

Letter: Heavenly takes a turn at B&B

To the community,

Thanks to the generous Vail EpicPromise Grant program funds awarded to Bread & Broth, 12 Monday evening meals are served annually through B&B's Adopt A Day of Nourishment program. On a monthly basis, Heavenly Mountain Resort and Kirkwood Mountain Resort alternate hosting a dinner and sending a sponsor volunteer crew to work with the B&B volunteers to provide a hot, nutritious meal and giveaway bags to South Tahoe Community members dealing with food insecurity.

It was Heavenly Mountain Resorts turn during the month of December to host a B&B Adopt A Day dinner and on Dec. 14 members of Heavenly's sales and hospitality teams came to represent their departments. As always, the sponsor volunteer crew members from the Vail Resorts were outstanding and a pleasure to work with. Representing Heavenly at the dinner were sales coordinators Shannon Proper and Mary Hajdas; Michelle Beall, hospitality marketing; Lynsey Wright, international sales manager; and Adriann Kremer, group sales manager.

Bread & Broth sincerely appreciates the support of both the Heavenly and Kirkwood Mountain Resorts and the great attitude of all the wonderful sponsor crew members who volunteer their time to help to ease hunger in our community.

"I know I speak for all of us when I say that I feel so lucky to work for a company that is so involved with community organizations like B&B," reflected Beall. "Thank you for letting us serve today."

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Opinion: El Dorado County out of control

By Larry Weitzman

At the last Board of Supervisors meeting on Dec. 15 item 40 on the calendar was to correct an error made by the CAO's office in the **annexation by El Dorado Hills Fire Department**, the wealthiest district in the county, of Latrobe Fire, one of the poorest. The annexation was performed by the BOS on June 10, 2014, but item 40 proposed a grant of \$513,302 from the general fund to EDH Fire. In doing so the BOS made a summary finding without any evidence being introduced that there would be a public benefit as a result.

EDH Fire is a district that has on its last reported financial statement more than \$22 million in cash, along with the highest pay and benefit scale in the county for its employees. With only five years of service, an employee at 50 can retire with post-employment health care benefits, including dependents.



Larry Weitzman

The El Dorado County Fire Protection District by comparison is six times larger by area, has nearly double the population and has just 12 percent of the cash (\$2.6 million) of EDH Fire, according to their last balance sheets. Recently their Lotus Fire Station was closed from lack of funds.

But there is a larger issue that didn't stop our BOS led by former EDH Fire Chief, Supervisor and Chairman of the BOS Brian Veerkamp from granting over half a million dollars to EDH Fire at that last BOS meeting. Veerkamp not only ran the meeting, he "said" that he had no conflict of interest, participated in the discussion, encouraged item 40's passing and voted for it all in a probable violation of Government Code Sections 1090 and 1091 even if it is found Veerkamp has only a "remote" interest in EDH Fire as defined by the statutes.

During this last meeting, the issue of conflict of interest was raised by two of the written public comments on item 40 with respect to Veerkamp's receiving an approximately \$200,000 annual pension paid indirectly by EDH Fire and health care benefits paid directly by EDH Fire. Veerkamp himself should know the answer as every elected official and certain public officials including fire chiefs are required to take ethics training, including conflicts of interest instruction every two years and maintain proof of participation in disclosable public records for five years. Instituted pursuant to Government Code Section 53235 the requirement for continuing education started in January 2006 (Attorney General Ethics Training for Local Government Officials). Since Veerkamp was the prior EDH fire chief, he should have had this training and course at least five times. He should be an expert on conflicts of interest and the prohibitions of gifts of public funds (California Constitution, Article XVI, Section 6).

The statutes with respect to conflict of interest questions are Government Code Sections 1090-1097 et seq. Those sections not only govern the conflict issues as raised by the written

and oral public comments, they relate to the June 10, 2014, BOS hearing when EDH Fire originally attempted to annex the Latrobe Fire District. But mistakes made by the county administrative staff prevented the takeover of the property tax revenues. Veerkamp was on the Fire Committee and LAFCO and participated favorably and voted for the annexation at the BOS level on June 10, 2014. Veerkamp had the exact same conflict issues then as he has now and likely has a problem as a result of participating in either BOS meeting. The penalties for a violation under Section 1090 are substantial. If you remember, former Supervisor Ray Nutting was charged by the district attorney for a 1090 violation.

