Letter: Thanks for great bike park opening

To the community,

On behalf of the city of South Lake Tahoe I would like to extend sincere gratitude to all of the individuals and merchants who donated product or provided services to help make our Bijou Bike Park grand opening a tremendous success.

On Sept. 19, thousands of youth and families joined City Council and staff to celebrate the Bike Park project with a free barbecue, ice cream, and music. A special thank you to grill master Steve “Tee” Branch and Anthony Pulera for sweating over hot coals for three hours to serve 1,000 people hot dogs and burgers. Emery, Caroline, Audrey, Van, and a few community members who just stepped in to help when they saw the need are all my super heroes for the day.

Additional kudos go to the following businesses who donated product or service to make this day a success: Sierra Gold Seafood, Beacon Restaurant, Lakeview Café, C&M Foods, Raley’s, Grocery Outlet, and Bonanza Produce. Throughout the day cash donations were collected on behalf of the Bijou Bike Park Association in the amount of over $800. The volunteer organization has designated these funds to purchase a permeant tool cache for ongoing maintenance of the park.

Finally, thank you to disc jockey Rob and announcer Jersey J provided by OnCourse Events who provided the energy and a true party atmosphere. Everyone who contributed to this successful event should pat themselves on the back for supporting a new recreation asset that will further identify our region as a recreation destination.

Sincerely,

Lauren Thomaselli, recreation manager city of South Lake Tahoe

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Opinion: The need for continual training

By Brian Uhler

Like many Americans, law enforcement folks have been deeply moved by the horrific images we have seen in Oregon. A certain feeling of helplessness has become the norm when we look at these events from the prevention perspective. We may ask questions like:

- "Why do people who would do such a thing have access to a gun?"
- "Why didn't people who knew the shooter do something to stop him before people died?"



Brian Uhler

Post-mortem, we dig into the answers for these questions and oftentimes see the breakdowns clearly. Family and friends may have "had an idea something bad would happen," but didn't feel like there was enough reason to say anything, sometimes adding something like, "I thought he was just blowing-off steam like he does all the time …." Medical professionals say they

couldn’t say anything because of confidentiality requirements and the lack of any clear threat.

Perhaps, some meaningful changes will come from this latest event.

From a local perspective, law enforcement, medical responders, mental health professionals, and school officials have been proactive in providing the highest level of safety possible. We have promoted the concept of “see something – say something” among those who have contact with students and with those providing mental health support. This concept can certainly be expanded to the entire community.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District regularly undergoes lockdown procedures and has supported training for our region’s law enforcement and medical responders. In three such training exercises we practiced responding to and eliminating the threat followed by a quick medical triage and emergency transport process.

In Lake Tahoe, your police department, the FBI, El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department, and California Highway Patrol have all worked together to stay at the cutting edge of capacity. One such example included an FBI led table-top exercise where local agency leaders tested their capacity.

Just a few months ago, we had a “false alarm” shooting event at the Lake Tahoe Community College. During this event, college officials learned of the need to bolster internal control and communication infrastructure. I am pleased to report that the needed system changes are now in-place and undergoing testing to make sure college students can receive information quickly and respond properly.

Unfortunately, we have no choice but to train and prepare for the possibility in our own community. We are thankful our region’s school and college officials take such matters seriously and have been unwavering in their support to the

police and fire department’s need for training.

Brian Uhler is police chief for South Lake Tahoe.

Letter: Appreciation for successful run

To the community,

Hundreds of students, parents, families and community members participated and thoroughly enjoyed the inaugural Run for the Gold 1K/2K/5K race, which provided the opportunity for first- to eighth-grade students to experience a professionally time chipped race on Sept. 26. The event was an enormous success and the Boys and Girls Club Western Slope will greatly benefit from the generosity of donors and sponsors.

Sponsors included Wells Fargo Bank, Jim & Maureen Carter, El Dorado Community Health Centers, Girard & Edwards, Palos Verdes Properties, Serrano Associates, American Recovery Services; PK Willis Company, Sam Smith, Tom & Andrea Howard, Cold Springs Dental, Carnahan Electric Ltd, James Whipple, Michael & Nannette Lubinski, Placer Title Company and Riebes Auto Parts.

