Handyman/Spring/Cleaning/Painting** (310)988-3298.

**Fictitious Business Name Statement**

The Following Person/Business is Doing Business As:

**High Sierra Architecture**

Bruce Woodward
95 Grittlewald Rd.
P.O. Box 3568
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by an Individual The registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on April 1, 2017.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on May 4, 2017 File Number 17-079. 2017-0104 (5/3, 5/20, 5/27, 6/3)

**Fictitious Business Name Statement**

The Following Person/Business is Doing Business As:

Eastside Handyman

Troy McCall
87 Snowridge Lane, P.O.Box 8908
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by an Individual The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on April 26, 2014. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on April 26, 2017 File Number 17-068. 2017-0098 (5/6, 5/13, 5/20, 5/27)

**Fictitious Business Name Statement**

The Following Person/Business is Doing Business As:

Red Carpet Rentals And Sales

Lisa Nelson
508 Hillside Place, P.O.Box 9003
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by an Individual The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on April 1, 2017. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on May 4, 2017 File Number 17-070. 2017-0085 (4/12, 4/22, 5/6, 5/13)

**Fictitious Business Name Statement**

The Following Person/Business is Doing Business As:

Life and the Kitchen Sink

Soo Dennison
432 North Mammoth Rd.
P.O.Box 1182
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by an Individual The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on April 1, 2017. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on May 4, 2017 File Number 17-079. 2017-0100 (5/6, 5/13, 5/20, 5/27)

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**Personal**

I saw you... got busted by Detective Cor- nell... ask me... keep on... you wish to be “supervised?” I saw you... squatting on Manzanita. Let’s see the Mammoth version of being a “Friend of Bill?”
Notice of Public Hearing

Notice is hereby given that the Mono County Board of Supervisors is accepting applications to the Mono County Fisheries Commission. The term of office for the vacant position will commence immediately upon appointment. The position will be filled until the next regularly scheduled 2018 election.

Notice of Public Hearing

A PUBLIC HEARING will be held Thursday, May 25, 2017, 10:00 am at the Mono County Courthouse, Bridgeport, CA, to consider the following:

TS # 2017-0101

Notice of Vacancy

TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES, CA
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING BIDS

Gas, Water, and Sewer Main Line Replacement Project

CRACK REPAIR AND SURFACING OF COMMUNITY ROADS

The Town of Mammoth Lakes, California, Taxpayer Agency, 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite B, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

NOTICE Inviting Bids

TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES, CA
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Notice of Hearing

Notice of Public Hearing

Notice of Vacancy

Notice of Summons

Notice of Vacancy

Notice of Summons

Notice of Vacancy

Notice of Vacancy

PUBLIC NOTICES
REVITALIZING BISHOP
By James

Last Wednesday, May 3, over 70 people attended a special community workshop held in the Home Economics Building at the Tri-County Fairgrounds to gather public input for ideas on how to “reinvigorate” downtown Bishop by increasing housing options, and streamlining the Municipal Code to incentivize commercial activity.

The meeting was sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Sustainable Communities. Chip Gurkin, with the Community Assistance and Research Division of the EPA, explained that the EPA’s “Smart Growth Program” works to encourage development strategies that protect human health and the environment, create economic opportunities, and provide attractive and affordable neighborhoods for people of all income levels in America’s cities.

Kate Ange, with Renaissance Planning, the group brought in to offer consultation to the city, told the gathering, “Our purpose is to look at issues and opportunities and promote development while maintaining the culture and character of the community.”

Alana Braiser, also with Renaissance Planning, said that, when surveyed, downtown business owners prioritized making Main Street while maintaining the culture and character of the community.”

Alana Braiser, also with Renaissance Planning, said that, when surveyed, downtown business owners prioritized making Main Street while maintaining the culture and character of the community.”

An attendee at Wednesday’s meeting, who asked to remain anonymous, said the successful turnout at the workshop, “What does it matter? It always boils down to the same few people that will meet in a room later making decisions to do things that have been tried in the past and failed, and yet again, nothing will change.”

Bishop Associate Planner and Economic Development Coordinator Elaine Kabala, said she refuses to be discouraged by local cynicism. It’s true that some efforts in the past might have failed, but… Planning is the key to making good decisions and setting priorities, as well as narrowing down the most important and do-able actions we can take. Then we go find resources and grant funding to make it happen,” said Kabala, citing a grant the City recently received to plant trees along Main Street. It remains too early to tell whether the City of Bishop, with its many unique qualities and community character, will succeed in revitalization, where so many other rural communities have failed.

