Letter: Successful summer programs at Douglas libraries

To the community,

“We love the reading program. Always a good time. Look forward to it every year!” “The plays and special events are awesome. Excellent, love the program.” “Great summer reading practice! Thank you.” These are just a few of the many positive comments received from parents about the 2015 summer reading program at our Minden and Lake Tahoe branches.

Every year in June, the Douglas County Public Library challenges kids and teens to read all summer. This year we signed-up 680 children. Of those, 375 finished the children’s Summer Reading Program “Every Hero Has a Story”. Children complete activities like reading, singing, attending library programs, and reading to others to earn prizes. Teens who participated in “Unmask”, the reading program for teens, read an astounding 49,600 pages. They wrote book reviews for every 100 pages they read during the program. The Minden and Lake Tahoe branches of the library signed up a total of 115 teens.

Youth Services Librarian Kathy Echavarria and Senior Library Technician Maria Pearson put together 59 fun activities for children including Lego building clubs and movie ays. Special programs included a Brüka Theatre live performance, an ice cream social, the Fratello Marionettes “Aladdin” finale, and Magic Dan at the Lake Tahoe branch library. Teens enjoyed a Mario Kart tournament and two “Captain America” movie nights during the reading program.

We are fortunate to have outdoor venues in the valley to host our programs. Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park welcomed our Summer Popcorn Blizzard and Mormon Station State Historic Park hosted our Hero Puppet Show event. Stories at Lampe Park

returned this year and were well attended. All together our programs were attended by 1318 kids.

The local business community was very generous. Minden-Tahoe Airport donated the grand prize, a glider ride, for one finisher from each program. All finishers received a personal pizza from Round Table Pizza. Carson Valley Swim Center donated swim passes. Donations were also made by Fatburger, GE Energy, Ironwood 8 Cinemas, Maverick America's First Stop, Maxton Manufacturing, Minden Fortnightly, Papa Murphy's, Perma-Cal Industries, and Zephyr Cove Stables.

Programs, events, and prizes were made possible by the following organizations: Friends of the Douglas County Public Library, Douglas County Public Library Foundation, the Institute for Museum Library Services, and the town of Minden. We thank them for their generous support.

The library could not have run such a well-received program without the generosity of educators and volunteers. We are fortunate to serve such a motivated community. The library was very busy this summer.

Maggie Rusmisel, library technician

Opinion: We don't need no education

By Ben Hewitt, Outside

Rye Hewitt putting his pack basket, which he wove himself, to good use. He and his brother Fin learned how to make the wooden baskets from a friend of the family's who also

unschools her children. Photo: Penny Hewitt

In early September, in a clapboard house situated on 43 acres just outside a small town in northern Vermont, two boys awaken. They are brothers; the older is 12, the younger 9, and they rise to a day that has barely emerged from the clutches of dark. It is not yet autumn, but already the air has begun to change, the soft nights of late summer lengthening and chilling into the season to come. Outside the boys' bedroom window, the leaves on the maples are just starting to turn.

School is back in session and has been for two weeks or more, but the boys are unhurried. They dress slowly, quietly. Faded and frayed thrift-store camo pants. Flannel shirts. Rubber barn boots. Around their waists, leather belts with knife sheaths. In each sheath, a fixed-blade knife.

By 6:30, with the first rays of sun burning through the ground-level fog, the boys are outside. At some point in the next hour, a yellow school bus will rumble past the end of the driveway that connects the farm to the town road. The bus will be full of children the boys' age, their foreheads pressed against the glass, gazing at the unfurling landscape, the fields and hills and forests of the small working-class community they call home.

The boys will pay the bus no heed.

Maybe the boys are actually my sons, and maybe their names are Fin and Rye, and maybe, if my wife, Penny, and I get our way, they will never go to school.

Hey, a father can dream, can't he?

There's a name for the kind of education Fin and Rye are getting. It's called unschooling, though Penny and I have never been fond of the term. But "self-directed, adult-facilitated life learning in the context of their own unique interests" doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, so unschooling

it is.

It is already obvious that unschooling is radically different from institutionalized classroom learning, but how does it differ from more common homeschooling? Perhaps the best way to explain it is that all unschooling is homeschooling, but not all homeschooling is unschooling. While most homeschooled children follow a structured curriculum, unschoolers like Fin and Rye have almost total autonomy over their days. At ages that would likely see them in seventh and fourth grades, I generously estimate that my boys spend no more than two hours per month sitting and studying the subjects, such as science and math, that are universal to mainstream education. Not two hours per day or even per week. Two hours per month. Comparatively speaking, by now Fin would have spent approximately 5,600 hours in the classroom. Rye, nearly three years younger, would have clocked about half that time.