Union Mine High School welcomed the event, while their facility and maintenance staff were instrumental to the event’s success. Garden Valley Fire Department provided medical and safety support. Sundance Stitch, Arnolds for Awards and Under the Sun Events went above and beyond our vendor requests. In addition, many participating parents and families gave generously to the cause.

Finally, we would like to thank the dozens of volunteers who donated their Saturday and brought this concept to life. This event would not have happened without your selfless support.

We look forward to making this race an annual community celebration.

Dina Gentry, El Dorado County Office of Education communications director

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Letter: Unwanted drugs collected in S. Tahoe

To the community,

The South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition collaborated with the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office and the South Tahoe Police Department for the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on Sept. 26, which saw approximately 50 pounds of unwanted prescription medication turned in to authorities.

The event gave South Lake Tahoe residents an opportunity to dispose of all unwanted, unused, or expired medications for free and no questions asked. No liquids or needles were accepted, and residents were asked to remove all personal information from bottles before dropping off medications.

The Drug Take Back events are the safest and most responsible way to dispose of unwanted and expired medication to protect your family and the environment. Every year nearly half a million kids under the age of 5 get into household prescription medications and result in poisonings. Without proper disposal, medications that are flushed can cause

serious harm to the environment and leach chemicals into the water supply.

The South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition has installed a permanent drug take back bin in the South Tahoe Police Department lobby for anyone unable to attend the Take Back event on Saturday who wishes to dispose of old medications. They installed the box last year and are currently looking for new locations for additional drop off bins.

The South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition's mission is to mobilize the community to prevent and reduce youth substance use. They have had many successes in the last year including the creation of a Brief Intervention Program for the South Tahoe Middle and High schools, which was adopted by the school district this year. The BIP program allows suspended students to participate in alcohol and drug prevention education activities during their suspension period, rather than simply being sent home from school.

The coalition meets the first Tuesday of each month in the Al Tahoe room at the South Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club on Lyons Avenue from 3:30 to 5pm. For more information, contact me at 530.541.2445 or kmagoon@tahoeyouth.org.

Kelsey Magoon, Drug Free Coalition coordinator

Letter: LTN trades 'ink' for aprons



Lake Tahoe News spends a Monday helping at Bread & Broth; from left – Susan Wood, Bill Kingman, Frank Conaboy, Carolyn Wright, Kathryn Reed, and Linda Fine Conaboy. Photo/Provided

To the community,

"Helping at Bread & Broth is just an extension of what *Lake Tahoe News* is all about – just serving the community in a different way," said Kathryn Reed, *LTN* publisher and B&B volunteer.

Reed and her crew representing *Lake Tahoe News* were the Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor team for B&B's Monday evening dinner on Sept. 7 at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

Serving along with Reed on *Lake Tahoe News'* sponsor crew were reporters Susan Wood and Linda Fine Conaboy, historian Bill Kingman, photographer Carolyn Wright, and Frank Conaboy. The crew kept busy putting together give-away bags filled with fruit, veggies, dairy products and pastries-bread, serving dinner and helping with the dinner's cleanup.

"We were all happy to be here to help in any way we could," Reed said.

Bread & Broth would like to thank *Lake Tahoe News* for the outstanding service as the only daily news source of

information about our community and the concern of its staff for the members of our community who struggle with hunger. As a nonprofit, all volunteer organization, B&B appreciates the support that *Lake Tahoe News* has provided us through the years both in news coverage and hosting Adopt A Day sponsorships. Kudos to *Lake Tahoe News.*

For more B&B information, find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Preschool not always the best choice

By Megan McArdle, Bloomberg

Universal preschool has become the ginseng of American politics, a sort of broad-spectrum nostrum that will cure almost anything that ails you. Inequality, male-female pay gaps, crime, poverty – just apply some early childhood programs, and watch those maladies fade. Expect to hear this a lot from Hillary Clinton in the coming presidential race.

