WHEN SKIERS COLLIDE
Are skier collisions up at Mammoth Mountain? If so, why?

By Rea

“During the holidays, it was collision after collision after collision,” said one local paramedic, who requested their name not be used, when asked if accidents between skiers and snowboarders were up this year. “One guy beat up a dude who ran into his daughter.”

A Mammoth Lakes Police Department arrest log confirmed that a three-year-old female experienced a “loss of consciousness due to collision,” on December 19, 2017. “The dad said he looked up, it was clear, and all of a sudden, bam! She got nailed by a snowboarder,” said MLPD Sergeant Joe Vetter, who responded to the incident.

“I know of a couple other instances we weren’t involved in,” said Vetter on Monday, February 12. “But it seems like collisions are getting more and more frequent. What that’s related to, I’m not 100 percent sure, but they seem to be on the rise.”

Vetter also said that “one of our officers’ mothers was visiting up here and got clobbered by a snowboarder about two weeks ago.” Vetter said the “snowboarder took off... and she actually broke something in her neck” that required minor surgery.

Jayson Smith, Assistant Director Ski Patrol at Mammoth Mountain, told The Sheet that leaving the scene of an accident, other than to get help, can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor. Smith, along with Health & Safety Manager Cindy Dady and Public Relations Manager Lauren Burke, spoke to The Sheet on Monday about Mammoth’s elimination of the Hill Safety Department last season (2016-17), and whether it has anything to do with the perceived increase in skier collisions this season.

“The changing of the Hill Safety program has nothing to do with the collisions,” Smith said.

Smith explained that the Hill Safety Department, started by Dennis Agee in the early 2000s, was “phased out” last season when some of its leadership moved on to other ski areas. “We took the opportunity not to fill... those 8-10 [Hill Safety Officer] spots and supplement them with ski patrollers,” said Smith.

Smith said that, while the Hill Safety Department was in existence, there were only 40 front line ski patrollers at Mammoth. Now, Smith said, MMSA has added 10 more for a total of 50.

“We certainly didn’t get rid of [the Hill Safety Program],” see COLLISIONS, page 7

MHS DOMINANT

What the underwhelming winter means for Mammoth

By Giles

On February 1, 2018, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that Sierra snowpack was at only 30 percent of the historic average.

At the same time last year, the DWR reported the snowpack at 173 percent of average. At that time, the Associated Press called the announcement evidence of a “drought-busting” winter, and the department predicted the highest runoff levels in over 20 years.

Nevertheless, local business owners report that business in Mammoth Lakes was good in January, and over the Christmas holidays. John Morris, Director of Operations for Snowcreek Resort, told The Sheet on January 29 that “We have actually been slightly busier than last year [for November through January].”

Tom Cage, owner of Kittridge Sports in Mammoth Lakes, said that, although he’s never seen so little snow at this point in the season, business is better than during the peak of the drought.

“The last two years were so good that people committed early with their reservations, and decided to come up [regardless of snow],” Cage said see ECONOMY, page 20

NEW BLEU CREW

Theresa and Brandon Brocia (center) with their crew at the new Bleu Market & Kitchen on Old Mammoth Road. The Market opened on Sunday, February 11. See photos of opening day, p. 16.
CLIMBING THE CHART(ER)S
By Lunch

Trivia Question: What percentage of Inyo County students are African-American?

Hint: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1 percent of Inyo County's population is African-American.

That's a lousy, misleading hint.

Inyo County's student population is 25 percent African-American.

Wait ... what? This is because the Inyo County Office of Education administers three charter schools subdivided into 29 different sites in Southern California.

As former Inyo County Superintendent of Schools Terry McAteer says, it's about a $30 million annual operation.

So why does Inyo County manage such a far-flung operation? According to Chris Langley, President of Inyo County's Board of Education, "we serve kids who either dropped out or were expelled from their traditional high schools."

Further, "LAUSD [Los Angeles Unified School District] wasn't interested in these kids or operating charter schools."

State law allows LEAs [Local Education Agencies] to operate schools which lie outside their geographical boundaries.

In exchange for its administration (payroll, et. al.) and oversight of its charter schools, Inyo County is allowed to charge up to 6 percent for administration (Inyo charges 5 percent) and 1 percent for oversight.

So what does Inyo County Office of Education do with this windfall? As McAteer says, if you charge 5 plus one, but can be efficient enough that it only costs 4, Inyo County gets to keep the excess (in this example, 2).

Doesn't sound like much until you realize Inyo's estimated take is 2 percent of $30 million, or $600,000.

So what does Inyo County Office of Education do with this windfall? According to Langley, "we don't use the money for personnel, because you never know when it may go away" (such as a contract with a charter not being renewed).

Instead, McAteer said, the general question the Board of Education has asked itself is: "What is in the best interest of education in this community?" Which is why the Inyo County Office of Education has not only spent the money at school sites (to improve the theater at Bishop Union High School, as one of many examples) and bought computers for every district student, but it has also performed renovations of County libraries, upgrades to grounds and facilities at Bishop's Cerro Coso campus, and even created an empowerment so that every local kid wishing to attend Cerro Coso will be granted free books and tuition in perpetuity.

And, thanks to the Inyo Promise initiative, qualified students are guaranteed to receive reduced tuition for enrollment at the University of Nevada-Reno. When the program was first conceived, three local students attended UNR. Today, there are 19.

McAteer retired as Superintendent of Schools in 2016. The Board, however, continues to retain him to manage its charter schools. His contract pays him $40,000 annually and includes health benefits, use of an automobile, and an expense account.

When The Sheet spoke to McAteer for this story on Thursday morning, he was in the process of conducting a school site visit with Inyo Board member Harry Petersen.

As Langley says, "The Board is very active and encouraged to be active by Mr. McAteer."

Just this past December, the Board undertook a four-day trip to Southern California during which it attended five site visits, two staff appreciation events and two staff meetings.

Langley added that he sees his Board's mission as focused on education not just locally but globally. When the idea of managing faraway charter schools was first presented to him years ago by McAteer, his response was, as long as we can positively impact those kids while not negatively impacting the kids at home, he was all for it.

Langley, who taught for 30 years in the Lone Pine schools, says, "As an educator, I know what they're doing down there. The overall theme is social justice. The challenges for the County's charter student population are many—families in disarray, students who already have dependents of their own. "We have social workers on-site at many campuses," Langley says.

But then there are the success stories. Langley says one student told him, "I was going to go into Dad's business, until I realized Dad's business (drug dealing) involved killing my friends."

I wrote the above as prelude to a follow-up on the story we wrote last week about Mono County Superintendent Dr. Stacey Adler. The story related to her management of a San Diego charter school on behalf of Mono County.

Mono County operates on a far smaller scale than Inyo. It manages one school and 240 students. It brings in about $127,000 in revenue from management of the school, according to Adler. After expenses, it generates about $100,000 in profit for the County, which is placed in the General Fund.

Over the past six years, Adler has paid out approximately $90,000 in stipends to employees (as well as herself) to perform the extra work required to maintain the San Diego school.

These stipends were paid separately from and in addition to salary. According to McAteer, Mono County Boards of Education approve a Superintendent's salary and budget.

Within that budget, the Superintendent has the authority to determine who shall receive stipends and for how much. However, Adler does not have the authority to grant stipends to herself.

Dr. Adler's mistake was in paying herself a stipend without formal Board approval.

She says her stipends were disclosed and discussed during closed sessions of the Board, and that her Board knew and approved of the stipends.

Typically, said Adler, she conducts at least two site visits to San Diego per year on her own time. She also writes the LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan) for her charter school, which she says can take several days to complete.

"If anything, I lowball my charge [to MCOE]," she said.

Given the controversy it's generated, Adler said she will not take a stipend this year.

There's more to say. Continuing coverage next week.
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3. Watch your speed and be prepared for others to make sudden changes in direction and speed.

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LETTERS

Not biting

Dear Editor:

I’m writing to offer a different opinion on the article in last week’s issue (see “TBDiness Deals,” Februa-
ry 10).

My opinion comes as a former Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board Member and as one of the longest-
sitting members in MLT’s history. I was also one of the greatest sup-
porters of the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and have a strong understanding of its ori-
ginal intent… flying into Bishop is not what the business community
signed up for.

Last week’s article started off with a quote from Mammoth COO Eric 
Clark, stating, “Commercial Air Service… doesn’t belong in Bishop.”

This quote comes from the same organization pounding their fists on the table, insisting the airport
belongs in Mammoth Lakes.

In fact, our Town is going to be paying nearly $50 million in debt over the next 20 years because we
were so insistent the airport be-

longed in Mammoth Lakes.

One of the primary goals of the

TBID was to drive long-term visita-
tion to Mammoth Lakes. Since the

creation of the TBID, funding to

Mammoth Lakes Tourism (MLT) has gone from approximately $2.5
million to roughly $7 Million. As

MLT’s Executive Director [John Urdi]
would brag, “We now have more
marketing dollars than any states.”

