Opinion: Laura’s Law is not the answer

By Joseph Bochner

With San Francisco, Los Angeles, Nevada, Yolo and Orange counties having implemented Laura’s Law (“LL”) – the newest of this state’s compulsory psychiatric treatment regimes – Placer County is set to become the sixth California jurisdiction to start court-ordered drugging of mental health patients. Promising to make our lives safer, cheaper and just-plain-more better, Placer County Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery wrote a recent opinion piece touting LL’s “voluntary” nature and sciency creds as an important “tool.” In almost Machiavellian fashion, elected local politicians will fulfill these promises the way pickpockets get at your wallet: by misdirecting attention.



Joseph Bochner

Dirge rather than fanfare accompanies this social engineering experiment. LL’s namesake Laura Wilcox, a young mental health worker, died in 2001 after a madman shot her at her desk. Her distraught parents dedicated themselves to AB1421, a statute that on its face and via court order, permits county authorities to force psychiatric treatment on people labeled mental, but unwilling. Hence madness, crime, death, and sadness aren’t inevitabilities of the human condition; authorities will identify at-risk individuals,

intervene, and stop them before they offend. (Think: the PreCrime Unit in “Minority Report.”)

Accusing the innocent

Of course, perfectly “sane” people commit substantially all crimes. Indeed, the most recent scientific study disproves any causal connection between crime and mental problems. In an upcoming publication, “How Often and How Consistently do Symptoms Directly Precede Criminal Behavior Among Offenders With Mental Illness?”, researchers studying over 400 crimes and 143 offenders were unable to show any real link.

“When we hear about crimes committed by people with mental illness, they tend to be big headline-making crimes so they get stuck in people’s heads,” said lead researcher Jillian Peterson. “The vast majority of people with mental illness are not violent, not criminal and not dangerous.” Translated: even if mental disorders went away entirely, the crime rate wouldn’t change much. Though psychiatric cases are overrepresented in the criminal system, it’s largely because they simply have nowhere else to go.

If diagnosed mental patients aren’t dangerous, why does forced treatment seem to help? Prestidigitation provides the answer. Compulsory treatment has two parts: treatment and compulsion. Treatment seems to help; compulsion, not so much.

Tom Burns, researcher and professor at the University of Oxford, helped write the UK’s analogue to LL. He designed a study to tease out the differences between compulsion and treatment components, hoping that the compulsion he’d advocated would produce salutary results. It didn’t.

Here’s what he says of LL: “The evidence for the effect of AOT [assisted outpatient treatment] or Laura’s law is inversely proportional to the scientific rigor with which it is collected. When biases are removed there is no evidence of effect. It is not really true that it has been proved to have

effect in all the [American] states mentioned [by Supervisor Montgomery] – the effect of targeted services and the effect of the law are not distinguished. When they are the effect disappears. Good services work, compulsion adds nothing."

Treatment or cause?

While scientific evidence proves LL doesn't really work, Supervisor Montgomery tells the story of a relative of hers who refuses treatment and exemplifies the need for government-ordered intervention. Although it's just as irrelevant, for decades, along with my family, I successfully urged my own mother to accept psychiatric treatment (read: pills). For about 60 years now she's pretty consistently taken one or a cocktail of prescribed psychotropic medications. Now in her 80s, she's in a board and care home and getting county assistance. Did drugs make her better, and did they save public money? When common side effects come home to roost – known and profound effects like weight gain, diabetes, weird (and permanent) involuntary movements called "dyskinesia," brain shrinkage, and more, it's possible to speculate, but impossible to know. Long-term psychiactric studies usually span weeks or in rare instances a few years. Seeing my mom now after a lifetime of meds, I'm not sure if they helped, hindered or perhaps both (depending upon perspective).