And what kind of a crotchety, sour, greedy old columnist could be opposed to such a wonderful idea? I'm so glad you asked.

In truth, I am not opposed to early childhood education programs. I am opposed to blind boosterism of such programs, the kind that confidently predicts marvelous results from thin empirical evidence, and briskly proceeds to demand huge sums be spent accordingly.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Extortion under the color of law

By Larry Weitzman

In February, I wrote a column where I explained the failure of the county to follow the Mitigation Fee Act that was codified in the California Government Code as sections 66000-66008. It had two purposes, one of which was to restrain local agencies from imposing development fees that were unrelated to a development project and a second purpose was to give government a way around Proposition 13.

The act allows agencies to attach a fee to each parcel developed that could be used for public needs of the new development like fire stations, parks and other infrastructure necessary to the new development.



Larry Weitzman

“For all unexpended development fees, the agency must make findings every fifth year that identify how the fee will be used, demonstrate a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose for which it is charged, identify all sources and amounts of funding anticipated to complete financing for incomplete improvements that were identified when the fee was established, and designate the approximate dates for that

funding to be deposited into a dedicated account. (§ 66001, subd. (d)(1). The public agency must make these findings 'in connection with' the annual report the act requires the agency to provide. (§ 66001, subd. (d)(2). If these findings are not made, 'the local agency shall refund the moneys in the account or fund' to the then current owners of the affected properties on a prorated basis plus accrued interest. (§ 66001, subds. (d)(2) & (e); see Home Builders, supra, 185 Cal.App.4th at pp. 565-566.)." That language isn't mine; it was copied from an opinion of the California Fourth District Court of Appeals in the case of Walker vs. the city of San Clemente filed on Aug. 28, 2015.

It is a case directly about the Mitigation Fee Act where San Clemente collected about $10 million for additional beach parking from developers. The need for parking didn't materialize. But the city kept the money instead of refunding it and was sued. The court found that that the city didn't file a sufficient five-year Nexus study as the city failed to make all the required findings and had other defects. The court went on to say that according to the language of Section 66001(d)(2) such a refund is required as the statute says, "If the findings are not made as required by this subdivision, the local agency shall refund the moneys in the account or fund. The court continued, "A statute's clear and unambiguous language controls, and therefore we need not resort to extrinsic sources or rule of statutory interpretation."

The court decision also bars the continuation of any noncompliant district to collect fees into the future. This decision creates serious problems for our county.

El Dorado County collects money for about a dozen districts from developers, homebuilders and families under the Mitigation Fee Act and most are out of compliance in not filing the necessary paperwork (a Nexus study) every five years with the Board of Supervisors. About 20 years ago the Board of Supervisors also adopted an annual Nexus study

ordinance (13.020.20) modeled after the aforementioned state statute, but it doesn't say that if there is a failure to comply, the unexpended fund balance must be returned and these balances are in the millions of dollars. If EDC is required to refund that money, it goes to the current homeowner of record.

It was about 2½ years ago when the county auditor notified the then CAO that EDC was out of compliance with County Ordinance 13.020.20 and Mitigation Fee Act (Government Code Section 66000-66008) districts that collect money and the collection of those developers' fees needs to stop. Every supervisor, including Norma Santiago, county counsel and even Mike Applegarth was put on notice directly by email. Why Applegarth? It was his job to gather and review the required Nexus studies in the CAO's office. He didn't. I guess he was too busy complaining to the BOS that the auditor was a bully.

The issue finally rose up earlier this year about the time I wrote a column in March about county mischief. There was an issue with the El Dorado Water (Fire) District that wanted to be paid about $95,000 from the fees collected. Until they filed the proper paperwork pursuant to Section 66001(d)(2), they didn't get the money.

Bigger problems face the county now. EDC has collected $330,000 in developers' fees for the El Dorado Hills Public Safety Facility. Money has been collected for more than eight years; no Nexus studies have been filed. With this new Walker vs. San Clemente decision, if a homeowner files for a refund of the developers' fees, the county will have to return the entire fund balance to the respective homeowners of record. Even worse EDC has no plans to build this facility.