Read the whole story

Letter: Live Violence Free serves at B&B

To the community,

Both Bread & Broth and Live Violence Free have been helping members of the South Lake Tahoe South Shore community for over 25 years. While B&B has been focusing on providing meals to those who struggle with hunger, LVF has been promoting a violence free community through education and advocacy to address violence, sexual assault, child abuse and basic needs.

B&B is greatly honored by Live Violence Free’s sponsorship of

an Adopt A Day of Nourishment on Aug. 31. It was the first AAD that LVF has hosted. With the donation of $250, they helped eased hunger by providing hot, nutritious meals to 110 dinner guests that evening.

Sponsoring a B&B dinner is “an another opportunity to give back to the community,” said Aileen Yure. Joining Yure as sponsor crewmembers were fellow Live Violence Free board members Stella Ortega and Sherri Acri. These hard working ladies represent the spirit and history of service that Live Violence Free has been promoting through its program to help improve the lives of others. B&B thanks Live Violence Free for its support and partnership in helping those in need.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Send California your anchor babies

By Joe Mathews

Anchor me, baby.

Because I find it impossible to write with restraint when politicians use babies to prey on prejudice and misinform the public in the service of winning votes.



Joe Mathews

That’s the story of the Republican presidential contest, as Donald Trump and his opponents make xenophobic nonsense about “anchor babies” a top issue. I won’t rehash here all the debunking of this phony idea that hordes of pregnant immigrants are coming here to have babies. Race-baiting bunk is a staple of America’s presidential politics, and nothing I write will change that.

But when it comes to the babies part of anchor babies, I can’t stay silent. I am 100-percent pro-baby. And I’m old enough to remember when politicians were, too, cooing at the diaper set instead of scapegoating them as a peril to the republic.

Unfortunately, mainstream media outlets are helping to spread the ignorance by portraying anchor babies as a “controversy,” or “complex issue” (as the *L.A. Times* called it) when it is no such thing.

When it comes to babies—anchor or any other kind—the only issue we face is that we don’t have enough of them.

Here’s an invitation: If you think you have too many babies in your community, please buy tickets to California for them and their parents. We sure could use them.

Our state is facing a historic decline in its number of young children. According to USC, California had nearly 200,000 fewer children under age 10 in 2010 as it had in 2000, with the losses heavy in coastal counties. Why? Flat immigration, the high cost of living, and a birth rate that has dropped below the replacement level to maintain a population.

Guess what, America? The country’s birth rate dropped below replacement in 2007 and hasn’t recovered; the recession left us with a baby deficit of 2.3 million. Which makes immigrants and their babies a solution to our baby bust, not a problem. Indeed, serious presidential candidates should be offering

plans to incentivize the arrival of more babies – and make them more successful grownups. After all, the biggest domestic challenge for this country is how a dwindling number of working-age people is going to support our growing population of retirees.

Yes, I know that Jeb Bush – whose own birth anchored him in presidential politics – is arguing that the real "anchor baby" problem involves so-called "birth tourism" by Asian families who come here to have babies and pick up a U.S. passport for them on their way back to their home countries. Media outlets have covered this "issue" for years in California regions with large populations of Chinese descent, especially the San Gabriel Valley, where I live. Isn't so-called birth tourism a trivialization of citizenship or an incursion into our communities, as Bush suggests?

Oh, please.

Getting citizenship has always required money in some form, even if it's just to get here and make a life. This country is full of malls financed by foreigners here on a popular investor visa program. And what American could be opposed to tourism? In a terrific *Rolling Stone* story on birth tourism, one Chinese couple that came to L.A. to give birth sees a Laker game, visits Venice Beach, and shops at our outlet malls. We need as much of this sort of thing as possible.

The only problems with Chinese birth tourists are that there aren't enough of them (estimates are in the thousands) and that they head back to China instead of making their lives here. U.S. citizenship is seen as a form of insurance against instability back home by wealthy foreigners, and many of the U.S.-born Chinese babies won't retain their insurance past age 18, since China doesn't permit dual citizenship into adulthood. Here's hoping that, at that age, many of those babies will choose to remain Americans, study here, and become productive citizens whose taxes pay my Social Security.

