Opinion: Tips for drivers, kids as school resumes

By Chuck Allen

Summer break is ending soon and children will be heading back to school. The Washoe County Sheriff’s Office is asking drivers to slow down and be on the alert for children walking to school.

Here are some precautions for drivers:

- Slow down and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods and school zones. Come to a full stop and check both ways at stop signs and red lights.
- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs.
- Watch for children on and near the road in the morning and after school hours.
- Watch for school bus stop signs. When a school bus stops with brake lights flashing or the stop sign raised, motorists from either direction must stop until all children have safely crossed the road.
- Reduce any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings. Remember, using your cellular phone while driving is against the law and a dangerous distraction.

Reminders for your kids:

- Distracted walking can be just as dangerous as distracted driving. Reduce distractions while walking, focus on where you are going, not on your mobile device.
- Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Never run out into the streets or cross in between parked cars.

- Make sure to always walk in front of the bus where the driver can see them.
- Refrain from horseplay and remain in a group while waiting for the school bus.

Chuck Allen is sheriff of Washoe County.

Opinion: The life of charity singles

By Lucy Robinson

A few years ago I took on a research challenge: to listen to every charity single released in the United Kingdom between December 1984 and the end of 1995. I ended up studying 82 singles in depth—some had international success, some were made for local community audiences.

Charity singles are the songs specially recorded by musical artists to benefit charitable causes. Perhaps the best known are 1984's Band Aid, which sang "Do They Know It's Christmas?" about Ethiopian hunger, and 1985's "We Are The World," recorded on behalf of Africa. Critics have never warmed to the genre, but I surprised myself by growing attached to a number of them. Not only do they tend to have the hookiest of choruses, there is something particularly pleasurable about music that makes no effort whatsoever to be cool. In a cynical, highly marketed, auto tuned and media-managed music world, singers prepared to just turn up and belt out a chorus seem endearing. They have an appealing lack of glossiness and even an artificial show of sincerity is more attractive than posed irony.

But there is one thing that is clear when you listen to charity singles: Most are bad. Very bad. Being bad was evidence that a single was thrown together to confront an emergency, with the participating artists typically lowering their usual standards. Bad was kind of the point; the rough production values demonstrated that no money was spent, much less wasted. In fact, the ones that were any good musically were usually unsuccessful.

There had been musical fundraisers before the 1980s. Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and Leadbelly did a benefit show for California's Dust Bowl refugees in 1940. Elvis did a 1961 benefit concert in Hawaii for the USS Arizona Pearl Harbor memorial and George Harrison did a 1971 concert for Bangladesh. But it was in the '80s that the charity single came into its own. Benefit songs sold philanthropy and Victorian values, raising funds for traditional causes such as Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, but in a style that appealed to youth-oriented broadcasting and made use of videos, which were then new.

Charity singles are never just about the money, though. They have an old-fashioned moral message and an idealistic take on the need for social change straight out of Dickens. These songs are statements: about who we think we are as a society, how we want to be seen, and which people in need we think we can "help." "We Are the World", we are reminded. "Do Something Now" for Christian Aid, "You'll Never Walk Alone" for the Bradford Football Disaster, The songs themselves created a utopian sense of community, however artificial, between donors and an imagined community of worthy recipients.

There was a recipe for building the perfect '80s charity single. Take an eclectic group of musicians who shouldn't really get along. Include individual voices that have standout lines (good options are Boy George, Bruce Springsteen, and Sting). One participant must look as if they are taking their part too seriously, and one person must look as if they are

not taking their part seriously enough. And there should be a video in which microphones, leads, lyric sheets and producers are visible, as well as a collective chorus shot including people who did not necessarily perform on the record.

Your group of singers should include someone old, someone new, someone with genuine credibility, someone surprising, and a puppet. The puppets from the British satire Spitting Image appeared in the videos for charity singles, including Genesis' 1986 song raising awareness of Middle East policy "Land of Confusion." (The puppets also made their own spoof charity single in 1990). The Muppets have had a good run in charity singles too, from the '80s to the present day. More recently their theme tune was re-recorded to raise money for a New Zealand cancer charity, and Kermit the Frog performed a duet of "Rainbow Connection" with Ed Sheeran for Red Nose Day, a song that the Muppets and their fans have used to raise charity funds and awareness since the 1980s.