But that is small potatoes. The El Dorado Hills CSD Rec Fee has a cash balance of $4.9 million. According to my research, there has been no compliance with the Mitigation Fee Act five-year Nexus study since 2007 that has been filed with the BOS. If they are still collecting fees, that would also be a

violation of the law. That could amount to several thousand dollars per homeowner.

Cameron Park CSD Fire fee has a cash balance of $1.2 million, and according to records no Mitigation Fee Act Nexus study has been filed since 2005. If refunds by homeowners of record within that district file for a refund, it's another million plus dollars the county will have to refund. This same problem could cause the Lake Valley Fire Protection District to refund about $81,000.

Other districts appear to be out of compliance all subject to refunds. Minutes of the BOS and former Supervisor Norma Santiago appear to have determined that the Nexus study for half a dozen Fire Protection Districts Capital Improvement Plans were out of compliance in 2011. The minutes from Aug. 11, 2011, reflected the following language: "1) Deny the adoption of the resolution and maintain the fees at the current rates as previously approved by the board."

In addition the minutes stated "direct staff to return in approximately 90 days with recommendations for changes in current policies and ordinances to incorporate consistent methodology among all districts." Then CAO Terri Daly ignored the direction of the BOS. Perhaps a firing or two might have been a good object lesson at this point. Or perhaps Norma Santiago let the CAO slide because maybe Daly promised to find Santiago a job.

But the BOS even today shows a pattern of feckless behavior that could cost the taxpayers of this county. In early June, the CAO, BOS and Supervisor Sue Novasel received an email pointing out these clear violations of the Mitigation Fee Act. They have been well aware of this problem since then. By now they must have permanent body indentions from sitting on their hands.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Participation should not determine grades

By Emily J. Klein and Meg Riordan, Huffington Post

“Stop counting participation as part of a student’s grade.”

As a professor of teacher education at Montclair State University, every time I teach our unit on assessment, I begin class with this statement. Usually, there’s a nervous giggle that spreads around the room, and my students wait for me to say, “Just kidding.” But I’m not, and neither is my colleague Meg Riordan, who for years has been supporting Expeditionary Learning leaders and teachers to implement a clear vision for students’ learning that includes standards-based grading: separating academic achievement from the habits that support it—such as participation, effort, or timeliness.

Imagine two students. They both receive an 80 as their final course grade. Ideally, that number should reveal what each student did or did not understand about the content and demonstrate her ability to perform particular skills. But what happens when the teacher includes “class participation” as 25 percent of the grade? Student A might have received a 90 on the final comprehensive exam or project, which assesses content and skills. Or maybe Student A received a 65 but, due to constant participation in class, benefited from a boost to her grade.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Junipero Serra wasn’t Calif.’s founding father

By Joe Mathews

Could sainthood be bad for Junipero Serra’s reputation?

Serra has long been a singular figure in California, hailed as the state’s “founding father” for the Catholic mission system he started in the 18th century. Schools, parks, and one of the state’s most beautiful stretches of freeway (I-280 from Daly City to San Jose) are named for him. California schoolchildren are still taught his story.



Joe Mathews

Pope Francis will canonize Serra this month — making him one more saint in a church with thousands of them.

Could sainthood transform Serra into a more explicitly religious figure — and, in time, a lesser one? California is a secular and diverse place, where the story of an evangelizing colonizer like Serra shouldn’t wear well. And California has long been a place that forgets its saints, even those whose names grace our cities. Ask yourself: Do you know anything at

all about the saints honored by Santa Barbara, San Diego, or San Luis Obispo?

At the very least, Serra's canonization should make clear that we needn't treat the man as a secular founding father of California. As I reread accounts of Serra's life recently, his religious devotion stood out as his defining trait. Steven Hackel's terrific biography portrays an almost supernaturally religious man with a relentless focus on evangelizing up and down California, despite health problems that made travel very painful. He spent nearly every day trying to save souls — establishing nine missions in California and baptizing 6,000 Indians.