Even if you have only a "remote" interest, which probably describes the Veerkamp relationship between being a supervisor and his receipt of benefits from EDH Fire as defined by 1091(b)(13), there are significant issues. The requirement of Government Code Section 1091(a) is where it gets dicey for Veerkamp. It says when a person sits on a governing body that is making contracts with an entity in which said person has a "remote" interest, you are required to do certain things which were spelled out by the court in the case of People vs. Honig (1996) 48 Cal. App. 4th 289, at 317, 318.

Honig was Bill Honig, the elected California superintendent of Public Instruction. "Section 1091 applies to an officer who is a member of a body or board that authorizes, approves or ratifies a contract. Such an officer will not be deemed to be interested in a contract if his or her interest is one of the remote interests as set forth in the section, if the officer makes a full disclosure of the interest, the officer abstains from voting, the officer does not influence or attempt to influence any other member, and the body or board authorizes, approves or ratifies the contract in good faith by votes of the membership sufficient for that purpose without counting the vote of the officer with the remote interest." The Honig case defined a "grant" of money as a contract.

And at this Dec. 15 meeting, the county had no contractual obligation to make this gift or grant. EDH Fire, because the property taxes were never transferred, had no legal interest in the Latrobe property tax revenues. They are gone forever as far as EDH Fire is concerned. Not only has the matter slipped through the sieve, the statute of limitations with respect to a claim likely has also past. To get around the prohibition against public gifts of money, at the suggestion of CAO Larry Combs, the BOS had to say there was a finding of public benefit. (At the hearing Auditor-Controller Joe Harn promised to pay despite the evidence of a conflict.) It was added to the agenda as No. 4 to item 40 seconds before the vote was taken.

Not only does this whole item stink, Veerkamp, instead of declaring a conflict and recusing himself from speaking and voting, acted as if he had no conflict and continued to conduct the meeting, encourage Item 40's passing and voted. Veerkamp should know better. Veerkamp may have a serious problem as a result of bowing to a former master. That is a key reason for conflict of interest laws as stated by the court in Honig at pages 324-325.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: California has issues with its neighbors

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

There's always been an incongruity about California's having three disparate states on its borders.

As California's population exploded during the 20th century, those of Nevada, Arizona and Oregon remained relatively sparse and today, collectively they have just one-third of California's population.



Dan Walters

The economies of California and its neighbors developed differently, but they once shared a generally conservative political outlook. Recently, however, we've shifted to the left, and Oregon has as well, while Nevada and Arizona still lean rightward.

The California-Nevada relationship has been particularly frosty. There's a long-running conflict over environmental issues around Lake Tahoe, for instance. And in recent months, Nevada has tweaked California by seemingly luring away California firms.

[Read the whole story](#)

Editorial: Federal water bill

deserves Calif.'s backing

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 16, 2016, Modesto Bee.*

Amid the worst drought in memory, California's congressional delegation has failed once again to compromise on a \$1.3 billion water bill that could deliver more water for farms and help the environment.

When it became clear earlier this month that the latest effort on this legislation was kaput, the politicians did what they so often do in the face of failure: point fingers.

Northern California Democrats – sensitive to regional needs and the desires of environmental interests – said they largely had been frozen out of negotiations.

Central Valley Republicans, who have had a front-row view of fallowed farmland, job losses and people in community food lines, pinned the blame on California's two Democratic senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Plenty to be proud of in Tahoe

By Joanne Marchetta

People at Lake Tahoe are working together like never before to restore our environment, revitalize our economy, and improve our communities. We saw significant progress all around the

lake this year. And our progress is sustainable with continued partnership and collaboration, so critical to tackle the many challenges and important decisions on our horizon.

This summer, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and city of South Lake Tahoe adopted the Tahoe Valley Area Plan, a community vision to enhance the environment and revitalize the area around the Y intersection of highways 89 and 50. This vision for the gateway to the South Shore is the second area plan adopted in the city and is already attracting interest.



