

Letter: Squaw helps raise \$130,000+ for nonprofits

To the community,

Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows and the Squaw Village Neighborhood Company are proud to have raised over \$130,000 with proceeds from the popular summer and fall events held in the Village at Squaw Valley. With the help of over 500 volunteers and the support of over 50,000 attendees, Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows and the Squaw Village Neighborhood Company were able to support many local and regional charitable organizations that promote education, arts, recreation, and community services.

Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows is proud to continue its mission to serve as a steward of the legendary Lake Tahoe area. We are dedicated to supporting local and regional organizations that aim to achieve great things in our area. We admire the work that these organizations are doing and are dedicated to helping them support our community.

“We work closely with the amazing team at Squaw Valley to plan, organize, and execute two of Tahoe’s greatest summer events—Peaks and Paws and Brews Jazz and Funk Fest—to benefit the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe,” said Stephanie Nistler, executive director of the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe. “In addition to months of planning, the events require tremendous support from our volunteers. These fundraisers are so important to our organization, both to share our message with thousands of locals and visitors and to raise much needed funds for local homeless pets.”

The following are the details of funds raised for each non-profit event hosted by Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows and the Squaw Village Neighborhood Company:

- Brews Jazz & Funk, featuring breweries and musical performances, and the Peaks & Paws event to celebrate canine friends raised a total of \$24,500 for the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe, a nonprofit dedicated to saving and improving the lives of animals.
- The Made in Tahoe event, which features all things made locally and inspired by the Lake Tahoe Basin and Truckee areas, raised \$11,000 for the Tahoe Food Hub, a nonprofit organization working to restore local food distribution by building a regional food system for North Lake Tahoe.
- The Art, Wine and Music Festival, featuring wine tasting from California wineries, local music, art booths, and exhibits raised \$13,000 for Achieve Tahoe, whose mission is to provide affordable and inclusive physical and recreational activities that build health and confidence.
- Guitar Strings vs. Chicken Wings, featuring a chicken wing cooking competition and live music, raised \$3,000 in proceeds for the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, a non-profit dedicated to advancing the natural history, conservation, and ecosystem knowledge of the Tahoe region through science, education and outreach.
- The annual Foam Fest, an afternoon of beer tasting and live music raised \$22,000 for Achieve Tahoe, a non-profit that brings people with disabilities to the slopes.
- The annual Alpen Wine Fest, featuring wine tasting, live music, and a huge silent auction and raffle raised \$25,000 for Can Do MS, a foundation providing wellness and education for people with Multiple Sclerosis.
- The ever-popular Oktoberfest that transforms the village into a mini-Bavaria, complete with Bratwursts, authentic German beer, music, and entertainment raised \$30,000 for the High Sierra Lacrosse Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports student athletes developing in the sport of lacrosse.

- In addition, Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows and the Squaw Village Neighborhood Company helped raise an additional \$5,000 for various other local and regional organizations including: the Shane McConkey Foundation, Tahoe-Truckee School of Music, Truckee Dance Factory and Arts for the Schools.

Andy Wirth, president and COO of Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows

Opinion: Don't rely on politicians to memorialize soldiers

By Kelly Kennedy

Five U.S. infantry soldiers died on June 21, 2007, when their 30-ton Bradley tracked vehicle hit a deep-buried bomb in Adhamiyah, Iraq.

I was embedded as a reporter with their unit when they died, and I watched as the men who served with them rallied.

They reached out to the mothers and fathers and wives, offering and seeking comfort, but also saying what they believed needed to be heard:

It was quick.

We were with them at the end.

We will never forget.

The families often reach back too, spreading wide wings over the men and women left behind in return for stories of their

sons and daughters and wives and husbands.

“You can call me ‘mom,’ because he can’t.”

“Tell me again about the time she ... ”

A service member’s bond with a Gold Star family feels profound because it squares so many different contradictions. The relationship is about both loss and presence, about courage and fear, and about a link with the loved one with whom we no longer can connect.