To go with the self-consciously eclectic stars, '80s charity single videos were produced in a deliberately slipshod way to emphasize the time and labour donated by musicians, producers, and technicians. The urgent nature of production was made clear in willfully unprofessional-looking videos, thrown together in a hurry. Viewers got to see the nuts and bolts of the recording process, often with a motley skeleton crew portrayed mucking around together. In fact, the more uncomfortable the style pairings and the less likely the performers to work together normally, the clearer their own charitable donation was. The eclecticism of performers also made it easier to market a charity single broadly.

Whether it's the performers singing together, the consumers buying the records, or the imagined recipients, everyone was part of the same community, headed up by the Muppets and Boy George. We weren't just buying a single, we were buying a moral community. At a time when there was no such thing as society and greed was good, charity singles reminded us that

there was another way, not perfect of course, but a statement of intent.

The problem with this recipe was that it became too familiar; once the format was instantly recognizable, charity singles lost their sense of spontaneity, their heart—and their charity.

Since that ’80s heyday, and up to the most recent wave of recordings, the most significant charity single releases have been corporate events for corporate-style charities attached to telethons like Red Nose Day, Children in Need, or Band Aid reboots. These events are not the spontaneous thrown-together responses to crisis, but professionally organized and carefully planned and executed. Recent charity singles have been linked to reality TV show brands like “The X Factor” and “BBC Music”, rather than being built from particular pop tribes. “The X Factor” finalists used to produce a charity single and music video before the final winner of the show was anointed. Making it through the live rounds to perform on the video was a badge of honor in itself. For “The X Factor” contestants, the charity single was a bridge into a professional music career. There is no awareness to be raised. There is no community to be built. There is a television event to be marketed.

Recently, the charity single has made a comeback as artists step away from the corporate event model to create moments of intensely shared feeling. Once again, some charity singles seem to be about community, and finding common ground amidst the shock waves of terrorism, mass violence, and climate change. Portishead, for example, has dedicated its haunting new ABBA cover “SOS” to the memory of Jo Cox, Labour MP, who was shot dead in the run up to the Brexit referendum. Adele and Christina Aguilera both used recent performances to express their reactions to the shooting in Orlando that killed 49 people at Pulse nightclub.

Indeed, Orlando may be a turning point for the charity single. The multiple charity singles for the Pulse shooting victims have not only been good, but also they are sung by the right people.

After Orlando, a vigil was held in London's gay village on Old Compton Street in Soho, which was the scene of a violent hate crime in 1999 when 39 people were injured by a politically motivated nail bombing. The London Gay Men's Chorus performed at the Orlando vigil, singing "Bridge Over Troubled Water," and the live performance captured a feeling of shared vulnerability and collective resilience. Their recording of a charity single marks the arrival of a transatlantic LGBTQ community. It will raise funds for both the Pulse Victims Fund and a British-based charity fighting hate crime.

The most striking example of what a charity single can do now is the recording of Bruce Bacharach's "What the World Needs Now," by 60 Broadway stars to raise money for the LGBT Centre of Central Florida. "Broadway for Orlando" contains touches of the Band Aid template: It was recorded in one sitting and the recording studio is the focus of the video. We see shots of the mixing desk. And while some of the singing leaves a bit to be desired, this is not a re-enactment of the '80s cliché. Whoopie Goldberg and Sarah Jessica Parker, might not compete vocally, but they understand the point of a good cameo. This record is an authentic outpouring by a community with deep-rooted connections to the recipients of funds raised.

This is the charity single at its best. The Orlando charity singers are singing for themselves, and singing resilience into their communities. United in a choir of voices, the Orlando singles find a way to give voice to victims of the unspeakable.

Lucy Robinson is a senior lecturer of Modern British History at the University of Sussex and co-organizer of the Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Subcultures,

Popular Music, and Social Change.

Opinion: How to regulate gene drive technology

By James P. Collins

From ancient soothsayers to Wall Street stock pickers, humans have always yearned to be able to tell the future. The ability, needless to say, has mostly been overstated.

