Letter: Drug Store Project makes a difference

To the community,

Thank you to the many agencies, service clubs, public organizations, and volunteers who helped with the 12th annual Drug Store Project event on March 31 at Lake Tahoe Community College. Our 320 sixth-grade students had the assistance of 200 volunteers to send a clear message that they are valued. Teaching our youth about the dangers of all drugs; marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, over-the-counter as well as prescriptive medications, gets more challenging each year as states provide new legislation and products such as e-cigarettes that are packaged to entice our minors.

The agencies and groups who provided this program strongly believe that a difference can be made for our kids. Collectively we believe that if youth are provided knowledge about what effects drugs have on the body, the mind, family and social life, productivity, and overall positive life experiences, that many more will choose not to experiment and not to participate in drug use. If we can collectively put off the “age of onset” experimentation, then we can see a difference for our youth. Less drug use means less demand. Less demand is less costly in lives and in all facets of economics.

This year marked the 12th year of our program and we continue to make improvements and adjust with the needs of our youth each year. Our students complete both a pre and post survey to evaluate the information we provide. We want to know if it is making a difference on a cognitive level; if they are gaining knowledge about what drugs are and what consequences can occur. We also work to learn what they thought about our program. Additionally, a counselor from Tahoe Youth & Family

Services will visit each classroom following the event for further discussion and students will be provided a community bag to take home.

Already our youth are reporting that the event was both meaningful and worth their time; that they have more information and confidence to make decisions that are in their best interest. Youth are reminded that the true test will come when confronted to choose experimentation or use of drugs, as the choice will be theirs alone. “Choices, What are Yours?” is the message we provide our youth before, during, and after this event.

Of the 200 individuals working the event, 16 were students at South Tahoe High School who participated in the program while in sixth grade. We also had the assistance of four Honor Society students from Lake Tahoe Community College assisting us. Those 20 students are now a proactive part in drug prevention here in Lake Tahoe and we couldn’t be more proud. We continue to also have the assistance of our California National Guard with representatives from our Army and Air Force who are assigned to the Joint Task Force Domestic Support – Counter Drug. It is with the help of these men and women who are working on coalitions to help provide events such as these for our communities. Their contributions are invaluable.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services is the agency under which our program is based. The Drug Store Project continues to be supported completely through donations, grants, and in-kind donations from businesses amounting to $41,650. Of this amount, $24,360 of in-kind donations is provided by Harrah’s Lake Tahoe, Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, McFarlane Mortuary, and Lake Tahoe Community College. The needed “cash” for this program is donated by our service clubs and agencies, $11,000 this year. We are in year tw0 of the South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition’s grant and receive $4,200 and we maintain a small carryover from year-to-year to keep us going when donations

are less. The true cost per pupil attending this year is approximately $130. Every dollar is worth a child's life. Please support those that support your kids.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the following entities:

Barton Health, Barton Health Foundation, California Conservation Corps, California Highway Patrol, CalSTAR, Diamond Valley School, Douglas County Search and Rescue, El Dorado Community Foundation, El Dorado County District Attorney, El Dorado County Mental Health, El Dorado County Probation, El Dorado County Public Health, El Dorado County Search and Rescue-Tahoe Team, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office – Narcotics, EDSO Sherriff's Team of Active Retirees, El Dorado County Superior Court, Harrah's Harvey's Lake Tahoe, Harrah's HEROS Program, JCV Photography, Joint Task Force Domestic Support-CD, Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe, Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, McFarlane Mortuary, Optimist Club of Lake Tahoe, Partnership of Community Resources, Pro Leisure, Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe, Sierra Community Church, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department: Explorers/K9/Narcotics/Patrol, South Lake Tahoe Police Officer's Association, South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition, South Tahoe High School, Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe-Douglas Rotary Club, Tahoe Turning Point, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Zephyr Cove Elementary, and the many community volunteers.

I hope that every parent of a sixth-grade youth will take the time to complete the parent survey on the Drug Store Project event. We hope that you and your child openly discuss the dangers of all drugs on a regular basis.

Get educated together.