To be fair, presidential candidates aren't the only ones unnecessarily raising alarms about babies. Federal law enforcement challenges pregnant mothers flying into the country about their intentions, even though birth tourism is legal. The feds even raided maternity hotels in Southern California as part of an investigation into the finances of birth tourism businesses. Given the national baby shortage, perhaps the feds should stick to their usual pursuits, like prosecuting marijuana activity and collecting metadata.

Strip away rhetoric and rationalizations, and what you have is an unreasoning fear of babies. After all, babies and their immigrant parents represent everything this country needs — investment, risk-taking, striving for a better life.

So if you have a problem with these babies, you have a problem with the American dream. Maybe you should consider emigrating.

Love it or leave it, baby.

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

Opinion: Taking a different approach to tackling crime

By Brian Uhler

Community outreach: During the month of August, we concluded our Coffee with a Cop program. Members of the public expressed support for the program, but several asked for us to do the same thing at the Starbucks located at the Y to help give

locals who frequent this location a chance to participate.

This said, our plan is to do another session for a month during the winter at the Y. When we have specific dates and times, we will forward this information.



Brian Uhler

Crime: Last month we reported on a rise in property crime. Most jurisdictions in California are having a similar spike in property crime and many law enforcement leaders believe the combination of "realignment" and Proposition 47 is the cause of this increase. Both of these political events resulted in many property crime offenders being removed from the penitentiary and released to local jails or placed on probation. In the case of proposition 47, the immediate consequence of jail was replaced with many such offenders getting a citation.

Our response: This community issue is being addressed by the police in the following ways:

- In the coming months, you will be provided opportunities to learn about and obtain "anti-theft dots." This program will help mark items which might be stolen with a special sticker and microscopic "dot" which police officers will be able to read in the field. The unique number associated with the dots will help us determine if property is stolen and return it to its rightful owner.
- The police department has acquired and will acquire additional GPS trackers. These trackers can be hidden on

items which we leave in places where thefts may be occurring. Say for example we hide a tracker on an expensive bicycle which is left unattended somewhere. When the bike moves, it will trigger the GPS signal. Our dispatchers will immediately track the GPS signal and direct responding officers to the unknowing crook.

Message to thieves: The bike or other item you might be getting ready to steal could be a police “bait” operation – don’t steal.

Brian Uhler is chief of police in South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: Change in food labels probably a mistake

By Roberto A. Ferdman, Washington Post

The good news is that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is poised to make the Nutrition Facts label on many packaged foods significantly more honest. The bad news is that this well-intentioned fix could seriously backfire.

As part of a label overhaul, which the FDA announced last year, the agency is planning to update the serving sizes to better reflect the amount of food people actually consume. The proposed tweak, which is almost through its months-long comment period and is expected to begin to take effect next year, would affect packaged foods for which serving sizes are seen as too low (just under 20 percent of all packaged foods), including popular items like ice cream, potato chips and soda.

The thinking behind the portion adjustment is fairly simple. It’s meant to correct for the fact that recent studies show

that Americans tend to eat a good deal more in one sitting than is indicated on current labels – which were last adjusted 20 years ago, based on data from a survey conducted from 1977 to 1988. Changing the serving size for ice cream, for example – from the current half cup to a more realistic full cup – means the amount of calories, fat and sugar per serving will double. And that would theoretically convince people to eat less ice cream.

Read the whole story

Letter: Heavenly practically regulars at B&B

To the community,

“We love serving our community and participating at Bread & Broth’s dinners. Everyone is so thankful and we can’t wait to come back soon!” That was the group quote written by the Heavenly Mountain Resort, the Adopt A Day sponsor crew on Aug. 24.

Volunteering their personal time to help the B&B volunteers at the dinner were Tom Maugeri, security manager; Barb Knapp, senior accountant; Jesse Plate, marketing specialist; Peter Spellman, financial operations manager; and Frank Papandrea, environmental manager.

Dana Tucker, a B&B volunteer, said that the Heavenly sponsor crew members “were great and they could come back anytime.” Heavenly volunteers are always great to work with and come so frequently that they just jump right in and know what they need to do to help the dinner go smoothly.

It was a very busy night with 122 community members showing up for the hot nutritious meal prepared by the B&B cooks who served a main course of roasted chicken. Thanks to the generosity of Heavenly Mountain Resort and their great employees, B&B and our tireless volunteers were able to provide these very thankful dinner guests with a great meal, a safe place to gather and lots of food to take home with them for future meals or to share with those who are unable to attend the dinners.