But what if there was a sense in which you really could tell the future? And what if we could also make a particular outcome more likely, even certain? The emerging technology known as gene drives offers just such a prospect for favoring particular traits in future plants and animals—to increase agricultural output, to reduce the risk of infectious disease transmission, or something we haven't yet imagined. Indeed, some have already suggested using gene drives to eliminate certain mosquitoes that can spread Zika, malaria, and other ailments. But is that a good idea? How should we think about employing such a technology in ways that anticipate, and weigh, its benefits and harms for current and future generations?

Over the past year, at the request of the National Institutes of Health and the Foundation for the NIH, a committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine considered these questions. Last month, the committee, which I co-chaired with Elizabeth Heitman from the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, released its report—"Gene Drives on the Horizon: Advancing Science, Navigating Uncertainty, and Aligning

Research with Public Values.” So what did we conclude? I will get to that in a minute, but first, a lesson on the science.

Gene drive technology allows scientists to alter the normal rules—odds, if you will—of genetic inheritance in sexual reproduction. Through gene drives, we can significantly enhance the chances (from nature’s 50-50 odds in most sexually reproducing species) of a particular gene being passed to an offspring. The gene drive technology combines an altered genetic trait, such as producing a male, with an increased likelihood the trait passes throughout a population.

This is a new tool in a well-established pursuit. Inheritance is an area in which humans put a lot of effort into managing future outcomes. Breeders may work for years or decades to ensure that characters such as a plant’s seed size, or a horse’s strength or speed, pass predictably from generation to generation. How predictably? Well, throughout history the essence of “good breeding” is making passage of a desirable trait between generations as reliable as possible.

It was only in the late 1800s, however, that experiments with pea plants by an Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel, raised the prospect that managing the passage of traits between generations could move beyond best practices or even best guesses. Mendel demonstrated that for at least some parental traits he could predict the average frequency with which they would occur in offspring. For example, if parent plants in a sexually reproducing species had red flowers or yellow seeds, a prediction might be that half of all offspring would have red flowers or yellow seeds. It was a remarkable advance. By early in the 20th century, Mendel’s results were among the fundamental insights leading to the science of genetics.

Geneticists work to reveal the rules of inheritance by understanding the processes that link an individual’s DNA, or genotype, to the expression of a particular trait, the phenotype of a developing organism or an adult. This requires

understanding the molecular and environmental variables controlling an outcome, such as having a male or female offspring. We know that in most species with two sexes, we can expect on average the offspring generation will have about half males and half females. This is a basic rule of inheritance—absent forces such as gene mutation or natural selection, the frequency of many traits in the offspring generation will equal that of the parental generation. But what if you had the technology to alter that basic rule and cause the ratio in the offspring generation to be 60:40 males to females, or 70:30, or even 99:1?

Gene drive technology opens up such possibilities. A gene drive could be designed to increase the likelihood a female produces males as opposed to females. In addition, with the passing of each generation the fraction of males in a population increases as the trait "drives" through a population—the future becomes more certain. In an extreme, much or all of a population could become males, and of course for a species with sexual reproduction the result would be reduction or elimination of a population, or even extinction of a species.

But should gene drives be used to alter population sizes, perhaps to the point of extinction? On the upside, gene-drive modified organisms hold the promise of improving human health and agricultural productivity, conserving other species and advancing basic research. Imagine eliminating a mosquito species that carries malaria.

There are, however, possible downsides to releasing gene drive modified organisms in natural ecosystems. How should we consider using such gene-drive power? What should we consider before deciding whether to use it?

The NIH committee report issued in June devotes a lot of attention to responsible science and the need for continuous evaluation and assessment of the social, environmental,

regulatory, and ethical considerations of releasing gene-drive-modified organisms into the environment. Each step in research and deployment, we emphasized, rests on values held by individuals and communities. Public engagement in pursuit of uncovering and understanding these values cannot be an afterthought. The governance of research on gene-drive-modified organisms should begin with the personal responsibility of the investigator and extend from there to research institutions and regulators. But what regulators: state, federal, global? After all, upon release, a gene-drive modified organism is designed to spread. The borders of private property, states, or countries are not barriers to dispersal. A key message of the report is:

There is insufficient evidence available at this time to support the release of gene-drive modified organisms into the environment. However, the potential benefits of gene drives for basic and applied research are significant and justify proceeding with laboratory research and highly controlled field trials.