My response is, where are the new

long-term visitors? With all the new
marketing dollars, we have not even

surpassed peak winter visitations

that existed prior to the formation of

MLT or the TBID. Intravest, a foreign

company, did a better job at driving

winter visitation… or should I say

the snow does a better job at driving

winter visitation… not MLT or

its failed air marketing efforts.

After MLT’s failed efforts to drive

“long term visitations” to Mammoth

Lakes, as was originally promised,

and its consistent failure to fill 76-
seat planes, is our community now
to believe Mammoth Lakes needs to
fly larger planes with larger subsi-
dies into a city 40 minutes away?

If the threat is to take away TBID in
the event MLT does not support
air service to Bishop, then my sug-
gestion to Town Council and the
business community is that we call
the threat and get rid of it.

Give the $5 million in TBID dollars
back to the business community,
and pass the savings back on to our
guests.

After all, the past few years have

proven that snow is what truly drives

our winter visitations… not MLT or

its failed air marketing efforts.

Matthew Lehman
Mammoth Lakes

The graph pictured above shows annual totals for passenger enplanements at Mammoth
Yosemite Airport (MMH) from 2010 through 2016. Mammoth’s TBID was passed in
2013. Passenger enplanements have declined steadily at MMH since that time. The
tax was approved to bolster tourism by providing additional funds to Mammoth Lakes
Tourism, among other agencies.

Given this situation, the business
community is supposed to entrust
Mammoth Lakes Tourism with more
marketing dollars and a new plan to
move visitors out of our town? No
thanks! Prove you can fill the planes to
Mammoth Lakes first! If you want to
make Bishop a backup airport in the
event of inclement weather, let’s
do that, but making Bishop a prima-
ry airport after years of well thought
out planning is just chasing the next

shiny new lure. MLT should save its
new shiny lures and fishing expedici-
ions for “Fishmas”.

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MONO SUPES PUSH FOR GRAZING PLAN AT CONWAY
By Giles

At its meeting on Tuesday, February 20, the Mono County Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 to initiate the development of a Grazing Management Plan at Conway and Mattly Ranches. In doing so, the Supervisors decided that the County would assume all legal risks associated with grazing at the site.

The two historic properties are located on either side of Highway 395, in the vicinity of Conway Summit, to the north of Mono Lake. Portions of the properties are owned by Mono County and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) respectively. The ranches are governed by a conservation easement held by the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT), which sets out conservation provisions that MAT Ranches, and said the irrigated meadows on the properties are important habitat for Bi-State Sage Grouse.

According to Steve Nelson, Manager of the Bishop BLM Field Office, Conway and Mattly Ranches have been grazed for over 100 years. Nelson said meadows that were previously irrigated by ranching tenants are now important habitat for local wildlife.

Dr. Orrin Sage, a former ESLT Board Member and owner of Sage Associates, told Supervisors that careful grazing could help restore Conway and Mattly Ranches to their “pre-contact” state. District 2 Supervisor Fred Stumpf asked Sage if he thought allowing cattle grazing at the site would expose either a lessee or the County to litigation. “In my opinion, the risk factor is greater if you don’t proceed. It will burn, and prescribed burning brings liability,” said Sage.

The BLM’s Nelson said he supports cattle grazing at Conway and Mattly Ranches, and said the irrigated meadows on the properties are important habitat for Bi-State Sage Grouse. Nelson said he has seen meadows identified for conservation and blocked off to grazing divide in the care of the BLM which had previously thrived in the care of ranchers. “On the fiscal side, what I have learned in 30 years of work is that if I want to do water management and manage what is growing out there at a given time of year… I can do it cheaper, quicker, and better with a livestock permit,” said Nelson.

In May 2017, the BOS voted to require prospective lessees fund and sponsor CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) and NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) analysis of their grazing operations at Conway and Mattly Ranches. This way, if a concerned agency to sue, the lessee and not the County that was sized, says Bien, is the fact that the State’s “Fair Share” funding policy (intended to provide additional funding to school districts that were hit hardest by the recession), haven’t evaluated the district’s need since 2009-2010. Bien said property revenues began to decline later in Mono than elsewhere in the state, and that the District has the double whammy of property revenue and reduced state funding.

The State did not, however, reduce district’s obligation to provide additional funding annually for students who are in foster care, are economically disadvantaged, or are English language learners.

In 2017, the California Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that State funding per student declined by 11.8 percent between 2008 and 2012. MUSD’s State funding per student was cut by about 50 percent after 2008, according to data provided in MUSD’s First Interim Budget Report for 2017-2018. MUSD has an enrollment of approximately 1,200 students. For 2017-2018, the District has budgeted $14.7 million. That means the district intends to spend roughly $12,250 per student. In 2015-2016, the average spending per student in California was $10,291 (the national average is $12,252 per student). According to Superintendent Lois Klein, California has historically provided less state funding for education than other states. According to the 2015 census, the most recent data available, California is ranked 22nd among states in the U.S. for per-pupil spending. Cuts to education funding are such that the current state funding for MUSD is “barely enough to pay for the students.” Klein added that, “In California, the only way you can do new facilities is through a bond.” To repair the roof at just the High School is estimated to cost $1.7 million,” said Chief Business Office Brooke Bien. “With no bond, MUSD’s projected deficit of $1 million for the 2018-2019 school year would increase to $2.7 million,” wrote Bien in MUSD’s 2017-2018 First Interim Report.

According to Klein, the District lost that funding because the state determined that MUSD had lost less revenue than other districts during the recession, based on property tax revenue it earned in 2010. Bien said that 2009-2010 was the highest grossing property tax year in the school’s history, but that “the very next year, property tax revenue dropped by $1.5 million.” We were just two to three years behind the rest of the state.” Additionally, the State allowed schools to issue furloughs (pink slips) to staff immediately following the recession. MUSD never used those furloughs. By the time its revenue declined two years later, furloughs were no longer legally permissible.

Additionally, the state took away funding it had previously provided to MUSD, and redistributed those funds to other school districts deemed needier. That redistribution has not been re-assessed since.

Klein said this week that she is no longer hopeful that the District will receive that funding in the future. Klein previously hoped that the State would re-assess the distribution of funds through its “Fair Share” program, so that allocations reflect current property tax revenues and not those from 2009-2010. When asked what will happen if property tax revenue does not start to increase more rapidly, and if state funding is not restored for MUSD, Klein said the District will continue to operate at a larger and larger deficit, until “we will be forced to think really hard and make some decisions.”

Klein said that although MUSD has not implemented staff layoffs, the District has opted not to replace employees when they have left or retired of their own will. “We’ve not gone in and slashed people, and most of our cuts have utilized the elimination, food, usage of vehicles. We are trying to keep them as far away from students as possible.” During 2017-2018 MUSD has a teacher to student ratio of roughly 19 to 1, which is lower than the state average of 22 to 1. According to the California Budget and Policy Center, the national average is 15.4 to 1.

Once upon a time... INTO THE WOODS

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said Smith. “We actually made it better.”

Former Mammoth Mountain Hill Safety Officer Sally Sperle said that the biggest part of her job during the season of 2015-16 was telling skiers to slow down on Mammoth Mountain.

Sperle said that a Hill Safety Officer was almost always posted at several of the biggest intersections at Mammoth. She said that their job was to inform guests about the relationship between speed and safety.

Former Hill Safety Officer Charlie Bennett said that the top of Chair 1 is referred to by patrollers as “Times Square,” and that, as a Hill Safety Officer, “you’d be out there yelling and screaming and people just blow by you.” Bennett said that, after helping patrollers post signage and identify hazards in the morning, “we’d go down and stand at [different] areas” where trails merged. He said he had to complete about two weeks of training and pass a ski test to become a Hill Safety Officer.

Sperle said she thinks having Hill Safety officers to remind people to slow down helped ski patrollers do their jobs more effectively. “The Patrol have so much going on already,” said Sperle. “If you’re a patrol officer, are you going to go tell that person to slow down or are you going to help somebody who’s hurt?”

“Standing there and watching what people actually do... was definitely mind-blowing. Like cutting off ski school. People would actually ski through the little kids,” recalled Sperle.

Smith said that the Hill Safety Department was “never really intended to take over patrol duties, it was intended to augment [mountain] safety.” Smith said the “mountain safety” umbrella includes everything from designating slow zones to closing runs to guest education.

Cindy Dady said that the Hill Safety Department was “never really intended to take over patrol duties, it was intended to augment [mountain] safety.” Smith said the “mountain safety” umbrella includes everything from designating slow zones to closing runs to guest education.

Cindy Dady said that Mammoth Mountain now utilizes department heads, managers, and other front-line employees who are “out in very visible jackets deployed at our slow zones” to tell visitors to slow down on busy weekends (such as this one). She said that when those employees witness people going too fast, “they will make contact with their eyes, slow them down, then our patrol backs up that group and are the individuals who interact with guests who might have been going too fast.”

