Letter: Design Workshop helps out at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Design Workshop, a local landscape architectural company, was the generous sponsor for Bread & Broth's dinner served on Jan. 27 at St. Theresa Church's Grace Hall.

This was their first time hosting a B&B dinner. Gina Montecallo, one of Design Workshop's landscape designers, said, "Great to give back to the community and everyone appreciated the dinner. Glad to see a program like this in South Lake Tahoe."

Montecalla and her fellow Design Workshop crew members, Xue Yao Wei, landscape designer, and Ben Fish and Sarah Nitchman, both landscape architects, spent the evening on the serving line, running the dishwasher and assisting B&B volunteers with the dinners cleanup.

"So happy and satisfied to see the smiles everywhere", said Wei, summing up her volunteering experience.

Bread & Broth is fortunate to have sponsors like Design Workshop who support our efforts to provide a weekly full course dinner to the members of the Lake Tahoe South Shore community. Design Workshop has beautified Tahoe with its design projects at Heavenly Village and Harrison Avenue and with the sponsorship of an Adopt A Day, they helped beautified the lives of those less fortunate in our community.

To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at (530) 542-2976 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: Verbal abuse at TRPA meeting unjustified

To TRPA, local jurisdiction members and the community,

I attended the January TRPA Governing Board meeting (as I attend most) and was astounded at the verbal accosting of a member of the public and the general treatment of this person by TRPA and local jurisdiction staff and associated consultants, and other members of the planning team. This all took place before the public hearing on an upcoming area plan presentation.

This is outrageous and unacceptable.

We, the public at-large, are entitled by legal right to speak our mind about any subject matter on an agenda and should not feel threatened or intimated into not stating how we feel on that particular matter.

I hope to never see this type of shameful treatment again.

Ellie Waller, Tahoe Vista

Letter: Parking fiasco should cause heads to roll

To the community,

The city is a corporation. It has a board of directors. It has a chief executive, the city manager. It has a legal department led by the city attorney.

The shareholders are the citizens of the city. The citizens who created the parking meter initiative that has been prepared for the ballot and approved has given a thumbs down, a vote of no confidence, to the board of directors, the City Council, and city manger and city attorney.



Bill Crawford

In the private sector such an event causes heads to roll. Members of the board of directors resign, CEOs are given pink slips, lawyers are replaced. A shake up takes place for, hopefully, the good of the corporation. So perhaps members of the City Council, in light of the vote of no confidence, should consider resigning. And the city manager needs to take a hard look at how and why she recommends the course of action for the council. The city attorney played bad politics on the creation of the initiative. He is guilty of misfeasance. Thus, he should be shown the door for cause without any waling money.

It is time for those holding the reins of government in the city of South Lake Tahoe to realize that they have a social contract with the citizen, to govern in the best interest of the whole, not to create pet projects that are ill conceived and over the top throwing time and money to the wind.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Anti-paid parking advocates lay out process

Publisher's note: ***The Tahoe 4 Tahoe Committee sent this letter Feb. 2 to the City Council to outline the process that was followed to bring the parking initiative to the voters of South Lake Tahoe. The council on Feb. 4 will discuss the election process for the parking initiative.***

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

The following is a time line of the steps that were taken to advance the parking initiative that has been approved for the ballot:

On Nov. 6, 2013, Tahoe 4 Tahoe submitted to City Clerk Susan Alessi a Notice of Intent to Circulate Petition. By law the city clerk refers the request to the city attorney so a title and summary can be provided. City Attorney Tom Watson responded to T4T on Nov. 14 in part: "The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the notice of intent to circulate petition and attached text of the Initiative. It is the duty of the city attorney to review the text for compliance with California law. If the text is proper and appropriate following that review, the city attorney should provide a ballot summary and title, allowing the circulation of petitions. Following our review we are not able to provide a ballot title and summary".

On Nov. 17, 2013, T4T requested to meet with the city attorney, Tom Watson, to obtain clarification of the issues raised in the Nov. 14 rejection letter.