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

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Presidential debates steeped in history

By Matthew Dallek

The first Republican presidential debate was a veritable blockbuster, with 24 million viewers tuning in last month. Its sequel next week at the Reagan Presidential Library in California may attract even more viewers. Why were so many Americans in this age of digital communications willing to watch 10 men on a debate stage making mostly canned remarks, charges, and countercharges?

The question has no simple answers, but a good start is to think of presidential debates as a modern civic rite rather than simply as an exercise in internecine warfare. We now take debates for granted, but the spectacle of candidates sparring verbally with each other as equals in pursuit of your support

is a radically egalitarian concept.

The era of the modern presidential debate dates back to the mid-20th century. In 1948, Republicans Harold Stassen and Thomas Dewey squared off over whether the Communist Party ought to be outlawed. Democrats Estes Kefauver and Adlai Stevenson debated in the primary in 1956, a sleepy encounter featuring few fireworks. The Kennedy-Nixon 1960 general election debates became the most famous example of how debates supposedly can seal the candidates' fates before the electorate (since Nixon sweated so much), although there is little data showing that debates sway many voters' minds on Election Day. Ever since 1976, when Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter sparred on stage, debates have been the required staple of our presidential campaigns, a tradition replicated and emulated in many other countries as well.

But debates were stitched into the DNA of American public life long before they assumed this role in presidential campaigns. Broadly defined, debates have been central to Americans' own definition of what it means to live in a modern democracy. The nation was established and shaped as a result of big debates about the proper distribution of power between empire and colonies, between federation and states, and between the sovereign and the individual. The Constitutional Convention was a debate about the future of slavery in the republic, states' rights, and the mechanics and principles of democratic elections. The Federalist Papers offered impassioned arguments by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton for the live debates that took place in most states over whether to ratify the new constitution.

Debates were instrumental in resolving crucial issues. Historian Todd Estes has described the Jay Treaty debate (whether to establish commercial links with England) in the mid-1790s as an argument pitched to the public, pitting Federalists against Jeffersonians in public rallies and on the floor of Congress. In the 19th century, debates in Congress,

in the partisan press, and in town halls were how Americans hashed out deep-seated differences over such vexing questions as the Bank of the United States, territorial expansion, and the federal government's role in national infrastructure.

Over time, debates replaced violent means of settling our differences, such as pistol duels and full-fledged battles.

There's also this: American debates are distinctive for their blend of boisterous theater and genuine substance. This uneasy combination – coarse words and high-minded policy disputes – makes politics inspirational, accessible, and offensive to many Americans, all at the same time.

America's most famous debates, pitting Abraham Lincoln against Stephen Douglas during the 1858 Illinois Senate campaign, fused bald, racist demagoguery with detailed arguments about slavery's expansion into the western territories. The two candidates engaged in personal attacks and misrepresented each other's positions. Lincoln declared his opposition to the rights of African-Americans to vote, sit on a jury, and seek elective office. Douglas warned that, under Lincoln, white Americans would be required, as one newspaper reported, "to eat with, ride with, go to church with, travel with, and in other ways bring Congo odor into their nostrils."

Richard Nixon's campaign operative Roger Stone once said, "The biggest sin in politics is to be boring." Debates require candidates not only to defend their positions, qualifications, and vision, but also to entertain and come across as someone voters can relate to, and will like. A good debate is part philosophical symposium, part comedic theater and part popularity contest.

The first Republican debate of the 2016 campaign delivered on all counts. Donald Trump certainly understands the demands of drama, while the exchange between Chris Christie and Rand Paul on spying, and the proper boundaries between civil liberties

and a state determined to protect its people, was an entrée into a deeper debate about the proper balance between liberty and security in our post-Sept. 11 national security policies. In this sense, the first debate exemplified the seemingly contradictory, but fully complementary, strands in the American way of debates.

It's small wonder, then, that millions of us will tune in again next week.

Matthew Dallek, an assistant professor at George Washington's Graduate School of Political Management, is author of "The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics". He wrote this for What It Means to Be American, a national conversation hosted by the Smithsonian and Zócalo Public Square.