Some suggestions from Wednesday’s meeting included making Main Street more pedestrian-friendly and allowing residential housing above existing storefronts. One local also lamented the lack of nightlife in Bishop, saying that it currently revolves around “going to bed early—and dreaming that you are someplace else...hopefully being entertained.”

One attendee at Wednesday’s meeting, who asked to remain anonymous, said the successful turnout at the workshop, “What does it matter? It always boils down to the same few people that will meet in a room later making decisions to do things that have been tried in the past and failed, and yet again, nothing will change.”

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Celebrate Provider Appreciation Day!
May 12, 2017

Provider Appreciation Day is a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers, and other educators of young children everywhere. Today’s child care professionals are the world’s unsung heroes. Research shows that early childhood is the most critical developmental period in a child’s life. Provider Appreciation Day offers a unique opportunity to recognize and commend the unselfish dedication, commitment, and compassion that child care providers demonstrate everyday.

Here are just a few ideas to show your appreciation:

• Work with your child to create a special appreciation card
• Bring flowers, a card, or a handwritten note of appreciation
• Offer to buy an item for your provider’s play area
• Bring breakfast or lunch for your provider and the kids

The Mono County Child Care Council strives to support and enhance quality child care. By advocating for children of all ages and their families and caregivers, we are helping to build a stronger community.

To learn more about the Mono County Child Care Council and how you can become involved, please call (760) 934-3343 or visit our website at www.monoccc.org.

The Mono County Child Care Council looks forward to seeing all the child care providers at the Provider Appreciation Dinner on May 19, 2017.

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This week’s SNARL (Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory) Lecture featured a scientist and a musician, both attempting to answer the question: What good is a toad?

First, the scientist: Starting in 2005, Dr. Eric Berlow led a team that gathered the first comprehensive data about where Yosemite Toads, which are listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act, breed in Yosemite. They breed early in the spring in small, ephemeral pools fed by snowmelt. They live to be about twenty years old, and little is known about how they survive winter in the High Sierra, except that they don’t hibernate.

Since 2000, Yosemite Toads have been at the center of several major lawsuits over whether or not backcountry grazing by pack stock harms their habitat. In 2000, the High Sierra Hikers Association sued the Inyo and Sierra National Forests, claiming the agencies had failed to uphold the National Environmental Policy Act when they authorized special use permits for pack stations in the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness Areas. The High Sierra Packers Association counter-sued, and the Inyo and Sierra National Forests lost because they only had anecdotal data regarding interactions between stock and toads.

“The problem with anecdotes is that you can always find another expert who will disagree,” said Berlow, who was promptly brought on to collect that data in Yosemite National Park. After years of research, he found no real correlation between the decline of toad populations and the presence of stock animals.

“So what good is a toad?” Berlow asked the audience. “People asked me that all the time, and I didn’t really find that science had a good answer. They don’t eat mosquitoes. If a toad goes extinct, what happens? Well, they aren’t a keystone species, nothing really eats them because they aren’t that palatable.” Berlow noted that their presence is an indicator of meadow health, but then that begs the question, what good is a meadow?

“Some of these high meadow ecosystems are the headwaters, the sources of water for San Francisco. They act like sponges, releasing water gradually into streams that flow to Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, which contains water so clean that it requires only filtration before it can be consumed,” said Berlow.

“Science is really good at articulating evidence, but not so much at telling us how and why we should care. We surveyed 2,500 meadows over an area the size of Rhode Island [Yosemite National Park] searching for toads… and completely bypassed the question of how do we protect them. It seems the more important question should be, ‘how do we prevent them from disappearing off the face of the earth?’”

Enter the Musician: Patrick Cress. In 2009, Cress was a fellow of the Yosemite Soundscapes Project, studying at the Wawona Institute, where Berlow was conducting his research. Cress was interested in the toads and in their ecosystems as sources of musical inspiration. He began accompanying Berlow on his surveys, collecting the sounds of Sierra meadows. “The reverb was just incredible in these natural amphitheaters,” said Cress, who accompanied Berlow on his search for the Yosemite Toad for two full years before ever hearing the chorus of the elusive amphibian. He has since mixed the tapes from those ventures with his own performances on alto saxophone and bass clarinet, mimicking and interpreting the calls of birds and amphibians to create multi-movement musical compositions that seek to capture the cacophony of Yosemite’s ecosystems as free-form jazz. At Tuesday’s talk, he performed the first piece from his upcoming album, Yosemite Soundscapes.

Science still has not provided an answer to why the Yosemite Toad is disappearing, and Berlow is still at a loss for an objective answer to why anyone should care. For Cress, and maybe his listeners, it’s part of the character of Yosemite, now preserved in his recordings of the park’s Soundscapes.
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