



File photo

Teams work to answer tough questions at the Friends of the Calaveras County Library Trivia Bee in San Andreas Saturday.

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teams compete in the event, which poses questions about all things useless and unimportant (it's my kind of event!). After three rounds of questions and answers, one trio is crowned champion, but the trash talking comes as the teams take the stage! Colorful, cute costumes always punctuate the proceedings and once the intellectual dust settles, one team gets to leave the San Andreas Town Hall with members' heads held high. The rest of the teams laugh and applaud politely and consid-

er where to study for next year's competition.

Trivia, at least as it seems to be defined at the bee, is all of that information our brains hold onto that's generally none-too-useful in everyday life. As a child, I read every record book and volume of quirky conundrums I could get my hands on. Yes, I admit it, I was a bigger fan of Guinness' records than I was of Steinbeck; many people suggest that says a lot about me. Trivia just sticks inside my brain better than anything. I'm sure my teachers wished they had come up with more trivial ways to heap factoids into my melon.

Groups posits better forest planning

Green seems to be the theme these past few weeks with my columns about the Celtic Faire, an Irish concert and tiny men in green. This week, green still has some cultural significance, but it has more to do with the home front and economic impacts on our natural resources. Living so close to those natural resources, the residents of Tuolumne County (and other foothill areas) have more reason than any to take note of the beauty that surrounds us. Perhaps what we don't understand – me included – is how important forests and rivers are to our economy and the lives we live.

Melinda Fleming, executive director at Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources and Environment Inc., first became fully aware of what she calls the "multiplier affect" in the early 1990s. A teacher at the time, she realized that the closure of a part of the Standard Mill and the 300 or so jobs that would be lost would affect her students and their families.

"The result would be a relocation" of at least a portion of the population, she said. "So then the schools would suffer due to declining enrollment. The effect would

begin to weaken the local infrastructure. Roads can't be repaired without tax dollars. All over the Sierra foothills and mountains throughout Northern California and into parts of southern Oregon, mill towns, affected by the wave of over-zealous environmental protections for spotted owls and other species, turned to ghost towns."

What made Fleming aware of the possible spiral of actions and reactions marks an extreme example of a problem that has long since become less of an issue, but according to TuCARE, there are more natural resources and related political policies that deserve our attention.

"TuCARE seeks stability for natural resource industries, through the wise use of our resources, to help ensure the economic soundness of our local communities for future generations," a statement from the organization reads.

"We are a conservative environmental conservation group that seeks to support a return to common sense regarding federal land planning and management," Fleming said. "If a forest never stops growing and the growth and removals are

severely out of balance on the growth side, we must keep up with excessive growth by removing excess for a variety of reasons, including the danger of wildfires, the need to create products for use by Americans and others, and the need to keep our economy vital."

Fleming went on to describe the organization's positions. TuCARE stands for: the constitutional rights that ensure all people the right to private property and the enjoyment of that property and education that supports and promotes our resources-based economy.

"TuCARE attempts to insert the human factor into every environmental discussion," Fleming said. "A vacuum exists in most resource and environmental planning and actions, the human element, the socioeconomic impacts and the impacts to culture and traditions are so often overlooked or purposely avoided in planning by agencies and responses from many environmental organizations."

Fleming said TuCARE tries to present evidence and science to dispel emotional views that place a disproportionate weight on

When former county Superintendent of Schools John Brophy left the lectern a couple of years ago (having served as emcee for as long as anyone could remember), the Friends asked yours truly to host the show and I have had a blast delivering the brain teasers. I can tell you that the questions this year will be manageable; the past couple of contests have featured truly astounding stumpers that left many folks scratching their heads far too deeply. Three gentlemen and I have pored over reference books, record books and books on books to come up with questions that should please everyone and still bring a true championship team to the fore.

New this year, we're adding Golden Blitzes to the mix. These "speed rounds" will allow those in the audience who believe their thinking caps are bigger than others the chance to step onstage and compete for prizes. Opportunity tickets are \$5 apiece and will only be sold on Saturday. Find me to make a contribution that could gain you (local) fame and (modest) fortune!

There's a nice dinner and beverages of the wine and beer variety are available. The fun starts at 5:30 p.m. After the meal, stretch out those thinking caps and prepare to be tested. The audience gets in on the fun, too, and once the winner is declared, we all rest easy knowing it will only be about another year before new champs are crowned.