Anecdotes are one thing, scientific study is another. Like me, science writer Robert Whitaker thought meds – really the only state-of-the-art treatment for mental problems – could help in the long run. However, when Whitaker began researching psychiatric drugs in large populations over long time periods, he discovered a disturbing paradox: consistently, the more meds, the worse the long-term outcomes. Whitaker published his findings in "Anatomy of an Epidemic" (2010). His hypothesis that present "treatment" strategies may make matters worse deserves more rigorous scientific study. LL essentially legislates the status quo, rather than letting the science work itself out, beginning with truly voluntary doctor-patient

relationships.

‘We’re from the government, and we’re here to help’

If none of this sounds especially Machiavellian, consider counties that for decades have neglected mental health services are today the same ones championing LL’s compulsory treatment regime. For the majority of people suffering severe mental disorders – often without housing, insurance or any visible means of support – mental health services simply aren’t available. Tellingly, some reports suggest that Laura Wilcox’s disturbed killer Scott Thorpe repeatedly tried to get psychiatric treatment; officials turned him away. There’s something highly cynical and even shameful about denying services to mental health sufferers who cry out for help, only to compel such services if and when authorities see fit.

Inexplicably, the “we’ll starve you until we think you need force-feeding” crowd insists that Laura’s Law isn’t really compulsory. They sugar-coat legal compulsion, lamely calling it “Assisted Outpatient Treatment.” Supervisor Montgomery goes even further: “Laura’s Law is voluntary,” she writes.

The statute itself makes plain the true equation: “‘Assisted outpatient treatment’ shall be defined as categories of outpatient services that have been ordered by a court….” Cal. Welfare & Inst. Code § 5345 subd. (b).

If, like Supervisor Montgomery, you slept through high school civics, court orders are neither voluntary nor even assisted, they’re imperative. LL says that defiance of a court order isn’t necessarily contempt of court, but it also specifically mentions section 5150, California’s involuntary commitment law. IOW, officials can put away people labeled mentally ill, and do all the time, usually on just the word of a psychiatrist or law enforcement.

(Make no mistake: when the government forces people into locked facilities against their will, they’ve been put away.)

Faced with that, folks get all kinds of “voluntary.” So accept any “assistance” ordered, or else.

Centuries ago, Machiavelli wrote a rather cynical little book advising a young prince how to govern without regard to ethics. Today, after decades of neglect, cuts in social services, and increasing onus on the “mentally ill,” LL arrives as just another county government “tool.” Are words what they mean, are results what they say? History will judge the matter harshly. With crime unaffected, causes and treatment uncertain, and little hope or help for the vast majority of those afflicted, critics may call Laura’s Law Machiavellian. They’d be right but for two truths: Machiavelli was clever. And he knew what he was doing.

Joseph Bochner practices law in South Lake Tahoe and is an avid skier, licensed pilot and computer geek. A volunteer with the Sierra Nevada Alliance, he graduated from UC Berkeley with a political science degree and holds a juris doctor from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

Letter: Zephyr Cove Tennis Club says thanks

To the community,

The Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation thanks all of the individuals and businesses that helped make the 31st annual Tahoe Tennis Classic a success.

We formed the foundation in January 2014. The foundation received official 501(c)(3) nonprofit status from the IRS in July. And two months before that, we were awarded a five-year

contract from Douglas County to run the six tennis courts in Zephyr Cove Park.

During this short time, we have worked with the county to improve the facility. But we aren't done. And as with all facilities, we always will have maintenance issues that go beyond substantive changes.

That is why we are on a fund-raising kick – to keep this public asset a treasure and ensure that Zephyr Cove is the best place to play tennis at Lake Tahoe.
At the Aug. 2 players' dinner, we had a raffle of items worth more than $7,500. All of the money raised will go towards improving the programs and facilities at Zephyr Cove Tennis Club.