Dady said that a team of employees will accompany speeders onto lifts and hand out “Know the Zone” cards and discuss safety initiatives and the Skiers Responsibility Code with them. She said they’re often rewarded with hot cocoa. Dady said that Mammoth is also introducing these materials to its lodging and retail properties (see an example on page 3).

Bennett and Sperle both said they were concerned that mountain hosts (identified by their trademark yellow jackets) may not be as firm with problem skiers as Hill Safety Officers once were.

“We were a little more of a younger crowd than the hosts, so we were... a little more aggressive,” said Sperle, who said she had the right to give warnings or to pull passes.

“The hardest part out there,” said Smith, is “the definition of ‘reckless,’ or ‘going too fast’ is subjective.” He said that patrols now take photos of violators’ passes and that Mammoth is “creating a database on each guest that skis here.” He said this is a recent development in the last year.

Smith said that any guest who gets a second offense for speeding (and any employee who gets a first offense) must go through the “Ride Another Day” program in order to get their pass turned back on.

That program is a short film (followed by a questionnaire) about a five-year-old girl who was killed by a snowboarder in Montana. The snowboarder also perished in the incident, and it was reported that he was going approximately 50 miles per hour when he collided with the young girl. The video is available online (warning: it’s a tear-jerker) and was produced by the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA).

“The responses that we’re getting (guests) didn’t realize the potential dangers of speeding. Dady said, “They see themselves as a changed person after watching the video.”

Smith said that the video is also mandatory for anyone involved in a collision who is determined to be at fault. He said that the length of a pass suspension “depends on the egregiousness of an offense, and did say that there are a few Mammoth guests with lifetime bans.

When asked if he thought people speeding was resulting in more collisions, Mono County Paramedic Training Officer Ray McGrane said, “As far as trying to make an injury pattern because of one specific thing, it’s going to be hard.” McGrane added that “When snow conditions are lesser during the holiday season and there are more people congested into a smaller area, it’s a numbers game.”

Laurie Bates, Emergency Room Department Manager at Mammoth Hospital, did not return a call for comment about admissions to the ER during the open hours of the ski area, though Ehren Goetz, Communications Strategist, told The Sheet that Bates said any information she could offer would be “anecdotal.”

The Sheet then asked Goetz for admissions rates to the ER from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. during the holidays of the last few seasons, which he declined to provide, saying in an email that “any patient information from this or previous years we could provide would be inaccurate to report any direct correlations.”

According to a 10-year injury study published by the NSAA and conducted by Jasper Shealy, PhD, of the Rochester Institute of Technology, as a percentage of all accidents, collisions with another person have not changed significantly in the past 10 years.

“Roughly 7 percent of all incidents involve collisions with another person, and this rate has generally held steady since 1980,” it read. Smith said any information she could provide, saying in an email that “We don’t actually have specific data to release, but can say based on our records, collisions have absolutely not increased with the restructuring of the Hill Safety Team into Ski Patrol.”
LUCY ON THE LOOSE

Shih Tzu mix makes the rounds in Mammoth Lakes, may be in the running for new Mayor of Mammoth

By Rea

“Honestly, without the people in Mammoth, Lucy would never have come home,” said Meredith Vender, whose 12-pound Shih Tzu mix, Lucy, survived for eight nights outdoors in Mammoth and was finally captured on Monday, February 12. “Your town is incredible.”

Vender (who adopted Lucy last June) and a group of friends were visiting Mammoth early this month when Lucy made a break for it. On Saturday, February 3, Vender went skiing and left Lucy at her condo with a friend who had volunteered to watch the dogs.

“When they opened the door, Lucy just bolted,” said Vender. “My one friend, who was pregnant, is a marathon runner,” and took off after Lucy. “And a random guy on a bike jumped in to help… he followed her for about two miles.”

But Lucy evaded her pursuers. Vender’s pregnant friend slipped and fell in the chase, and ended up going to the emergency room, “which added another horrible layer” to the ordeal. Vender was on a chairlift at Mammoth Mountain when she got the phone call. “The first thing my friend said was, ‘Don’t panic.’ Well, of course… I panicked. I thought, ‘She’s already been eaten by a coyote, it’s over, she’s dead.'”

Apparently, chasing Lucy was the wrong thing to do. “You’re not supposed to do that,” she learned. “It’ll just make them more anxious.”

The first night, Vender was inconsolable. But over the next few days, Lucy was spotted in The Village. And Woolly’s Tube Park. And the Mammoth Mountain Garage. And in the Knolls.

Vender started putting up fliers. “The employees of the Village Hotel bought me coffee at Starbucks,” said Vender. “And complete strangers came to help me look. They put up fliers for me when I had to go back down to L.A.”

“On Monday [February 5], I had to go back for work… then I got a call at 4:30 p.m. that she was following people in The Village. So I dropped my friend in L.A. and drove back up.”

No sighting Tuesday. Vender drove back down south. Then back up Friday. She camped out near the Earthquake Fault, cooking bacon, buying rotisserie chickens. At one point, she was followed by a coyote. “So now I know for sure there are coyotes out here, and it’s getting really cold,” she said.

She drove back to L.A. again on Sunday. Then on Monday she got the call. Lucy had finally been cornered by Zach Nikolau at the Mammoth Garage. Nikolau was an accidental hero. “In all honesty, I had no clue” that Lucy was the subject of a Mammoth-wide dog hunt. “I just went on my lunch break,” he said. “I saw this little dog running around in the parking lot… when I came back to work I saw a lost sign and I was like, ‘Oh crap! I just saw that dog!’ So I ran back outside and followed her footprints in the snow to one of our shipping containers and there she was, laying down inside.”

Nikolau tried to grab her, but she growled at him. “So I just closed the door so she couldn’t get out” and called Angela Owens, the Mammoth resident who had spearheaded the local search party.

“Lucy wouldn’t have come home without Angela,” said Vender. “She put up over 100 fliers for me. She went to the garage when they cornered Lucy and put on her sweater” to provide her with a familiar smell. “She brought Lucy back to her house and even let me sleep there” on Monday night. “And I’d never met her before.”

Owens told The Sheet that she’d seen a flier with Lucy’s picture on it and “I had the natural reaction most people in Mammoth do” when they see a dog has gone missing. “You’re like, ‘Okay, good luck.’” But she couldn’t stop thinking about Lucy. She heard that former police officer Sean Frank was out with heat vision goggles at night, so she thought maybe she could spend at least a day searching. She even had a dream that Lucy had made it back home. So she looked. And on Saturday, February 10, a week after Lucy went missing, “I freaking saw her,” said Owens.

But she couldn’t catch her. So she printed up more flyers to put in The Village. Owens said that businesses in the village like Sushi Rei and Gomez’s, who let her put Lucy’s picture in prominent locations, were crucial to finding the pup. “When I told people that she had survived a week, they were like, ‘Oh my god…’” Owens said. “And the story changed,” said Owens. “Even people who said she’s coyote food started to think maybe we could get her home… I think one of the biggest things was people sharing the sightings, because that kept hope alive.”

As of press time, Lucy was home with her mom, sleeping in her familiar cozy gray bed. “She’s crazy,” said Vender. “She’s a little warrior.”

ACED IT

Crowley Lake dog survives 12 nights in Long Valley Caldera

By Rea

Mammoth resident Mimi McDonald took her Swiss Mountain Dog-Hound mix, Ace, out to the Long Valley Caldera on Tuesday, January 30. “And, standard procedure, once we hit the dirt road, I let him out to run,” said McDonald, who adopted him when his owner, her high school sweetheart, moved to L.A.

“Donald’s friends deploying drones, and the trail went cold. Over a week passed without a sign, with McDonald camping out in the caldera. On Monday, February 12, McDonald, who works at Alpine Approach, and the couple she and her partner were on their way to Alpine Approach, and the couple had found Ace. “He’d probably lost 20 pounds,” said McDonald, who adopted him when his owner, her high school sweetheart, moved to L.A.

“Of course… I panicked. I thought, ‘He’s already been eaten by a coyote, it’s over, he’s dead.'”

As of press time, Lucy was home with her mom, sleeping in her familiar cozy gray bed. “She’s crazy,” said Vender. “She’s a little warrior.”

Lucy FOR MAYOR

Answers to NO ONE!

12lbs white and brown Terrier mix is well on her way to establishing local residency, the hard way. Lucy believes more foot traffic is key to Mammoth’s unique way of life, and she has a proven record of reaching across the aisle, working together with fellow Coyotes. First order as Mayor, Lucy intends to clean up the recent newspaper litter that has ridded our fair Village.

