

# Winter Adventures Await: Cut Your Own Christmas Tree and Embrace the Outdoors at Galena Creek

By Gabe Zurn and Dagmar Bohlmann

Winter in Northern Nevada is truly magical. While the region is known for its world-class ski slopes, there are other, quieter ways to connect with the season: venturing into the great outdoors on snowshoes, painting with watercolors, or cutting your own Christmas tree in the backcountry. Weathering the cold brings you closer to nature and offers significant mental health benefits—especially in winter.

### Why Being Outside in the Winter Is Good for Mental Health

As the days shorten and temperatures drop, many people retreat indoors. While cozying up with a hot drink and a good book has its charms, getting outside in winter—especially into the mountains—can have profound effects on your mental health. Studies show that spending time in nature improves mood, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being. Winter outdoor activities allow you to disconnect from the busy world, enjoy solitude or quality time with loved ones, and immerse yourself in the season's beauty.

Research from the National Institute for Health highlights that exposure to natural environments can reduce anxiety and depression. The crisp air and the quiet of snow-covered forests are restorative. Natural sunlight boosts serotonin levels—your body's natural mood stabilizer—so even a short time spent outdoors on a sunny winter day can elevate your spirits.

### The Allure of Cutting Your Own Christmas Tree

While many people opt for the



(Photo: Shutterstock)

**Cutting a Christmas tree in the backcountry is a rewarding winter tradition that connects you with nature and creates lasting memories for the whole family.**

convenience of a pre-cut tree, there's something special about cutting your tree in the wild. In Nevada, there are several locations where families can wander into the backcountry and select a tree. The U.S. Forest Service allows people to cut down a tree with the proper permit. This tradition has become a beloved holiday activity for many, offering a chance to reconnect with nature while making memories. Here's why it's such a great idea:

• **Connection to Nature:** Cutting your own Christmas tree is a deeply satisfying experience. Not only do you get to enjoy a scenic winter adventure, but you also gain a deeper connection to nature. You can choose a tree that feels personal and unique. The experience of hiking through snow-covered trails, searching for the perfect tree might lead to a deepened

appreciation for the landscape and the creatures that live there.

• **Creating Memories:** It's an activity that appeals to all ages. Whether you're teaching your children the process or consider it a romantic winter outing with your partner, cutting a tree in the backcountry creates long-lasting memories. Working together to select and harvest a tree makes the holiday season

more meaningful. It's an opportunity to slow down and enjoy the process, rather than rush through it.

• **Supporting Conservation:** When you cut your own tree, you're not just getting a beautiful holiday centerpiece. You're also supporting sustainable practices in forest management. Permits for tree cutting are typically granted for thinning overgrown areas, helping to maintain a healthy and well-managed forest. This ensures that future generations can enjoy healthy forests and abundant wildlife.

• **Physical Activity:** Winter hiking is a great form of exercise. The physical activity involved in trekking through snow-covered forests, hauling a tree, and cutting it down engages multiple muscle groups, improving your fitness.

• **A Truly Local Tradition:** In Northern Nevada, many families have been cutting their own Christmas trees for generations, creating a tradition that connects you with the land and the local community. There's something special about knowing your tree was chosen with care from a specific spot, making it all the more unique when you bring it home.

*continued on page 2*

## Letter From the Publisher

As we are enjoying the first powder days in the Sierra, I can't help but reflect on the challenges we've faced recently. With immense gratitude I want to honor our incredible firefighters, first responders, and the National Guard for their heroic efforts battling the Davis Fire. I remember looking out from my back deck and seeing flames in the trees—a sight I'll never forget. It was a scary time for so many of us, and we're beyond grateful for their hard work. We truly dodged a bullet!

In this issue, you'll find reflections on the Davis Fire. We will catch you up on events at the Washoe County Library. You can learn some fitness tips from Ryan, see what's happening at Sky Tavern, and get inspired by Beth's latest delicious recipe.

From all of us here at Galena Times, we want to wish you Happy Holidays and a Merry Christmas. Thanks to our wonderful writers, advertisers, and readers for all your support. We feel very happy to be part of this community, and we'll keep doing our best to share

the good stories that bring us together. Here's to the place we all call home!

*Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year, Richard Keillor*



**Richard Keillor enjoys the Aspens changing colors when riding his mountain bike at Marlette Lake.**

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tree cutting *continued from cover*

The Galena Creek Visitor Center offers Christmas tree permits for just \$10, with each household allowed two tags for two trees. However, tree tags are limited this year, so be sure to get yours before they run out. Visit the visitor center at 18250 Mt. Rose Hwy, Reno, NV 89511 (North entrance, just 0.9 miles up the hill from the Lodge Bar & Patio). For more details, visit galenacreek.org or call (775) 674-5475 ext. 801.

Before you set off on your tree-cutting adventure, there are a few things you'll need to keep in mind. Wear warm clothing and sturdy boots, as mountain conditions can change quickly. It's also important to bring tools, such as a saw, gloves, and a tarp to protect your tree for the ride home. Don't forget to pack snacks, water, and a camera to capture the moment.

**Galena Creek – Winter Playground of Truckee, Reno, and Incline Village**

Beyond cutting your own Christmas tree, the greater Truckee/Reno/Incline Village areas offer myriad ways to enjoy the wintertime. For many locals, the first thing that comes to mind is hitting the slopes at Mount Rose, renowned for its world-class skiing and snowboarding. But if you're looking to beat the crowds or enjoy winter in a different way, the Galena Creek Visitor Center offers plenty of opportunities for the adventurous.

For those looking to try something new, snowshoeing is a fantastic way to explore the winter landscape. The

Galena Creek Visitor Center provides adult and child-sized snowshoes available for a suggested donation of just \$5 per day. For those interested in honing their artistic skills, the center also offers guided watercolor classes, where you can learn to paint while soaking in the beautiful forest views and sipping hot cocoa.

Galena Creek also hosts educational programs, usually on Saturdays at 10 am, for those who want to learn more about local flora and fauna. This is a perfect way to get outside and enjoy the serenity of the snow-covered landscape while expanding your knowledge of the natural world.

**Winter Exploration for Kids: A Chance to Learn and Play**

Wintertime also means more time spent indoors with family. For parents, it can be challenging to keep kids engaged during the Washoe County winter break. Luckily, Galena Creek offers a Winter Exploration Camp for kids ages 11-15. From December 30 to January 3, campers will enjoy hands-on activities like building snow shelters and learning to track animals in the snow. They could even spend the night outdoors in the snow. It's the perfect chance to get your child outdoors and learn new skills in a fun, safe environment.

*Gabe Zurn is the visitor services program manager – for the Great Basin Institute at Galena Creek Regional Park. For more information on winter programs, email AshMorales@gbinstitute.org*

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AGES: 11-15 YEARS

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Join us for an unforgettable winter experience at the beautiful Galena Creek Regional Park! Our camp offers a range of exciting activities including sledding, snowshoeing, fort building, and exploring the snowy landscapes of Galena Creek Regional Park. Campers enjoy plenty of hot chocolate and engage in various indoor activities and science challenges in the Visitor Center. Adventure Awaits!

