Letter: Remembering a friend

To the community,

On Jan. 5, I got a phone call that Pat McLeod, the lady I've been driving to Incline Village to the doctor, passed away. I had asked my prayer chain for prayers of healing and strength for Pat a couple times in the last few years so I wanted to thank all of them for their support in those prayers to make Pat's life just a little easier. Pat suffered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome for the last 30 years. She was unable to work, leave her home or be around people as she was very sensitive to germs and smells.

Pat depended on a few friends to do her shopping, pay her bills, take out her trash, run errands and drive her to doctors appointments, which I was privileged to do. She had very little family and none in town. She had no money so most likely there will be no services and the county will take care of Pat, although I just heard she will be donating her body to research.

My monthly trips to the doctor with Pat were always enjoyable and I realized how blessed I was to share that time with her. We were always in awe of the beauty of Lake Tahoe on those drives. Pat's last job was working at the Cream Puff Bakery, in the '70s and early '80s before she got sick. She shared her memories of the many experiences working at the bakery. Pat and I had wonderful conversations about our faith, family, books, TV shows and recent experiences. We had quite a few good laughs too.

Pat was a delightful person, always positive, appreciative, thankful for life and had a great faith in God. I found myself looking forward to our time together.

As my time with Pat is over, I felt a need to share my experiences with this gentle soul. I will miss Pat and always

remember her.

Cindy Merhaut, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Meyers catalyst project must be shelved

To the community,

Having read the 71-page catalyst project paper, I am appalled and disheartened. If we could take a poll of Meyers residents, I bet the outcome would be this: we like our community the way it is. We moved here to live in the county, not the city. We don’t care if big crowds of tourists stop here.

The catalyst project amounts to “taxation without representation” because ultimately it will be the residents or “stakeholders” that will pay the enormous debt on these bonds. If the debt is not serviced, will the project end up as a time share? This does not benefit the residents in any way whatsoever.

After the wildly unsuccessful debacle at Stateline, that is, an attempt to build a convention center where none was needed, many parallels exist here. Without a real airport, a convention center was not viable. There are few nonstop flights to Reno and then the traveler faces a 90-minute bus ride to South Lake Tahoe. From Southern California, it’s far easier to travel elsewhere to ski or recreate. That leaves a narrower market of Northern California, primarily Sacramento and San Francisco Bay Area. Snow country does not attract routine conventions that have to be canceled at the last minute due to weather, so winter months further decrease

usability. These are but a few of the myriad reasons for the failure at Stateline.

Likewise, the proposed training center for world class athletes – is this really feasible? Professional athletes will seek treatment from elite physicians and facilities that already exist. World-class doctors will be at big city hospitals or university settings; I can guarantee they will not reside in Meyers and maintain a thriving business. Other training centers exist such as Salt Lake City where the 2002 Olympics were held and others like it are well established. Therefore the need for ancillary businesses such as restaurants is a pipe dream because they would be underutilized. This center is not for residents – it's for outsiders. We don't want a mega resort or mega anything. The right of eminent domain is to be used for public highway or structure, not an enterprise. We don't want big businesses; we would like to support small businesses that are here. Give equal signage and road access, be fair with the little guy as much as a popular gas station.

The dictate to "park and go" arises from an ecological ideal, but undermines the very freedom of citizens. Also in question is how well these required electric vehicles with low ground clearance and 2-wheel drive can negotiate a snowstorm and who will be liable for accidents. Charging private residents a fee to use their own vehicles amounts to extortion. Meyers does not want to be the parking garage for the basin. Another idea to build a "bridge to nowhere" over highway 50 would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars is simply a waste. The grandiose ideas outlined in the catalyst project are unreasonable and extremely expensive, and wrong. It's wrong to take away people's homes, churn up a community by a handful of people and spend millions and millions of dollars that will not suit our community. This is big money at its worst. To trust the same people who were involved at Stateline to do another project is foolhardy.

Elizabeth Swope, Meyers

Letter: Barton appreciates community's support

To the community,

A huge thanks to the community for providing baby toys, gift certificates and specialty items for the first baby of the year. Joshua Tapia-Hernandez, who arrived on Jan. 2, was the first baby born at Barton Birthing Center in 2014.

Joshua and his family were welcomed with over $1,200 in gifts from local businesses and community members. The gifts started with a flower arrangement from Thran's Flowers. To get him off on the right foot, Joshua received donations from El Dorado Savings, Earth Smart Diaper Service, and Tahoe Valley Pharmacy. Toys and fun gift cards came from Big 5 Sporting Goods, Kmart, Kahle Community Center's Two's Day Class, Toy Maniacs, and Tot to Tot.

Special treats for the parents included gift certificates from BeautiControl, Harrah's and Harveys Lake Tahoe, Paradise Beauty Supply, and Tahoe Nails & Spa.

The family also received restaurant certificates from Beach Hut Deli and Round Table Pizza.

Barton's own staff added to the wagon of gifts with donations from the Auxiliary Gift Shop, foundation, human resources, and public relations.