But as the families and veterans wrap around each other, these tight bonds can exclude those in our communities who haven’t served in the military themselves or who don’t know anyone who serves now. Such exclusion may seem a small point in the immediate context of soldiers and families grieving those they loved. And letting a wider group of people into a tragedy may seem like too much for people who already carry a heavy burden of loss.

But exclusion has real-world consequences for families, communities, and the country as a whole.

How can we grieve for service members we don’t know, but who so completely represent us? How can we support families who don’t convey their grief and experiences beyond those tight bonds? And how, without paying attention to more than just headlines, can we feel the weight of a particular family member’s words, while fully understanding the diversity of that community?

If civilians don’t know about, understand, or feel comfortable reaching out to service members’ families, that can lead to those in the military, and their families, feeling isolated, abandoned, and afraid to speak.

We send people to war, but the contract shouldn’t end with their lives.

Renee Wood-Vincent, whose son Sgt. Ryan Wood died that day in Iraq, said she feels that fallen soldiers can be forgotten, and that there's a lack of respect and knowledge in the public for what families and members of the military experience. But that also creates an obligation to reach out.

"There's such a focus on what's happening to us—it's all about our sorrow, our problems, our military families—and we aren't letting people in," she said.

Letting people in can't be done alone. It requires civilian leaders who can bridge and connect people. And in the United States, the highest bridge is embodied in one office, the presidency.

That's why it's so important that the person occupying that office be able to connect with soldiers and their families.

When the president reaches out to Gold Star families, he speaks for the civilians who made the decision with their votes to send service members to war. Even if a letter or phone call does not bring comfort, it is an acknowledgment of sacrifice for country. It's why scrutiny of President Trump's calls with Gold Star families is warranted.

But whatever the nature of the president's words, the most important thing to know is that his words aren't enough. A president should serve only as a starting point for civilians to reach out. "If I rely on politicians to memorialize Ryan and understand his sacrifice, I'm going to be sorely disappointed," Wood-Vincent said. "They can empathize, but it's still a number."

Wood-Vincent received a letter from President George W. Bush, which she said was enough in a time of war, when the commander-in-chief should be dealing with national issues. So did Shawna Fenison, whose son, PFC Ryan Hill, served with Wood in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion 26th Infantry Regiment. Hill died on Jan. 20, 2007, in Iraq, when a roadside bomb exploded

near his Humvee.

But the letter wasn't enough. "I don't think the country cares about us and would rather we just go away," she said.

That feeling represents a failure, and a historic shift. The concept of the Gold Star family began as an invitation for conversation and caring between civilians and military.

During World War I, a family could hang the red-bordered flag with two blue stars in the front window to alert the neighborhood that two sons served overseas.

The neighbors could say, "Heard from your boy?" or "Where's he fighting?"

If one of those stars turned to gold, the conversation changed.

"I'm sorry for your loss."

"Thank you for your sacrifice."

But as wars turned more political and became less of a community effort—during World Wars I and II, most families had relatives or friends serving—the conversation changed again. Some families folded their flags when they felt they brought unwanted attention during the Vietnam War. In recent wars, the rarity of the flags offered reminders of just how few people served. About 7 percent of Americans have served in the military, and less than 1 percent serve now in our all-volunteer armed forces.

Both Fenison and Wood-Vincent were initially showered with gifts: flags. Artwork anonymously sent in the mail. Letters from strangers. "I have a large, supportive family," Wood-Vincent said. "My neighborhood happens to be very military." At work, people knew her son and offered condolences. People told her they fly the American flag for her son.

“We had a neighbor who came down every night for two years and prayed over our home,” she said. “I had never met her. I would see her out there in the summertime, in the wintertime, standing in the rain with her little dog.”

People still leave things on her porch.

“It may be the part of the country I’m in, or the neighborhood,” she said. “But part of it is the people I’ve surrounded myself with.”

Fenison had a similar experience, at first. But then, as people moved on with their lives or grew disenchanted with the wars, they encouraged her to stop talking about her son, to take down the “shrine” she’d assembled in her home that included her son’s pictures and the flag from his coffin.