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# Explore the Great Indoors at South Valleys Library: Books, Films, and Learning for All Ages

By Brad Bynum

Sure, our region boasts a lot of great places to ski or snowshoe or what have you, but winter is also the perfect time to rediscover the joys of the great indoors. There's nothing better than heating up a warm cup of coffee or tea or hot chocolate, snuggling up in a favorite easy chair, hopefully next to a crackling fireplace, and digging into a tall stack of fresh library books.

The South Valleys Library is the go-to spot for acquiring that stack of books, but the library offers a lot more than that. How about one of the other fine pleasures of the great indoors, classic cinema?

This season, the South Valleys Library is hosting "Isn't It Romantic? Classic Love Stories," a film series featuring some of the great romantic films from the Golden Age of Hollywood, like "It Happened One Night" (1934) and "Roman Holiday" (1953). The series kicks off with "Christmas in Connecticut" (1945) at 2 pm on January 4. And no classic romance is more classically romantic than "Casablanca" (1942) so don't miss that one on January 25.

If you want to be more ambitious during hibernation season, Washoe County Library offers free access to tools for digital learning, including

Rosetta Stone Library Solution, an award-winning online language learning platform. Rosetta Stone offers language and literacy tools to help build reading, writing, and speaking skills in 24 world languages, including Spanish, Japanese, and Arabic.

The South Valleys Library is hosting several Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics events this season including a presentation on "The Water Cycle" by Ranger Kim from Washoe Lake State Park at 4 pm on January 23, and "Tales from Local Beekeepers" by Northern Nevada Beekeepers at 4 pm on February 20. In addition, staff from the Terry Lee Wells Discovery Museum will visit the library and present educational coding activities on January 12 at 11 am.

But you don't need an event or any other excuse to visit the South Valleys Library. You can come just to check out the recent renovations, including the newly upgraded teen zone, expanded business room, and revamped garden space. Or you can come to check out books. Or just to find a cozy place to sit with a mountain view. Or you can come to check out books.

To learn more and discover other upcoming events, check out the winter edition of our Explorer magazine. You can find a paper copy at any Washoe County Library branch or visit



Catch a classic love story this winter at South Valleys Library's 'Isn't It Romantic?' film series, featuring timeless films like 'Christmas in Connecticut', 'Casablanca', and 'Roman Holiday.'

[washoelibrary.org/explorer](http://washoelibrary.org/explorer).

Brad Bynum is the marketing and communications assistant for the Washoe County Library System. Before joining the library team, he was the editor of the Reno News & Review and an instructor at the University of Nevada, Reno, a school from which he has a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in music. He grew up in South Reno and graduated from Galena High School.



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# Sky Tavern Sets the Stage for an Unforgettable 2025 Season

By Rick Reed

Sky Tavern, Northern Nevada's cherished nonprofit ski and snowboard destination, is gearing up for a thrilling winter season with fresh upgrades and expanded family-friendly offerings. Celebrating over 75 years of teaching young skiers and snowboarders, the renowned, affordable Junior Ski Program is wrapping up membership sales for its January kick-off.

Whether experienced or just getting started, membership options for families and volunteers provide something for everyone. Financial assistance and scholarships are available to qualifying families.

"We have a renewed focus to place family first in our winter programs," said Chief Operations Officer Chris Brown.



(Photo: R. Reed)

**Sky Tavern's slopes await the 2025 season with new snowmaking upgrades ensuring quality conditions from base to summit for families and young skiers.**

Meanwhile, the operations team has been focused on capital improvements across the mountain during

summer and fall, nearing the completion of the first stage of snowmaking. The new snowmaking capabilities will result in a consistent ski surface for the base area and top of the mountain.

Finally, the region's largest annual Ski Swap happened in Reno on November 22-23. Benefitting the Junior Ski Program, Sky Tavern's Ski Swap always a great way to shop for those missing gloves and worn-out gear before the slopes open.

Visit [www.skytavern.org](http://www.skytavern.org) for more information and how to sign up for your 2025 membership.

*Rick Reed heads up Sky Tavern's bike park development and marketing. Besides bikes, he enjoys traveling and adventuring with his dog Zuul. Visit [skytavern.org](http://skytavern.org) to see the calendar of events. To become a volunteer or inquire about sponsorship opportunities, contact [rick@skytavern.com](mailto:rick@skytavern.com).*

## Lifting the of Confusion to Reveal Beauty



Liesa Leggett Garcia

By Liesa Leggett Garcia

Once, on an early Sunday morning, as my husband and I were driving down the Mt. Rose Highway into town from our (then) home in Callahan Ranch, we looked out and saw a dense cloud of fog hovering over the city. It was breathtaking!

Instead of the usual view of the skyline of the city and the roofs and treetops, all that was visible were a few tops of hills; standing out was the top half of Rattlesnake Mountain.

Where we were coming from, at the higher elevation, the sky was deep blue and not a cloud in sight. As we descended the highway, we drove right into the mist. For a few moments, we couldn't see

beyond a few feet in front of us. It instantly became dark and damp and foreboding. I commented to my husband, "Isn't it amazing that just moments ago we were immersed in sunshine and in an instant, everything suddenly changed."

I read once that if you could gather all the fog that it took to fill a city street and condensed it into a single container, it would only fill a mayonnaise jar. Fog is really just a lot of nothingness.

In that moment of the realization of the stark contrast, I recognized that's how life can seem. One minute, everything is great—blue skies as far as you can see, warm sun on your skin, a sense of comfort. The next minute, things can seem dark, cold and maybe even hopeless, as if we'd driven into the fog of confusion, the fog of doubt, the fog of lack, or the fog of fear that settled in. We may feel darkness,

dampness and a sense of foreboding. Everything changed. Or did it?

This "fog" that set in can be our perspective as to how we see things. If we have succumbed to fearful rhetoric around us, the fog can seem thick. But if we can remember that just like actual fog, the basis for that fear can be a whole lot of nothingness. If we can stop and tune into the memory of how it felt to live from that higher elevation, that higher perspective, we can watch the fog burn off and reveal the beauty that was always there.

Just keep driving—it'll get better.

*Liesa Leggett Garcia, a Nevada native, is the senior minister of the Center for Spiritual Living, located in southwest Reno. It is a positive, inclusive community that teaches "Change your thinking, change your life." For more info, visit [www.cslreno.org](http://www.cslreno.org).*



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**The Galena Times encourages everyone to write and express opinions about the community or the paper. We welcome your stories and photos, but reserve the right to edit submissions.**

Please contact Richard with all inquires regarding the Galena Times: [Richard.Keillor@cbselectre.com](mailto:Richard.Keillor@cbselectre.com) or visit our website: [www.galenatimes.com](http://www.galenatimes.com)

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# Reflecting and Rebuilding: Lessons from the Davis Fire to Strengthen Community Preparedness

Submitted to the Galena Times

The Davis Fire that recently ravaged parts of the south Reno community provided Washoe County's Emergency Management team the opportunity to evaluate what we have been doing well in our emergency response development and consider what could go better in the future. We are often reminded that the disaster doesn't end when the threat itself does; the end of the hazard is just the beginning of the ongoing need to reflect and continuously improve processes.

