Census: Doctor visits on the decline

By Sabrina Tavernise, New York Times

WASHINGTON — Americans of working age are going to the doctor less frequently than they were 10 years ago, according to a report by the Census Bureau.

In 2010, people age 18 to 64 made an average of 3.9 visits to doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, down from 4.8 visits in 2001, said the report, which was released on Monday.

The precise reasons for the decline were unclear, said Brett O'Hara, an official at the Census Bureau and a co-author of the report. But the changing demographics of the American population most likely had something to do with it.

As baby boomers retire, for example, they leave a working-age population that is on average younger and that tends to use less health care. Still, that is likely to be only a small part of the explanation, as the baby boomers began to move into retirement only at the end of the report's period, about two years ago.

Another possible reason for the decline in doctor visits, Mr. O'Hara said, is that the share of uninsured working-age people has expanded over the past decade. People without insurance are less likely to visit a doctor, said the report, which was based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation, a long-running survey of more than 80,000 households. The share of working-age Americans without health insurance was 21.8 percent in 2010, according to the Census Bureau, up from 17 percent in 2001.

The report measures the years before 2010, when a provision in the Affordable Care Act began allowing young adults to stay on

their parents insurance policies until age 26. That change has helped stem the rise in the uninsured.

People lacking insurance were far less likely to go to doctors. Just 24 percent of the uninsured went to a doctor at least once in 2010, compared with 72 percent of the general population of working age adults, the report found.

The share of doctors visits by uninsured adults was low, O'Hara said, despite the safety net that is supposed to help them get medical care, like as federally financed community health centers and hospitals with charity care.

But even for those with insurance, costs have increased, with deductibles and premiums rising far faster than inflation, and many have cut back on doctor visits, said Kathleen Stoll, director of health policy at Families USA, a nonprofit health care research and advocacy group.

"Many are thinking twice before going to a physician," she said.

Still, about two-thirds of Americans reported being in good or excellent health, the report said, compared with about one-third that reported being in fair or poor health. The report also showed the sharp difference in medical usage by income. Nearly 40 percent of people in poverty did not visit a doctor in 2010, compared with 19 percent of people from higher income levels.

Hispanics were the least likely to seek medical care, with 42 percent reporting not having visited a doctor at all in 2010. Among whites, the share was 23 percent and among blacks it was 30 percent.

Opinion: Hike for Housing organizers say thanks

To the community,

Habitat for Humanity, El Dorado County Chapter and St. Joseph Community Land Trust had a partnership fundraiser Hike for Housing on Sept. 15 at Spooner Lake and would like to thank Nevada State Parks for co-sponsoring the event.

We thank the many hikers who came out to support our missions to raise money to help beautify and provide affordable housing in our community. We thank our generous donors: Laurie Ault, Casey Conroy, Linda LaFavor-Coyle, DIY, Hair Cuts by Janice, Heart Rock Herb & Spice Co., Heaven Scent Salon, Lillian’s Tan & Nails, Lira’s, Angie Peart, Raley’s, Jim Stamates, South Shore Bikes, South Tahoe Stand-Up Paddle, Jan Carr with Tahoe Mountain Soap Co., Tahoe Queen, Cindy Tedeschi.

Carolyn Meiers, Habitat for Humanity

Banned book week lasts until Oct. 6. Is there ever a time when any book should be banned?

Citizens Academy enlightens residents about S. Lake Tahoe

Twelve South Lake Tahoe residents have a lot more insight into the workings of the city than they did a few months ago.

These individuals were recognized Tuesday at the City Council meeting as the first graduates of the Citizens Academy.

Josh Hempel told the council his only complaint is the days were not longer.

Russ Dahler said, “I’m very impressed with the staff you have working for you. Jim Marino seems to know every manhole cover and every type of asphalt.”

The point of the academy was to get locals in touch with the city, the individual departments and have an understanding of what goes on on a daily basis.

Course topics included City Government 101 which highlighted the city’s history, organization and adopted strategic and business plans. Department heads and staff from Community Services (parks and recreation, snow removal, special events), Development Services (building, planning, housing), Finance, police and fire, and Engineering (capital improvement, stormwater) all provided comprehensive overviews of the inner working, accomplishments and future plans of their respective departments.

Other graduates are: Bonnie Turnbull, Chris Beni, Eoin Doherty, Jameson Honeycutt, Perry Obray, Philip Armstrong, Ruben Zepeda-Raya, Ryan Payne, Shawn Kearney and Scott Homolka.

The free, six-session interactive academy will be offered again in the spring. The goal is to have it twice a year – spring and fall.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Austin's House looking for donors

Austin's House, an emergency children's shelter located centrally near the Douglas/Carson border, is celebrating five years of providing compassionate care for children in crisis by launching its inaugural annual campaign the 2012 Appeal for Kids.

The facility was built entirely with donations from our generous community and opened in September 2007.

The community support has been tremendous, but raising the funds necessary to take care of children in crisis who must be removed from their homes is always a challenge for Austin's House.

Austin's House board is looking to improve the situation by supplementing fundraising efforts with more repetitive giving going forward.

As part of the campaign there are giving levels for every budget. The Daily Club is a $100 donation that will care for one child for one day. Other donation levels include the Food Club, Professional Club, and the Go Green Club. These plans pay for a major annual expense such as groceries, insurance, or utilities. Room sponsorship is another giving option.

Anyone interested in learning more about Austin's House, about its campaign or in making a donation can contact Austin's House at (775) 267.6711.