“When I talk about Ryan, many will change the subject or give me the look of ‘Here she goes again,’ so I find myself withdrawing more and more,” she said. “Communities are good about honoring on Memorial Day with their token events, but it pretty much stops there.

“While my world has stopped, the rest has moved on.”

The families ache for the engagement—for someone to care. For someone to mourn their losses. For someone to look up Niger on a map and not only think about what it might have felt like to be doing what you, yes, signed up for and loved—but also to contemplate the terror and heartbreak for service members, friends, and families.

Those flags should serve as a call to action: This family’s sacrifice represents you. Gather them up. Listen to their stories.

“It’s much more complicated than people know,” Wood-Vincent said.

“On one hand, I’m a mother who lost a child no matter how he

was taken from the world. I'm not thinking of him as a soldier."

But then she explains to strangers how he died.

"People will say, 'Oh, what a shame. What a waste,'" she said. "Don't assume I feel the same."

Sometimes, she said, she gets angry and wants to walk away. Other times, she reminds herself that she can't be mad about people's ignorance about proper responses or "Gold Star" moms if she's not helping to educate them.

"I'll think, 'That person just made me so angry,'" she said. "Why? Well, my son's loss was not a waste. Give me 10 seconds in the parking lot to tell you why. If someone sees your Gold Star plate and says, 'What is that?', you don't say, 'Hey. You're an idiot. You should know.'"

She sees her personal call to action as part of that big conversation. Every summer, she invites her son's brothers in arms to a reunion. Her family created a scholarship to celebrate his art-punk-rock drawings that expressed convictions about being different and doing your part to save the world—through the university. And she told his story at several events.

She makes sure people know and remember him, and through that, she closes the divide.

She believes that communities can, too. Local organizations can invite in Gold Star family members. They can form community partnerships—Boy Scouts who adopt families, or Junior Leaguers who organize lunches, or schools that bring Gold Star alumni in as speakers. Communities can organize town halls about what families need—even if that need is simply relaying kind questions to ask. Leaders can ensure families are remembered beyond Memorial Day.

And Gold Star families have to be willing to accept those invitations.

“You’ve got to open yourself,” Wood-Vincent said. “They’ll never completely understand, and thank God for that. But they will never understand if we don’t invite them in.”

Kelly Kennedy is an Army veteran, former USA Today reporter, and author of “They Fought for Each Other: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Hardest Hit Unit in Iraq.” She co-authored “Fight Like a Girl: The Truth Behind How Female Marines are Trained,” which is due out in April.

Opinion: Partnerships can help bridge divides

By Joanne Marchetta

Nearly 200 conservation professionals from around the country gathered back east this November to have a strategic dialogue about the state of landscape-scale conservation. Lake Tahoe was featured at the forum for the region’s cooperative restoration initiatives, and it was an honor to share the stage with such high-caliber conservation thought leaders.

The national forum showcased how people of all backgrounds are collaborating and working to conserve some of America’s most iconic natural areas.



Joanne
Marchetta

Through the High Divide Collaborative, partners are working to conserve forests, wilderness areas, and open spaces that extend from Northern Montana and Idaho to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The focus is on protecting working family ranches, headwaters for world-class fisheries and water supply, and nationally-important recreation areas, while also ensuring continent-scale wildlife corridors for species such as elk, wolves, grizzly bear, and sage grouse.

Along the East Coast, dozens of partners are working to conserve and restore natural areas and protect cultural experiences along the storied Appalachian Trail that runs from Georgia to Maine. And through the Two Countries, One Forest initiative, the U.S., Canada, and 50 partner organizations are working to protect 80 million acres of forest habitat in the Northern Appalachia and Acadia ecoregion.

Speakers at the conference clearly showed that the conservation movement is coming of age in North America. From the Gulf Coast to New England and the American West, collaborative, landscape-scale conservation is being understood not just to feed the human spirit, but for our very survival, to connect people responsibly to the ecosystems that sustain us.

The understanding of this deep need to protect natural areas was echoed in elections this month. According to the Trust for Public Land, voters across the country passed 36 out of 41 local and state conservation measures on the ballot, approving

more than \$1.5 billion for parks and conservation in coming years.