“You can’t stop progress… or me”
A GIRL, A ROCK BAR, AND A DREAM
Meet local badass Agnes Vianzon, founder of Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps, at Liberty Bar benefit

By Rea

Agnes Vianzon, Director of the newly-formed Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps (ESCC), got her new job in the classic Eastside way—she created it.

Yes, her office is her living room. And yes, her entire house has turned into a gear locker for the backcountry trail crews she manages, but the former Tusks bartender and Director of Programs for the California Conservation Corps (CCC) is making it happen. This Sunday, February 18, New Orleans-based roots rocker Eric Lindell will play a benefit show for ESCC at the Liberty Bar in Mammoth, where music lovers can donate to an organization dedicated to getting young people a taste of the wilderness.

Vianzon joined the CCC after graduating from UC Santa Barbara with a degree in Environmental Studies. A job she found online brought her to Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI). She wanted to stay in the mountains and "be a ski bum," so she started working at Mammoth during her winters and leading trail crews in the summer months.

"I slung drinks half the year, and half the year I was sober and in the middle of nowhere," she said of the decade or so that she spent living a seasonal lifestyle.

But all the while, there was this idea that kept buzzing around in her head. "I've wracked my brain trying to think of that 'patient zero' moment" where the idea for an Eastern Sierra-based trail crew came into focus, she said this year in an interview on the podcast She Explores. "But as I'm catching up with folks [now that ESCC is a reality], they'll mention they'll remember me talking about it way back when."

Vianzon said that Mammoth was the natural choice for the crew. "The access to recreation that we have...I see these kids, and they've never been to the mountains, and you could plop someone in the middle of town and just say, 'What trails do you want to go on?'

She said that "there were always rumors that the CCC was going to establish a Bishop residential center," but it just never happened. "So, I said, 'Let's just do it.'"

So she quit her government job. She built a Board of Directors (Mono County Supervisor Stacy Corless is a member). She applied for a 501c3 (after reading a Nonprofits for Dummies book).

And last summer, Vianzon got a grant for the ESCC to establish an all-woman trail crew (ages 18-25) to work in SEKI. She also put together an inaugural Women in the Wilderness (WIW) Trip, leading about a dozen women on an 8-day, 40-mile backpacking trip where they volunteered with trail crews for a portion of the journey.

Chelsea Taylor, who found her way to backcountry trail work after graduating from college in Chicago with a criminal justice degree, led that trip. She said trail work led her to "explore not just my individual potential, but my potential as part of a group."

She said that young people benefit from this kind of work because "The success of a season project...is dependent on our ability to understand each other and achieve things. That's kind of the romantic part...it's a verbal tradition and learning process."

"These skills, you can apply them to anything in your life," said Valerie McCampbell, who led the all-women's crew in SEKI last summer. "Living just the bare minimum, no running water, no cell phones, you need to connect with people on a deep level, and that's valuable for anybody."

McCampbell, who will lead this year's eight-week SEKI crew (which is currently hiring), said that "No matter what your background is or what your life is like outside the backcountry, everyone has something unique to offer."

To learn more about ESCC, visit www.esternsierracc.org, call 760.935.3877, or even better, stop by the Liberty Bar on Sunday beginning at 9 p.m. The show is free, but a $30 donation will benefit the ESCC.

See ad, p. 15 for more information.
QUIZ QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

By Paul Oster

In a recent Jack Lunch editorial in The Sheet it was expressed that the Ice Rink/Multi-Use Facility (MUF) should be made an election issue for the upcoming three Town Council seats in June. We like the idea. Let the candidates and local voters debate and decide. What we want to know is: what other issues should the candidates be questioned about?

There are important issues facing Mammoth. Town government and real estate meet at many intersections in this resort community. In fact, real estate’s symbiotic relationship with tourism makes this town tick. Almost all of the dollars the government entities have to spend are derived from real estate property taxes, and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue, also known as a bed tax. Those tax dollars are generated when our guests stay in some form of local real estate (predominately condos). Many local residents are employed in building, remodeling, repairing, maintaining or renting this real estate. The tourism wonks may think they are almighty, but the real estate and the multitude of various service providers are the ones who make it all happen.

Unlike most communities, the majority of Mammoth real estate owners are “absentee” owners, and they rely on us locals to perform in a responsible and reliable manner. This includes the Town Council and local government. And ultimately these second/absentee homeowners don’t have a vote in these matters simply because they aren’t registered here in Mammoth. That gives us full-time residents a greater responsibility to be engaged, or at least that is the way it should be. The Town Council and local government controls how most of the money is spent.

So a big questions is: Should the Town of Mammoth Lakes’ financial strategy be more conservative, or more risk-and-debt prone? That question echoes a familiar theme in both real estate investment and government.

Today, most governments like to borrow and spend to their heart’s content. But does anyone want to recognize that we live in a boom/bust economy; both at the local and state levels? Busts historically crush the risk-and-debt-prone until they can borrow again (the Town of Mammoth Falls falls into this category right now). Conservative operators are typically in a position to take advantage of the busts. It is a proven strategy to get ahead.

Do the present local residents (and voters) in Mammoth know how many Town Council members, Town Managers, Planning Directors, Marketing Directors, Parks & Recreation Directors, etc. have bowed through this town since its incorporation? I’ve known and dealt with plenty of them. The majority have moved on and have no concern for any of the messes they may have left behind (does the name Paul Marangella mean anything to you?).

The current group is no different. Just because someone’s words make them sound endeared to the Mammoth area doesn’t mean they have any real investment here, or long term intentions. It is the Council’s responsibility to make sure poor decisions aren’t being made just to make someone’s resume look great.

Are our memories so short that we can’t remember that we filed for bankruptcy just a few years ago? Those bankruptcy headlines hurt this community and may have suppressed local real estate values as much as the drought.

So I’d like to know any prospective candidate’s position on local economics and spending, because sooner or later, the chickens come home to roost.

Which leads me to propose this question for Council candidates: At what point does the Town’s massive marketing budget meet the law of diminishing returns? This is an economic law that few people understand. Its half cousin is the concept of opportunity cost. Can any of our Town Council candidates process these two concepts and question what we are spending on marketing, and are we spending it efficiently and effectively? And is there a better place to spend some of the allocation that would be more beneficial to the big

Reasons to buy a vacation property in Mammoth Lakes

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- Future Mammoth Lakes airport expansion with additional flights and destinations, along with a proposed regional plan for commercial air service with additional flights, destinations and more reliable service.
- With an $8 million annual marketing budget, Mammoth Lakes Tourism has an incredible global marketing arm that is bringing in tens of thousands of international visitors. Mammoth’s room tax revenue rose a staggering 63% between 2014-2015 and 2016-2017.
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MammothLakesProperties.com

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Cynthia Fleming (760) 914-4444
Info@MammothLakesProperties.com
DRE 01899459
OSTER
continued from page 10

picture of the community? Do the TC candidates desire more quality, or more quantity from our tourism? Do we really understand the return on the marketing investment? I'd like to hear the debate.

I support the Town's purchase of the Shady Rest parcel. I'd like to think I could have negotiated a better deal. As I have pointed out in the past, when you control the land use (zoning) of a parcel you control the value. And land value is compromised here in Mammoth because of the high cost of construction. But what do I know? The future Council will drive what is ultimately developed on that land. So what do the candidates see as deriving "the highest and best use" from this piece of land, which is so critical to the community's future? Is it more middle-income housing, low income housing, or both? And is there an opportunity to utilize some of the land for something else (an opportunity cost question again)?

Which brings me to the Main Street redevelopment plans. Now that the powers-that-be have become less delusional about the process, how do we promote and incentivize a more economically vibrant downtown and commercial district? And without bankrupting everybody? And doesn't it need to apply to all of the commercial areas including Old Mammoth Road and around The Village? The current planning mentality seems to only think in terms of "new," when the old is what we need to revitalize. A legendary Mammoth planning commissioner, Helen Thompson, used to remind us that we don't have "a giant eraser." That would be nice. But it isn't reality. So what are the candidates' visions for revitalizing the commercial areas of Mammoth? What policies will they support or not support? Hopefully they are grounded in the real world.

Now we arrive at one of my long contentsions (and this is never talked about): Should the Town Council be a truly paid position like County Supervisor (not that anybody is getting rich off of that)? Paying the Council members a decent salary would be a relatively small line item in the Town's greater budget and it would help ensure competition, quality, stability, focus, etc. The Town probably pisses away more money than this would cost. It is very difficult to be a Council member and own a business or hold down a full time job. There are so many meetings (beyond regular Council meetings) and tons of reading to do. And there are endless people who want your "ear." Are we short-changing the community by making this such a compromised position? I pose the question. I'd like to hear some thoughts on this.

And as office space becomes increasingly less necessary (and less valuable), does the Town really need to be considering a massive expenditure for government offices? In the real estate world, owning is great, but sometimes leasing is better. Real estate investors are bailing out of office space across the globe. And for good reason. Does building new space make sense? Again, is this the highest and best way to spend taxpayer dollars? Candidates?