We thank the following people and businesses for their generosity in supporting the foundation for the raffle:

Businesses
A Massage at Tahoe, AAA Carson City, Adele's Restaurant & Lounge All Sports Fitness & Personal Training with Andy Veris, Angel Touch Salon & Spa, Anytime Fitness in Zephyr Cove, Atlantis Casino & Resort, Bleu Wave Cruises, Cavender's, Carson Valley Inn, Ernie's Coffee Shop, Genasci & Steigers DDS, Getaway Café, H20 Home Cleaning Products, Hair and Nail Studio with Dawn Stackpole, Harrah's Lake Tahoe, Heavenly Sports SSV, Heavenly Village Cinema, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Lake Tahoe Cruises, Lake Tahoe Golf Course, Lake Tahoe News, Lake Tahoe Yoga, Little Philly Cheesesteaks, Luigi's Tahoe Pizzeria, Minden Food Company, Mirabelle French Cuisine, MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa, Mt. Rose Ski Resort, On the Rocks, One World Healing Massage, Park Place AMPM, Pedego Electric Bikes, Pine Cone Resort, Sorensen's Resort, South Tahoe SUP, Sprouts Natural Foods Café, Tahoe Best Friends, Tahoe City Golf Club, Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters, Tahoe Mountain Soap Company, Tahoe Outdoor Living Nursery, Tep's Villa Roma, The Angler's Edge, The Improv at Harveys, The

Ridge Tahoe and Weidinger Public Relations.

Individuals
Carol & Carl Bergren, Barbara Cooper, Mike Espinoza, Tina Fobel, Dorothy Fugitt, Susan Glasson, Sheryl & Hersh Herschmann, Melissa & Jess Jester, Judy McClennan, Danny O'Looney, Sandy Paul, Holly Rittiman, Lorraine Segala, Judy & Mark Spellman, Adam Turner and Rob Wunderlich.

For more info about the Club or Foundation, go online.

Carolyn Wright, Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation president

Letter: A sports idea for South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

Sports town? Sure, but we could do better.

So, what are the fastest growing sports in America? Standup paddleboard? Nope. Mountain biking? Nope. Tennis, golf? Google it. The fastest growing team sports are rugby and lacrosse. I don't think either is played here.

They are fast and exciting, but require time, organization and a certain culture to develop.

But the fastest growing non-team sport in America is pickleball. Yes, PICKLEBALL! It also is fast and exciting. And it is also extremely social, inexpensive, and addicting. For those not familiar, it is played on a court, similar to, but smaller than tennis. The paddle or racket is also smaller and the head is solid graphite, composite, aluminum, or even wood.

The ball is plastic, and hollow; a wiffleball.

Because the court is smaller, and because pickleball is almost always played as a doubles event, the amount of running is reduced. Volleys are generally longer, and can be extremely fast and furious. Pickleball plays more like a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. It offers the experienced player a wide range of shot options and techniques. But pickleball has an easy learning curve, because it basically relies on hand/eye coordination and sports many people have played before. It is stimulating and invigorating and can be played by all ages. In fact, it is baby boomers and retirement communities which have caused the sport to explode. One community in Florida boasts of over a hundred courts AND long lines.
So, why is there no pickleball in South Lake Tahoe? We are the only major community, and major recreational complex around the lake without pickleball. It is easy and inexpensive to convert unused tennis courts, or indoor hardwood courts to pickleball. Relining, even on a temporary basis, and setting up a portable pickleball net would cost under $300. One unused tennis court, outfitted to play pickleball could host three side to side pickleball courts. This is not high finance. This is how to get people enjoying recreational facilities in South Lake Tahoe that have long sat sadly underused.

Clearly our administrators and facilities are handcuffed by underfunding. Still, people and communities all over America have shown enough interest in pickleball to support its rapid growth. Hopefully, we can do the same here by voicing our interest. We can all benefit.

Steve Szekely, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Meyers residents speak out

Publisher's note: ***This letter was sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in July.***

Dear Chair Santiago and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

We are writing to you to express our concerns about the Meyers Area Plan process. We are writing not as land speculators seeking project approvals. We are not writing as paid consultants advocating land use changes to benefit clients. We are not writing to you as out-of-area advocacy groups seeking favors for large corporate interests. We are writing to you as people who live and work in Meyers and ones who care about the community's character and future.