Lake Tahoe's conservation story is helping inspire and guide many of these initiatives. Lake Tahoe was one of America's visionary and first landscape-scale conservation initiatives. Rightfully fearing that Tahoe could be lost to runaway development half a century ago, California, Nevada, and the federal government partnered to stop overdevelopment in the Tahoe basin under the organizing cry that polluted water doesn't respect state lines.

Over the last half century, the Tahoe region has taken major steps to conserve and restore the lake and its environment and we are continuously working to increase the pace and scale of our conservation and restoration accomplishments and to make our communities more sustainable.

In the last two decades, the Lake Tahoe environmental improvement program has grown into one of the nation's most ambitious and successful conservation and restoration initiatives. More than 50 public and private sector partners at Tahoe have implemented more than 500 projects to restore streams and wetlands, reduce storm water pollution, and restore forest health. TRPA and dozens of partners are working to sustainably redevelop our communities to lessen their environmental impact, improve the health, vitality, and safety of our neighborhoods, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

With climate change now threatening the environment we all depend upon, landscape-scale conservation takes on a new importance. It not only protects wildlife and the natural areas we all enjoy for recreation and inspiration, the integrity of landscapes can alleviate the aftermath of extreme storm events as well as protect air and water quality, human health, and confront major threats like increased wildfire.

Our partnerships and successes at Tahoe have created a national model for landscape-scale conservation in America, and it is heartening and inspiring to see other models taking shape nationally and globally. The leaders who gathered at the national landscape conservation forum acknowledged today's polarized politics and national divisions. But they all agreed on one thing: That there is the opportunity to use landscape conservation to show how models like Tahoe's collaborative partnership can bridge divides, promote understanding, and heal division. Now more than ever, we need that.

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

Opinion: This is a man problem

By Charles M. Blow, New York Times

It is impossible to say too often or loudly how important a moment this is, when many women feel brave and empowered enough to speak up about being sexually assaulted or harassed by powerful men.

It feels like a watershed, like something is fundamentally shifting.

But the greatest measure of fundamental change will be when everyday offenses by everyday people are also named and shamed, the trickle down of speaking up.

For most women, the perpetrator is not a Hollywood executive, or a sitting senator or an esteemed journalist. For most,

there will be no press conferences if they come forward. There will be no celebrity attorney to sit at their sides and stroke their hands. There will be no morning news shows to praise their courage.

Read the whole story

Opinion: A Cheech Thanksgiving

By Joe Mathews

This week, California should give thanks for Cheech.

Richard Anthony Marin deserves our gratitude not just because his new autobiography, “Cheech Is Not My Real Name ... But Don’t Call Me Chong,” is the best California book of the year. Or because he provides hope that short, bald men still can be stars.



Joe Mathews

The biggest reason to thank Cheech now is that his life embodies Thanksgiving itself: a big, robust meal that includes many different flavors but is ultimately for everyone. This California entertainer reminds us, happily, that our state’s cultural mainstream is so much more interesting and inclusive

than we acknowledge.

Indeed, Cheech is evidence of a California paradox: To stay in the mainstream here, it helps to start as an outsider. And Cheech is most often identified as a “cult” figure—one-half of the stoner comedy team, Cheech and Chong, that made the 1978 film “Up in Smoke.” But his career has been much bigger and more mainstream than that.

Indeed, the dirty secret of Cheech’s life, as he tells it, is just how much of a square he’s been. Marin was a middle-class kid who spent his early years in African-American South Central Los Angeles. His father was an LAPD officer; his mother was president of the PTA. But by his teens, the family had relocated to a white neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley.

Racially and ethnically, he was an outsider in both places, so he fit in as much as he could. The future stoner actor-musician-writer-comedian was a Cub Scout, a Boy Scout, an altar boy, and “a little wiseass who got straight A’s” first at Catholic schools and later at San Fernando Valley State College (now Cal State Northridge). He even worked in the signature L.A. industry—aerospace—during college, manufacturing airplane galleys at Nordskog.