And I agree with Jack Lunch, the Ice Rink/MUF should really be left up to the voters at this point. Is it really the highest and best use of $15 million in this town? It really is a $15 million project — we've already spent $1 million and we haven't made a decision to build it, or how to build it, and the ultimate cost is increasing all the time. It is a fair question to ask anyone running for a Town Council position. And has anyone completed a real cost/benefit analysis on this project?

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The current Council majority is too emotionally invested at this point and their majority may not even be on the Council in the near future. They really owe it to be left to a vote of the community. Whatever happened to the old public planning axiom; What is going to benefit the greatest amount of people?

So candidates; Is an Ice Rink (the MUF is just a bureaucratic red herring so the facility doesn't look like a special interest project) the highest-and-best usage of the expenditure? And not only the high cost of development but also the ongoing line item expenditures of personnel, maintenance, insurance, utilities, etc.? Marketing budgets and police budgets can be trimed in tough economic times but large facilities have ongoing debt and operating expenses. Of course, if it doesn't work out we can turn it into a homeless shelter.

Which then leads to the School District bond proposal and questions for the candidates. The District wants the local residents to pass a $63 million property tax based bond initiative. But they didn't want to see OSTER, page 16
By Giles

IN LOVE WITH A GHOST TOWN

Bishop's Steve McIndoo has spent over a decade caring for the Champion Sparkplug Mine

The Champion Sparkplug Mine is a ghost town. The metal-frame buildings of the mine's Black Eagle Camp perch on the lip of a large gulch. The Andalucite cliff face into which the mines were blasted looms above the cabins, which housed miners and their families while the mine was in operation, between 1919 and 1945. There is still a rough trail to the upper mine from Black Eagle Camp, which is maintained by volunteers like Bishop's Steve McIndoo.

The mine was founded in 1919 by Dr. Joseph Jeffrey, a dentist, and was the first Sillimanite mine in the United States. In the early 1900s, Sillimanite was added to porcelain to make it hard and heat resistant. For about 30 years, it was essential to the manufacturing of dental products, lab ware, and, most importantly, spark plugs. The Champion Sparkplug Mine shipped Sillimanite all the way to Detroit, where it was incorporated into spark plugs for airplanes and automobiles, until an affordable synthetic alternative was discovered.

In McIndoo's heyday, he was known among truckers who regularly worked the local shipping circuit for his late-night CB radio calls. Because he was always in the mountains, he could tell them if chains were required on the high passes (there was no digital information sharing system in those days). He said he even recruited a few truckers to do volunteer trail work and maintenance at the Sparkplug Mine on their days off. He'd often hike in with his son, who now lives in Ridgecrest, and his dogs, Gidget and Honey.

McIndoo said he has met people from all over the world at the Sparkplug Mine.

Two years ago, Steve was diagnosed with a heart condition that prevents him from hiking to the mine alone, and limits his ability to haul materials. He's now only able to hike in a couple times a year. The log books are still filled with stories of people who have met him, or who visit the mines annually and wonder where he has been.

Steve has met a few young people who come up to do trail work, and believes that the mine will continue to be cared for.

The land on which the buildings are located is part of the Inyo National Forest. McIndoo said he knows the agency is strapped for funds right now, and that they need volunteers more than ever. "If they could pay me to be a caretaker, to go up there and take care of the place, I'd do it. That'd be the best job in the whole world right there," said McIndoo.

Steve said he hopes visitors will respect the site, so that others can enjoy it. "I probably keep it up better than my own place," laughed McIndoo.

There are no signs pointing to the Sparkplug Mine from Highway 6. Getting there requires a willingness to hike and use of a map. Call the White Mountain Ranger District in Bishop for more information, at 760.873.2400.

Steve's preferred cabin is The Hilton. All cabins are first-come, first-served, and have "occupied" signs on their door handles.

Steve McIndoo at the Sparkplug Mine with dogs Gidget and Honey.

in the mid-1940s. But this is no ordinary, hantavirus-infested ghost town. The cabins are immaculately swept, and most have curtains on the windows. Their logbooks are full of entries from hikers who met McIndoo on the trail, or shared a meal with him at camp, or witnessed him hauling loads of tools up the three mile trail to remove a downed tree or fix a porch railing.

Since the early 2000s, McIndoo has spent most of his days off from work maintaining the camp. For at least 10 years, he has hiked in two to three times a month to do trail work, pick up trash, and fix the occasional broken window. He sweeps out and paints the outhouses (which are still in use), installs water bars, and clears downed trees from established paths.

Steve McIndoo was born in Long Beach, but moved to Bishop when he was 14. As a student at Bishop High School, he worked for the Youth Conservation Corps, where he learned to build trails.

"This whole valley, it's a special place," said McIndoo.

McIndoo first visited the Sparkplug Mine in 1985. He hiked in with a friend, who warned that he should be prepared to spend the night on the mountain because "when you're up there, you won't want to go back home." McIndoo returned to the site over the years to get away, while working at local gas stations.

McIndoo worked the graveyard shift at the Bishop Creek Chevron for 12 years, until 2015. The schedule was a convenient one for maximizing time in the mountains. "In those days, I'd work four tens," he said. "As soon as I got off on Monday morning, my pack was already packed, and I'd take off for Sparkplug."

He and a friend once hosted a birthday party for his son at the camp. McIndoo baked a birthday cake and deep dish pizza in the wood-fired oven in the camp's kitchen. According to a 1992 article in "The Album: Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono," that stove weighs 600 pounds and was hauled into camp by a mule of superhero stature called Old Maude.

During one of his many visits to the mine, Steve met Don and Margy Fraser. Don was up on the roof of one of the cabins, fixing something, and McIndoo stopped to talk with him. He discovered that the couple would come up for two weeks at a time twice a year to do maintenance on the cabins. In 1971, Margy had converted the old Blacksmith's shop at Black Eagle Camp into a museum, complete with newspaper clippings, photographs, letters and other historical documents about the mine's history.

Steve said he hopes visitors will respect the site, so that others can enjoy it. "I probably keep it up better than my own place," laughed McIndoo.

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Steve's preferred cabin is The Hilton. All cabins are first-come, first-served, and have "occupied" signs on their door handles.

Steve McIndoo at the Sparkplug Mine with dogs Gidget and Honey.
According to organizer Chris Leonard, this year’s fourth annual Owens River Clean Up Day saw the largest turn-out in the event’s history. Over 70 volunteers, some of whom represented multiple generations within the same family, turned out to pick up trash along and in the Lower Owens River on Saturday, February 10.

The group filled an entire dumpster with garbage found at popular fishing and swimming holes.

Next year’s event will run on Saturday, February 9, 2019. People interested in making donations for the annual raffle can call Chris Leonard at 818.288.3271.

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by robin stater

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to give the community a favorable lease on the existing ice rink. That doesn’t seem equitable. Who made them king? Forget that a substantial portion of the last bond initiative was extravagantly spent on administrative offices and a sparsely used football field.

The trade-off for our votes for the bond initiative should be a lease that makes sense so we can put a roof on the ice rink and stop planning a potential $15 million boondoggle. Candidates? Are there any candidates that can see a win-win opportunity here? The skaters just wanted a roof on the rink from the beginning so they could get a little more skating time through the season. They weren’t looking for the Taj Mahal. The whole thing got out of hand. But do we now have a bargaining chip? Can’t the District share a little pain with the local property owners?

The really regrettable part of it this bond proposal goes back to our “absentee” property owners; the vast majority of the people who pay for the schools in this community via property tax will never have any children attending these schools. And they’re not likely to go ice skating either (Okay, I know the “social contract” rhetoric). But for now the School District’s intransigence on the ice rink negotiation has, and may, cost this community dearly. The District thinks they live on a one-way street. So much for being responsible. Will any of the candidates think that is a good reason to vote NO on the bond?

I hope the candidates have some thoughtful answers.

Happy President’s Weekend!
Paul Oster is the Broker/Owner of RE/MAX of Mammoth. For other timely real estate information you can go to www.MammothRealEstate-Blog.com. For legal, accounting, or construction advice, please seek out the appropriate professional.

The Bleu Market & Kitchen is located on Old Mammoth Road in the old Chart House building. Come early—it’s been hopping.

Theresa and Brandon Brocia celebrate on Sunday, February 11.
The Eastern Sierra Transit Authority is seeking an Account Clerk II. This position will work form the Mammoth Lakes Office and provide a variety of duties including: assisting in the coordination of the daily operation of EASTA's Mammoth Lakes area fixed routes and demand response public transport services, provide the public with route information, facilitate communication between operations staff and with vendors, and perform data management and general office duties. Skills required include being detail oriented, strong keyboard skills, computer file management, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Access. Customer service and good with numbers.

Pay Range $16.25 - $20.25 (II); $17.35 - $21.35 (III) per hour.