Joanne
Marchetta

Barton Memorial Hospital is making major facility upgrades with the planned construction of a health and sports performance center on its medical campus. An investor is working on plans to overhaul the factory outlet stores at the Y, turning the tired shopping plaza into a contemporary retail center with a stage for events, community patio, and bike and pedestrian trails linking to the Tahoe Valley green belt envisioned for the area.

South Lake Tahoe also opened Bijou Bike Park, an impressive community undertaking. The bike park shows the kind of recreational assets we can build working together and is proving to be tremendously popular with residents and visitors.

Working with California State Parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, and U.S. Forest Service, El Dorado County completed the second phase of its Sawmill Bike Path, finishing

an important 3-mile link between South Lake Tahoe and Meyers for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Placer County and Caltrans are nearing completion of the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project. This large project is calming traffic, improving pedestrian and bicyclist mobility, and beautifying Highway 28 in that North Shore commercial hub. It is also significantly reducing the amount of stormwater pollution that washes off the highway into the lake.

Douglas County Board of Commissioners passed a 5-cent gasoline tax increase that will help pay for future transportation improvements, showing how local communities can take action. North Tahoe transit providers are consolidating and working on funding plans to create a free-to-rider transit system with more frequent service for Truckee, Tahoe City, Kings Beach, and Incline Village. Similar initiatives are underway on the South Shore. By staying focused, we can achieve a seamless, free-to-rider regional transit system.

California officials awarded nearly \$9 million in grant funding this year for several upcoming Tahoe projects. The funding will help California Tahoe Conservancy build another phase of the South Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail, help South Lake Tahoe improve bicycle and pedestrian access and safety around the South Tahoe Middle School, and help Tahoe Transportation District build the Highway 89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project in Tahoe City.

Budget enhancements California and Nevada approved this year provided TRPA and its partners with the funding needed to sustain Tahoe's watercraft inspections. This frontline program is critical for protecting our lake from invasive species and it is working: No new invasive species have been detected in Lake Tahoe.

With the inspection program funded, we are now turning our

focus to controlling or eradicating the aquatic invasive species already in Tahoe before they can do any more harm to its environment and world-class recreational opportunities. A science-based roadmap for invasive species control projects that researchers at UNR released this year will guide that initiative.

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have moved forward on the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015. The bill would continue the federal government's important investment and leadership at Tahoe, helping pay for projects to clear hazardous fuels from our forested public lands and protect our lake from the harm of invasive species.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, a five-year, \$305 billion federal transportation bill Congress and President Obama enacted this month, includes language that will steer additional funding to Lake Tahoe for roadway improvements and enhanced transit service.

We are making significant progress at all levels and on all fronts and we have much to be proud of at Tahoe. But we have much more to do and continued partnership and "epic collaboration" will be critical to sustain our progress to restore our environment, revitalize our economy, and improve our communities. By working together we are making a real and meaningful difference.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Letter: Meyers thankful for community's support

To the community,

On behalf of the Meyers Community Foundation, we would like to sincerely thank a number of people and organizations for their assistance in making this year's Meyers tree lighting celebration the best one yet.

This event would not have been possible without the support of Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort, Rise Designs, Tahoe Journal, CalStar, California Conservation Corps, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, California Highway Patrol, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, Dylan Thomas, Misty McBride, *Tahoe Daily Tribune*, Lake Tahoe TV, Sunrise Ski Rentals, Downtown Café, John and Delaney Rice, Lauren Lindley Photography, Fast Prints, and Ryan Palmer.

Thanks again for a magical night. We will continue our efforts to bring more opportunities and projects to "Make a Better Meyers" and look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Rene Brejc, president Meyers Community Foundation

Opinion: How California invented Christmas

By Joe Mathews

Do the good citizens of New Orleans skip town during Mardi Gras? Do proper New Englanders take cruises when their trees display glorious fall colors? Would New Yorkers dare sneak out of Times Square 10 minutes before the ball drops on New Year's Eve?

Of course not. So why must I leave California this coming Christmas week? Because too many people—including my wife, who is insisting our family spend this holiday in her native Wisconsin—fail to recognize the truth: California is the true home of Christmas.



Joe Mathews

Yes, I know that California's status as the headquarters of Christmas is not widely known, especially given the widespread cultural misperception that the holiday should be cold and snow-white. But, like virtually everything else about our 21st-century Christmas, that misperception is itself a California product.

