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on drums and the party's rolling. Plan to hear tunes in all manner of tempos nudging the feet into action.

When the Tour Guides take the stage, Jessie Mouser steps in on lead vocals. There's never really a competition between these song-birds; rather it's an energetic encouragement that always makes for more fun if you happen to be in the audience.

Welles is a versatile player who has appeared in the area for years. Some folks say he sounds like James Taylor, so expect some velvet with your dancing.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students and seniors in advance at Sustenance Books, Sierra Nevada Adventure Co. and Murphys Music Co. in Murphys or \$20 at the door. Visit forestwatchers.org to learn more about Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch and its activities.

Remember a few weeks ago when I talked about how great it is to see people stepping in to assist schools as they need it most? Well, the Vallecito Music Boosters is ready to once again do its wintry thing as the Jazz Trax Snowshoe Stomp comes to the Bear Valley Cross Country meadow on Saturday, Feb. 23. Lots of people grab their shoes and plow

Jazz Trax Snowshoe Stomp

WHEN: 10 a.m. Feb. 23

WHERE: Bear Valley Cross Country Ski Area, Highway 4, Bear Valley

COST: \$5 to \$25

MORE INFO: Patty Jo Struve at 795-3266



their way over the hills to raise money for music programs at the Vallecito Union School District and fun is always the rule of the day.

The music boosters have assisted the arias and anthems, ballads and blues up the Highway 4 corridor for as long as I can remember, helping students acquire the instruments they feel like they want to learn, repairing those same instruments and even paying for instructors to teach them to play. Great things have been made possible by this nonprofit and the snowshoe stomp is another way that everyone can join in the excitement. Plan to hear

some of the students who are the recipients of all this kindness perform during the day, too.

There is a 1-mile Run/Walk for everyone (\$5), a 5K Junior and Adult Race (\$15) and an Adult 10K (\$25), with awards in all kinds of divisions. The musical mayhem commences at 10 a.m. You can reserve your slot by stopping by Hazel Fischer or Michelson elementary schools or Avery Middle School to pick up a registration form or call Patty Jo Struve at 795-3266. If you register on Feb. 23, add \$10 to each event.

A few weeks ago I got to enjoy

some jazz at Columbia College as Dr. Rod Harris once again staged the Big Band Jazz Festival there. I marvel at the likes of Mic Gillette, Paul Contos, Bob Secor, Mario Flores, Mike Rocha, Kenny Karst, Clint Day and Jim Anderson joining the Columbia College Community Big Band for these shows every year because it's terrific to find professionals eager to pass along their performance know-how to emerging talent. Kids as young as 11 and 12 thrilled at listening to their heroes reaching for those high notes and offering tips on playing super cool solos. The beauty of this event is that it's not a competition, so everyone settles in to let the students grab their grooves without any pressure. After each ensemble performs, the pros give them the high-octane fuel they need to blast a set to the moon in the form of constructive commentary on their performances. I can't congratulate the professionals enough for their willingness to share with younger players; that's the way the music is passed along for future generations.

Whether anyone's wearing Lycra is immaterial; the music still sounds fantastic and brings us together.

Reach Mike Taylor at mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.

These aren't those old playground contests



Tuolumne Talk

Harmony
Wheeler

there were after the film came out. I never participated, as sports and activities in general have never suited me, but it became a school-wide spectacle to observe. So, at least I walked the short distance from the dorm to the gymnasium to watch the contests; there was my exercise for the day.

Maybe you can get some similar exercise beginning later this month, when dodge ball comes to Tuolumne County. And, according to Tuolumne County Recreation Department Activity Director Sarah Garcia, the Mother Lode version won't be the stuff of childhood nightmares.

The Adult Dodge Ball League will hold its first games from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Tuolumne Veterans Memorial Hall. The recreation department will hold weekly games every Thursday at the same time through March 21, but only the final game will take on the form of a competitive tournament. The preceding weeks will consist of scheduled, friendly games between teams, each playing two to three times every Thursday. Teams consist of

six to eight players with six players on the court at a time.

Garcia said the teams come from various sources, including area companies, county departments, softball teams, families and friends. She welcomes anyone interested to form a

team and sign up by calling her at 533-5663. Participants must be 18 years old or older to play, but all ages are invited to watch the contests.

"This is the second year that our department has done a dodge ball

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Although Single's Awareness Day (Valentine's Day, for those of you in relationships) is here, I thought I'd talk about something else straight out of my school days' least favorite things list: sports. And after a brutal Super Bowl to start the month, maybe the topic finds more relevance in the month of love than one might expect. After all, when you finish making your New Year's resolutions to get healthy, and when you're done watching the football replays, perhaps it's your turn to get out and get active.