Gratefully,

Lisa Huard, Drug Store Project coordinator

Opinion: Good Neighbor Policy is good for everyone

Publisher's note: ***The Nevada Senate Education Committee unanimously approved the bill April 2.***

By Kindred Murillo

It's been nearly four years since I moved to South Lake Tahoe and became president of Lake Tahoe Community College. When I first arrived, I heard an earful from community members who were upset about the loss of the Good Neighbor Policy (GNP). This policy was established by the Nevada System of Higher Education in 1988. It made it possible for basin students living on the Nevada side to attend LTCC at California resident rates. The GNP was discontinued by Nevada in 2011 for reasons that were understandable at the time: all state higher education systems faced deep cuts during the country's recession, and there was a clear need to reduce costs.



Kindred Murillo

The unintended consequence of the decision to end the GNP is now apparent. The people who are most affected by the loss of the GNP are primarily residents living and working in the Stateline area, mostly in low wage jobs. Many of them were born and raised in Tahoe, brought here by parents seeking work in the many tourist-oriented businesses found in the basin. They are often what we call “place-bound,” meaning they don’t have the financial footing to move elsewhere to attend college and improve their job prospects. They work hard, often in multiple jobs, just to get by. They are stuck with minimal skills, minimal education, and little hope of breaking out of that cycle without access to education. Community colleges in rural areas evolved out of K-12 systems to serve these “place-bound” students.

While the number of people affected by the loss of the Good Neighbor Policy isn’t massive, the policy’s cancellation has clearly hurt the basin’s most vulnerable population. Our community’s success and growth depends on a highly trained workforce. When a portion of our local population cannot get the skills and education they need, the entire basin suffers economically. I am passionate about reinstating a form of the Good Neighbor Policy so LTCC can once again be a good neighbor to Tahoe residents living on both sides of the state line who want the opportunity for a better life. They are much more likely to achieve that if they can access a community college.

I encourage you to support Nevada Senate Bill 414, written by Sen. James Settelmeyer, R-Minden. The bill, currently under consideration by the Senate Education committee, encourages the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education to enter into a reciprocal agreement with California to create reciprocity for residents in the Lake Tahoe Basin as stated in California Senate Bill 605. SB605 will create a limited reciprocity six-year pilot program for residents in the Lake Tahoe Basin to attend Lake Tahoe Community College and Western Nevada College at resident rates. If you believe, as I do,

that we are one community regardless of borders, and that all of our citizens deserve access to education, then please let the members of Nevada's Senate Education committee know that. A list of committee members with links to their contact information is here.

On behalf of the many students who will benefit from this bill on both sides of the border, I thank you.

Kindred Murillo is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

Opinion: Bringing awareness to distracted driving

By Shannon Laney

To save lives and educate all Californians, especially young drivers, about the dangers of distracted driving, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), California Highway Patrol (CHP), Impact Teen Drivers, and more than 200 law enforcement agencies statewide are working together on increased education and enforcement efforts for National Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April and California Teen Safe Driving Week, the first week of April.

Driving takes one's full attention and any distraction can have deadly, dangerous consequences. Imagine driving for4 to 5 seconds while blindfolded. That can be the effect of looking down to send a text message. In the average time it takes to check a text message – less than 5 seconds – a car travelling 60 mph will travel more than the length of a football field.

Throughout the month of April, police, sheriff and the CHP

will focus on educating the public about the dangers of driving distracted through local media interviews, visits to schools, and traffic safety presentations. In addition, April 15 has been earmarked for special statewide high visibility enforcement days for all law enforcement agencies that are participating in the national traffic safety campaign.

The urge to read and answer an incoming message when we hear the text sound can be almost overwhelming. The Office of Traffic Safety is using a message of Silence the Distraction in new public service announcements aimed at getting drivers to turn off their phones while driving so they won't be tempted.

"No text, call, or social media update is worth a crash," said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. "With an average of less than a second to react to an urgent situation, drivers need to have all their attention on the roadway."

While distracted driving can take on many forms and affects all road users, young drivers are at a greater risk. During "California Teen Safe Driving Week," April 1-7, Impact Teen Drivers will focus on educating teens that their number one killer – reckless and distracted driving – is 100% preventable.