The unfortunate truth is that disasters will happen, from fires and floods to earthquakes and avalanches. The silver lining of knowing disasters can happen is that we can prepare effectively—by having a solid plan in place and knowing where to find reliable information when needed. Some questions that we ask ourselves after an incident are, in retrospect, did everyone evacuate safely? Did regional partners respond effectively to the disaster as it occurred? How can we improve our preparation for the next threat?

On Washoe County's part, we are working collaboratively

with the U.S. Forest Service and Army Corps of Engineers for a post-event assessment and implementation of recommendations from their findings, and we have also opened a community feedback survey to gain your input on emergency response and communications. We encourage you to take the survey by scanning the QR code.

We recommend that families do the same – a self-evaluation for continuous improvement. Some way to start would be to ask, did you have a plan in place? If yes, was that plan successfully executed? If not, why not, and what can be done to improve that plan for the next time disaster strikes? We hope that you had a "go-bag" already prepared. Was it effective and did it contain everything you needed? What items need to be replaced, or added to your kit?

One thing we heard is that some people did not have cell service during this disaster which impeded their ability to receive emergency alert updates. Many others said they were able to continue to receive emergency notifications through an AM/FM radio that was battery-operated. Speaking with your neighbors about what did and did not



(Photo: Washoe County)

**An aerial view of the Davis Fire as it sweeps toward South Reno highlights the need for robust community preparedness and coordinated emergency response. Leave your feedback on a survey by scanning the QR code.**

work for them during this most recent disaster will help to plan for whatever Mother Nature serves up next. Together, we can all continue to learn and hone our emergency plans.

## Reno Transit Triumph: RTC Washoe Marks 26 Months of Ridership Growth Post-Pandemic

Submitted to the Galena Times

Transit agencies across the country felt the same pressures as most businesses during COVID, and the pandemic only exacerbated already declining ridership levels and revenue collection. Now, only a few years after the country reopened, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County is boasting 26 straight months of ridership growth.

"We've put a lot of effort into rebuilding ridership after COVID," Jim Gee, RTC Washoe's director of public transportation and operations said. "These numbers are very encouraging."

In addition to acting as the area's metropolitan planning organization and leading multiple pavement preservation and construction projects in the area, RTC Washoe serves the citizens of Reno, Sparks and unincorporated areas of Washoe County with public transportation. The RTC fleet of 111 buses runs on 20 routes including two Bus Rapid Transit routes, along with their curb-to-curb FlexRIDE service and RTC ACCESS Paratransit service.

"Our service operates 24 hours a day," Gee said. "Over 5.3 million rides are taken annually."



(Photo: RTC)

**After pandemic challenges, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County rebounds with innovative service expansions, boosting ridership and community impact across Reno and Sparks.**

Executive Director for RTC Washoe Bill Thomas credits the success of the public transportation division to the quality-of-service riders expect of the system. "There are a few major keys to a successful transit system," Thomas said. "Passengers expect our buses to run on time,

and to have friendly and professional drivers. If there are delays in service, customers expect to be notified quickly via our apps and text alerts."

Communication has been a key factor not only for route updates, but for RTC Washoe's overall recognition and awareness in the community.

"The developments RTC is making to the infrastructure in this region affect more than just bus riders," RTC Public Information Officer Josh MacEachern said. "Public transportation is a key part of our mission, but the road improvements, bridge replacements, intelligent traffic system upgrades and multi-modal connectivity improvements are enormous parts of our long-term outreach plans."

For the future of RTC Washoe's public transit system, Gee looks to new audiences to increase ridership even further.

"Some of our biggest upcoming initiatives are focusing on audiences that don't typically use the bus, but could benefit greatly from our services," Gee said. "Our free rides for college students and faculty program, ED-Pass, helps to encourage students to venture outside of campus affordably, and we are constantly making improvements to our outreach efforts for the Spanish-speaking community."

## Nevada Peer Support Network: Heroes Caring for Our Heroes

By Meaghan Maillet

September 7th will be remembered as the day the Davis Fire started, launching a week of anxiety and uncertainty. For those who lost their homes, the struggle continues. But most found relief thanks to the incredible efforts of First Responders—who also are our neighbors, friends, and family members. They put themselves at risk to protect our community. Despite facing the same stress we do; they confront danger daily. Around 30% of first responders experience depression, anxiety, or PTSD, according to the National Institutes of Health. When heroes need support, they often turn to fellow heroes at the Nevada Peer Support Network.

Founded in 2019, the NPSN includes representatives of the fire, EMS, law enforcement, healthcare, and military communities. Their objective is to help first responders, military personnel, and frontline healthcare professionals in Nevada get access to mental health and peer support resources. A large part of that objective is working to reduce the stigma around mental health issues and reinforcing that seeking help is not a sign of weakness, but indeed a strength.

Peer support is a key factor in achieving that objective. Peers, who understand the culture of responders, can help their brothers and sisters cope with stressors and



(Photo: M. Maillet)

**First Responders line up for a well-deserved meal after battling the Davis Fire. These everyday heroes not only protect our community but also turn to each other for strength through programs like the Nevada Peer Support Network, which provides vital mental health and peer support.**

lower stigma in ways others may not.

In addition to helping responders gain access to peer support and mental health resources, the NVPSN opened the first Resiliency Center in the state. The center is a place where responders can meet in person for support and camaraderie. There is a meeting space where responders can debrief after an incident. At the Resiliency Center, they have access to mental health

clinicians, chaplain services, support groups, and a variety of classes, specialized trainings, and workshops aimed to maintain well-being and build resiliency. The center plans to expand upon these in-person services, with future offerings, including yoga, massage therapy, meditation/mindfulness practices, physical wellness programs, and more.

NVPSN also created the Incident Support Program. The program provides on-site rehab and canteen support at long-term incidents such as the Davis Fire. The program is staffed by a 100% volunteer team of retired responders. This program not only provides much needed support during an emergency event, but also offers an opportunity for retired personnel to stay engaged.

To learn more about the Nevada Peer Support Network, or to see how you can support their mission, visit their website at NVPSN.ORG

*Meaghan Maillet, LMT, is the owner of Connective Touch Therapeutic Massage. Meaghan relocated from the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC and has over 20 years of experience as a licensed massage therapist. She works with all ages and specializes in Sports Massage, Prenatal Massage, and Traditional Thai Massage. To learn more, email meaghan@connectivetouchmassage.com or visit www.connectivetouchmassage.com*

# Keep your Christmas Tree Fresh: Essential Tips for a Long-Lasting Holiday Tree

Submitted to the Galena Times

A beautifully decorated Christmas tree is the heart of holiday festivities, but keeping it lush, fragrant, and safe can be a challenge. Whether you're setting up a cut tree or a living tree to plant after the season, a few essential steps will make all the difference in extending its life and vibrancy. From making that all-important fresh cut to maintaining daily watering, these expert tips from Moana Nursery will ensure your tree stays picture-perfect throughout the holidays.