My alma mater, Biola University, holds a yearly dodge ball tournament between the dormitories there, with each dorm given its own color in which to dress. I still recall the blue "Avatar" team mascots



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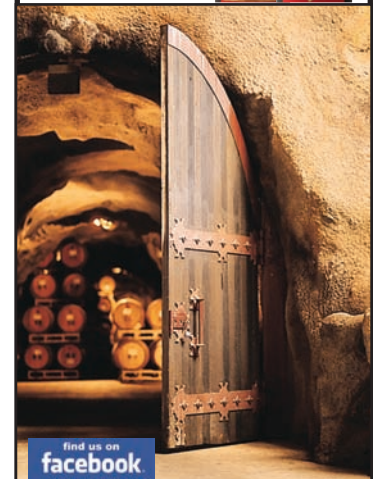
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Continued from previous page

league,” Garcia said. “We had about 12 teams sign up last winter. It’s a lot of fun not just to play, but to watch. The stands at the memorial hall were full of people. Some were teams, but there were also a lot of people there to watch. It was loud and interactive. People help referee. It’s also an honor system. If you get hit, you have to say so. The whole stands will see it and be shouting you got hit. It’s so entertaining to watch a bunch of adults acting like kids having fun.”

Garcia said part of the reason participants enjoy themselves comes from the fact that the game has a fast pace that fits all levels. Some teams become super competitive, while others come to have fun and everyone has different athletic abilities.

“We use a foam ball in rubber coating,” Garcia said. “It doesn’t

Adult Dodge Ball League

WHEN: 6 to 9:30 p.m. Thursdays starting Feb. 21

WHERE: Tuolumne Memorial Hall, 18375 Fir Ave., Tuolumne

COST: \$85 per team at tcrecreation.com

MORE INFO: Sarah Garcia, 533-5663

hurt. It’s not like the old-school playground balls. They still fly super fast and it’s still fun and fast paced, but it’s not like you have to worry about getting hit hard in the face. It’s more a friendly game than a nightmare kids have.”

The game also gets residents out and active in the winter months, when outdoor activities are ham-

pered by weather. The recreation department holds other sporting activities for both children and adults throughout the year, but dodge ball fits well into the county-owned memorial hall, saving money and providing a public service at the same time.

“It’s just another way to get people active, but do it in a really fun way,” Garcia said.



Courtesy photo

Matt Muller dodges some balls at Tuolumne Memorial Hall during a 2012 Adult Dodge Ball League contest.

Send your Tuolumne County *hwheeler@sierralodestar.com* and events to Harmony Wheeler at *mtaylor@sierralodestar.com*.

There were military men before the rush

Some of the first gold seekers who came west were military men who worked in California before the discovery of gold. One of the most interesting

arrived as a regiment leader too late to see action in the Mexican American War. Instead, he and his regiment found themselves in the right place at the right time when

gold was ultimately discovered.

Jonathan Drake Stevenson of New York had served as the secretary to the governor of his state. His close ties to political figures gained him

favor and appointments within his party. When he supported James Polk for president, Polk in turn favored Stevenson for a unique appointment. The U.S. government wanted to populate the new California territory, even when it was still under Mexican rule.

In 1846, Polk gave Stevenson the command of a regiment of soldiers to go west. Stevenson enlisted 10 companies of volunteers of 77 men each. The regiment came to be known as the 1st Regiment of New York Volunteers, or eventually just Stevenson’s Regiment.

Stevenson himself had no formal military training outside of his work with the volunteers. Regardless, his troops were considered above average, especially for volunteers. He had specifically enlisted educated and talented men who included mechanics, engineers and clerks. All of the men came from good families and all were single. The troops had no misunderstandings

as to what was expected of them; they understood that after the conclusion of the war, they would remain in California to populate the new territory as U.S. citizens.

The regiment was sworn in on

Bonnie Miller

Mining the Past



Aug. 1, 1846, and within a month sailed toward Cape Horn on its way to California. The volunteers arrived in San Francisco in March of the following year and shortly thereafter, Stevenson assumed command of the post in Monterey.

When the war with Mexico ended, the troops were mustered

out. Stevenson chose to settle in the community of Mokelumne Hill, where about 100 of his men joined him. There he was appointed (or assumed the position) as the area alcalde, although at least three others claimed the title. Stevenson is credited with drawing up a code of mining laws and regulations while in Moke Hill.

Eventually Stevenson returned to San Francisco and partnered with one of the regiment’s doctors in real estate speculation. He bought a portion of a former rancho and



Jonathan Drake Stevenson

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