Cathy Vogelgesang, a member of the auxiliary – Barton's dedicated group of volunteers -– even knitted an infant-sized

beanie.

We live in an incredibly generous community and appreciate all the local businesses who showed support for Barton's first baby of 2014.

Susan McLaughlin, public relations coordinator at Barton Health

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Opinion: Sustainable Lake Tahoe becoming reality

By Joanne Marchetta

We were invited to give the opening presentation at a national conference of weather journalists this month on the South Shore called Operation Sierra Storm. The main theme was Tahoe as a world leader in environmental sustainability and as we move into this new era of climate change, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has a lot to share with the world about what is happening here to adapt to the threats that come with it.

In the face of climate change, we all can contribute and make a difference. Sustainability for Lake Tahoe communities includes bringing mobility options, natural resource protection, health and social well-being, and a healthy economy together in ways that increase the long-term resilience of the natural and built environments. A number of sustainability actions are taking place at all levels around Lake Tahoe – from local green building codes to major transportation improvements – and 2014 is shaping up to be a critical year to press forward on climate change priorities and continue the positive progress happening in our

communities.



Joanne
Marchetta

First, the TRPA has partnered with other agencies and organizations to form the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program to bring a cohesive approach to everyone’s efforts. The program is implementing greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies across the basin and will establish sustainability indicators as part of Lake Tahoe’s climate action plan. The collaborative group is expected to release the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan in February with the Tahoe basin’s first complete greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

It’s also important to know that while this new partnership is taking shape in the basin, Lake Tahoe’s sturdy regional framework has already put many sustainability measures in place. TRPA years ago established an urban boundary to stop sprawl, capped the roadway capacity of the Basin to reduce reliance on the private automobile, integrated land use and transportation plans, and set environmental standards on new development to stop additional impacts.

TRPA adopted the new Lake Tahoe Regional Plan in 2012 moving the basin into the 21st century with incentives for property owners to upgrade buildings with modern environmental design and to redesign town centers more around walking and biking. When we look at what has been done here to reduce our footprint on Lake Tahoe, there is a lot that is exportable to other communities and it is no wonder that conferences like

Operation Sierra Storm are drawing people to come learn from us.

While implementation of the Lake Tahoe Regional Transportation Plan is projected to reduce per capita emissions in the region by 7 percent by 2035, those reductions account for only mobile sources of greenhouse gases like cars and light trucks. The emissions inventory is showing that stationary sources like homes and buildings are an area where big improvements could also be realized. The Sustainable Communities Program is working to establish minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings in the Lake Tahoe Basin through local Area Plans and building codes. The partnership is bringing together existing actions with new and innovative ideas.

Along with the Sustainable Communities Program, TRPA in its role as the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization is making it possible to implement mobility options in our transportation plans. We are opening a grant program this month to bring forward community-based ideas for mobility and streetscape improvement projects. Called the On Our Way Community Grant Program, we are looking for community-based organizations to identify local improvements that will enhance streets and neighborhoods. The first grant application round will run from Jan. 15 to March 14. The program aims to help meet regional goals of encouraging biking, walking and transit use and supporting economic vitality by studying neighborhood-level improvements such as safe routes to schools and downtown street-design projects.

And last, there are more people all around us who are changing their daily habits to make a healthier Lake Tahoe and more sustainable planet. Whether you are shopping locally, insulating your home, or leaving your car at home one day a week, you are part of what will make Tahoe a better place to live. If you are one of the many who are stepping up with new ideas or are prepared to lead your community forward, I encourage you to find out more about the sustainability

efforts taking shape in the Region and get involved. Lake Tahoe is on a world stage and we have an opportunity not only to adapt our communities to climate change, but to set an example for communities around the nation and the globe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Letter: Animals benefit from Coldwell Banker

To the community,

On Dec. 28, Coldwell Banker Select Real Estate in Zephyr Cove decided to give back to the pets in the community by hosting a Holiday Pet Food Drive, yielding big results.

Leading up to that date, close to 600 pounds of dog and cat food were donated to pets in need. In addition, many pet toys and other items were donated, on top of $170 in cash.

Coldwell Banker Select in Zephyr Cove wanted to help those who have no voice and that is why we held the 2013 Pet Food Drive at our office in town benefiting Douglas County Animal Care and Services

Gregory Cremeans, Coldwell Banker Select agent

Letter: Kiwanis help at Bread & Broth

To the community,

“The motto of Kiwanis is to change the world one community and person at a time. That is why we are here. We love to support Bread & Broth,” said Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra member Pat Frega.

He and fellow club members Carolyn Willford and Eric and Nancy Schafer were the sponsor volunteer crew members for the Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra’s Adopt A Day sponsorship on Jan. 6.

B&B appreciates Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra’s annual hosting of an AAD dinner and their hard working and community minded volunteers. In providing the funding and assistance at their evening meal, the Kiwanis organization is making a difference in the lives of many in the Lake Tahoe community.