## Make a Fresh Cut

- Make a fresh cut on the trunk to open up the pores which have been clogged by sap. Cut off at least one-half inch.

The fresh-cut surface should be creamy-white, not yellow or brown. If you do not make a fresh cut, the tree will not be able to drink water.

After the cut is made, put the tree in warm water as soon as possible. The longer the time between when the tree is given a fresh cut and when it is put into the water, the less ability the tree has to absorb water.

Even if a hole is drilled to accommodate a pin-type stand, a fresh cut also should be made on the trunk.

## Place Tree in Water

Place the tree in a sturdy stand which will hold at least one gallon of water.

Check tree stand for leaks.

Fill stand with water treated with SUPERthrive (1/4 tsp per gallon).

If the tree is not going into the house soon after the purchase, it should be stored in a bucket of clear water on a cool porch or patio away from wind and sun in warm climates and protected from freezing and wind in cold

climates.

## Water Daily

A cut tree will drink 65% of its water in the first week. A good rule of thumb is that for every 1" of diameter, a tree will use a quart of water per day. For example, a 4" diameter tree will use 1 gallon of water per day for the first several days.

An average tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day. Add SUPERthrive to each watering.

If the water level drops below the cut end of the trunk, a seal will form, and no more water will be absorbed by the tree unless another fresh cut is made. So don't forget to add water every day.

## Keep Away From Heat Sources

Place the tree away from heat sources such as heating vents, fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, or sunny windows.

## LED Lights Produce Minimum Heat

LED lights produce virtually no heat and reduce the drying effect upon a tree.

Always check light sets for frayed, cracked wire insulation & broken sockets before placing them on a tree.

Do not attempt to repair a worn light set. Throw it away and buy a new set.

Do not overload electrical circuits.

## Remove Tree Promptly

After Christmas, before the tree dies, remove it from the house for recycling or pick up by your local disposal service.

If the tree dies before you remove it from your house, dried needles will be extremely messy.

Never burn any part of a Christmas tree in a wood stove or fireplace.



## Questions to consider before purchasing a living Christmas tree:

Where are you going to plant it after Christmas? Most of the trees sold as living Christmas trees grow 40 feet or more so will need adequate space to thrive as well as the proper light and soil.

**Living Christmas trees should stay inside the home the shortest time possible — no more than ten days.** Remember living Christmas trees have no warranty.

Spray with Bonide Wilt Stop before bringing inside to prevent drying out. It will remove the blue green color, so if you have a tree with blue green needles, consult a Moana Nursery teammate first.

## Care Tips:

Place the tree away from all heat sources, fireplaces, space heaters, heating vents, electrical appliances and televisions.

Water daily; add ¼ tsp. of SUPERthrive to each gallon of water. Constructing or buying an inexpensive siphon system will make it easier to continue watering once there are presents under the tree. A clear vinyl saucer will protect your flooring.

Decorate with LED lights, which give off less heat and are more energy efficient.

## Planting Tips:

Plan ahead! Dig the hole now before the

ground freezes. Fill hole with straw or burlap and cover with plywood so no one falls in. Keep soil and amendments in the garage or shed so that they do not freeze.

It is important to not move your tree directly outdoors for planting. The extreme temperature differential from indoor to outdoor could adversely affect the viability of your tree.

Move your tree to an unheated garage near a source of outside light for several days. A carport or porch could be substituted in the absence of a garage. The amount of time depends on the outside temperature. Decrease the time if it is unseasonably warm. Increase the time for extreme cold.

After the appropriate time in the garage, move the tree to a protected outside location close to the house. The amount of time at this location is dependent upon the extremes in the weather.

Add one ¼ tsp. of SUPERthrive to each gallon of water when you plant the tree. It is extremely important to water your tree the appropriate amount once it is in the ground. This will vary according to the amount of precipitation and temperature.

*If you have any questions, stop by any one of our three Moana Nursery garden centers or contact [www.moananursery.com](http://www.moananursery.com)*

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# LIVE EDGE SLABS OF RENO TAHOE



## Reno Tahoe Welcomes Watchman Brothers Custom Live Edge Tables and More

The Reno Tahoe community has always been about combining natural beauty with innovation, and now, a new family-owned business is bringing a touch of artisan craftsmanship to this vibrant region. Brothers Jack and Will Watchman have officially opened their custom live edge table business, continuing a family legacy of woodworking excellence while adding their own unique spin.

Jack and Will's journey to this moment is as inspiring as the tables they create. After years away, they're thrilled to be back in the Reno Tahoe area, putting down roots and contributing to the community that shaped them. Jack brings a rich background in fine dining, having spent years mastering the art of hospitality, opening and managing restaurants. His keen eye for detail and customer experience translates seamlessly into the craftsmanship and service at their new store.

Will, on the other hand, comes from the fast-paced auto industry, with 13 years of expertise under his belt, including his final chapter at Mercedes-Benz of Seattle. His dedication to precision and quality now finds a new outlet in their handcrafted tables, each one a testament to the enduring beauty of nature and skilled design.

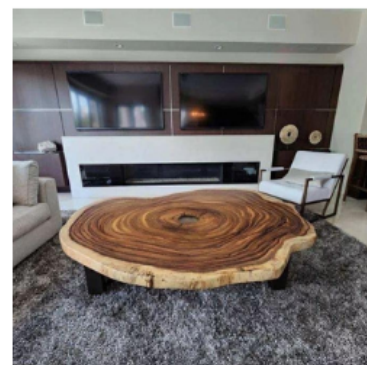
Their father, Bill Watchman, set the stage for this venture, opening Live Edge Slabs of Las Vegas in 2021. Inspired by his passion for woodworking, the brothers decided to follow in his footsteps, creating stunning live edge tables that are as functional as they are works of art.



Each table in their collection tells a story, made from sustainably sourced Costa Rican hardwoods that showcase the unique grains and imperfections of nature. Whether you're looking to elevate your dining space, create a standout office desk, or design a showpiece for your home, their tables offer timeless beauty and unparalleled craftsmanship.

For the Watchman brothers, this business is about more than tables—it's about reconnecting with their roots and sharing their passion for creativity with the Reno Tahoe community. Stop by their showroom to find a slab that speaks to you, customize your project, meet Jack and Will, and experience firsthand the warmth and artistry they're bringing to the area.

Welcome to a new chapter of craftsmanship in Reno Tahoe, where family values and fine design come together—one live edge table at a time.