The Eastern Sierra Transit Authority is seeking to fill two Appointment Account Clerk II / III positions. This position will work form the Bishop Office and perform a wide variety of accounting, statistical, and clerical support activities of a highly responsible nature such as payroll processing, benefits administration, accounts payable, accounts receivable, bank reconciliation and work directly on financial and accounting matters with the Accountant/Controller's office. This is a 50% benefited position approx. 20-25 hours per week.

For Hire

Bookkeeping Services Available. Let me keep your books up-to-date and in order while you focus on your business or travel the world. I can be reached in person, by cell, email or online. Microsoft Office, Dropbox, Google Docs. Graphs and Financials available. Z-ZIPPIERS Quality work, speedy service. Sportswear, pants, packs, pants & duffles. Hair cutting 336-774-2100 ext. 100.

Fictitious Business Name Statement
The Following Person is Doing Business As: Skyline Arborist Inc.

Michael McLaughlin P.O. Box 9011, 2 Arrowhead Dr. #58 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546
This business is conducted by a Corporation. The registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name. To be noted here.

For Rent

2BR, 1BA Apartment for Rent Unfurnished washer/dryer hook-up, no garage. $1500.00, 1 year lease, and local references. Greg 760.973.7769.

Cleon, quiet unfurnished studio apartment in Mammoth Slopes, $655 per month. Call Jon for details 760-769-2511.

Fictitious Business Name Statement
The Following Person is Doing Business As: Skyline Tree Service

Michael McLaughlin P.O. Box 9011, 2 Arrowhead Dr. #58 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. To be noted here.
calendar of events

BARS & MUSIC

Happy Hour
The Liberty Sports Bar and Grill
Pursuit of Happiness Hour, 3-6 p.m.
off glasses, $2 off wine, $4 well drinks, $2 off specialty drinks. $5
Flatbread. See ad, p. 15.

Outhouse Saloon – Happy Hour
Monday; All Night Happy Hour; 4-Midnight, Tues-Fri 4-6 p.m.
Tuesday, $2 Tacos 4-10 p.m.; 6-9 p.m. Wing Wednesday 50% off
all wings. Thursday; Burger & Beer specials daily. See ad, p. 9.
Roberto’s 4-6 p.m. every day.
Austria Hof 5-8 p.m. daily. See ad, p. 21.

Whitebark Restaurant Bar & Lounge
Unwind with daily drink and food specials 4-6 p.m.
Clocktower Cellar Happy Hour 4:30-7 p.m. daily and all day Sunday.
$5 dollar menu items, drink specials. See ad, p. 16.

Petra’s Bistro Happy Hour, 5-6 p.m. every day. See ad, p. 16.

Mammoth’s famous Sclocums Happy Hour
Mon, thru Fri 4-6; Saturdays 4-5. Closed Sun. See ad, p. 5.

Happy Hour @ The Bistro at Snowcreek
4:30-6:30 p.m. daily.
Mammoth Tavern Happy Hour
Tuesday-Sunday 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Closed Mondays.

Smokyard weekend Happy Hour 4-6 p.m. in the bar only.
Sidewalk Happy Hour daily 3-6 p.m.
Giovanni’s Happy Hour, daily 4-6 p.m.
Large pizza and a pitcher of beer gets you free wings.

Lakanuki Happy Hour daily 3-6 p.m., $4.50 margaritas, Mai Tais. Happy Hour drink specials 10 p.m.-close.

Black Velvet Coffee’s Happy Hour, from 4-6 p.m. every day.

Morrison’s Happy Hour Daily
4-6 p.m.

Friday, February 16/
DJ Rodney-O @ Rafter’s. 10 p.m. Free.
Cottonwood Creek plays Rusty’s Saloon in Bishop.

Saturday, February 17/
The Whatevers play Schat’s Roadhouse in Bishop. 6 p.m. Free.

Sunday, February 18/
Afroman live at Rafter’s in Mammoth. 9 p.m. Tix: $20 advance at tickethawk.com, $25 day of and over. DJ Rodney-O and Luck Factor Zero.

Eric Lindell and the Grand Nationals @ Liberty Bar. Benefit for Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps. Suggested donation; $20. 9 p.m. See ad, page 15 and story, p. 9.

Sunday, February 13/
Some Assembly Required plays Black Doubt Brewing. 7-9 p.m. Free.

Monday, February 19/
Open Mic at Black Doubt Brewing Co. 6-9 p.m.
Bowling @ Beaches @ Mammoth Rock ’n Bowl. Fee. Will Nye and Chronfucius. 9 p.m.

Tuesday, February 20/
Trivia @ Mammoth Brewing Co. 7 p.m.
Karaoke at Rafter’s. 10 p.m.

Wednesday, February 21/
Dueling Pianos with Killer Keys at the Bishop Country Club. 7 p.m. $20. All Request show. Limited seating.
Info: 760.873.5828.

TOWN STUFF

February 16-18/
Mammoth Lakes Repertory Theatre presents The Importance of Being Earnest, Wednesday through Saturday at 7 p.m., Sunday at 4 p.m. @ Edison Theatre, Mammoth. Tix: Mammothlakesrepertorytheatre.org or 760.934.6592. See ad, 2.

February 16-18/
48th Annual All-Indian Basketball Tournament hosted by Bishop Indians Ice Hockey Club. In conjunction with the Mammoth Lakes Winter Fireworks Festival. Tix: (760) 920.2035 or Lisa Manetti (760) 937.6888.

February 17-19/
Friends of the Inyo presents: The Racertrack Project. Join NPS and FOI in restoring areas where vehicles have trespassed on the Racertrack Playa. Contact: julia@friendsoftheinyo.org for info.

February 17-18/
Silent Disco at The Village at Mammoth. Three DJs will pump their sounds into wireless headphone sets. Pick your channel and rock out.

Saturday, February 17/

Sunday, February 18/
Alamah Hills Under Our Feet. Guided hiking tour of the Alabama Hills with the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association. Tours start 10 a.m. at the Eastern Sierra Interagency Visitor Center, end at noon. Info: john@esi-aonline.org.
Sierra Club hike/Ski/Snowshoe. Meet 10 a.m. at Mammoth Union Bank parking lot. Contact Brigitte for more info at 760.924.2140.

Olympic Curling Clinic and Match Play at the Mammoth Ice Rink. 7-9 p.m. Register at the ice rink or at 760.965.3695. Registration required. Free.

Monday, February 19/
Film History in the Alabama Hills Book Presentation. Guided tour of film locations in the Alabama Hills. Starts at the Eastern Sierra Interagency Visitor Center, Lone Pine. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Info: 760.876.6222.
Inyo Associates Meeting. 5:30 p.m. social hour, 6:30 p.m. dinner. Location: Independence.

Tuesday, February 20/
Sierra Club Talk on Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep by ESIA’s John Kelly. Crowley Lake Community Center @ 7 p.m. ROLL meeting @ 6:45.
Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting, 8-9:30 a.m. at the County Administrative Offices, Independence. Mono County Board of Supervisors meeting, 9 a.m. Mono County Courthouse, Bridgeport. Live Broadcast from the CAD Conference Room, Sierra Center Mall, Mammoth Lakes.

Wednesday, February 21/
Mammoth’s Town Council meets, 6 p.m. in Suite Z.
Spellbinder Books Book Club discussion of the Three-Year Swim Club by Julie Checkoway. 6:30-8 p.m. at Spellbinder Books, Main Street, Bishop.

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THE SHEET | Saturday, February 17, 2018

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MAMMOTH'S TOWN COUNCIL

Meets, 6 p.m. in Suite Z.
Meetings held at Spellbinder Books, Main Street, Bishop.

April 1, 7:30 p.m.
Julie Checkoway. 6:30-8 p.m. at Spellbinder Books Book Club.
Synopsis: The Three-Year Swim Club: by Julie Checkoway. 5:30 p.m.
Sierra Club Talk on Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep by ESIA’s John Kelly. Crowley Lake Community Center @ 7 p.m. ROLL meeting @ 6:45.
Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting, 8-9:30 a.m. at the County Administrative Offices, Independence. Mono County Board of Supervisors meeting, 9 a.m. Mono County Courthouse, Bridgeport. Live Broadcast from the CAD Conference Room, Sierra Center Mall, Mammoth Lakes.
The Importance of Being Earnest

Mammoth Lakes Repertory Theatre will perform Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, from February 9-18. The Importance of Being Earnest is a play in which the protagonists maintain fictitious personas to escape burdensome social obligations.

For more information, visit www.mammothlakesrepertorytheatre.org, or at the door, for $22. Online: $20 for adults, $18 for seniors, and $15 for students. For reservations, call 760.934.5674.

Owens Lake Bird Festival

Early registration for the 4th annual Owens Lake Bird Festival is now open to the public. This year’s event will run from April 27-29 in Lone Pine, and is hosted by Friends of the Inyo.