The Golden State popularized the modern Christmas via our entertainment industries, designs it through our toymakers, digitizes it through Silicon Valley, distributes it through our ports, and provides beautiful weather in which to celebrate it. Even the quintessential carol, "White Christmas," is set in California on Christmas Eve. Here is its mostly forgotten first verse.

The sun is shining. The grass is green.

The orange and palm trees sway

There has never been such a day

In Beverly Hills, L.A.

But it's December the 24th. And I'm longing to be up north.

Then comes the familiar chorus. Sadly, some fools overlook the key “I’m dreaming” phrase and travel to cold, bleak places to recreate such white Christmases. The dream, for those stranded in airports throughout the Midwest and Northeast, often becomes a nightmare.

What’s more, the song’s writer, Irving Berlin, author of hundreds of hits (including “God Bless America”), bragged that “White Christmas” was both “the best song I ever wrote” and the “the best song anybody ever wrote.” He told a historian that he composed it at the Beverly Hills Hotel. The version sung by Bing Crosby, who gave California the Del Mar Racetrack and the annual golf tournament at Pebble Beach, is probably the best-selling record of all time.

The 1942 recording—and the films and TV that used it and similar tunes—actually redefined the holiday. Berlin, a Russian-Jewish immigrant, has been credited with taking the “Christ” out of Christmas, turning a religious holiday into a unifying national one. Today, 90 percent of Americans—including 80 percent of non-Christians—celebrate Christmas.

Subsequent generations of California creators have updated this tradition. For my money, the best California Christmas film is the original “Die Hard”—an action film set in a Century City skyscraper that ends with snow in Los Angeles—and the best Christmas music came from former Alhambra resident Phil Spector (now in prison after his murder conviction by an L.A. jury) and the Carpenters, the city of Downey’s gift to the world.

And this year, California's Christmas present to the rest of the world is the long-awaited resurrection of the "Star Wars" movie franchise, courtesy of those California giants of American storytelling: Disney and Lucasfilm.

California's Christmas leadership goes beyond the screen. It's impossible to imagine Christmas without Mattel, the toymaker, incorporated in California after the Second World War and based in El Segundo. Its brands include Barbie, Hot Wheels, American Girl, and Fisher-Price. While Mattel faces financial challenges, other toymakers—from the giant Hasbro to smaller firms like Jakks Pacific—have established stronger presences here in recent years, making Southern California Santa's workshop, or the unofficial capital of toys.

Now, while we all know Santa Claus delivers toys and other gifts to good girls and boys, we should be honest with our kids and let them know that Kris Kringle, who was early to embrace globalization, relies on overseas manufacturers, often in Asia. Many gifts enter the U.S. through our giant ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach, and are distributed via inland California warehouses. It's only from there that they go to local staging areas where Santa, by some mysterious process, gets them into your home.

Southern California's Christmas leadership is not purely secular. L.A. is the largest archdiocese in the country, with 4.3 million Catholics. And Orange County hosts the church of this era's most prominent evangelical Christian pastor, Rick Warren.

But let's not kid ourselves. The 21st century Christmas is about capitalism and dreams and artifice, and no place does dreamy capitalistic artifice with the skill and gusto of California. Heck, our largest city, Los Angeles, even derives one of its most popular nicknames from a popular Christmas decoration. They don't call us Tinseltown for nothing.

Joe Mathews is California and innovation editor for Zócalo Public Square, for which he writes the Connecting California column.

Opinion: LV Fire defends ambulance staffing

By Kileigh Labrado

It has been and will remain the mission of the Lake Valley Fire Protection District to provide the highest level of public safety services for our community, its people, and the environment. As our motto states, it is “Because We Care”.

Driven by these guiding principles, in 2001 the LVFPD entered into a partnership with the city of South Lake Tahoe to provide fire based ambulance transportation and advanced life support paramedic services throughout the South Shore of Lake Tahoe. For over 14 years the fire district has had the privilege to provide first class fire based emergency medical services (EMS) to our constituents under contracts with the county of El Dorado. LVFPD remains dedicated to providing the highest level of public safety to the community we proudly serve.