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# Narrow Escape in Galena Forest: Davis Fire Spurs Wildfire Preparedness Lessons

By Gary Weichert

The Galena Forest community narrowly avoided catastrophe when the Davis Fire erupted on September 7, sparing the area's homes but leaving vital lessons in its wake. Thanks to tireless efforts from firefighters and resident-created defensible spaces, all but a dozen structures were saved, despite six days of fierce winds that fanned the flames. This close call highlights the importance of continued wildfire prevention efforts, from creating defensible spaces to enhancing evacuation readiness. Now, residents are reflecting on what they learned — and planning for better preparedness in future emergencies.

First, we owe our gratitude to our professional firefighters who mustered all available personnel and equipment they could get their hands on, to minimize the fire's impact on personal property. Coupled with resident-created defensible space,

firefighters were able to save all but about a dozen structures. Given that weeklong winds were fanning the flames, this is nothing short of miraculous. Defensible space around homes allowed firefighters the opportunity to defend structures. Coupled with modern construction designs that adhere to "Wildland-Urban Interface" building codes and surviving a wildfire is an achievable feat. Dozens of homes remained unscathed amid what was once a dense forest due to the attention paid to wildfire risk-reduction efforts. This cannot be overemphasized.

We must continue to work diligently to keep our brush growth under control and to formulate plans to thin our dense stands of trees. Keeping our vegetation healthy, whether native or landscaped, and maintaining recommended spacing between both brush and trees is paramount. It's not easy to decide to remove a 150-year-old

tree, but in many cases it is necessary. And our wildlife doesn't need contiguous brush for their habitat. We can balance safety and habitat without sacrificing the ambiance of our forest.

Our community deserves praise for the calm cooperation shown during this challenging time. Following the essential rule of early evacuation, everyone acted responsibly, resulting in smooth traffic flow with no congestion and no issues with authorities.

Reflecting on this evacuation, we need to ask ourselves, "What would I do differently next time?"

My first thought was "Why didn't we take more clothes?" When we first realized we were evacuating for real, we thought, "Valuables!" Good thought and easy to gather. Next, "Computer and chargers!" But just the laptop, as everything is digital, anyway. Lastly was, "Clothes!" We thought a couple of changes in a duffel bag would suffice, as we'd be back home that night.

But as Day 3 of the evacuation dawned, the seriousness of the event started to set in, and we wished we had Day-1 to do over again.

Next time, we'll pack multiple suitcases with clothes and fill a cooler with perishable foods and easy-to-grab snacks. When the decision to evacuate is made, it's easy to think you're overpacking and will be returning in a few hours. But by Day 8, when we finally returned home, we would have gladly unpacked extra clothes and avoided the unpleasant surprise of spoiled food in the fridge. Lesson learned for next time.

Gary Weichert is the resident leader of the Galena Forest Community, a Firewise USA-recognized neighborhood. Visit [GalenaForestCommunity.org](http://GalenaForestCommunity.org) and add your email address to the private contact list used only for official GFC communication purposes. For questions, concerns, or suggestions, use the contact form on [www.GalenaForestCommunity.org](http://www.GalenaForestCommunity.org) or email [gary.w@galenaforestcommunity.org](mailto:gary.w@galenaforestcommunity.org) or call (775) 843-8279.

# Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe Turns 65: A Legacy of Innovation and Local Charm

Submitted to the Galena Times

This season marks a milestone for Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe, which is celebrating 65 incredible years of skiing and snowboarding in the Sierra Nevada. What began as a visionary project in the 1960s has evolved into a beloved destination for locals and visitors alike.

The story traces back to 1964, when Jim Leuscher spearheaded the development of a ski resort on the north-facing slopes of Slide Mountain. While the Reno Ski Bowl (later Slide Mountain Ski Area) had been in operation since the early 1950s,

the purchase of the Rose Bowl (now Sky Tavern) was the catalyst for something transformative. This acquisition plowed the way for the creation of a second ski area along the Mt. Rose Highway.

The late 1960s brought the construction of an 87-room hotel, turning Mt. Rose Ski Area into Mt. Rose Ski Resort. The hotel offered lodging until 1982, adding to the mountain's allure. By 1987, Slide Mountain and Mt. Rose areas merged under the unified name of Mt. Rose Ski Area. From then on, continued investment and improvements have shaped the resort into the

beloved winter playground known today.

To dive deeper into this rich history and witness the evolution of this local treasure, explore the full story at Mt. Rose's official history page.

This season, as Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe celebrates its 65th anniversary, take a moment to remember your own experiences on the mountain, and dream about the exciting possibilities for its future. With its legacy firmly rooted in the Sierra, the next chapter of Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe promises to be as thrilling as its past.



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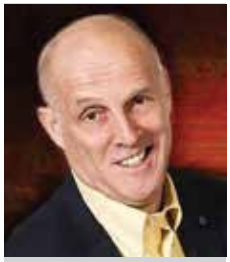
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# How Clinical Research Drives Progress in Cancer Treatment



Dr. Max Coppes

By Max Coppes

When you go to see a doctor, you either want to find out what causes you to have certain symptoms and what can be done to address them, or you go in without symptoms and want a checkup to make sure there are no health problems that exist but thus far have gone unnoticed. Whatever the doctor does or recommends is based on their training, experience, and learning.

Clinical research is the term used to describe that part of medicine that is focused on studying health and illness in humans and learning from observations. It is an integral and very important part of medicine. Major advances in managing many diseases are the direct result of clinical research.

There are four types of clinical research: observational (only observing patients, no interventions), longitudinal (following patients over time to see how their conditions develop and respond to various factors), translational (focusing on translating findings in the laboratory into practical applications), and clinical (testing of new drugs, devices, or treatments in humans). All four have had a tremendous impact on advancing our understanding of and improving cancer treatments.

Below is more on the critical role of new drug testing in advancing cancer care and supporting the mission of Renown Health's William N. Pennington Cancer Institute. As part of our core purpose, we aim to "deepen and expand our understanding and

treatment of cancer through research."

Let us assume that treatment "A" results in a 55% cure for people with lung cancer (this is an oversimplification because we do not specify which group of lung cancer patients we are talking about). Looking back at the outcomes 20 years ago, 55% sounds good. But for patients treated today, it is 45% short of ideal. So, how do we improve?

Let us imagine that five years ago, researchers found a new cancer drug that works really well in the lab and looked promising in animal models. A year later, several volunteers helped determine which dose was safe to give to humans (this particular part of clinical research is called a "Phase 1" study). Another year later, about 200 patients with cancer who were failing standard treatments were gracious enough to participate in a "Phase 2" study that was aimed at determining which cancers would respond to this new drug. Some patients participated for purely altruistic reasons, some because they hoped the new drug would work against their cancer.

The study may demonstrate that the new drug was particularly effective against lung cancer, 5 out of 12 patients had experienced considerable shrinkage of their cancer. Having identified this new drug, we now need to establish whether the new drug, either on its own, or more often in combination with the existing treatment improves upon the 55% cure or does not change the cure rate but only adds unwelcome side effects.