On Nov. 19, 2013, T4T received a letter from Tom Watson, city

attorney, stating in part: “We respectfully decline as there is no assistance this office can provide your organization. The role of the City Attorney’s Office is not to provide legal advice to private individuals and groups. Our role is to provide an objective review and summary of initiatives.”

On Dec. 2, 2013, T4T received a phone call from Tom Watson inviting us to meet with him.

On Dec. 3, 2013, T4T met with Tom Watson, city attorney, at the city offices. The more than one-hour meeting was productive and we were each given a letter (dated Dec. 2, 2013) from Tom Watson at the start of the meeting. This meeting was recorded by T4T. That letter states in part: “This correspondence is to outline the issues that this office observed with the proposed initiative in our review in order to prepare a ballot measure summary. My job as city attorney is to assist both the public and the council navigate through the initiative process so that if the voters so enact, the initiative can be effective and without further challenge by legal process.”

On Dec. 4, 2013, Tom Watson was on local TV discussing the initiative for paid parking with Austin Sass on the High Sierra Report. Tom Watson described what a city attorney is and does: “Let’s at least identify what the city attorney is and his role. My role is I work directly for the City Council. I am not a staff member although I am an employee of the city. As a result I have the ultimate responsibility to be the chief legal officer for the city and I’m accountable to both the council and the people so when I made this decision (to reject the first petition) it was entirely in my purview. I would advise them that this was happening, but I don’t consult or ask their opinion or to generate some sort of consensus. The advantage of the city attorney is I am not political so I am trying to do what I believe is in the best interest of the citizens of this community by giving them the opportunity to vote on an initiative that is clear, understandable and gives

a clear choice, yes or no.”

On Dec. 9, 2013, T4T submitted a rewritten and revised notice of intention to circulate petition initiative.

On Dec. 11, 2013, T4T received the title and summary from the city attorney giving the group official permission to proceed with the gathering of signatures with the intent of qualifying the initiative for the ballot.

On Jan. 15, 2014, 1,422 petition signatures were delivered to the city clerk, Susan Alessi, who hand delivered them to the El Dorado County Elections Department.

On Jan. 23, 2014, the El Dorado County Recorder Clerk certified that the signatures were sufficient to qualify the initiative for the ballot.

This committee undertook the monumental task of bringing a voter initiative to the ballot knowing we had the guidance and approval of the city attorney.

At the Feb. 4th City Council meeting you will be tasked with options as outlined by the Election Code or seek some form of legal challenge against the voters.

City Manager Nancy Kerry and City Attorney Tom Watson are recommending an impact report be commissioned at a cost of $25,000-$35,000.

This overview is respectfully submitted in the belief that the responsibility of elected officials is to the citizens.

No one should be afraid of the outcome because South Lake Tahoe belongs to the people that live here.

Sincerely,

Tahoe 4 Tahoe Committee

Opinion: Truckee optimistic about 2014

By Tony Lashbrook

I kicked off the New Year by cleaning up my desk and office so that I can think more clearly about the coming year. While 2013 was a banner year for the town of Truckee, 2014 has the potential to be even better.

Our economy has more than stabilized – transient occupancy tax collections are at a record pace, sales tax, while not back to pre-recession levels is growing at a healthy clip, and property tax, the stalwart of the town budget, is headed in a positive direction.

We are building significant new facilities for our community. With our partner, the Humane Society of Truckee Tahoe, we just opened the new animal shelter which will serve the needs of our community for decades.

We are halfway through widening Glenshire Drive from downtown to Glenshire to enhance traffic safety and provide class II bike lanes. Responding to a community goal identified nearly 20 years ago, we are also completing the Truckee River Legacy Trail from the regional park to Glenshire.

These two projects are game changers for our community as we create viable non-vehicular connections between Downtown and the Glenshire neighborhood. Both of these projects will be completed next fall.

We have come out the other end of the bureaucratic maze created in Sacramento by the elimination of redevelopment with

our “bond” funds intact and looking to partner with the Brickelltown property owners and businesses to dramatically improve the Donner Pass Road streetscape with sidewalks, plazas, enhanced parking, landscaping and pedestrian lighting. The prototypes for this project are the recently completed streetscape improvements on Bridge Street and at the Depot. The completion of these improvements will bolster downtown Truckee’s status as the preeminent visitor destination in the region while improving mobility and functionality for us locals.