The festival will feature birding outings on the Owens Lake and around Lone Pine. Outings include: Birding and Botany in the Alabama Hills, Photographing Birds, Natural History at Cottonwood Creek, Geology of the Alabama Hills, and Hiking with Salt Tram in Keeler, as well as many more.

Pre-registration is required for outings, as group sizes are limited. All outings will begin at Statham Hall, Lone Pine. To register, visit www.friendsoftheinyo.org.

Death Valley MarsFest 2018

MarsFest will take place February 23-25, 2018 in Death Valley National Park. On May 26, 1992, the Mars Rover was tested in Death Valley, climbing the summit of “Mars Hill.” This was the first time a private space organization involved the public in the actual tests of a craft designed to explore another world.

Friday evening will feature keynote speaker, Luther Berger from Jet Propulsion Laboratory’s 2020 Mission. There will be an Expo Saturday at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center. You’ll find children’s hands-on activities and booths from SETI, NASA, and others. Saturday will also yield a star party with night sky viewing in the evening. Scientific-guided field trips to analog sites will take place both Saturday and Sunday.

All activities are free and open to the public. To view a full schedule please download the 2018 MarsFest Schedule available via the Death Valley National History Association’s website at: www.dvna.org.

For more information, including photos of previous years please visit SETI Institute’s Webpage from last year: https://www.seti.org/marsfest-2017. For more information about Death Valley National Park and to find information to help plan your trip, see www.nps.gov/deva or call 760.786.3200.

TOWN SHOWS

**Wednesday, Feb. 21 (cont’d)**

**Storytime at the Mammoth Lakes Library**

8 a.m. All ages welcome. Jewelry Making at the Mammoth Lakes Library. Learn to make earrings with Lauren Dowell in the upstairs conference room. 3:30 p.m. Sign up at the library; 8th grade and older.

**Thursday, February 22**

**Community Coffee with Mammoth Lakes Tourism.** 8-10 a.m. at Looney Bean Coffee. Free coffee! Learn about Mammoth Mountain’s Avalanche Dogs and Ski Patrol. 3:30-6:30 p.m. at McCogy’s, The Village at Mammoth.

**Brody Leven speaks for ESIA.** 7 p.m. at the USFS Welcome Center. See sidebar; ad page 23.

**Saturday, February 24**

**Dirthang: The Legend of Fred Beckey.** 6 & 8 p.m. at the Edison Theatre, 100 College Park. Presented by the Mammoth Lakes Foundation, Tix: $15. brownpapertickets.com.

**The Sierra Club presents: “Saving Snow.”** 7-9 p.m. at the Mammoth Lakes Forest Service Welcome Center. Free film screening.

**Friends of the Inyo: Chocolate Mountain Outing.** Hike Chocolate Mountain with Stewardship Program Director Julia Runcie. Info: 760.873.8500.

**UPCOMING**

**Walking Water Presentation.** Hear stories and see photos of the group’s 550-mile walk from Mono Lake to L.A. 4-6 p.m. at the Lone Pine Tribal Community Building.

**Mammoth Unbound Series: Slopestyle 3.** 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chair 1/Broadway Express lift, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Bib collection at 7:30 a.m. at the MMSST Team headquarters. Register: www.usasa.org

**Sunday, February 25**

**The Mammoth Unbound Series Rail Jam 2.** 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chair 1/Broadway Express lift, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Bib collection at 7:30 a.m. at the MMSST Team headquarters. Register: www.usasa.org

**UCCE Master Gardeners Workshop: Starting Tomatoes.** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Highlands Mobile Home Community. Hosted by Master Gardener Carolyn Lynch.

**Monday, February 26**

**Bishop City Council meeting.** 6 p.m. at City Council Chambers, City Hall.

**Mono County Treasury Oversight Committee meeting.** 11 a.m. at CAO Conference Room, Sierra Center Mall, Mammoth Lakes.

**Tuesday, February 27**

**Business After Hours.** 6 p.m. at a Better Fireplace & Stove Company. Hosted by Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

**City of Bishop Planning Commission.** 6-7 p.m. at City Council Chambers, City Hall.

**February 27-28/ Sunday, February 25**

**Mammoth Unbound Series Rail Jam 2.** 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chair 1/Broadway Express lift, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Bib collection at 7:30 a.m. at the MMSST Team headquarters. Register: www.usasa.org

**UCCE Master Gardeners Workshop: Starting Tomatoes.** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Highlands Mobile Home Community. Hosted by Master Gardener Carolyn Lynch.

**City of Bishop Planning Commission.** 6-7 p.m. at City Council Chambers, City Hall.

**February 27-20/ Saturday, February 24**

**Full moon snowshoe tours @ Tamarack.** Depart @ 7 p.m. for a 1.5-hour tour, then enjoy hot drinks at Tamarack Lodge. Tix: $39 including equipment. Reservations: 1.800.MAMMOTH.

**Mammoth Lakes Winter Festival**

The Seventh Annual June Lake Winter Festival will run on March 3, 2018. This year’s celebrations will feature a snowmobile poker rally, snow sculptures, a Family Fun Zone, and, for the first time ever, a dog parade. The Family Fun Zone will be hosted by June Mountain and will feature food, festivities, music, kids’ games, and sledding.

The traditional winter triathlon will not take place this year, but will be replaced by the dog parade. Participants should dress their dogs in costumes. For more info, visit www.visitjune.com.

**A Night with Brody Leven**

Professional Adventure Skier Brody Leven will present at the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association’s fifth installment of its Winter Adventure Series on Thursday, February 22.

The title of Leven’s talk is “Making Something from Nothing: Human-Power, Mountains, and Activism.” Doors at 6 p.m., talk at 7 p.m. at the Mammoth Lakes Forest Service Welcome Center. Admission is $10, and includes a local beer.

**Saving Snow**

On Saturday, February 24, the Sierra Club and 350 Mono will host a free screening of the new film “Saving Snow.” The film illustrates how towns across the United States whose economies depend on winter recreation are dealing with unreliable winters.

The film starts at 7 p.m. at the Mammoth Lakes Forest Service Welcome Center auditorium.

**Mule Deer Migration Field Trip**

Join Eastern Sierra Land Trust staff and special guest Timothy Taylor of California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a guided hike and discussion of how local mule deer are doing after severe drought and the 2015 Round Fire. Free, Family-friendly event. RSVP required. Be prepared for light hiking. Contact Ryan at ryan@eslt.org or 760.873.4554 to reserve your place. Event runs Saturday, March 5. Time and meeting place TBD.
NOTICE INVITING BIDS
CAP 14-001
NOTICE INVITING BIDS
Notices/cover story
20
I reject any and/or all bids, or to utilize any alternative
The Town of Mammoth Lakes reserves the right to
debate bid without all alternates. The Town reserves the
bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid on the
under the Contract.

hours of labor and the debarment of contractors and
rates to all worked employed by them in the execution
payment of not less than the required prevailing wage

TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES, CALIFORNIA
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tactor shall also demonstrate adequate experience in
adequate equipment in good working order, experi-
ence in the performance of a particular trade, the
or engage in the performance of any contract for
public works over $10,000 within the last five years in
the Municipal Building at 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite 8, Mammoth Lakes, California.

Jamie Gray, Town Clerk

BT #2018-0019
Notice of Vacancies

Notice of Public Hearing
Notice of Public Hearing
Notice of Public Hearing

BY ORDER OF THE MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0019
Notice of Vacancies

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the following
positions are vacant:

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0020
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Hearing of Appeals
for the Board of Review of the Planning and Zoning
Committee/Board of Appeals of this office on the
proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0021
Notice of Public Hearing

Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Hearing of appeals
for the Board of Review of the Planning and Zoning
Committee/Board of Appeals of this office on the
proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0022
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

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MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0023
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

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for the Board of Review of the Planning and Zoning
Committee/Board of Appeals of this office on the
proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0024
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Hearing of Appeals
for the Board of Review of the Planning and Zoning
Committee/Board of Appeals of this office on the
proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0025
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

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proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

TS #2018-0026
Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF APPEALS

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MAMMOTH LAKES TOWN COUNCIL
Dated: February 9, 2018
Jamie Grey, Town Clerk

ECONOMY
continued from page 1
that the hype of one good winter bol-
sters business for the next year. "This
is better than in the drought years,
but we could change if we don't see
a weather pattern change here pretty
quick." Morrise and Cage's observations are
supported by Mammoth Lakes Tour-
ism Report. Occupancy reports. Occupancy
in Mammoth Lakes for Saturday,
February 11, 2017 was 98 percent. Occupancy for Saturday, February 10, 2018 was forecast to be 82 percent, a difference of 16 percent. Occupancy rates are much higher than at
the peak of the drought (2014-2015), when
Mammoth was only 61 percent full on Saturday, February 18, 2017.
In contrast, occupancy rates for this
Presidents' Day Weekend were down only
2 percent from the same dates last
year. On Saturday, February 18, 2017, occupancy was 88 percent.