"People are realizing that everyday behaviors, such as texting or reaching for a dropped item, can be lethal when done behind the wheel," Kelly Browning, executive director of Impact Teen Drivers.

Each of us must drive responsibly, keeping full attention to the task at hand – driving. If you have teenagers in your family who are driving, make sure they understand the laws and what their responsibilities are as well. The collective goal with this month-long campaign is to change the behavior of all drivers. That change begins with education.

Shannon Laney is a sergeant in the South Lake Tahoe Police

Department.

Editorial: Treat wildfires like other natural disasters

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 23, 2015, Sacramento Bee.*

An out-of-control wildfire is just as much a natural disaster as a hurricane or flood. Just ask Californians who fled for their lives or saw their homes burn down in recent years.

But that's not how wildfires are handled in the federal budget, and it's taking money away from worthwhile programs in our national forests and parks.

This has to change.

The U.S. Forest Service, the White House, bipartisan supporters in Congress and conservation groups are on the right track. They're trying to push through legislation (HR167) so that the costs of fighting the few catastrophic wildfires would be paid from emergency funds, just as when other natural disasters strike. The Forest Service and Interior Department would continue to fund routine firefighting from their regular budgets.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Why you hate work

By Tony Schwartz and Christine Porath, New York Times

The way we're working isn't working. Even if you're lucky enough to have a job, you're probably not very excited to get to the office in the morning, you don't feel much appreciated while you're there, you find it difficult to get your most important work accomplished, amid all the distractions, and you don't believe that what you're doing makes much of a difference anyway. By the time you get home, you're pretty much running on empty, and yet still answering emails until you fall asleep.

Increasingly, this experience is common not just to middle managers, but also to top executives.

Our company, The Energy Project, works with organizations and their leaders to improve employee engagement and more sustainable performance. A little over a year ago, Luke Kissam, the chief executive of Albemarle, a multibillion-dollar chemical company, sought out one of us, Tony, as a coach to help him deal with the sense that his life was increasingly overwhelming. "I just felt that no matter what I was doing, I was always getting pulled somewhere else," he explained. "It seemed like I was always cheating someone – my company, my family, myself. I couldn't truly focus on anything."

Mr. Kissam is not alone. Srinivasan S. Pillay, a psychiatrist and an assistant clinical professor at Harvard Medical School who studies burnout, recently surveyed a random sample of 72 senior leaders and found that nearly all of them reported at least some signs of burnout and that all of them noted at least one cause of burnout at work.

More broadly, just 30 percent of employees in America feel engaged at work, according to a 2013 report by Gallup. Around

the world, across 142 countries, the proportion of employees who feel engaged at work is just 13 percent. For most of us, in short, work is a depleting, dispiriting experience, and in some obvious ways, it’s getting worse.

Demand for our time is increasingly exceeding our capacity — draining us of the energy we need to bring our skill and talent fully to life. Increased competitiveness and a leaner, post-recession work force add to the pressures. The rise of digital technology is perhaps the biggest influence, exposing us to an unprecedented flood of information and requests that we feel compelled to read and respond to at all hours of the day and night.

Read the whole story

Opinion: How dogs laugh with you

By Ian Frazier, Outside

I was sitting on a front porch in Helena, Mont., with my 14-year-old son on a hot summer afternoon when the smoke of nearby forest fires made the air even hotter. A black Labrador belonging to nobody we knew came walking along in a low, overheated mood. On a neighbor’s lawn, a sprinkler was going. The dog saw it, bounded into the spray, and stayed there for a long while. Then he came out, shook himself a lot, and walked up onto the porch. He sat on his haunches looking at us.

This was one happy dog. This dog owned happiness.

Regarding us benevolently, his eyes had the fogginess of total

bliss. Just sitting there, wet and dripping, he embodied the sound *ahhhhhhhhhh*. My son and I agreed that we had never seen a human being as happy as that dog, and suddenly we became happy ourselves.