The book’s signature moment—recounted by Cheech as the Apostle Paul might have recalled his trip to Damascus—is when he smoked marijuana for the first time, and found that the allegedly mind-rotting substance expanded his perspective. He thought: “What else have they been lying about?”

And with that, he discovered art, awakened politically, dodged the draft, met Tommy Chong and began playing shows all over the world. The rest is California history. He bought a house in Malibu, and even practiced transcendental meditation, as taught by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Cheech proudly identifies as Chicano and Latino, but sees his

heritage as bridge, not niche. The glory of being Latino, in his telling, is that you are part of a diverse demographic that contains multitudes. "My face has some kind of international malleability to it. Add your own preferences or prejudice to it, and I could be anything," he writes.

But narrow-minded Hollywood types couldn't see his natural breadth at first. Marin countered by writing his own material, most successfully in the 1987 film "Born in East L.A." The movie is quintessential Cheech—a comedy framing the Mexican-American story as fundamentally American, and demonstrating the absurdities of putting people in boxes.

Marin's other strategy was to find roles in the most middle-of-the-road TV and movie productions and make them his own. He did a spin-off of the "Golden Girls," and co-starred with Don Johnson on the middlebrow but high-ratings police procedural "Nash Bridges," set and filmed in San Francisco. While living there, he appeared in the premiere of a Sam Shepard play, "The Late Henry Moss", at San Francisco's Theatre On The Square. And he turned himself into a regular voice in the animated films of Emeryville-based Pixar films, most notably as Ramone in the "Cars" films.

Marin is unapologetic about mainstream success. His book includes an entire chapter on how he became champion of "Celebrity Jeopardy." By his account, his old partner, Tommy Chong, foundered because he was not willing to evolve to reach audiences.

Marin has made news more recently as a noted collector of Chicano art. The city of Riverside wants to turn over its main library for the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry. Marin, ever mainstream, emphasizes that, "Chicano art is American art."

Despite his cult status, it's hard to call Cheech countercultural now. The man who performed his most recent

marriage, Antonio Villaraigosa, is a leading candidate for California governor. In January, recreational marijuana will become legal in his home state.

Now that Cheech is an institution, maybe it's time to honor him as one. Perhaps California could create its own version of Mt. Rushmore; the natural place would be the Granite Mountains, in the Mojave Desert.

There would be many great candidates for this pantheon. But why not start by carving the old stoner in stone?

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

Opinion: Giving thanks to sugar pine lovers

By Maria Mircheva

In the time of Thanksgiving, we at the Sugar Pine Foundation are thinking of the people and organizations that have made our work possible. We are especially thankful to the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation and Patagonia, our first funders, but also to all our partners and volunteers.

Twelve years ago, the Sugar Pine Foundation was just an idea. The idea was that sugar pines are beautiful trees that are under threat and we need to do whatever we can to preserve them. Sugar pines have the striking, long pine cones that people use to make holiday decorations.

All white pines in the Tahoe basin – sugar pine, western white pine and white bark pine – have important ecological roles to

provide food and shelter to birds and animals, and contribute to forest diversity and resilience. Unfortunately, there is a nonnative invasive fungus, called white pine blister rust that infects all white pines. This fungus has been in the area for the last 20 years. Land managers have agreed that the most effective restoration strategy is to find seed trees that are naturally resistant to the fungus and plant their progeny.

That was the idea behind starting the Sugar Pine Foundation. At first it was just a couple of guys in the forest shooting a sling shot to get pine cones from healthy sugar pines. They were lucky that the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation board decided that this was a worthwhile effort and funded the search for blister rust resistant sugar pine trees. Since then, the Sugar Pine Foundation has flourished into a full blown small nonprofit that plants 10,000 sugar pines a year with the help of 700 volunteers.

Today, the Sugar Pine Foundation has three part-time staff and a six-person board of directors. The Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, through the Nature Fund, Martis Fund, Tahoe Donner Fund, Wiesner Fund and a few other funds has contributed more than \$100,000 to our efforts. Various other organizations, including Patagonia, American Forests, Tree Cyler, Arbor Foundation, National Forest Foundation, Rose Foundation, Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation, Truckee Tahoe Airport District and Bently Foundation have made significant contributions as well.