B&B’s Adopt A Day of Nourishment program is a way for individuals, organizations and businesses to host a Monday evening dinner. A donation of $250 will provide the funds to cover the costs of providing a hot, full course meal to any individual who comes to Grace Hall on Lyons Avenue.

Due to the generosity of our AAD sponsors like the Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra and anonymous donors, B&B also sponsors a soup and pasta dinner every Friday evening at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church.

To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: Public agency lacking transparency

To the community,

On Thursday morning I read an article by Kathryn Reed in the *Lake Tahoe News* that stated there would be a meeting of the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC) that morning at the Inn by the Lake.

I stopped by to attend the meeting. When I entered the meeting room I was approached by Ray Lacey, deputy director of the CTC. Mr. Lacey informed me that the meeting was not open to the public. Mr. Lacey indicated that they the CTC had already spoken with their attorney who advised them that the meeting would not be open to the public.

As far as I could see I was the only member of the public at the meeting. Even if the meeting wasn’t open to the public, I wonder why I simply wasn’t invited to stay. What made the CTC consult with their legal counsel about the public attending this meeting? The California Tahoe Conservancy is a public agency. Why would an interested member of the public be turned away?

Lou Pierini, South Lake Tahoe

Editorial: Time to worry about unfunded liabilities

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Jan. 8, 2014, Sacramento Bee.***

Senate Democrats announced legislation on Tuesday to expand kindergarten to help 4-year-old children get off to a strong start in school, at a cost of $198 million a year. It's a great idea.

So is this: Paying the debt Californians incurred by promising to provide public school teachers with secure pensions. The California State Teachers' Retirement System estimates that the cost to fully fund the teachers' pension debt will be almost $4.5 billion in the coming year, $4.6 billion the year after that, and more in each subsequent year.

CalSTRS calculates that 30 years from now – and many veteran teachers who retire now will live another 30 years – the annual cost of fully funding the system will be $13.9 billion.

Read the whole story

Opinion: It's a conspiracy to keep you fat

By Deborah Cohen, Los Angeles Times

At this time of year, a lot of Americans have vowed to develop more healthful habits. Unfortunately, most of those who have made weight loss resolutions will fail. But it won't be

entirely their fault.

Americans today live in a food swamp. We are constantly exposed to marketing and advertising designed to keep food on our minds and treats at our fingertips. If you go out to dinner, you will probably be served more food than you need and eat more than you should. At the market, you'll be encouraged to buy unhealthful foods. It's not easy to avoid or ignore all the forces that trigger bad eating habits.

Humans are hard-wired to notice food over other items. Once we perceive food, through sight, smell, hearing, taste or touch, we find ourselves wanting to eat, even if we are already full. This was no doubt a useful adaptation as humans evolved. But today, in a time of plentiful food, such impulses aren't in a person's best interest.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Liberty explains convenience fee

By Janine Irwin-Webb

As Liberty Utilities' senior manager of customer care, I appreciate the opportunity to address some of the understandable concerns and frustrations our customers may have over the newly implemented third-party convenience fee for online payments.

Liberty Utilities is a privately owned utility, but regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The CPUC reviews all of the utilities' expenses and sets the rates

charged to its customers. Consistent with utility practices across the country, the CPUC allows Liberty to assess the convenience fee paid to a third-party vendor for processing certain forms of payment. When Liberty Utilities began operations in January 2011 the existing rate tariff allowed the utility to assess this fee, but Liberty only began collecting it effective Dec. 4, 2013. It should be noted that NV Energy uses the same third-party payment administrator and charges a convenience fee similar to Liberty's.

The $3.50 convenience fee is applicable only to payments made that require the services of Liberty's third-party administrator. These payments include any online payment involving a credit card or the one-time use of a debit card or electronic check. If a customer wants to make a payment over the phone using a credit card or a one-time use of a debit card or electronic check, this also requires the services of the third-party administrator since our customer service representative goes online to make this payment on the customer's behalf. The fee goes directly to the third-party vendor, and Liberty does not profit in any way from it.

Liberty recognizes that credit card payments and one-time debit or electronic check payments may be desirable to customers who are willing to pay for the convenience of this option. We also recognize that other customers may not want to pay for the on-line processing of their payment, so we continue to offer payment options that do not involve a third-party administrator.

There is no convenience charge for a customer who sets up automatic checking account deductions, pays by mail with a paper check, or pays in person with either cash or a paper check at one of our two locations. To further customize their payment option, customers can enroll in our Equal Payment Plan and/or select their payment due date. All these options can be found on our website.

Although we informed our customers about the implementation of the convenience fee several months earlier via statements on their bills and information on our website, we appreciate customers’ input that we need to clarify the reason for this charge. We have made some changes to our website noting the fee is charged by a third-party administrator as well as noting other payment options.

At Liberty Utilities we understand that one size doesn’t fit all, so we hope that these multiple ways to make your utility payment provides you with options that make your life easier. Please visit our website or call one of our customer service representations at 800.782.2506 if you’d like more assistance.

Janine Irwin-Webb is senior manager of customer care at Liberty Utilities.