A dog's sense of smell is said to be ten thousand times better than a human's, and that's also how much better dogs are than humans at being happy. Human happiness is a shabby thing compared with a dog's. For eons, humans benefitted from the canine gift for happiness and favored happy dogs, who thus passed along their happy genes, producing a species that is now besotted, almost deranged, with happiness.

Of course, many other animals take pleasure in being alive — eagles soaring, otters skidding down slides, cows content to the point of smugness. But there's a selfishness to that happiness.

Dog happiness always looks outward. To reach fullest expression, a dog's happiness has to be lived large and strewn around. The only thing that slows down a dog's happiness is if he can't infect you with it so you can be happy together.

Read the whole story

Letter: Kirkwood employees spend time at B&B

To the community,

By sponsoring an Adopt A Day of Nourishment on March 23, Kirkwood Mountain Resort partnered with Bread & Broth to feed over 90 community members at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall.

“I love our community and love to help in any way,” said Sean Groover, Kirkwood’s warehouse manager. “Kirkwood is happy to be a part of this event and this community.”

Also helping at the dinner were fellow Kirkwood Mountain Resort team members Scarlett Mellin, director mountain dining; Kristen Gregg, Kirkwood Inn manager; Jason Bucholz, executive chef; and Tara Gonyer, General Store manager.

Upon arrival at 3pm, the Kirkwood volunteer crew jumped right in to help the B&B volunteers pack the give-away bags with fruit, dairy products, canned goods and bread products. From there, they manned the serving line for spaghetti dinner firsts, seconds and to goes, and at the end of the event cleaned and put away tables and chairs.

By Adopting A Day, not only do our sponsors donate $250 to cover all the costs of the evening meal, B&B encourages our sponsors to become involved with their sponsorship by helping with most aspects of the dinner.

“This was a great time. It felt good to help,” said Bucholz.

Helping others who are dealing with difficult life situations and struggling with hunger is an experience that raises awareness and improves the lives of others. Thank you to Kirkwood Mountain Resort and their employees for their service to the community. To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: What if the drought is permanent?

By Dan Walters

California’s prolonged drought drew a bit of official attention last week.



Dan Walters

The state Water Resources Control Board tightened, ever so slightly, water conservation rules on local water agencies and users.

Two days later, Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders announced a $1.1 billion drought response plan, mostly old wine in new bottles with little immediate effect.

Underlying these tepid responses are assumptions that the drought is still a temporary condition and that mild steps will suffice without major economic or social disruptions.

But what if the drought continues for many years or is even permanent? Shouldn’t we be thinking about alternatives?

Read the whole story

Opinion: Poverty not an action item for Legislature

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Poverty is the issue du jour of this year's legislative session – with good reason.



Dan Walters

By an alternative Census Bureau method of calculating poverty, including the cost of living, 23.4 percent of California's 39 million residents are impoverished, the nation's highest rate.

A Public Policy Institute of California study found that poverty is fairly consistent throughout the state, although Los Angeles County, with high living costs and mediocre incomes, has the highest.

Read the whole story

Letter: Historical Society

gives up on Barton Ranch

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to South Lake Tahoe officials on March 23 and to Lake Tahoe News on March 27.***

Dear Ms. (Hilary) Roverud,

It has come to our attention that the Mosher family has applied to the TRPA for a permit allowing them to either move the buildings that comprise what is the remainder of the Barton Ranch, or demolish them. As we have not received a formal response from the city of South Lake Tahoe to our letter of Jan. 5, 2015, in which we asked that the city of South Lake Tahoe to take the lead in preserving the Barton Ranch, the Lake Tahoe Historical Society would like to formally state it is ceasing all activities related to the Barton Ranch.

The Lake Tahoe Historical Society has exhausted all of its resources to preserve this important and historic site. Long gone are many reminders of Tahoe's proud past, which if they had been saved might have contributed to the economic vibrancy of the area, simply by their historical significance.

The board of directors of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society wishes to go on record to express its deep regret that the many governmental organizations having jurisdiction over the future of the city of South Lake Tahoe's historic sites do not see the value in preserving them.

Sincerely,

Catherine Whelan, president Lake Tahoe Historical Society