Some of the gaps in understanding the full impacts of gene drive technology include ecological and evolutionary processes in natural ecosystems. If we diminish or even eliminate a species like a mosquito that transmits a pathogen that infects humans, what will that mean for the ecosystem's stability? This action, for example, may then open an opportunity for one or more additional insect species that transmit even less desirable infectious diseases to become established or increase in numbers.

The committee's blueprint for moving forward includes a gradual framework for testing that stretches from laboratory development to field release and monitoring of gene-drive-modified organisms. We recommended ecological risk assessment as a method for quantifying how a specific change or changes in the environment will affect something of value to society—such as water quality, or the chance an unwanted pest

species that transmits an infectious pathogen might become established.

Controlling the future of inheritance across entire populations and species is a powerful scientific advance, one that is hard to overstate. And, as often happens, there is a risk of scientific research outpacing the development of a broader ethical framework to determine whether, and how best, to deploy this newly acquired scientific power. Let's hope scientists, and governments everywhere, heed the report's call to proceed with caution. The promise of gene drive technology is immense, but when we're talking about the power to make certain species extinct, it's a technology we can't afford to misuse.

James P. Collins is Virginia M. Ullman professor of Natural History and the Environment in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University in Tempe. This article was written for Future Tense, a Zócalo partner. Future Tense is a project of Arizona State University, New America and Slate.

Opinion: NASA's other moonshot revolutionized marketing

By Richard Jurek

On July 20, 1969, an estimated 600 million people watched and listened in real time as astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin touched down on the surface of the moon.

With the drama unfolding on their television screens, the

attention of millions was focused on a single event—a single step, really—for the first time. It was one of the first grand, extended global social media events of our modern era, much bigger than a Super Bowl Sunday.

But landing on the moon almost didn't happen—not for the public, anyway. While Armstrong and Aldrin were preparing to make one of the biggest celestial moves of a lifetime, NASA's small and dedicated marketing team was preparing to make another major move on the ground: Televising the event.

Looking back on the moon landing, it would seem almost unfathomable that NASA administrators would have missed the mark to use live television to capture that historic moment, but they nearly did. Unlike live video, which had to be returned, developed, and shared after the fact, live television would allow viewers to watch in real-time. Many NASA engineers argued that live footage was a waste of valuable weight and crew focus and would require too much time and money to develop the technologies to broadcast live news feeds from the moon. Most of the original Mercury 7 astronauts and their bosses insisted, with good reason, that operating and performing for television cameras during their missions would unnecessarily detract from the important work at hand.

Embedded within NASA's formative charter was a congressional mandate to report—freely and openly—the program's activities and accomplishments to the world, unlike the secretive, closed military program in the Soviet Union at the time. "I insisted," said Julian Scheer, the head of NASA Public Affairs during Apollo. He would not accept any dissent, either from the engineers or some of the astronauts. "They could never see the big picture. But they weren't landing on the moon without that camera on board. I was going to make sure of that. One thing I kept emphasizing was, 'We're not the Soviets. Let's do this thing the American way.'"

To enlightened astronauts like Tom Stafford, television's

value proposition was clear: “The American public was paying for Apollo and deserved as much access as it could get,” Stafford said. “They should see the wonders we saw. Photos and movies were great, but nobody saw them until after the mission was over. What better way to take viewers along to the moon than by using color television?”

“Without television, Apollo would have been just a mark in a history book,” says Gene Cernan, the last man to walk on the moon during Apollo 17, when reflecting on the importance of television on board Apollo. “The thing that meant so much and brought so much prestige to this country is that every launch, every landing on the moon, and every walk on the moon was given freely to the world in real time. We didn’t doctor up the movie, didn’t edit anything out; what we said, was said.”