This year marks the planting of our 100,000 tree. To find planting sites, we partner with all the land-managing agencies in Tahoe – the U.S. Forest Service, California and Nevada state parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Tahoe Donner Forestry, Vail Resorts and various other public and private landowners. Our planting sites are often fire scars, but also areas where the forest was mechanically or hand thinned.

Countless local schoolchildren and community volunteers have helped us plant seedlings and we would like to thank all of them – students from North and South Tahoe middle schools, Tahoe Expedition Academy, Sierra Expeditionary School, Forest Charter School, Lake Tahoe Community College, Sierra Nevada College, University of Nevada, SOS Outreach, Tahoe Turning Point, Girls and Boy Scouts, all Rotary clubs, Patagonia, Vail, Southwest Gas, Bently, Nevada Energy, Hyatt, Starbucks, Hard Rock and Harrah's and Harveys employees, and everyone else.

There are a lot of challenges to our forests these days. Years of fire suppression have left the forests too dense and have heightened the risks of wildfires, drought and pathogen mortality. A bark beetle epidemic took place in the southern and central Sierra last year. Sugar pines were hit hard by mountain pine beetle in North Tahoe. Mistletoe is widespread on Jeffrey pines on the East Shore. Fir engraver beetle and root rot are damaging white firs on the West Shore. The warming weather is exacerbating fires, drought and bark beetle outbreaks. Nonnative invasive species are taking a toll on the ecosystem especially when other disturbances are present. As beneficiaries of clean water, beauty, shade, and other ecosystem benefits of the forest, we have a responsibility to manage our forests and keep them healthy. Reforestation is a part of that effort: it benefits both forest and ecosystem health, and helps decrease carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Thanks to all our supporters for being a part of it!

Maria Mircheva is executive director of the Sugar Pine Foundation.

Opinion: How did CalPERS dig a \$153B pension hole?

By Dan Pellissier, San Jose Mercury News

During the next five weeks, the CalPERS board, custodian of \$326 billion in assets needed to fulfill retirement promises for 1.8 million California public employees and beneficiaries, will make decisions affecting government budgets for decades to come.

The problem is, despite their fiduciary duty under the state Constitution to “protect the competency of the assets” under their absolute control, CalPERS is roughly \$153 billion short of fully funding the retirement promises earned to date.

How did CalPERS dig this huge hole? During the last decade, they manipulated actuarial assumptions and methods to keep employer and employee contribution rates low in the short term.

Read the whole story

Letter: EDC needs to reel in VHRs

To the community,

In writing this letter, I am only expressing my own opinion and not that of any organization or entity.

Vacation home rentals (VHRs) in El Dorado County are out of

control. As is evidenced by the number of residents complaining about noise, parking, trash, over-occupancy, etc., it is time for our government representatives to act and change the current ordinance to respect our rights to live in peaceful neighborhoods.



Leona Allen at her parents' property, which is now a garden in the burn area. Photo/Susan Wood

There are many issues surrounding VHRs that need to be addressed, but I believe public safety should be in the mix. Visitors to our area do not understand our fire danger predicament, and are often negligent when it comes to the use of campfires, charcoal briquet and ash disposal, propane use, discarding of cigarettes, and illegal fireworks. In addition, the overloading of people in homes built for significantly smaller occupancy puts undue stress on our fire and emergency medical systems.

My suggestions for solutions are twofold: require defensible space inspections and compliance of every VHR, and compel them to receive annual fire agency business inspections. Defensible space requirements are already the law (Public Resource Code 4291). All businesses in the El Dorado County portion of the Tahoe basin are required to be inspected annually for safety

issues – so why not VHRs?

Until our representatives can work with the community and develop a strict but fair ordinance, we must demand that a temporary moratorium be put in place on all new VHR permits in the Tahoe basin. Please call your Board of Supervisors representative Sue Novasel at 530.573.7955 or bosfive@edcgov.us and let her know that you support the moratorium.

Thank you.