Letter: TAP thankful for successful fundraiser

To the community,

On Aug. 27, Tahoe Arts Project held a Music on the Beach fundraiser at Tahoe Lakeshore Lodge and Spa. Our guests enjoyed music by Niall McGuiness, Trey Stone and John Shipley.

A huge thank you to Pat Ronan and his staff for hosting this event. Thank you to Sessions Salon, South Tahoe Stand Up Paddle, Sealed with a Kiss, Sugared, Tahoe Massage and Bodywork, McP's, Safari Rose, Elements Day Spa, Azul Latin Kitchen, Tahoe Lakeshore Lodge, Rise Designs, Freshies and Tahoe Bowl for providing raffle prizes.

We would also like to thank everyone who attended our event and shared this special evening with us. It was so fun seeing all of you dancing on the beach. Everyone was very generous and we appreciate your support.

All funds raised will go toward our performing arts programs in the schools. Tahoe Arts Project is a nonprofit, bistate organization that sponsors an annual performing arts series in our local schools and community. If you would like to find out how you can help bring the arts into our schools, please call 530.542.3632.

Our annual membership drive has begun and you can send your tax-deductible donation to Tahoe Arts Project, P.O. Box 14281, S. Lake Tahoe, CA 96151. Thank you for doing your part to enrich the children of South Lake Tahoe.

Peggy Blowney, executive director Tahoe Arts Project

Opinion: Real New Year starts in September

By Andrés Martinez

Have you made your New Year's resolutions?

No? What are you waiting for? Labor Day is upon us.

September sneaks up on us every year to interrupt the languid days of summer, like a bell being rung to signal the end of recess, a return to work and to seriousness. 'Tis the season to be purposeful.

The day after Labor Day should be proclaimed our real New

Year's Day. So what are you going to do with the rest of your life? Or with the coming year? At least go buy yourself one of the many calendars that starts with the fall – believe me, it isn't just students purchasing them.

We talk about the "school year" starting now, but I am not sure why the qualifier, why the undue deference to January. Nothing ever really starts in January, a dreary post-holiday hangover of a month. It's no wonder that month's resolutions usually fail to gain traction.

I was reminded of how hardwired we all are to think in terms of academic years while enviously watching my fifth-grader unpack his new supplies the other day at his school's open house. All those new pencils and pristine binders ready to entertain new scribbles and doodles. I'll never forget that excitement of getting new notebooks each fall, writing my name on them, and struggling to keep the starched paper from sticking together initially.

In college, I used to love picking up the books for each course (well, except for having to pay for them) and I'd make the most of our initial "shopping period," when you could wander in and out of any class, as if sampling a grand buffet, before finalizing your semester schedule. The possibilities were endless.

But fall isn't only about going back to school. Every workplace I have ever worked at has treated the fall as the true beginning of the year, when new projects are launched. Fall marks the start of a new football season (both of the American and English varieties), a new TV season, and a new budgetary year for the federal government. It marks the arrival of new fashions (check out how fat those magazines are!), new car models, and of more purposeful movies and weather. In certain latitudes, the fall brings a crisp air that chides you into reaching out for your long-neglected sweater or jacket – but without the malevolence of winter.

In September, I still believe, every year, that my Steelers and Gunners will go all the way in their respective leagues. Even Cleveland Browns and Tottenham Hotspurs fans can be hopeful in September. Heck, even those teams' players can be hopeful this time of year, at least for a few weeks.

This New Year I am also excited to check out Stephen Colbert's debut playing himself on late-night network TV, and the return of the Muppets to primetime. Don't bother asking me what's new, what I am excited about, come January. I couldn't tell you.

Could the NFL, Hollywood, Uncle Sam, and Judaism all be wrong about the true beginning of the year? I don't think so.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year ("head of the year"), commemorates God's annual renewal of the world; this year it starts at sundown on Sept. 13. Most Christian denominations used to set the beginning of their liturgical year in September as well; the Eastern Orthodox still do. Back in their heyday, the Phoenicians and Persians were also civilized enough to realize New Year should be celebrated in the fall.

The theme of renewal is why it's important to celebrate the arrival of a new year on a personal level, by taking stock, and by setting new goals and resolutions. I can't guarantee you will succeed in shedding all those pounds, learning Arabic, and becoming your community's leading volunteer – all the while increasing your productivity at work.

The important thing is to try, whatever your resolution may be. Then try again.

And to start your trying now, not in January.

Andrés Martinez writes the Trade Winds column for Zócalo Public Square, where he is editorial director. He is also professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University.