So NASA’s small public affairs team, spread over 14 installations nationwide, got down to business, working long and hard to ensure that the world was informed and engaged using media outlets and other NASA-affiliated contractors’ public affairs employees.

“We sure didn’t do the PR job by ourselves,” remarked Chuck Biggs, a NASA public affairs officer during Apollo. “We needed representatives from Rockwell, Martin Marietta, and all the other contractors to do the job. By head count, we had more contractors’ public relations people than we had NASA public affairs employees.”

Operationally, NASA public affairs chose pioneering tactics now called content marketing, an approach that doesn’t overtly sell a product or brand. Rather than just promoting their cause, NASA used its resources to educate the media, who became surrogate spokespeople for the program and kept the story in front of a voracious public, both nightly on television and daily in the newspapers.

Embracing the content marketing technique, NASA operated its

public affairs as if it were a newsroom—staffed not with “Mad Men”-era advertisers and public relations agents, but with highly qualified ex-journalists. They were professional storytellers, operating as news reporters embedded inside of the agency. As ex-newsmen, they understood what the broadcast and print media needed in terms of content, so they selected and pushed stories in various languages and formats that could slip easily into the news streams of the day. It wasn’t jus that they were good writers, but they were also newsmen who understood the power of storytelling and the importance of access to live, unedited, real-time events.

“The core contingent of NASA Public Affairs people were ex-newsmen,” recalled Jack King, head of public affairs at Kennedy Space Center during Apollo. “We were good writers, and we knew the news business. That made a major difference in the whole operation.”

“We are not doing what is known in the public relations business as flackery or publicity or propaganda,” said Scheer. “We are simply not in this kind of business. We are a news operation. We don’t put out publicity releases. We put out news releases.”

Keeping a global audience engaged over a decade—from 1961, when President John F. Kennedy announced his goal of landing a man on the moon, to 1972, when Apollo 17 became the last lunar landing mission—was not easy then and is not easy now. Long-term engagement requires creating a shared, communal experience that resonates with the audience. Due to NASA’s use of television, this experience was not only shared by its own engineers, but by millions of people worldwide.

I call the generation that took part in this shared experience—my generation—the “Children of Apollo.”

Apollo’s place in our collective memories is chiseled there because we experienced it together. NASA didn’t just send

three men to the moon on the Apollo 11 mission; they sent more than 600 million of us—men, women, and children from all over the globe—to the moon and back, thanks to live television.

Richard Jurek, a marketing and public relations executive, is the co-author of "Marketing the Moon: The Selling of the Apollo Lunar Program".

Opinion: Calif. pot law would be bad for SLT

By Brian Uhler

During the last weekend of July, a group of women visited South Lake Tahoe for a bachelorette party. During the visit, the women willfully ingested marijuana brownies they obtained through a ride share company.

Within a few hours, 10 of the women were taken to the emergency room in South Lake Tahoe. Eight of the 10 were later admitted to the hospital for treatment.

Brian Uhler

While many would have you believe marijuana is a harmless drug, those of us in the public safety arena have seen increases in medical emergencies from marijuana ingestion. It

is noteworthy that our system of emergency medical transport was completely tapped in order to handle this event. Thankfully, no other medical emergencies occurred simultaneously, otherwise someone might not have received timely emergency help.

Marijuana Legalization Proposition 64, which would legalize recreational marijuana if passed, is going to California voters in November. This initiative is bad for California and bad for South Lake Tahoe. After a similar, short-sighted 2014 initiative passed in Colorado, marijuana related traffic deaths jumped 32 percent from 2013 to 2014.

Some in law enforcement find details in Proposition 64 very disturbing:

- False proponent claim: Provides "law enforcement the resources it needs to redouble its focus on serious crime";
- False proponent claim: Provides "the strictest child protections and billions in new revenue for important programs such as public safety";
- No MJ tax money for police: None of the tax money from marijuana is for any "boots-on-the-ground" law enforcement. In fact, the proposition specifically forbids marijuana related tax money from going to the California General Fund. The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development is the biggest winner for future marijuana tax funds (increasing to $50 million/year and continuing forever). California Highway Patrol, by contrast gets just $3 million/year ending after five years for the non-enforcement function to "establish and adopt protocols to determine whether a driver is operating a vehicle while impaired, including impairment by the use of marijuana."
- Kids exposed to MJ business: Proponents claim the proposition somehow provides child protections, yet Proposition 64 allows marijuana businesses to operate

> just 600 feet from schools. Further, marijuana businesses will be able to advertise to anyone, including kids, as long as the advertising "shall only be displayed where at least 71.6 percent of the audience is reasonably expected to be 21 years of age or older." What about the 28.4 percent of a given audience which are kids? How are they being protected?