Leona Allen, Meyers

Editorial: Ways to change how Calif. manages water

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Nov. 14, 2017, Water Deeply.*

It's time for California to rethink how it manages water for the environment. Despite four decades of effort, many of the state's freshwater-dependent native species are in decline. Controversy over water for the environment remains high. The latest drought left lasting impacts on already-stressed species and their ecosystems and highlighted the need for a change of course.

Our new research identifies shortcomings in current practices and lays out three reforms that could reduce conflict while improving freshwater ecosystems.

The first critical problem area is water accounting. During the latest drought, state and federal agencies found their

decision-making hampered by gaps in information on water availability and use as well as ecosystem conditions.

Read the whole story

Opinion: SLT taxpayers fund sexist sculpture



South Lake Tahoe's champions statue treats women as inferior to men. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Champions Plaza in South Lake Tahoe was developed to recognize

athletes in the area who have reached statewide, national or international recognition in their sport. It was never intended to be just about Olympians or three in particular.

Nonetheless, the idea was born out of the trio who became known as the Golden Girls – Jamie Anderson, Maddie Bowman and Hannah Teter. All have won gold medals in their disciplines at a Winter Olympics, all live in Meyers, and all ride for Sierra-at-Tahoe.

Next year the inaugural inductees will have their names engraved into the Walk of Champions. They include: Anderson, Bowman, Teter, Elena Hight, Glen Plake, Jonna Mendes, Kyle Smaine, Shaun Palmer, Travis Cabral and Travis Ramos. Perhaps not surprisingly they are all either a skier or a snowboarder.

Let's hope other sports are soon brought into the fold.

I know who I'd nominate: the 2010 3.5 senior women's tennis team from Zephyr Cove. They won the national championship that year.

The Zephyr Cove team included Becky LeBuhn, Yrma Haro, Diane Baker Roberts, Patty Yamano, Charna Knerr, Becky Darrow, Susan Glasson, Linda Vollenhals, Karen Neri, Carel James, Carla Paterson, JoJo Conroy, Eddi Quiggle, Julie Zeid, Carol Faccinetti, Mary Rey, and Sandy Paul.

It was up to Neri, captain of the team, to choose who went to nationals in Indian Wells. She picked herself along with Roberts, Vollenhals, Haro, Zeid, Kerr and Rey.

But it takes an entire team to qualify for playoffs, then districts, then sectionals and ultimately nationals. That's why all of the women (and one would be posthumously) deserve to be inducted into the Champions Plaza.

In 2015 the City Council approved the criteria and nomination process for future Champions Plaza inductees.

The city is to be commended for carving out a part of Lakeview Commons to honor athletes. We are an athletic bunch, competing in an array of sports.

A sculpture was commissioned and last month the Spirit of Competition was installed. It's even more magnificent at night illuminated by a handful of lights.

It is Gareth Curtiss who created this nearly 11-foot bronze work of art.

When the City Council saw the first version the three beings were clearly male. Anderson, who is a native of the South Shore and won gold in slopestyle in 2014, voiced her disappointment to those who would listen – as did others. The council told the artist to try again. Curtiss listened. One of the three is a woman, the other two are clearly male.

I first noticed the art piece earlier this month, driving by with my mom and two of my sisters. I explained to them how it came to be. We swung into the parking lot, got out and looked at it. And we all had a similar reaction – *what the hell?*

One of the male figure's hands is on the ring, while the other two are reaching for it. I felt like I had been hit in the gut, the wind knocked out of me. This sculpture is an assault on all women – athlete or not. It is hard to believe two female councilmembers and a woman city manager could sign-off on what is clearly a piece of work that puts women in second place (second class?) again.

"I honor the artist's interpretation of the spirit of competition with those in competition reaching for excellence as represented by the ring," Councilwoman Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*, adding that she "approves" of the sculpture as is.

JoAnn Conner was the councilwoman at the time.

I say shame on anyone who had something to do with approving this \$75,000 sexist piece of art.

All hands should have been on the ring or none at all.

Maybe I won't nominate that tennis team; maybe Douglas County will figure out a way to honor athletes without a gender bias.

Kathryn Reed is publisher of Lake Tahoe News.