S. Tahoe staff, council differ on need for commissions

By Kathryn Reed

Even though staff told the South Lake Tahoe City Council there is no money, time or staff to deal with the non-mandatory city commissions, the elects aren't ready to disband them.

Instead, the council wants to have every member of the Parks and Recreation, Latino Affairs, Sustainability, and Airport commissions make a case for why their particular commission should stay the way it is. Even if everyone weighs-in, there is no guarantee later this fall the council won't take staff's recommendation and do things differently.

And if the commissions stay in place, the council will have to figure out how best to allocate the minimal resources left in the city to handle this non-essential work. Staff reductions in the last few years mean 65 fewer positions – or one-third the employees are gone.

Prior to the Oct. 2 meeting the city manager had contacted the chair of the Sustainability and Recreation commissions to

apprise them of the agenda item. Neither attended Tuesday's meeting.

The Latino Affairs Commission only has a couple members and therefore is not able to meet because it does not have a quorum. This has been an issue for that commission for some time.

Councilman Tom Davis, who chairs the Airport Commission, said he is fine with disbanding that group. However, David Kelly, who is on that commission, said the opposite.

City Clerk Suzie Alessi and City Manager Nancy Kerry tag-teamed the presentation to the council that outlined what the commissions do and why change is needed.

Kerry explained that each commission is subject to the Brown Act – the California open meeting law, how staff helps oversee the commissions and that city offices are used for the meetings.

What was proposed was to make many of these commissions committees. This would eliminate the open meeting requirements, allow for less structure and potentially the ability to get more things done.

However, the council likes having control over the commissions, including who is on them. Council members also questioned whether there would be their desired transparency if the groups become committees. And then there was the question of whether committees would have the same voice as a commission.

By state law or city code South Lake Tahoe must have the Building Board of Appeals, Delinquent Refuse Fees Hearing Board, Planning Commission, and Airport Land Use Commission.

The city has technically not had the latter commission. It got away with it under old state requirements by having the

Planning Commission plus two airport commissioners convene. They haven’t met since 2007. But current law necessitates the new commission be formed.

That commission will be comprised of two county reps, two city, two aviation experts and one person from the general public. The purpose is to work on land use issues involving the airport. With the city soliciting requests for proposals for someone to come up with a master plan for the airport, the commission would be on the ground floor with that process.

The current Airport Commission is more involved with operations of the airport. The new commission would have none of those responsibilities.

Council recommended blending the Delinquent Refuse Fees Hearing Board’s responsibilities into one of the established commissions. The Planning Commission or Building Appeals are contenders.

Davis wondered why the city deals with collections for South Tahoe Refuse when it doesn’t for other utilities. Because that stipulation is part of the franchise agreement is the answer. That, though, could be changed.

Changes the council agreed to are:

• establish the Airport Land Use Commission

• appoint two physically handicapped people, per the Health and Safety Code, to the Building Board of Appeals.

Expect delays traveling near Northstar



Caltrans is alerting motorists that up to 15-minute delays are expected on Highway 267 near Northstar on Wednesday and Thursday.

Crews will continue grinding and paving from shoulder to shoulder as part of a maintenance project.

Delays Oct 3-4 will be from 7am to 5pm. Expect one-way traffic controls from Highland View Road to Northstar Drive.

Defensible space credited for no structures lost in West Slope fire

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Twenty-five homes in the Somerset area of El Dorado County were threatened Tuesday afternoon by a fire that burned 15 acres of heavy brush.

The Sand Fire started at 11:35am Oct. 2 on Sand Ridge Road near Bucks Bar Road southeast of Placerville. As of this evening, the fire’s progress had been stopped and it was 50 percent contained, according to a CalFire news release.

No injuries or structural damage has been reported.

“Some of the homeowners had done an excellent job creating defensible space around their homes and it clearly made the difference between them returning to their home or a pile of ashes, since the fire literally burned right up to their homes,” Robert Little, a spokesman for CalFire’s Amador-El Dorado Unit, said in a written statement.

Officials said the fire spotted across Mount Aukum Road. The El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department oversaw voluntary evacuations of the Meyers and Moody roads area until the spot fires were contained.

Mount Aukum/E-16 was closed to traffic for a few hours. One lane then was opened with the California Highway Patrol escorting vehicles between Grizzly Flat and Paradise Ranch roads.

CalFire was assisted by the El Dorado County, Diamond Springs, El Dorado Hills, Georgetown, Rescue and Pioneer fire departments, and the U.S.Forest Service.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

S. Tahoe council delays city attorney evaluation

South Lake Tahoe City Attorney Patrick Enright was supposed to receive his annual evaluation during closed session on Oct. 2. While he was talked to, he was not given an evaluation.

“I don’t want to comment on what the discussion was,” Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Patrick Enright

Mayor Claire Fortier said because there was no reportable action, she didn’t have anything to say other than she expects the issue to be on a future agenda.

Enright said the review has been postponed until at least after the Nov. 6 election.

His contract expires May 31; which would give him four years on the job.

Enright said he is not worried about the council not extending his contract, but he also said he would not comment on whether he wants it to be extended.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Santa Rosa man hit while

crossing Hwy. 50

A Santa Rosa man was airlifted to a Reno hospital early Sunday morning after being hit by an SUV in Stateline.

The hit-and-run accident occurred Sept. 30 at about 1:23am in front of CVS on Highway 50.

According to the Nevada Highway Patrol, Philip Preston Parsons, 25, was walking south to north in the crosswalk when he was stuck. However, he was walking when the light was red.

The driver of the dark colored SUV did not stop, but instead drove into California.

NHP officials say Parsons' injuries were not life threatening.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report