Proposition 64 is opposed by a broad coalition of healthcare, law enforcement, education, business, and community organizations and leaders across California. To learn more, go **online**.

Stealing from cars

We have seen an increase in the number of burglaries from cars (now a misdemeanor by virtue of Proposition 47 –The Safe Schools and Neighborhood Act). Please lock your cars as we have noticed many of the victim's vehicles were not locked.

Brian Uhler is police chief of South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: Anxiety over Calif.'s transitioning cannabis industry

By Joe Mathews

California tokers, why are you trippin' so hard?

You keep saying that marijuana helps manage anxiety. But those

of you who work in or partake of the cannabis industry sound like the most stressed-out people in California.

Joe Mathews

And that leaves me wondering what's in your bongs, especially since 2016 is supposed to be a year of great triumph for you. Cannabis is booming in California. New regulations on medical marijuana are coming together, and a November ballot initiative to legalize recreational use seems likely to pass. California is thus well on its way to becoming Mary Jane's global capital, and a national model for how to pull cannabis out of the black market shadows and into the legal light.

So if the future looks so dank (that's stoner-speak for awesome), why do you all look so wrecked?

Did you get some bad schwag or something?

In talking to some of you in recent weeks, I've learned there are two reasons why you're stressed out.

The first involves all the necessary pressure you're putting on yourselves. Cannabis is not just an industry, it's a movement to end prohibition, and the hardest times for movements can come right when they are on the verge of winning what they want. Your movement's victory—the end of cannabis prohibition—requires a difficult transition that is stressful and scary.

In California, by one estimate, there are as many as 10,000 cannabis-related businesses—only a couple hundred of which

have the proper zoning and licenses to operate a medical marijuana business. That leaves thousands of you trying to work out your futures very quickly—at least before 2018, when regulations for medical marijuana (including a state marijuana czar) and for recreational use (assuming the ballot initiative passes) are supposed to be in place.

Some of you may choose to shut down. But others of you are engulfed in the difficult, expensive process of making your businesses legal quickly—but not so quickly that you run afoul of local police who are still conducting raids on your operations or federal authorities who already making banking and paying taxes so difficult for you. On top of all this stress comes the burden of being a political cause. Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom is trying to build a gubernatorial campaign by backing the ballot initiative to legalize recreational use.

That brings me to the second source of pressure on you: the constant outside demands on your industry from those of us in what cinematic stoner Jeffrey "The Dude" Lebowski called "the Square Community."

California leaders have gotten way too high on the possibilities of fully legal marijuana. Today politicians and media claim that legal cannabis in California will end the drug war, rationalize our prison and court systems, create new jobs and economic opportunities in poorer and rural areas of the state, save agricultural businesses and lands, and replenish strained local and state budgets with new taxes on weed.

Los Angeles County recently debated a plan to address its homelessness crisis with a marijuana tax. Environmentalists have been touting how marijuana farming can pioneer water-saving practices to mitigate the state drought. No small number of musicians—among them Snoop Dogg, the wizard of "weed wellness," and Tommy Chong, the "godfather of ganja"—seem to think that by licensing their names to marijuana products,

they can replace some of the revenues music used to provide.

Cannabis has come to be seen by its most zealous champions as a substance that can alter California realities—in ways reminiscent of our craze for gold in 1849 or for oil in the early 20th century. That is an awful lot of expectation riding on this one plant.

Before exploiting legal marijuana for their own schemes, California governments need to get this transition right. The tax system for cannabis should be comprehensible and not so extortionate that it drives out small players (or creates incentives to keep the black market alive). The regulatory regimes for medical marijuana and recreational use should fit together, and be transparent enough that California cannabis goes forward as a competitive market, not a state monopoly. To ease the transition, state government needs to do everything it can to help you—the growers, processors, dispensary operators and customers—negotiate these changes, including protecting you from the feds.