The partnership between the Lake Valley Fire Protection District and the city of South Lake Tahoe formed the Cal-Tahoe JPA which currently has a contract with the county of El Dorado to provide paramedic ambulance services to the South Shore until Aug. 31, 2019, with the potential to extend the contract until Aug. 31, 2021. The JPA partnership allowed ambulances to be staffed with firefighter/paramedics in the South Shore, which increased the level of public safety by

increasing the number of firefighters on duty every day. Firefighter/paramedics are available for all types of incidents including fires, rescues, and vehicle accidents as well as medical aids.

On Dec. 14, 2015, the city of South Lake Tahoe began staffing the two JPA ambulances they are responsible for staffing with non-firefighters. While non-firefighting paramedics and emergency medical technicians are qualified to run medical aid calls, they are not all risk personnel and cannot perform the same duties of a firefighter, such as fighting fires, entering burning buildings, performing technical rescues, or vehicle extrication.

There have been ongoing discussion and negotiations between the city and LVFPD regarding LVFPD taking over staffing of all of the ambulances in the South Shore to keep a fire based system intact. Unfortunately there has been no agreement reached to date. The LVFPD is committed to working with the city and the county to find an equitable solution that is in the best interest of the community and maintains the increased level of public safety.

Lake Valley Fire Protection District strongly believes that a fire based emergency medical and ambulance transport service for the South Shore provides our constituents with a proper level of public safety. The fire district believes that the ambulance transport services agreement enhances our ability to maintain an adequate work force that is needed to adequately fulfill our mission and commitment to provide a high level of public safety to the community we proudly serve. Public safety and fiscal responsibility are of the utmost importance to the fire district. It is the intention of the LVFPD to continue to operate fire based emergency medical and ambulance transport services for our constituents.

Kileigh Labrado is the public information officer for Lake Valley Fire Protection District.

Letter: Homeless Coalition grateful for support

To the community,

On behalf of Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless, I would like to thank our community for a successful opening of the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room.

Peggy Eichorn and Kelly Pelcher from Coldwell Banker McKinney were instrumental in the search for a location for the Warm Room, and have been an unwavering partner in the project. We thank them for their support. Also, the coalition is grateful to Star Lake Investments for use of their facilities.

We also appreciate those who helped make the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room safe for overnight guests. Rob Worth, Jim Pelcher, and Erik Finkelstein of Innovative Electric donated labor in order to complete our building upgrades. Dan Graham at Tahoe Valley Electric donated supplies as well. South Lake Tahoe is very fortunate to have individuals and businesses like these supporting nonprofit efforts such as ours.

Over 40 individuals and 10 partner agencies have come together to provide short term assistance to our friends and neighbors who find themselves without housing this winter, and to provide resource referrals to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is still looking for more volunteers to assist during the 2015-16 winter. Three training sessions are scheduled next month: Jan. 9 from 10am to 12:30pm; Jan. 12 from 1pm to 3:30pm; and Jan. 12 from 6pm to 8:30pm. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please

contact Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless at
tahoewarmroom@gmail.com or 775.573.0822.

Donations are also welcomed to aid in funding the Warm Room. Checks can be made payable to Live Violence Free (Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless' fiscal sponsor), note "Warm Room" in the memo line and mail to P.O. Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151.

Marissa Muscat, Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless

Letter: Rotary appreciative of community's help

To the community,

Tahoe Douglas Rotary held its annual children's Christmas party and traditional turkey dinner at the Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. This event was held for Live Violence Free's children and their families, and also Sierra Child and Family Services, who assist in placing foster children in the South Lake Tahoe area.

Tahoe Douglas Rotary would like to thank the following for again making this event a success for these special children and their families.

Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort again this year donated the space for this event. The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department and crew who attended were a big hit with the children. In addition to the gifts donated to the children by Tahoe Douglas Rotary Club and individual members, Sealed With a Kiss and their staff generously provided gifts for the parents and volunteers to

help work the event. Special entertainment was donated courtesy of Randy and Theresa Daggs of Dyna-Mic-Duo who provided a photo booth complete with Frosty the Snowman, Whittell High School student Chris Evans as disc jockey and some dancers from the Forever Dance studio, who lead the children with some fun dancing.

This event has a long tradition with Tahoe Douglas Rotary and with the assistance of Jenny Buscher and Jana Walker Spano this year again was a big success.

John McDougall, Tahoe Douglas Rotary