So clinical investigators develop a new treatment that combines what was included in "A" with the new drug and we will call this treatment "B". In a Phase 3 clinical study,

patients with lung cancer will randomly be assigned treatment "A" or "B" and after several years we will know whether "B" is indeed better. If so, it becomes the new "standard of care".

As a direct result of many years of clinical research, the five-year relative survival across all cancers has increased from 49% in the mid-1970s to 69% for patients diagnosed between 2013 to 2019, according to recent data from the American Association for Cancer Research. For breast cancer, the death rate declined by over 40% between 1989 and 2017, while the death rate for colorectal cancer declined by 39% between 2020 and 2022.

There are quite strict rules and regulations associated with participating in clinical research. Cancer specialists, the Federal Drug Administration (the federal agency that regulates drugs in the USA),

and the public at large want to be assured that only true improvements are added to cancer treatments.

At the PCI we are proud that we are meeting the strict requirements set out to participate in clinical studies, thereby offering patients in our community access to promising new drugs before they are formally approved as part of the 'standard of care'. Actively participating has allowed us to recruit top-notch cancer specialists, committed to helping establish better treatments. The focus on clinical research is also paramount to achieving our ultimate goal, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation.

*Dr. Max J. Coppes, MD, Ph.D., MBA, is the Director of the William N. Pennington Cancer Institute, Renown Health and professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Internal Medicine at the University of Nevada Reno School of Medicine.*

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*Debra Lynn Markoff, D.D.S. has been practicing dentistry for over 25 years and has enjoys the advances in technology that have improved treatment options and patient comfort. She says "I love working with my hands and people so dentistry is a good fit for me."*

Debra Lynn Markoff, D.D.S.

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# Keep the Holiday Cheer Without Sacrificing Your Smile: Festive Tips for Family Dental Care



Gilbert A. Trujillo

By Gilbert Trujillo

For many of us, the holiday season is the most favorite time of the year. We should all enjoy the celebrations, including partaking in all that glorious food. But, as you know, most holiday treats are usually not the best for our teeth. Yet, we can still eat them with a couple

of modifications to our daily dental routine. Here are a few helpful tips to navigate the holidays with the health of our teeth and our children's teeth in mind.

If you and your kids are eating more treats, then just try to brush and floss more often after these treats. This additional bit of dental hygiene will

keep those foods and sugars off our teeth and not allow them time to cause cavities.

A fluoride rinse is another way to help combat cavities. A fluoride rinse can help strengthen the enamel and keep your teeth healthier. Usually, two or three times a week is enough to provide adequate protection. If your child is unable to spit, don't give them a rinse. You can put a little on the toothbrush and brush it on their teeth. Your child's dentist can prescribe the proper fluoride for your child.

Don't forget to replace your toothbrushes after any cold or flu. This will keep harmful bacteria and viruses out of our mouths and bodies.

You can also add "tooth care" to your Holiday! How about stocking stuffers that have a dental spin? Fun flossers, tooth-brushing timers, toothbrushes, spin brushes, even electric toothbrushes can make

your child's stocking fun and useful.

A quick search online reveals a variety of fun dental toys for kids, including books, pretend dentist kits, Play-Doh dental-themed sets, and more. These playful items can help spark your child's interest in dental care and make brushing and flossing an enjoyable part of their daily routine.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season and enjoy everything that makes this such a beautiful time of the year.

*Dr. Gilbert Trujillo, a Reno native, received his D.D.S. from the University of the Pacific and his Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry from Baylor College of Dentistry, Texas A&M. He received his Certificate of Resident of Pediatric Dentistry from Children's Medical Center, Dallas. Dr. Trujillo belongs to many dental organizations and is active in organized dentistry on the local level. He can be reached at (775) 824-2323 or at RenoKidsDentist.com.*

# The Fast Fitness Trap: Why Consistency and Recovery Outshine Quick-Fix Workouts



Ryan Golec

By Ryan Golec

We live in a rushed society that is determined to get things done as fast as possible. Fitness has certainly trended towards this mentality. So, now we have all these claims that short-burst high-intensity workouts are the key to getting fit in a short period of time. This isn't untrue, but it is

not always the best approach.

Depending on several factors, you have the capacity to efficiently recover from a certain volume of exercise. Just because a workout is short, doesn't mean that it won't create a lot of training stress on the body. No matter where you are in your fitness journey, the goal, and key to success, comes with consistency. Consistency requires recovering efficiently and optimizing the next workout. If you do an intense workout, and your body feels like you need to sleep for the next 3 days, it's possible that workout volume, or intensity, was too high for your ability to recover. That means, you may not be able to safely or efficiently perform an intense workout for another 3-5 days. That doesn't cater to a great degree of consistency. If it's both subjective

and individual, how can we know the right amount of exercise and when? Follow these simple guidelines to build consistency.

- **Start easy.** If you are new to exercise, deconditioned, and/or aren't sure what you are capable of, start with an easier workout. Then evaluate. How did you feel over the next couple of days? Could you easily repeat that effort? Did your energy increase, decrease, or stay the same? You should be able to at least repeat that effort every other day.

- **Choose a variety of intensities.** If you do a high intensity workout, do a nice easy aerobic or movement workout the next day. Light exercise following hard exercise goes a long way to aid recovery.

- **Don't get too caught up on variety.** Doing the same strength exercises over a few weeks not only lets you observe progress but creates new motor patterns. This will inevitably make you more efficient and increase your ability to recover.

- When adding a variety of new exercises, add them when you feel the most recovered. Even though an exercise can seem easy, when it's new, the body uses more energy to sort out the pattern. Then you can build efficiency again.

There are other ways to improve recovery, but these



(Photo: Shutterstock)

**In a society rushing to get fit fast, building sustainable exercise habits with balanced intensity and recovery proves the true key to long-term progress and health.**

simple steps can help you go a long way in building consistency and progression towards your fitness goals.

*Ryan Golec is the director of movement and education at Performance EDU in Reno. He has worked in the fitness world for over 20 years and has a passion for correcting and enhancing movement patterns to help people achieve their ultimate goals. He is also a licensed massage therapist and uses manual therapy as a part of his system to improve his clients' function and fitness. Contact him at (775) 846-2894, Ryan@fitubuilt.com or visit www.performancedu.com.*

# Lifelong Health Begins By Taking Preventative Action Locally



Dr. Kris Deeter

By Kris Deeter

We are blessed to live in an incredibly beautiful state filled with an abundance of clean air, mountain water, and healthy forests. We ski, bike, kayak, bocce, hike, and pickle. Most or perhaps all my friends in Reno have a sport, activity, or hobby they invest time (and sometimes lots of money) in to maintain health and joy. I would not want to live

anywhere else!

Our region is additionally fortunate to have fantastic community partners that focus on the health and wellness of our population. Urban Roots is teaching families about gardening and healthy eating. The Tahoe Fund and Keep Tahoe Blue lead efforts to keep our lake clean and safe while supporting trails and outdoor activities. Children's Cabinet offers resources for children and families to be safe and supported. The Boys and Girls Club of Northern Nevada provides a safe and fun place to engage kids when they are not in school. The High Fives Foundation mission is to prevent injuries and provide resources for those who

have sustained them. This is just a small peek at the many wonderful things happening daily in our area.