If California gets this right, maybe some of the biggest dreams for marijuana can come true. At the very least, cannabis could be a thriving and well-regulated industry.

But for now, as the marijuana-friendly rap group Cypress Hill like to say, we all gots to chill. These are stressful enough times for stoners already.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zocalo Public Square.

Letter: Realtors dish it up at B&B

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to thank the South Tahoe Association of Realtors for hosting the July 25 dinner and sending a fun and energetic group to help put on the evening meal.

“Most of us didn’t know what to expect and the B&B volunteers were very patient and explained what we needed to do,” commented Ellen Camacho, STAR president.

She and her fellow STAR members Michelle Blue-Benedict, president-elect; Jaime Sauers, treasurer; and Jessica Crase and Tiffany Grimes, volunteer committee co-chairs did a fine job of coming on board and helping feed the hungry folks who showed up at St. Theresa Grace Hall.

As a nonprofit, all volunteer organization, B&B relies on the $250 donation and the help of the sponsor volunteer crews to hold each Monday evening meal. The sponsor volunteers work alongside the B&B volunteers and together they see to it that up to 110 dinner guests are fed and provided with bags of food to help them through the remainder of the week. For more than four years, every available B&B Monday evening dinner has had an Adopt A Day sponsor thanks to the wonderful people in our community.

Camacho described the B&B volunteers as “very giving in donating their personal time. Very friendly to the clients and they truly care.”

Those comments are also a very apt description of the five star volunteers who worked hand-in-hand with the B&B volunteers. It is really important to B&B that our sponsors are involved in their dinner.

“It was a rewarding experience,” said Camacho, and a wonderful way to see how funds donated for the dinner impact those who are in need of help.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Calif. pension fund being squeezed

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Ron Seeling, the California Public Employees Retirement System’s chief actuary, believed he was speaking to a closed-door seminar in 2009 when he warned that public employee pension costs were becoming “unsustainable.”

Dan Walters

However, Ed Mendel, a veteran reporter who writes a blog on pensions, was there, and later published Seeling’s dire warning.

“I don’t want to sugarcoat anything,” Seeling said. “We are facing decades without any significant turnarounds in assets, decades of – what I, in my personal words, nobody else’s – unsustainable pension costs of between 25 percent of pay for a miscellaneous plan and 40 to 50 percent of pay for a safety

plan (police and firefighters) … unsustainable pension costs. We've got to find some other solutions."

It was eerily prescient of what was to come within a few years.

Seeling made his remarks a decade after then-Gov. Gray Davis and the Legislature had quietly, virtually without notice, decreed a massive, retroactive increase in state employee pension benefits, which was quickly emulated by hundreds of local governments.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Muslim family is the rule, not the exception

By Paul Barrett, Bloomberg Businessweek

How typical of an American is Khizr Khan, the man who stole the show on the last night of the Democratic National Convention? Answer: pretty typical.

U.S. Muslims are much more mainstream than many Americans might think. Khan brought down the house in Philadelphia when he told the story of his son's heroic war death in Iraq and excoriated Donald Trump for spreading religious intolerance.

Khan's son, Army Captain Humayun Khan, died in 2004 as a result of a car bomb explosion near Baquba, Iraq. Capt. Khan was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Earlier, he got his college degree from the University of Virginia, where he enrolled in the ROTC program.

The Khans embody the material and educational success of the roughly 3 million American Muslims who make up about 1 percent of the overall population.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Nevada should end adjusted diplomas

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 28, 2016, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

Nevada's education system sets up students with disabilities for failure.

A principal issue driving this is the availability of "adjusted diplomas." These glorified certificates of attendance are enshrined in state law, and yet they have zero value in the real world beyond allowing families to see their children walk across a stage.

According to Siobhan McAndrew's two-year investigation into the Washoe County School District's special education programs, Nevada ranks worst in the nation for graduating students with disabilities largely because of these alternative diplomas.

Read the whole story