This strategy is already bearing fruit as exciting new businesses are opening downtown and vacancies are at the lowest level in several years.

In concert with this effort, based upon leadership provided by the Town Council, we are launching unprecedented programs to push our economic recovery through partnership investments to incentivize job creation, revitalize the Truckee River corridor and spur private investment. These tools provide an ability to strategically support community improvements and private investment in areas that the community has prioritized.

The portion of our economy traditionally supported by growth and development has been effectively shut down during the recession. There are some positive signs of life stirring. The Truckee Building Division has reviewed plans for 112 dwelling units in 2013. Although significantly less than the boom years, housing construction at this level would help improve the health of our economy and be sustainable for a number of years, assuming market support. Construction of new commercial buildings has been limited to a few owner occupied projects like Dickson Real Estate and the Kelly Brothers Painting, which is not surprising considering the vacancies that have cropped up through the recession. Larger projects like the Truckee Railyard have their land use planning in place and are seeking the right economic time to begin construction.

While others, like Planned Community – 1 (Coldstream), Planned Community – 3 (Joerger Ranch), Canyon Springs and Pollard Station continue to work through the environmental and entitlement process. The town will continue to work hard in a transparent manner to ensure that these projects are fully vetted, comply with Truckee's adopted policies and standards and if built, that they actually make our community better, not just bigger.

I am excited and optimistic as the town moves into its 21st year as a municipal government. To improve service and efficiencies the town continues to fine-tune our organizational structure. Animal services and parking are now part of the police department, which consolidates our field services to maximize our outreach and enforcement efforts.

In response to strong community sentiment, the Town Council has adopted a single use plastic bag ban that will become effective in June and has placed a measure on the June ballot so Truckee voters can consider a stable funding source for trail construction and maintenance.

There will be ample opportunities for community engagement in 2014 as we move forward with an update to the Trails and Bikeways Master Plan, consider a trails funding mechanism, design the details of the Brickelltown Streetscape, update the Housing Element of the General Plan, implement economic development programs and review development proposals. I urge you to get engaged and be a part of making Truckee a better place.

Tony Lashbrook is Truckee's town manager.

Opinion: Brown ignores state's high poverty rate

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

At the very end of his State of the State address to the Legislature last week, Gov. Jerry Brown – almost as an afterthought – tersely declared, "We have too many struggling families …"



Dan Walters

Well, yes, we do. In fact, according to an alternate Census Bureau method of calculating poverty that includes cost of living, nearly a quarter of Californians are mired in poverty, the highest rate of any state.

One would think that fact would have rated more than a throwaway line from the governor as he delivered a report on "the condition of the state."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Questioning if snowboarding can be saved

By Marc Peruzzi, Outside

I was a state college kid the first and only time I rode a snowboard. This was in the 1980s and snowboarding was still illegal at New Hampshire's ski resorts. A classmate from New York City named after Dylan Thomas (and who called everybody he didn't like a chucklehead) brought a board to campus after the winter break. It was a Burton Woody. Skegs on the base. No edges. You just strapped your Sorels in and went.

But it didn't hook me. It's not that I didn't think snowboarding was relevant, I did and I still do. But I was already a passionate skier and never once considered giving it up. Still, I supported my friends in the fight to open resorts to the fledgling sport, hired snowboarders to run nascent board departments in 50-year-old ski shops, helped Olympic snowboard racers figure out their stance angles and tuning, ran photos and profiles of snowboarders in a magazine about skiing, chased powder with snowboarders, climbed and descended Mount Rainier with snowboarders, and cracked many an après beer with snowboarders.

It sounds like borderline bigotry to say it, but I have "snowboarding friends." In fact, from adulthood on, most of my skiing memories are tied up with snowboarding. Frankly, skiing would be a lot less fun without it. From twin tips and fat skis to better clothing and a more laissez-faire attitude at ski resorts, the advent of snowboarding dramatically altered my once-stale sport. So please trust that I'm not just a hater when I say this: Snowboarding is screwed.