It's forecast at 91 percent for Saturday, February 17, 2018.

February in Mammoth was...
On Thursday, February 15, the Mammoth High School Women’s Varsity Soccer team lost a playoff game at home against Arrowhead Christian High School, of Redlands. The score was 0-0 at half time. Seconds before the clock ran out, Arrowhead Christian scored to bring the final score to 0-2. This was the Women’s Varsity team’s last game of the season.

Photos by Giles

SUNSET FOR HUSKIES

INTEGRITY AND CIVILITY

These Mammoth High School students participated in a speech contest at the Mammoth Lions Club meeting on Wednesday, February 14. Their topic was “Integrity and civility play what role in today’s society?” From left: Catherine Cacho, Malenea Kamlue (winner of the contest), Lauren Ranas, Cecilia Basler, Kaylee Garcia, and teacher Rebecca Thomas.

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HOROSCOPES
By Clouds McCloud

Aquarius: This is a year of accelerated evolution for mankind and for Aquarians especially. You are, after all, the sign that usually knows when trends are changing first anyway. That’s why you should feel more comfortable gambolling this next year of your life, primarily on yourself. You’re a safe bet this year, except for when your frisky side gets fired up—and then you’re a sure bet.

Pisces: A sports radio station in Boston went off the air for 12 hours this week so that the entire staff could go to sensitivity training. This is a good news/bad news scenario. The good news is that idiotic a-holes are starting to learn it’s new game and the good news is that they didn’t take any dying a loud and painful death. The old misogynistic and racist ways are going to keep on going, so doubt, fear and regret get their licks in. But that nervous go eat a churro.”

Geminis: One of Clouds’ favorite new people is a Gemini who once lived in Montreal. Naturally, she loves hockey—as do many others, since it’s one of the fastest growing sports in the country. That’s why your advice comes from puck-heads. From Wayne Gretzky: “A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.” From Brian Burke: “I will personally challenge anyone who wants to get rid of fighting to a fight.” From Jim McKenney: “Half the game is mental. The other half is being mental.”

Cancers: Your antihero for the week is a fellow Libra named Vitina. The former Gold Medal winner suggested an Olympic skier was struggling because she had gotten married. Miller instantly got in the doghouse with his former Gold Medal winner suggested an Olympic skier was struggling because she had gotten married. Miller instantly got in the doghouse with his wife and countless others. The losers: 1) Marriage is about growth and pursuing happiness, it’s not about success. 2)Never share controversial ideas on Valentine’s Day.

Leo: The Stars are saying to keep it right where you’ve got it. You should be lined up nicely for a fun ride. Your key, as always, will be to act like a river: Flow; find the path of least resistance; enjoy the white water; be a safe haven for other creatures; and enjoy the ride, cause it ain’t stopping.

Virgo: To keep you moving in a positive direction, please choose a new motto or two from the following selections: A) From Joel Osteen: “Life is too short to go through it waiting to be happy.” B) From who knows: “Whenever I feel blue, I start breathing again.” D) From Clouds: “No matter how nicely they sing it, there’s no way everyone was Kung Fu fighting.”

Libra: A fellow Libra named Vitina passed along some kind words about Clouds recently. Since such kindness is always repaid ten-fold, this would be a good time to befriend Vitina and other kind-hearted Libras, for opportunities of all kinds are about to start knocking at their doors—and not just their back doors at 3 a.m. after they’ve closed down Lakanuki and are craving burritos.

Scorpios: Sometimes it’s easy to feel like a voice lost in the wilderness. You call out, and all you hear is an echo or the wind. But Clouds is here to remind you that your voice never falls on deaf ears, it’s just that the Powers That Be like to answer in their own sweet time and way. Therefore, your new theme song is “Rise Up” by Andra Day. “You’re broken down and tired of living life on a merry-go-round. And you can’t find the fighter, but I see it in you, so we gonna walk it out and move mountains … rise up!”

Sagittarius: It looks like the Stars are saying this would be an ideal time to clean your act up and focus on the really important people in your life. If you’re not sure who they are, they’re not the folks you only hang out with during the good times. No, they’re the ones who run around the whole playground of life with you. The ones who help you up, sometimes knock you over, and make riding the seesaw so much fun.

Capricorn: If it’s not one thing, it’s the other. Therefore, Clouds would like to pass along two things. The first is to take more responsibility for where your life is at, the good, the not-so-good and the downright joyful. The other is to keep a positive and hopeful attitude no matter what, so try listening to X Ambassadors every time you’re feeling down: “You’re so gorgeous’ cause you make me feel gorgeous.”

Horoscopes are courtesy of Clouds McCloud, a psychic and astrologer from San Francisco whom The Sheet News has exclusively been able to get a patch of.

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Rite Aid Do It Center Mall

The Sheet News, Saturday, February 17, 2018
If you’re a regular at Mammoth Mountain, you’ve probably seen her—the grinning woman in a pink cowgirl hat, most often stationed at the top of Chair 2, perpetually handing out high-fives and snapping photos.

In an age where everyone’s a photographer, Robin Vallentyne (AKA “the pink cowgirl”) has been making a living at her chosen profession for five seasons at Mammoth. She’s been so successful that she’s even been able to afford to take summers off.

“I mean, it’s a sales job,” said Vallentyne, who said that when she first started working for Magic Memories Photography (formerly SharpShooter Imaging) she was “really shy.” Also, she couldn’t ski.

Mel Seator and Andreas Braun, instructors at “the Dirty Bird” (Eagle Lodge), helped her get her snow legs. And she credits the job with bringing her out of her shell.

“If you want a lazy job where you take a lot of ride breaks, this isn’t it,” says Vallentyne. She works entirely on commission. “You just get used to being poor, that’s all,” says Vallentyne, laughing. She’s kind of kidding. “It does work. If you work hard,” she says. “During the holidays I did 28 days straight,” said Vallentyne. Probably the best known member of her team is Mammoth uber-local Sue Morning, who only photographs races. But Vallentyne, sporting as much pink as she can muster, is likely the most recognizable.

A few winters ago, Vallentyne had to go to bat for her signature style. “The Mountain said it was not ‘on par,’” with uniforms standards, said Vallentyne, and she was asked to discontinue use of the hat. She said her sales dropped 15 percent. So her manager stepped up to get the hat approved. It now falls under the category of ‘mountain morale,” says Vallentyne. “Kind of like Woolly.”

And it works. “You can see [the hat] from different chairlifts,” says Vallentyne. “Kids love it. I once had a little girl skiing around the mountain to try and find the cowgirl. The Mighty Mites (Mammoth’s 6-8 year old ski team) ask me where my horses are. I tell them they’re in the lift shack.”

Vallentyne, who grew up on the western slopes of the Sierra near Oakhurst, first applied for a job at Mammoth “because it was only 30 miles from my house!” As the crow flies, of course, her pink cowgirl hat.

She drove to Mammoth and spent her first winter in a travel trailer (a 1960s “Aristocrat”) in the woods. Her mouthwash froze solid, but “I loved waking up out there every morning.”


“I went to this party in the desert, and some people were taking off the next day to do the PCT, so I just started walking with them,” she said. She had an external frame JanSport backpack and crappy boots. And, of course, her pink cowgirl hat.

“I just kept saying, ‘I’ll get to the next town and get off’” the trail, but then she’d hop back on after re-supplying. “It just kind of escalated.”

She also credits that trip with improving her sales skills. “Getting people to give you rides and food” was great training, she said. At one point, a piece of plastic on one of her hiking boots broke inward, and she had to cut the boots off her feet because she couldn’t pull them off. “I had to hike to the road barefoot… the couple who picked me up didn’t believe in Walmart, so they ended up taking me to a gun store which also sold Nikes and ice cream.”

She’s accepting suggestions for this coming summer’s adventure, after spending last summer recuperating from ACL, MCL and meniscus surgery (shout-out to Mammoth Hospital’s Dr. Brian Gilmer for patching her up). But she says she’d be returning to Mammoth each winter as long as she can. “You basically get paid to ski, give high fives, and hang out with fun people.”

Favorite place to shoot? “Chair 2,” she answers without hesitation. “The Minarets are unbeatable, and it’s a transfer station, so you have people coming from all over the place.” Insider tip: “Chair 10 has the best view in the house, but it’s harder to get people to do photos, because they have to walk up past the lift shack. But the view is absolutely incredible there.”

Worst thing to happen on the job? “One woman yelled at me because I was taking pictures instead of blowing snow” during one of the drought years. “I also got yelled at because the chair wasn’t heated. I went immediately into the lift shack to ask the liftie if this was a thing, and where could I find a heated chair lift?”

What do you want to be when you grow up? “I don’t want to grow up! We live in Peter Pan land, no one has to grow up here.”
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