Fun of a different kind comes to Murphys Saturday, too, as the Wild & Scenic Film Festival Tour brings environmentally conscious movies to the Black Bart Playhouse at 6 p.m. Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch stages this

Wild & Scenic Film Festival on Tour

WHEN: 6 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Black Bart Playhouse, 580 S. Algiers St., Murphys

TICKETS: \$8 for adults and \$5 for students in advance at wildandscenicfilmfestival.org or \$10 and \$6

WHERE: Agata Sulczynski at (415) 516-4972 or forest-watchers.org

annual tour and you can check up on all of the movies – and future tour stops – at forest-watchers.org. Tickets – inexpensive at \$8 in advance – are also available there, or buy yours at the door for \$10.

Movies with messages and players plucking facts out of thin air; it's a weekend of support for groups that do a lot to preserve our quality of life.

Contact Mike Taylor at mtaylor@sieralodestar.com.



a balance in which the resource is able to renew, but man is allowed

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to continue to use it as a natural resource within reasonable limits.

“Most people don’t know that there are different laws for managing forests on public lands and private lands,” Fleming continued. “Public lands are governed by the National Environmental Policy Act. Private lands in California are governed by the California Environmental Quality Act. For California, there are over 1,000 laws that govern private forest land management.

“Public lands have many uses and laws that govern the specific allowable uses on each designation. Multiple Use Forests have the broadest access for the public for recreation and other uses. Wilderness has limited access. National parks, like

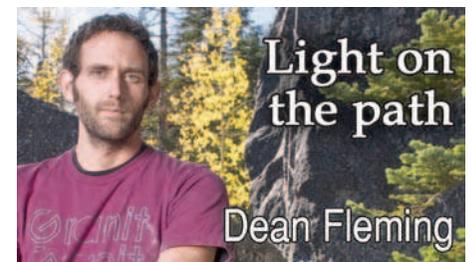
Yosemite, are part of national forests, but have another set of regulations and laws. There are layers of policy, regulation and directives that the general public isn’t aware of, and this is just about one natural resource. Water is another that has layers of regulations, as well as mining, grazing and many other resource-related activities.”

TuCARE provides school tours and educational programs for adults. Individuals and businesses can also become members of TuCARE for a fee. For more information on TuCARE, visit tucare.com or contact Fleming at 586-7816 or tucare@mlode.com.

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

China Gulch is a great getaway for green

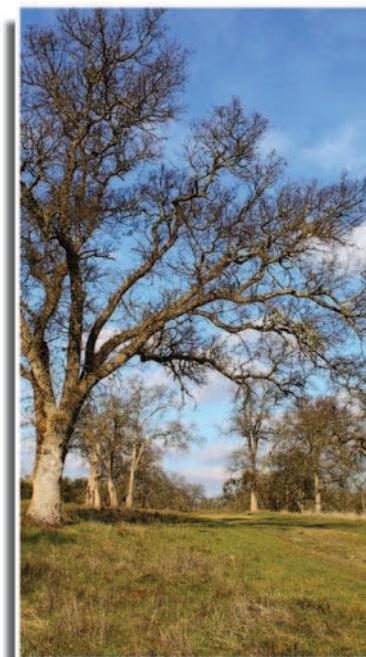
Spanning nearly 300 miles and gaining more than 8,700 feet of elevation, the Moke-lumne Coast to Crest Trail (MCCT) is turning out to be a marvelous addition to California’s already booming network of hiking trails. When completed, the MCCT is planned to run from Shoreline Regional Park in Contra Costa County and slice eastward through the heart of the Gold Country to eventually finish at Calaveras County’s portion of the Pacific Crest Trail atop Ebbetts Pass. Crossing over some of the



most scenic terrain in California, this monster is destined to become a hiking masterpiece.

While completing the entire length of the Coast to Crest Trail would be an astonishing feat for even the most enthusiastic long-distance hikers, the length of the trail doesn’t necessarily single out this amazing resource for only the most dedicated athletes. As with any trail, when sections of the path come close to major roads, that portion of the trail quickly becomes a makeshift trailhead. Luckily, the developers of the MCCT planned ahead by installing “staging areas” at key points along the way.

One of the most striking sections of already-completed trail runs along the north shore of Camanche Reservoir and, because of its easy access and spectacular scenery, this particular trailhead is known among Amador County residents as one of the Mother Lode’s best winter hikes. From the China Gulch Staging Area on the north shore, hikers have a multitude of options. You can take the entire



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Sierra Lodestar