As a leader in our children's hospital, I am all too aware of the national crisis that we are facing in pediatric health—physical and mental. Unhealthy kids become unhealthy adults, so my physician and hospital partners spend much of our time focused on preventative care. We have an opportunity with children to prevent injury, stop addiction before it starts, and emphasize education and wellness.

In 2023, a quietly released government study reported that 77% of youth ages 17 to 24 are not physically/mentally qualified to enlist in our military. Reasons given were obesity, lack of education, criminal records, and poor health. Nationally, one in five children is obese, and this is expected to rise quickly to two out of five children in the next decade. Chronic school absenteeism is up to 26% nationally, from 15% before the COVID-19 pandemic. Behavioral and mental health continues to be headline news.

While I may not be able to fix the national crisis, with all of the resources I described above, we can impact our region's health locally. I am asking each of you to look at my list below and pick one thing that is easy and important to you. This is my short list – look around, and you can find

so many more. It will take all of us to improve the health and well-being of our region. Let's keep Northern Nevada beautiful and strong!

**Things you can do to get involved locally:**

- Plant a tree, or talk to Urban Roots about planting a garden
- Volunteer to mentor or tutor a high school student
- Donate clothes and goods to local (instead of national) organizations to keep those items in our region
- Encourage families in need to enroll in Head Start, WIC, and Medicaid
- Improve internet connectivity for families that don't have Wi-Fi access
- Volunteer at Food Bank of Nevada, a local soup kitchen, or a holiday event for those in need
- Support local non-profits like the For Kids Foundation, Tiny Toes, Make A Wish Nevada, Ronald McDonald House, and Northern Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation so that the donation supports our local kids!

*Kris Deeter, MD, MBA, FAAP is Chief of Pediatrics at the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine, and Physician-in-Chief of Renown Children's Hospital. She also works for REMSA as a pediatric educator.*

# Creamy Shrimp Spaghetti with Arugula and Tomato: A Flavorful Twist on Classic Pasta



Beth & Miguel Carbone

**By Michele and Beth Carbone**

This is one of my preferred new recipes. Enjoy it with a group of friends to keep you company in the kitchen as you prepare

this dish because they will definitely want to make it for themselves once they have tasted it.

**Ingredients**

- 1 box of spaghetti
- 20-25 large shrimp (4-5 per person)
- ½ cup of olive oil
- 1 clove of garlic, smashed
- ¼ of cup parsley, minced
- 2 - 4 hot red peppers
- 1 box of arugula of 4 ounces, or so
- 1 cup of chopped Italian tomatoes
- 1/3 of cup white wine
- ½ cup of orange juice
- whipping cream

**Preparation**

• Make sure you have all the ingredients measured and ready to cook, because this sauce is made while the spaghetti is boiling. Look at the box to see how long the spaghetti should cook. You will need to remove it from the pot about 2 minutes before it's fully cooked, because it is finished with the sauce for the last 2 or 3 minutes of preparation, which is about 11 minutes after you have started cooking the sauce. The total cooking time is about 15 – 16 minutes from the time you have started cooking the pasta.

• Rinse the shrimp and slice through the back of each shell. Leave the shells on the shrimp because they add more flavor to the sauce.

• In a large pot for pasta, put water on to boil. Add a little to the water, if necessary, you can always add salt at the end.

• Soon after you put the spaghetti in the pot to cook, prepare the sauce. Use a large skillet to cook the sauce, which will take about 11 - 12 minutes before you add

the al dente drained spaghetti.

Put the olive oil, garlic, minced peppers, shrimp, arugula, and parsley into the skillet at the same time. Turn the heat to high.

• After 2 minutes, turn the shrimp and continue to cook for another 2 minutes.

• Add the chopped tomatoes and wine, lower the heat to medium and cook for 2 minutes. Remove the shrimp from the skillet and put them in a covered bowl.

• Add the orange juice to the skillet, stirring well. Let it cook for another 3 minutes so some of the liquid evaporates. If necessary, increase the heat to high.

• Bring the heat to low and add the whipping cream a little bit at a time, stirring until the sauce becomes pink –not red, and not white, but pink. Let it simmer gently for another minute or so.

• The spaghetti that's boiling in the pot should be very al dente (firm). Drain it in a colander and quickly pour it into the skillet containing the sauce. With the heat on high, stir the pasta in the sauce and cook for another 2 minutes – until the



(Photo: B. Carbone)

Michele and Beth Carbone share a delicious meal of spaghetti with shrimp, arugula, and tomato with friends, gathered around a cozy, welcoming dinner table. Warm conversation and laughter add a special flavor to the evening.

sauce is dense.

• Mix the reserved shrimp into the pot and serve immediately.

Michele and Beth Carbone maintain a website with all their recipes in both English and Italian. Visit <https://michelecarbhone.org> to search for any recipe by keyword.

## Winter Wine Wonders: Uncork the Season with California's Finest Bottles

**By Joe Grzymski**

Winter is a time of wine occasions. Either break out great bottles of wine to share with friends and family or unwind by yourself after too many friends and family. If it is within your budget, there is always a special occasion to break out wines that dazzle, tell a story, or have a bit of age on them.

Here are two of my California favorite, small family-run wineries that have limited allocations and require being on their mailing list or in a club to secure direct releases. However, thanks to the competitive secondary market, you can purchase these wines online at essentially the same price as from the winery.

At Law Estate Wines from Paso Robles, the Law family organically farm their vineyard with an emphasis on Rhone Varietals. Their 100% Grenache, 100% Syrah, and their traditional Rhone and Priorat blends are some of the best wines of this style you can find in the US.

The Law Estate wine named "The Nines" is a 100% Grenache that is rich in berry and earth with an incredible Grenache perfume that really overtakes you.

"Sagacious" is a traditional blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre. This complex wine is made in large vessels called foudre which impart very little oak on the wine, instead, each varietal can be detected and collaborate in a symphony for the senses. While I recommend allowing Law Wines to age a bit, they are delicious popped and poured.

Dunn Vineyards are located on Howell Mountain in Napa Valley. Many years ago, I brought an aged bottle of Dunn's Howell Mountain Cabernet to a discerning gourmand's house in Reno. He was particularly fond and knowledgeable of



(Photo: J. Grzymski)

Whether celebrating with friends or savoring a quiet night in, winter is the perfect time to indulge in wines that dazzle. Discover two standout California wineries — Law Estate Wines and Dunn Vineyards — offering coveted selections from Rhone varietals to world-class Cabernet.

great Italian wines. He called Dunn the best American wine he had ever had by a long margin. It really is that good. Dunn makes two 100% Cabernet wines – a Napa Valley wine blending Napa Valley floor Cabernet and their Howell Mountain fruit along with a 100% Howell Mountain Cab. Both wines require aging, but the Napa Valley Cab tends to be a bit more approachable early on.