But — for all the power of his faith — it's also fair to say that Serra's work as an administrator and builder was a failure. His mission system was supposed to serve Indians, but it was a disaster for them. In the mission system, native Californians lost culture, communities, food sources — and lives. Tens of thousands of Indians died in the mission system, mostly from disease.

For all his religious fervor, when it came to temporal matters Serra was — to put it charitably — out of touch, ignoring the miseries of others. He made little effort to understand the culture or customs of the Indians. And he was no democrat. When Gov. Felipe de Neve, who wrote that Serra treated the Indians worse than slaves, sought to establish local governance and elections in the missions, Serra blocked him.

"He knows how to feign compliance in matters put before him, as well as how to avoid it," one Spanish governor complained of Serra.

And, contrary to popular mythology, Serra did not found the state. The real impact of his mission work was to clear away much of native California so that future Californians had a freer hand to do as they wished. The state of California that

we live in today began long after Serra's death with the Gold Rush, and was re-founded by waves of wealth and migration, driven by oil, mining, war, aerospace, weather, and the lure of our cheap, high-quality higher education. The most important network of institutions in California history is our system of public universities, not the missions that were preserved by generations after his death.

Serra's new sainthood, and the controversy over it, is good for today's California, and we should thank Pope Francis for both. The controversy, in particular, suggests that we might move to a more mature understanding of the mission period, and that we might eventually recognize that Serra, even as he receives a sacred promotion, deserves a demotion in our secular histories.

One positive sign: An effort is under way to replace the statue of Serra in the U.S. Capitol – each state gets to have two statues in the Capitol (our other one is of Reagan) – with a far more admirable and representative figure, the late astronaut Sally Ride, the first American woman in space. Sexual politics are helping drive this – Ride was gay – but the best case for replacing Serra with her is that she embodies the secret of California's success: our faith in science. (I also suspect Reagan is destined is to be supplanted by a more politically correct secular saint, like Cesar Chavez or Steve Jobs).

Legislation to make the switch from Serra to Ride was shelved this summer – in deference to the pope's visit this month – but it should be revived before too long. Perhaps after Gov. Jerry Brown, who once studied to be a priest and has opposed the switch, leaves office in 2018.

Serra may deserve his reward from his Catholic employer, but we don't need to keep honoring him as a hero for all Californians. Here's praying that his sainthood proves to be a moment for us to correct the record. This state had no

founding father. We had founding impulses. We had greed. We had ambition. We had crazy dreams.

And now we have a saint. Let’s leave it at that.

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

Letter: TRPA needs to stop Squaw’s development

To the community,

At this week’s meeting of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Sierra Watch delivered a clear message to Tahoe decision-makers: Proposed development in Squaw Valley threatens their mission to protect Lake Tahoe.

I told the Governing Board, “That the proposed Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan would remake the region with development of a size, scale, and scope Squaw Valley – and North Lake Tahoe – has never seen. We encourage TRPA to participate in Placer County’s public planning process.”

KSL Capital Partners is seeking development entitlements from Placer County for the proposed Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan, which would include a series of 10-story tall high rises; an indoor water park with water slides, fake rivers, and indoor sky diving; and 300,000 square feet of commercial development.

New buildings would include more than 1,500 bedrooms. Proponents project that it would take 25 years to complete.

“If all the development were approved,” I told TRPA, “it would make your job to protect Lake Tahoe even more difficult.”

Of particular concern is traffic. Traffic in Tahoe is already a problem, with the key intersection in Tahoe City often stuck at what planners call “Level of Service F” – otherwise known as gridlock.

Proposed development in Squaw Valley would add more than 8,000 new daily car trips to the region’s roadways on any summer weekend, many of which would head to Tahoe.

Increased traffic makes for increased air pollution; air pollution is a direct cause of reductions in the lake’s famous clarity – TRPA’s primary responsibility.

I was joined by local volunteers, clad in purple Keep Squaw True T-shirts.

For more information about Sierra Watch and its campaign to Keep Squaw True, contact Chase Schweitzer at cschweitzer@sierrawatch.org or 530.448.1506.

Tom Mooers, executive director of Sierra Watch