Our concerns and comments about the Meyers planning process and outcomes are not new. We want the community plan for Meyers to be one that is acceptable to a majority of the community and the result of a plan update process that actively engages the entire community in arriving at a plan acceptable to them. We do not want a staff-driven plan where deals are made behind closed doors between small groups of invitees in a non-transparent process. We want a community plan that is acceptable to a majority of the community that we can live with over the next 20 years. We want a Plan that is our Plan not a special interest and self-serving document for development interests in or outside our community.

We acknowledge that there is a great diversity of opinion regarding how residents, property owners, and business owners and operators view the future of Meyers as well as great confusion and lack of understanding of proposed land-use changes. This diversity of opinion about the future is in itself the core condition that must be assessed and evaluated

in a manner that helps County officials to arrive at a verifiable and democratically-based decision on land use and restores faith that the entire community has had its voice heard.

Specifically, we continue asking for the following:

1. **To be placed on the agenda of the Board of Supervisors on an item to discuss our concerns below at a time that is convenient for the board and those of us who work for a living;**

2. **A verifiable method for the county to determine that it has gained a wide-range view *from the community within and directly impacted by* the proposed Meyers Area Plan.** A "validated" community-wide survey of all residents and property owners is needed to guide and shape the final Meyers Area Plan. Such a survey would allow all interested parties in Meyers to have a voice in this 20-year plan. It would also provide the opportunity for all community voices to be heard. This request has been made in the past and is reiterated herein. We are researching the cost of such a survey by a nationally-recognized survey company at this time.

3. **Defer any final action on the plan until a new county supervisor is elected and seated to allow him or her input on the new 20-year plan.** The voters of the 5th District will elect a new supervisor in November and the man or woman elected should have an opportunity to be heard and decide on a final area plan. Our new supervisor will have the benefit of being recently elected and accountable to the people of the district.

4. **Verification in the plan document that available incentives provided under the plan will be applicable to existing business and property owners.**

5. **Specifically define height limitations in all planning**

areas. The previously staff agreed height standard of 35 feet should be made part of any final. Include specific language in the Meyers plan that limits height and density to those selected by the Meyers community. In other words, variances allowed by TRPA's Code, but not discussed in the Meyers plan, cannot be used to exceed the maximum heights desired by the Meyers community. This request is of course subject to the results of a validated community survey that we are requesting.

6. **Affirm in writing in any adopted plan verbal assurances made by staff to make available to all existing business and property owners incentive allowed under an area plan.**

7. **Eliminate mixed land-use additions to the plan that could compromise existing business uses (e.g. motel next to an industrial use).** Do not allow the creation of uses near existing businesses that compromise the ability of owners to conduct their businesses.

8. **Ensure in language of the plan that all existing business will be permitted uses in any new Plan adopted and that the owners of the businesses can sell their property for the same use to a subsequent owner.**

9. ***Include in specific language in the clan that the County does not support and will not use eminent domain*** (acquisition of private property over the objection of the property owner) to achieve plan goals and objectives nor will the county support the use of this extraordinary confiscatory power by other agencies.
10. **Include specific language in the Plan that maximum new Commercial Floor Area will not exceed the 33,650 sq. ft. noted in the Meyers Plan, period**. We have been told by TRPA staff that although the community discussions and presentations have centered on a 33,650 sq. ft. limit, in reality, the TRPA would not prohibit CFA above this

limit if it were transferred or converted per TRPA's Code, Chapter 50. If the community wants a limit, it should be a true limit.

11. **Define in the Plan that County and TRPA officials must carefully explore with Caltrans alternative ways to ensure safe passage of pedestrians and cyclists across SR 50 including installation of a traffic signal.**
12. **Maintain community character while striving for community improvements.** Community members do not oppose new development in Meyers. They do want to retain the rural character of the community and help existing and new small businesses flourish.
13. **Write the language of the Plan in plain English**, not "planners speak." Make the document user-friendly and informative.
14. **Let the people of Meyers decide if current open space lands owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy should remain open space or sold for development. We have been told that CTC officials have made this commitment in the past.**
15. **Formation of a community-selected advisory council or group that operates under California's Open Meeting Law and is subject to the Brown Act.**The existing Meyers Community Advisory Council is not subject to the Brown Act. This lack of public notice requirement in the past has helped to create the lack of awareness of the community to date about important issues relating to Plan development. The currently comprised MCAC Board is made up of good people but not structured in a way commonly accepted to conduct the public's business.
16. **Let the people of Meyers decide their future.** Comments have been made to Meyers' owners and operators over the course of the current planning process by certain policy makers and planners that Meyers should be changed and allowed to develop like "cities" in Europe living and working in a "Pack & Stack" world. Meyers is of course not a city. This "Pack & Stack" notion and "European"

> future scenario needs to be tested against what the people who live and work there think and want. It is the people of the community's future that is being planned, and they need the ultimate say in the decision.

It came to our attention during our community-led meeting last February, and in subsequent meetings, that many community members are unaware of the land use/zoning changes plugged into the Meyers Plan through the 2012 RPU Update, including this mixed-use/pack & stack concept and changes to boundaries and special districts in the plan. We believe the community should have the opportunity to be adequately informed of any changes, and to discuss and decide upon them, before any land uses not prescribed in the **1993 Meyers Community Plan** are adopted or implemented.

The Board of Supervisors needs to hear from the community in a verifiable and inclusive way before making changes that impacts them. *We look forward to hearing from you on our request for a meeting date before the Board of Supervisors and for the remedies we seek in the Meyers Area Planning process.*

Sincerely,

Angela Olson, Jennifer Quashnick, Moya Sanders and Diane Verwoest

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Opinion: FDA's blatant failure on food

By Ruth Reichl, New York Times

Every year, antibiotic-resistant infections kill at least 23,000 Americans and make another two million sick, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That’s why a recent ruling by the United States Second Circuit Court of Appeals is so appalling.

It allows the federal Food and Drug Administration to leave an antibiotic used in animal feed on the market even if the agency openly states that the drug’s use is not safe and increases the risk of antibiotic resistance in people. This means that the dangerous misuse of antibiotics in industrial livestock and poultry can continue unabated.

For years industrial meat and poultry producers have fed healthy animals antibiotics to fatten them up fast. The antibiotics also prevent disease in what are often overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. This practice breeds antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threaten us all.

The F.D.A. has issued a toothless voluntary guidance document for the industry, which requires no action to reduce antibiotic use and will therefore do little to nothing to stop the spread of antibiotic-resistant superbugs.

Why should we be concerned? Because the superbugs bred on industrial farms can easily travel to us in our food – as in the recent antibiotic-resistant salmonella outbreak linked to Foster Farms chicken that has sickened over 600 people. The superbugs also get into our water and our soil. Some of the antibiotic-resistant bacteria can cause life-threatening infections.

Read the whole story

Letter: Watching a community care

To the community,

This is part of an email that I sent my son Aug. 1. We hear so much now days about people that don't care, are apathetic, and just don't want to get involved. That's not the case in South Lake Tahoe. The people that I witnessed today were amazing. They did care, weren't apathetic, and jumped right in, literally, to help a person in dire need.

I was in the water so I don't know where they were running from to help.

I am proud to live in South Lake Tahoe, and I do feel safe here if I ever needed rescuing.

August 1, 2014

Today is the 14th anniversary of my moving here to Meyers so I'm going kayaking to celebrate. As I'm loading up, there are some people in front of the house across the street crying. I go over and ask what's up. The sweet lady Marilynn that has been battling cancer for the past 6 years died this morning. Very sad. Tom was married to her for 45 years. I can't imagine the grief that he and his family must feel. She used to run a day care from her house. All of the families that could leave their kids with someone that they could really trust. She will be sorely missed. I thought about them throughout the day and the kindness that they showed me by inviting me over for dinner this last Thanksgiving. I could tell that it was not easy for her but she was a very strong person. They are such nice caring people.

So I finally make it to the Lake. The little island at the Upper Truckee river mouth is now part of the shore. People

were riding their bikes out there. Some were walking way out beyond where I was paddling. Very low lake.

Saw A ton of birds and ducks.

So it’s evening now and I’m coming back to Timber Cove pier and the waves were pretty big and several came in the boat to be with me. This time I brought my sponge. They were mostly coming from the north so I was broad sided all the way back. As I came up to go through the pier I had to work hard not to crash into it. I noticed two girls walking on the pier just a little ahead of me towards the beach. I got through ok and turned to head in when I noticed one of the girls ripping her shirt off and had a swim suit underneath. She flew down the stairs ahead of me and started wading through the water as fast as she could go. I had no idea what she was doing.

She stops about 20 feet ahead of me and reaches down into the water and pulls up a limp girl, face down from under the water. I thought that she had found a dead body, then I realized that it was the girl that she was walking with. She lifted her head out of the water and held her by her under arms face down for a few seconds and then gently turned her over and held her face out of the water. Just then another guy races down the stairs and wades over to help and is joined by two other guys a few seconds later. The rescuing girl says that she is breathing and talking and leaves her with the other three guys while she retrieves something from the water and tells the drowning girl that she found it. Then I hear them say that she can’t move. Another girl from the pier is yelling to put her in a C-spine position and not to let her bend. Now all four of them are holding her from head to toe keeping her straight. They really struggled because of all the big waves coming in. They held her facing the beach so the waves weren’t broad siding her. The guy holding her head was between her and the waves. Other people on the pier were running around and showed up with a paddleboard and lowered it down to the water. They get her on it and slowly started

moving her to the beach. The paramedics were already there waiting for them to bring her in. Now they take over and a few minutes later they rush her off to Barton. I was amazed at how all of these people responded so quickly and knowing just what to do.

I talked to the rescuing girl afterwards to see how the girl was and she said that she could raise both hands over her head when the paramedics asked her to but they fell down right away. She also had a grip in both hands, but very weak. They thought that she might be slowly recovering already. I pray that she will recover fully. She told me that the wind blew $30 out of the girls hand and she dove in head first to retrieve it. The water was maybe 3 1/2 feet deep and very muddy. She said that she is a professional lifeguard and went after her right away. She said that one of the rescuing guys was an EMT. I told her that she just saved her life and that the response and professionalism were excellent. I said that I'm glad that they knew how to handle the situation because I know very little about medical emergencies. I did stay close, but out of their way, in case there was something they could use me for. I told her again, " You just saved that girls life." She thanked me for that and went on her way.

So that was my anniversary day paddle.

Mitch Forster, Meyers

Editorial: How Calif. can fight climate change

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the July 14, 2014, Los Angeles Times.***

California’s landmark climate change law, Assembly Bill 32, has created a promising cap-and-trade program for greenhouse gases that has put the state on track to meet its emissions goals for 2020, kick-started the state’s green technology industry and generated hundreds of millions of dollars for mass transit and other projects that will further reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Gas prices already have risen by close to 50 cents a gallon since the beginning of the year.

But now comes the harder part for many Californians: In 2015, AB32 will begin to cover companies that produce transportation fuels, including gasoline. That means oil companies will begin paying for the greenhouse gases their products emit, a cost the oil companies say they will pass on to consumers. They say it will amount to an extra 15 cents a gallon.

Gas prices already have risen by close to 50 cents a gallon since the beginning of the year, for reasons that have nothing to do with AB32. The prospect of adding 15 cents more – though it’s relatively minor compared with the overall price increase – is daunting to many drivers. Assemblyman Henry T. Perea, D-Fresno, has introduced a bill to delay the extension of the law to transportation fuels for three additional years.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Time for feds to repeal pot ban

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the July 27, 2014, New York Times.***

It took 13 years for the United States to come to its senses and end Prohibition, 13 years in which people kept drinking, otherwise law-abiding citizens became criminals and crime syndicates arose and flourished. It has been more than 40 years since Congress passed the current ban on marijuana, inflicting great harm on society just to prohibit a substance far less dangerous than alcohol.

The federal government should repeal the ban on marijuana.

We reached that conclusion after a great deal of discussion among the members of the *Times's* editorial board, inspired by a rapidly growing movement among the states to reform marijuana laws.

There are no perfect answers to people's legitimate concerns about marijuana use. But neither are there such answers about tobacco or alcohol, and we believe that on every level — health effects, the impact on society and law-and-order issues — the balance falls squarely on the side of national legalization. That will put decisions on whether to allow recreational or medicinal production and use where it belongs — at the state level.

We considered whether it would be best for Washington to hold back while the states continued experimenting with legalizing medicinal uses of marijuana, reducing penalties, or even simply legalizing all use. Nearly three-quarters of the states have done one of these.

Read the whole story

Letter: John’s Cleaners helps Tahoe youth

To the community,

The Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe is extremely grateful of the services that are being donated by John’s Cleaners.

Once a week we have the opportunity to drop off our shirts that the kids wear daily and they wash and clean them for us. This is a very important service because we want the kids to feel comfortable and clean with the shirts we provide them.

The members of the club who are in kindergarten, first-, and second-grade wear blue shirts and members who are in third-, fourth, and fifth-grade wear the gold shirts. Right now we have enough shirts so the kids do not wear the same shirts every day. The shirts are rotated with clean one’s daily.

We use the shirts not only to identify the different age groups, but also for safety to keep our members separate from the other people from the community that use the playground and fields located at our 1100 Lyons Ave. site.

We are so thankful that John’s Cleaners is providing this service so we can keep our members safe and fresh in their shirts.

Kelly Garrity, Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Bringing awarenes to breastfeeding

By Alicia Paris-Pombo

August is World Breastfeeding Awareness Month. During the month of August, health professionals in El Dorado County are raising awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding and sharing information about local resources and supports for breastfeeding mothers.

Breast milk is the best food you can give your baby. Breast milk has important ingredients that can help protect the baby from infections, reduce the risk of allergic conditions and aid the baby with digestion. Babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop childhood obesity. Breastfeeding also has many health benefits for the mother."

I am a member of the Breastfeeding Coalition of El Dorado County, a group comprised of local hospitals, First 5 El Dorado, El Dorado County Office of Education and the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency. The coalition helps breastfeeding mothers get the resources and support they need. Many resources are free. The coalition provides education on all areas of breastfeeding, including how to help baby latch on properly, the best breastfeeding positions, breastfeeding equipment, and tips to successfully transition back to work. The group provides referrals as necessary.

A special project of the coalition is the Express Stop program which has hospital-grade electric breast pumps available for loan to new mothers returning to work or school in El Dorado County free of charge. For information or to reserve a pump, call 530.906.7872 on the western slope of El Dorado County or 530.573.3049 in South Lake Tahoe.

The El Dorado County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program

also has breastfeeding support services and breast pumps for loan to income eligible mothers in El Dorado County and can be reached at 530.621.6176 or 530.573.3491. In addition, moms may access lactation consultant advice and resources through Marshall Medical Center at 530.626.2835 and through Barton Health at 530.543.5547.

It’s important for new mothers returning to work to know that California law requires employers to provide reasonable break times and a private location for them to pump breast milk at work. It’s a good idea for working women to have the conversation with their employer ahead of time.

Alicia Paris-Pombo is El Dorado County’s health officer.