You will appreciate both their beautiful structure and richness while they have modest alcohol levels. These characteristics contrast many huge, overripe, California Cabs that can exceed 15% alcohol. These two are special wines, modestly priced given the quality, and particularly special compared to some of their rivals that exceed \$400 and even \$500 per bottle. In my opinion, Dunn Vineyards has consistently been the best California Cab over the past 30 years.

If you enjoy drinking wine, special

occasions require special bottles. If you need to splurge on wine, these wineries are two of the best in the US. Buying these wines directly from the winery requires signing up for their mailing list, however, they are available online at sites like wine-searcher.com or totalwine.com. Most Law wines retail for about \$80 and Dunn for between

\$100 and \$150.

Joseph Grzymski likes cooking for his family and drinking wine. He is studying human genetics at Renown Health and UNR School of Medicine. He founded the Renown Institute for Health Innovation and is the principal investigator of a large population health study called the Healthy Nevada Project.

# Gifts from the Heart: Meaningful Presents That Last a Lifetime



By Maren Schmidt

Do you ever worry about selecting the right gift for the special people in your life? Let's take a few minutes to consider gifts that are free, yet continue to give. Here are some gifts we can give our children, and anyone we care about, that can only come from the heart.

## The Present of Listening.

How do we really listen to those around us? Do we turn off our cell phones, the television and the computer? Do we give our complete attention to the person talking to us? Are we thinking in terms of the other person's interests, dreams, and disappointments? Can we refrain from judging the other person? Do we ask questions to help us understand? Do we stop ourselves from telling a story about what happened to us? Do we sincerely try to understand the other person's point of view? When we can, that's the present of listening.

## The Present of Good Humor.

Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Clip the comics. Learn to share a joke or two. Tell a few funny stories about yourself. Smile to light up a room. Spread laughter because laughter is the theme of a heavenly chorus.

## The Present of Tenderness.

It is with small actions that we are remembered. The touch of tenderness comes from the heart and can express what perhaps a thousand words cannot. A hug, a kiss, a pat on the back, a touch of the hand. A cup of coffee. Cookies



(Photo: shutterstock)

**Sometimes the best gifts are those that come from the heart, bring joy, and create a connection for both the giver and the receiver.**

and milk. These tiny gestures show the love we have for family and friends.

## The Present of Appreciation.

Being able to offer sincere gratitude is a gift. Give a compliment to someone for the work they have done.

A few words such as... What a great meal, Thanks for setting the table, I appreciate your kindness ...can brighten anyone's day.

## The Present of Sharing.

Do something that lets others know that you are thinking of them. Growing up, my mom would ask me if I would like to split a stick of chewing gum with her. To

me, that simple gesture of offering to share a stick of gum communicated a lot of love and thoughtfulness.

## The Present of a Handwritten Note.

In today's world of e-mails and texts, a handwritten note becomes deeply personal. Your handwriting reflects your personality and sends a non-verbal message that is difficult to duplicate. Seeing my dad's handwritten notes in the books he left me is a gift that continues to give every time I read his script or doodles.

## The Present of Being Alone.

As much as we like to be with other people, at times being by ourselves is a wonderful gift, a true care package. Be aware that an incredible gift for family and friends might simply be to let them have some time alone to rest and rejuvenate. Time alone helps us recharge and refill our love buckets.

## The Present of a Positive Attitude.

There's enough doom and gloom in the world. We don't need to bring a rain cloud to the party. Help those around you see the beautiful, the hopeful, and the wonderful in the world around them.

These acts become the jewels that shine throughout our lives, held in the velvet boxes of our memories. Our loving presence is our priceless present.

*Maren Schmidt has over thirty years of experience working with children, and their families, as a parent, Montessori teacher, Girl Scout leader, Sunday School teacher, Montessori school owner and administrator, parenting coach and workshop leader. This newsletter was published with her permission. Sign up for her weekly Kids Talk Newsletter at [www.marenschmidt.com](http://www.marenschmidt.com).*

# Brain Boost at Summer Camp: New Research Highlights Cognitive Benefits for Kids in Nature



By Lisa Blauth

A recent study by Harvard Medical School's Massachusetts General Hospital and its Multicultural Alzheimer's Prevention Program reveals the

brain health benefits for youth attending overnight camps. From increased physical activity to time spent outdoors, experiences like Sierra Nevada Journeys' Summer Camp provide a powerful blend of cognitive and social benefits.

"Our camp is an unplugged experience," says Shannon Robeski, camp director. "Campers build confidence, independence, and form lasting relationships."

Research shows that active, nature-based settings improve memory, emotional awareness, and social skills, creating lifelong impacts for campers well beyond summer.

"From kayaking to conquering the Alpine Tower, hiking trails, and playing large group games, kids stay active at Sierra Nevada Journeys Summer Camp from sunrise to sunset," says Robeski.

MAPP identifies a clear correlation between physical activity and brain health, explaining that physical activity is any voluntary movement that requires energy. Aerobic exercise raises respiration and heart rate, which boosts the immune system and reduces risks for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Most relevant to MAPP is that it boosts cognitive function. Studies show that regular, consistent exercise keeps the mind sharp and helps protect cognitive



(Photo: sierranevadajourneys.org)

**Campers and counselors at Sierra Nevada Journeys dive into a day of active, unplugged fun, building skills, confidence, and friendships while boosting brain health through outdoor activities.**

abilities like memory, thinking, and reasoning. Physical activity, especially strength training, improves balance, neural functioning, and reaction time.

MAPP's research also suggests that being in nature clears our minds. This conclusion has neurological support; researchers studied more than 2,500 kids (ages 5-7) and found that children who spent more time outdoors showed a 28 percent improvement in memory. Additionally, children who spent time in nature were better at reading others' emotions and showed greater social awareness due to increased brain activity.

As an environmental education nonprofit, Sierra Nevada Journeys' Summer Camp combines traditional activities with science, nature, and social-emotional learning. This holistic approach ensures that, while having fun, campers are also gaining valuable knowledge and skills.

Summer Camp 2025 registration is now

open. Learn more at [sierranevadajourneys.org/camp](http://sierranevadajourneys.org/camp).

*Lisa Blauth is the marketing director with Sierra Nevada Journeys and a professional*

*juggler of life. When she's not helping organizations share their stories, you'll find her walking the dog on the ditch trail, hitching up the trailer to go camping, remodeling her beloved money pit in the Old Southwest, or parenting her teenager.*

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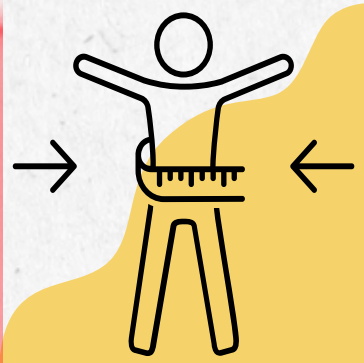
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