

Opinion: Redefining the Millennial generation

By Troy Matthews

How would you describe Millennials? Until recently I found myself apologizing for my generation as if I were ashamed to be part of the group of people that grew up with the Internet, cell phones, electric toothbrushes, and CGI, and therefore didn't know what it meant to struggle. But I've come to realize that perhaps this isn't true.

I read once about the attitudes of the various generations of the 20th century. The Greatest Generation tended to be "civic minded." They grew up with the great depression and therefore felt a sense of community and drive to serve. This attitude allowed them to bring this county out of the depression and through World War II because they cooperated first before they argued.

Now the Millennial's attitudes have come full circle once again to a "civic minded" generation. Perhaps it was growing up in the shadow of 9/11; two wars, one of which that lasted longer than Vietnam; the Great Recession; the disappearing middle class; crippling student debt; stagnant wages; healthcare costs at criminal levels; and a world more connected than at any time in history, for better and worse. For the first time in history, we won't be better off than our parents.

But difficult times can bring out the best in us. The first thought of my generation is to cooperate. To think "civic." To serve. To blur the lines regardless of race, gender, politics, sexual orientation, religion, and, dare I say, nationality. Where we can come together and move things forward regardless of the old biases and good ol' boys clubs of the past. Where

we can stop fighting with each other and start listening to one another. I am blessed to be part of two local organizations that want to move things forward, Tahoe Regional Young Professionals and Leadership Lake Tahoe. In each you will find the greatest minds in Tahoe of my generation who are thinking of nothing but how to make Tahoe work for all of us, for our generation and those before us and those to come. I belong to a great generation. Not because of our music, or technology, or lifestyle, but because we genuinely care about each other and care about this community.

The greatest thing about this attitude of cooperation and service is that once it takes root it will spread regardless of age. We are leaders who are connecting this city and this basin in a way that it has never been before. We are working to retain young professional talent who want to live and work here, not leave. We are networking, and pushing for new ideas, and lending each other a helping hand. We are striving for redevelopment of old systems. We can protect the beauty of this place and grow the economy. We can make Tahoe work by working in Tahoe. Service is an attitude not an age. Come join us. They say Tahoe is a great place to visit, but not a great place to live. We can change that. We can change the world. Please attend the Make Tahoe Work Leadership Summit in May to see the greatest Tahoe minds of this generation at work.

Troy Matthews is a grant writer for Tahoe Youth & Family Services.