Many a destination resort will admit privately that snowboarding now accounts for less than 15 percent of total

revenue. Others have seen snowboard visits cut in half. Sales of snowboarding gear are down dramatically, too, a whopping 29 percent over the past six years. Where did all the snowboarders go? Many are skiing. Others simply quit.

It didn't really have to be like this. The problem isn't so much snowboarding, but the snowboarding industry. The sport was invented by humble folk in the Midwest (by a friend's grandfather) and Vermont (by some older classmates of my wife), but it was adopted by Southern California. Actually it was more of an alien rendition than an adoption. Most snowboarders in places like Maine, Montana, and Colorado have little affiliation with the carefully cultivated image of "action sports." Then there's the ageism. Over 30 years old but still get out and shred? The industry lives in absolute dread of you.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Media slant DiMatteo-Swanson articles

To the community,

Last week several sources published a report that Angela Swanson was cleared of bribery charges. They simply quoted what the district attorney said as if it is fact. You asked no one else to comment while knowing full well that many of us came to question the district attorney's actions and in fact the DA dismissed all charges against Mr. Gino DiMatteo, in embarrassment over the way this matter was handled.

They articles leave the reader with the impression that Mr.

DiMatteo is some sort of hated criminal and Ms. Swanson is innocent with statements like, “no receipt was given.” Does not sound very innocent to me. It sounds like she took the money with some other intention than charity. They call Mr. DiMatteo a “career criminal” when in fact he followed the letter of the law in opening the store and at that time ran another very mainstream business.



Ted Long

They copy the DA’s statement that, “Mr. DiMatteo clearly believed that he needed to make a donation.” Based on what evidence? As a person who actually looked into it, that is far from the truth. Had you bothered to ask, I would have shown you so.

The expression, “You scratch my back, I scratch yours” was said when the DA was trying to get Mr. DiMatteo to wear a wire to entrap Ms. Swenson and Mr. DiMatteo refused. This by the way has a lot more to do with the circumstances then anything else.

As to the conclusion that Mr. DiMatteo is a prior convicted felon, a statement taken without support, isn’t it the city’s job to investigate potential applicants? Yes, in deed it is, and they did. Did you question or even wonder why the police investigation prior to the issuance of the license did not reveal such information? No, you did not. Had you, your story would have been very different. As to the federal arrest and Mr. DiMatteo prison sentence, to this day believe he was set up. Look at the facts. He is running a California legal, city

authorized dispensary, he has inventory and products, the city without notice closes him down. What is he supposed to do with the inventory? Under the California law he must return it to the cooperative member growers, the raid was days after the closing before final arrangements could be made. It certainly is no big surprise that he would have some product left over, is it?

I do not have nor have I ever used marijuana, nor have any interest. I do believe the so-called war on drugs is a joke, just as Prohibition of the ’20s was. I have seen first-hand the benefit of the use by cancer patients, and I am sure if you had a loved one doing cancer treatment, you would want them to have the benefit. I also know that there are many more deaths and tragedies from alcohol than there ever has been with marijuana, and society needs to work this out. I also know that the force of the government is overwhelming. If an average citizen is arrested, guilty or not he may look forward to months of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to spend to defend himself. The issue is only aggravated when a newspaper publishes the authority’s views, with no counter balancing opportunity for comment; the public is left with a very inaccurate view. I am not Mr. DiMatteo’s best friend, I do know him and he comes across much more like a loving family man then “Bragger of connections to organized crime.” Which, by the way, I never heard him say.

Ted Long, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Tahoe dying from

being 1 dimensional



Why isn’t the South Shore promoting snowshoeing-hiking, history, art and hockey? It’s time to be more than a ski destination. Photos/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Unemployment, jobs and the economy were big topics in President Obama’s State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

“Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by – let alone get ahead. And too many still aren’t working at all,” Obama said.

They are topics that also resonate in the Lake Tahoe Basin, especially this winter. With the dismal amount of snow, businesses are not hiring the number of people they usually do

this time of year. Hours are being cut. It’s getting hard to pay bills.

The national unemployment numbers that came out this week are the lowest in five years at 6.7 percent. California’s unemployment rate is at 8.3 percent, whereas Nevada’s is 8.8 percent.

The good news is unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County ended lower than what they started at in 2013. The numbers are also lower than what they had been the previous few years during the height of the recession.

Even though retailers and ski resorts tend to ramp up hiring in December, it’s not unusual for the unemployment numbers to slip a little compared to November.

Here are the 2013 unemployment numbers for South Lake Tahoe:

January 10.2 percent

February 9.6 percent

March 9.4 percent

April 8.6 percent

May 8 percent

June 8.1 percent

July 8.5 percent

August 7.8 percent

September 7.4 percent

October 7.6 percent

November 7.6 percent

December not released.

These are the unemployment numbers for Douglas County in 2013:

- January 11.8 percent
- February 11.5 percent
- March 11.3 percent
- April 10.8 percent
- May 10.2 percent
- June 10.4 percent
- July 9.6 percent
- August 9.5 percent
- September 9.4 percent
- October 9.6 percent
- November 9 percent
- December 9.5 percent.

This all equates to an annual rate for Douglas County of 9.4 percent. Data is not collected in a manner to know the unemployment rate just at the lake portion of Douglas County.

What will be more telling about the local economy is what the numbers are like the first quarter of 2014 because of what the weather has done to hiring practices.

But what does not show up on unemployment charts is people with reduced hours, pay cuts or people who have stopped looking for a job.

People aren’t coming to Tahoe to play and spend money right now because it’s a one-dimensional economy. Tourism works when there is a product. Lake Tahoe is known for its winter snow fun and summer beach-hiking-biking fun.

If spastic, unpredictable weather is the new normal, then the status quo is no longer acceptable from our government leaders and more important our tourism officials. Why isn't there a push to get people to Tahoe to enjoy what the locals are doing? Talk to hikers and cyclists – trails are pretty incredible. Learning to ski or snowboard is ideal now because roads are clear, skies are blue and those slopes are well covered in white stuff.

Having a chamber official tell a Sacramento television station that people can kayak and paddleboard is dangerous when morning temps are well below freezing. It's one thing for locals to tackle Tahoe this time of year; it's another for those unfamiliar with this unforgiving body of water.

Then having her say come to Tahoe to shop because ski gear is cheap isn't really touting what Tahoe has to offer.

Where was the promotion for the restaurant week that happened earlier this month?

The South Shore needs to be showing people what the area is about, not using gimmicky make-believe characters telling people to come to the wild side.

It has long been proved that events bring people to town. But on the Lake Tahoe Visitor Authority's website there are no events listed for January or February, and one for March on the "2013 Tahoe South Travel Planner". Note the year our tourism people are telling visitors about.

What about a big Super Bowl party? It doesn't matter that there isn't a California team in the game.

Why not have a mini Olympics or make up sports that locals and tourists could compete in? Why aren't we embracing our athletes who will be going after gold next month?

Another thing Obama said Tuesday night was, "In today's global

economy, first-class jobs gravitate to first-class infrastructure.”

Are you listening Lake Tahoe?

Letter: Rotarians give back at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Wearing “Rotarians at Work!” T-shirts, five members of the South Lake Tahoe Rotary Club ladled out heaping servings of the evening’s dinner fare of a “Fanciful Frittata”. The mushroom, onion, bacon and bell pepper frittata was the main course of the “Adopt A Day of Nourishment” dinner that the Rotary Club sponsored on Jan. 20.

Full of energy and demonstrating the Rotary motto of “service above self” attitude, Rotarians Randy Vogelgesang, David Jinkens, Cynthea Preston, Ruth Goshorn and Buck Barkley graciously assisted the B&B volunteers with the meal’s setup, serving and cleanup. Throughout the dinner event each of the Rotary Club volunteers expressed their strong convictions about “service above self” and their enjoyment in giving back to the community.

The SLT Rotary Club is a community service organization dedicated to doing a community service every month and B&B is grateful to have been selected as “Rotarians at Work” February project. The Rotary’s goal to positively affect South Shore community members was clearly demonstrated by their financially hosting and serving a hot, nutritious dinner to all those who attended B&B’s Monday evening dinner.

For more information about B&B, go online or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth