Letter: Church members help at Bread & Broth

To the community,

On April 29, Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra hosted the healthy and tasty Bread & Broth dinner served to over 90 members of the South Lake Tahoe community. The weekly meals are full course dinners with a meat entree, vegetables, fruit and or green salads, bread, dessert and beverages.

The dinner guests also receive bags of breads, produce, dairy products and canned goods provided by local stores.

Hope Lutheran Church sponsored the Adopt A Day of Nourishment by donating $250 to cover the cost of preparing the dinner and having church members donate their time from 3-6pm preparing desserts, beverages and giveaway bags, serving dinner and helping B&B volunteers with cleanup.

Church members Linda Amundson, Mark MacKenzie and Edna MacKenzie worked alongside fellow church members and regular B&B volunteers Juanita Brock, Bonnie Driscoll, Julia Martinez, Carolyn Meiers and Angie Peart. This group of experienced sponsor volunteers made the evening a fun and smooth running event for the dinner’s guests.

Bread & Broth is very grateful to the membership of Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra for their recognition of the need of the Monday dinner service provided by B&B and their support in sponsoring the April 29 Adopt A Day dinner.

B&B is a nonprofit, all volunteer organization that is only able to meet their goal of feeding the hungry through the support of generous and socially conscious individuals and groups. Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierra is such a group.

For additional information on how you can support the Bread & Broth program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: Nurses make the difference

To the community,

This week is National Nurses Week. It was May 12, 1820, that Florence Nightingale was born. Nightingale is most known for her work during the Crimean War of 1854. She and a team of 34 nurses improved the unsanitary conditions at a British base hospital, reducing the death count by two-thirds.

She became known as “the Lady with the Lamp” or the “Angel of the Crimea.” She was given these names because of her constant watch and care of the soldiers – when she and her team arrived at the hospital, not only did the soldiers need wound care, but the hospital was filthy and in unmentionable conditions. Her writings sparked worldwide health care reform. In 1860 she established St. Thomas’ Hospital and the Nightingale Training School for Nurses.



Transitions in Care nurses: Cesilia Uribe, R.N.; Emily Barkley, R.N.; Melissa Dahl, R.N., P.H.N.; and Andrea Baldwin, R.N. Photo/Provided

Still today, nurses play a critical role in the care of a patient. Their compassion and knowledge helps keep the health care setting steadily going strong.

As South Lake Tahoe's only acute-care facility in this world-renowned destination area, our 200 nurses are dedicated to caring for Tahoe residents and visitors alike. They sit at the bedside and meet every need possible for patients. While putting their emotions aside, they communicate with patients' loved ones at some of the toughest times of their lives. Often times, nurses treat visitors who have unexpected accidents or suffer from illness while on vacation. Not only has their adventure been delayed or canceled, but they are in an unfamiliar place and with a different culture. Nurses have become experts at understanding and empathizing with people from the all over the world. By using interpreter services to communicate in more than 100 languages, nurses have been able to build strong relationships with patients and their loved ones.

To all of you who serve in not only the inpatient and outpatient areas of the hospital but in various areas of our health care system, such as Barton's urgent care, community clinic, family and internal medicine, ski clinics, surgery

center, pediatrics, imaging, occupational medicine, long-term-care, home health, hospice, sports medicine, telehealth and many more – you are amazing. You have been critical in researching, introducing and implementing new programs based on evidence. Additional achievements include reducing the number of hospital-related infections (by 65 to 100 percent); you have been instrumental in the Patient-Family Centered Care Initiative to allow for 24-hour visitation at the bedside; received national recognition of the Transitions in Care Program, where specially trained nurses in chronic disease management assist patients after they leave the hospital. Several of your initiatives have helped move Barton Memorial Hospital to reach its highest patient satisfaction scores in history.

Whether you have just started your nursing journey or you have been here for 40 years – we are proud of your contributions, continuous passion and commitment to patient care.

Sincerely,

Barton Health's Nursing Administration

Editorial: Restore faith in license plate program

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the April 21, 2013, Riverside Press Enterprise.***

California's specialty license plates should not dangle a promise that government does not keep. Drivers buy the plates to support a variety of causes, but a new audit found slipshod oversight of the resulting income. The Legislature needs to

ensure that state agencies handle the money properly, and use the funds as drivers expected.

The state auditor last week released a report on the state's specialty license plates. California offers 11 types of specialized license plates for an extra charge, with the money going to a variety of programs. The most common is the personalized license plate, which supports environmental protection. But there are plates that support the arts, help provide scholarships, aid veterans and help restore Lake Tahoe, among other causes. The specialty plates have raised more than $200 million over the past two decades.

Auditors looked at just two of the specialty programs: the environmental funds from three types of special plates, plus money from a memorial license plate commemorating the Sept. 11 attacks. Legislators ordered the audit after a series of news stories last year reporting lax management of the money from the specialized plates.

The results only raise questions about the state's handling of the specialty plate programs. The audit discovered that the Department of Motor Vehicles undercharged drivers for some of the plates, and failed to collect some fees in other cases. Altogether, the auditor said the specialty plate funds missed out on $22.2 million over the past two fiscal years.

But the report also found that state agencies used the license plate money in ways that had little connection to the programs' stated purpose. The memorial license plate, for example, is supposed to provide funding to help fight terrorism. But the California Emergency Management Agency spent more than $98,000 of the money over the past three fiscal years on office furniture and supplies, travel expenses and other uses unrelated to stopping terrorism.

The auditor could not determine whether another $1.3 million in license plate money during that period went for the

programs the special plates supposedly support. State agencies could not provide proper documentation that some expenses were legitimate uses of the antiterrorism and environmental funds. And no one knows how far the lax oversight extends, because the audit only studied two license plate funds.

Such careless handling of public money undermines trust in state government, and makes taxpayers skeptical when government asks for additional taxes and fees. Drivers who thought their special plates were aiding favored causes now cannot be sure – which only irritates people and discourages participation in those programs.

The audit recommends what should already be obvious: The DMV should improve collection of the specialty plate fees, and state agencies should ensure proper use of the money.

State agencies should not need reminders of such basic responsibilities. Repaying drivers' civic impulses with sloppiness is an insult, not acceptable practice.

Editorial: Adapting to climate's new normal

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the May 5, 2013, Sacramento Bee.***

No doubt, it is gearing up to be a dry, ugly summer.

It's just early May, but fires have erupted around the state, most notably in Ventura County. Folsom Reservoir, normally brimming with water at this time of year, is at two-thirds its capacity. And it won't get help from the remaining snowpack,

which, according to the state's latest and last snow survey, is at 17 percent of normal.



It was possible to walk under the Tahoe Keys pier in November 2009. Photo/LTN file

But of course, that's the problem. Climate change has changed the norm, creating a "new normal" that is far from easy to predict. All we know is that the bulk of reputable scientists tell us to prepare for extremes. By this, they mean extreme events far beyond what is "normal" in a state known for its disastrous wildfires, droughts, floods and mudslides.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Global Change Research Program released a draft of its Climate Assessment Report. It noted that the Southwestern United States, including California, has heated up markedly in recent decades.

"The period since 1950 has been hotter than any comparable period in at least 600 years," the report stated, citing more than 10 studies. It also cited research concluding that human-caused temperature increases and drought have killed trees and increased both the frequency and size of wildfires in the region.

Climate models – not absolute proof, but the best tools available for forecasting the future – show that annual average temperatures in the Southwest are projected to rise 2

to 6 degrees Fahrenheit by 2041-70 even if global emissions of greenhouse gases are substantially reduced. The Climate Assessment Report warns that the Southwest should prepare for decreased snowpack and stream flows, meaning reduced water for cities, agriculture and fisheries. It predicts serious impacts on high-value crops, stronger flood events and more extreme high tides. And it warns that, with 90 percent of the Southwest's population living in urban areas, heat waves will claim an ever-higher toll, partly because of the way hard-scaped cities amplify heat, known as the "heat-island effect."

California has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gases through cleaner cars, energy efficiency, conservation and a state law requiring a reduction in emissions. But adaptation has to be an equal part of the strategy. Overall, and especially on the local and regional level, public officials aren't taking seriously the need to prepare their communities for the kind of extreme events that are inevitable with a changing climate.

These extremes – and the responses to them – vary on where Californians live. In the Central Valley, authorities must prepare communities for flooding evacuations and protracted heat waves that are particularly brutal, especially for the elderly and infirm. In coastal areas, sea level rise is projected to increase, and flooding and erosion are already occurring in places where houses were built too close to the water, or too close to cliffs.

In Southern California and the foothills, wildfires are the primary threat, and as the photo above shows, the unrestrained construction of suburban homes in wildfire zones complicates the task of first responders.

California has developed a "climate change adaptation strategy" that is thoughtful and comprehensive, including a tool called "Cal-Adapt" that allows local officials to better understand projected impacts to their communities.

Local leaders need to read this report and take the threats seriously. To adapt to a changing climate, cities and counties will have to be proactive in planning for more extreme floods, droughts and fires, even if means changing their general plans that were developed under the “old normal.”

Letter: CalFire warning about scam

To the community,

It has come to our attention that residents in the Lake Tahoe Basin area may be receiving phone calls from a caller claiming to be with CalFifre who is soliciting funds.

CalFire has not, and will never, call residents asking them to donate money to support the department due to State budget cuts.

Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento Unit Chief Kelly Keenan states, “This is clearly a scam and we want to caution anyone who has received or may receive a phone call asking them to donate money to CalFire to hang up their phone. The state of California would never solicit funds in this manner.”

Teri Mizuhara, CalFire

Letter: Heavenly thanks community

To the community,

On behalf of Heavenly Mountain Resort, I want to thank the community for stepping up and helping with the U.S. Freestyle Championships and the High Roller Hold ‘Em last month.

Heavenly had a large number of volunteers help pull off these amazing events successfully.

First, the California Conservation Core members from both the Greenwood and Tahoe centers were instrumental in helping us do zero waste at the Freestyle Championships. Parents and participants from the Heavenly Ski Foundation were also a huge help, as well as Heavenly staff and numerous community members.

Without the support and resources from South Tahoe Refuse, Heavenly could not have made our resource conservation efforts a success. The best thing about our zero waste activities was the recycling donation and match from South Tahoe Refuse to two local youth charities, the Heavenly Ski Foundation and SOS Outreach. We want to continue to bring big-time events that we can all be proud of to South Shore, and volunteer participation is one of the deciding factors for event organizers.

So, thank you to each of you for helping us run an environmentally-friendly event and position Heavenly as a world-class venue.

Frank G. Papandrea, environmental manager Heavenly Mountain Resort

Letter: Paid parking is not the answer

To the community,

The city's determination to "sell" paid parking and residential permit parking to the residents of South Lake Tahoe is being met with strong opposition. The almost 100 people that attended Monday night's Residential Parking Permit and Kiosks meeting (just the title is confusing) was a demonstration of how passionate this community is about free access to the lake and the continued confusion over residential permit parking.

People should be able to park in their own neighborhoods without exposure to a $50 parking ticket. Listening to the community dialogue, I'd say this is becoming a public relations concern.

It was just three weeks ago at the April 16 City Council meeting that anyone outside city government learned of the "new" expanded parking plan. Something Police Chief [Brian] Uhler describes as, "A huge program involving lots of parts – it is complex".

By expanding the seasonal parking plan to 12 months/seven days a week/8am to 10pm with rates starting at $2 per hour, they have effectively eliminated any opportunity for free use of the beaches by the locals who often yield them to tourists until after Labor Day.

I am perplexed by our City Council's stubborn support of a parking plan that by staff's own projections will earn just $150,000 per year, with the promise that another $100,000 can

be gained by issuing approximately 4.000 parking citations. The kiosks alone cost $250,000.

Considering the city's overall budget of $95 million, this $150,000 is viewed by some as the equivalent of having a bake sale to save the city budget. As a community, we should be able to come up with revenue strategies that don't piss off half the town.

Our city's beach parking lots and some of our streets with parking demand have been described by consultants as assets that need to be profited from. That being said, the city's largest parking lot asset is at the airport. To best utilize this asset, I'd like to propose that parking kiosks be installed at the airport so council members and city staff can have the opportunity to contribute to this parking campaign to improve the city's lagging revenues. The city tests the public's trust when they have different rules than the citizens.

For me, free lake access is fundamental and should be at the center of any tourism and community vision plan that we have for ourselves.

Peggy Bourland-Madison, 40-year resident of Al Tahoe

Editorial: Worrisome water year in California

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the May 2, 2013, Chico Enterprise-Record.***

North State reservoirs may be higher than usual for this date,

but that’s not going to last.

Some optimistic media outlets in the state, particularly those from metropolitan markets, seem to want to report and believe statistics based on wishful thinking. They report optimistically that lakes are higher than normal for this time of year, and that’s true.

But those people need to get out a little – up where the water is. Or rather, where the water is supposed to be.



Sierra-at-Tahoe in late April shows how little snow is in the area. Photo/LTN

The High Sierra is nearly barren of snow. This is a time of year where there’s usually snow on the ground above 6,000 feet in Plumas, Alpine and Sierra counties. The rivers streaming out of the Sierra are usually flowing high and brown with snowmelt right now.

Instead, there is very little snow. Drive to Reno, Tahoe or Almanor right now and you have to crane your neck skyward to see any snow, only on the highest mountains. Ski resorts have long since closed, and even Donner Pass only has a hint of old, dirty snow. Rivers are running low and clear, the type of water conditions you usually see in July. Anglers out for the traditional late-April opening of trout season met summerlike conditions in the Sierra.

By the time those streams reach the valley, there’s not much of them left. That was obvious last weekend, as people played in knee-deep water on a 90-degree day at the Five-Mile. Big Chico Creek is barely moving. Usually at this time of year, we’re warning swimmers to be cautious around the high, cold water. Not this year. The air temperature and the river flow make it look like July.

If the spring-run salmon haven’t already made it up the canyons on Butte, Chico, Deer and Mill creeks, there’s a good chance they won’t. The water in the lower portions of the streams is too low.

It’s true that the lake levels are about normal. Heading into May, Lake Oroville was 104 percent of average for the date. Shasta was 96 percent of average. Folsom was 94 percent of average.

You have to be extremely uninformed to think that’s good news.

The problem is, usually water managers are releasing water from reservoirs at this time of year to make room for the snowmelt. The lakes continue to rise in a good water year till mid-June or July, all from the snowpack.

Not this year. Lakes are already dropping and will continue to do so. The high point for Oroville, Shasta and Folsom are usually sometime in June. This year, barring a May miracle, it appears the high point was reached sometime in April.

We hope people in other parts of the state don’t hear about our higher-than-normal lakes and think water is plentiful this summer. It’s not. And the sooner everybody starts conserving, the less likely it is that people will start tossing around the D-word.

Editorial: Calif. slow to prepare for curriculum changes

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the April 22, 2013, Los Angeles Times.***

While education reformers in Sacramento continue to obsess about how easy it should be to fire teachers and how important tests should be in evaluating their performance, almost no one is talking about the central issue of what students are supposed to be learning in the near future.

A sea change is coming to schools in California, one of the 45 states that have adopted what are known as the Common Core State Standards. The idea of the new standards is to bring some consistency to education from state to state, and to better prepare students for the work they'll be expected to do in college and their jobs. Though the Obama administration couldn't legally force new standards on states, it threatened to deny grant money under the federal Race to the Top program if they didn't create and adopt common standards.

The standards are designed to push students to deeper levels of understanding and analysis. They call on teachers to cover fewer topics but to delve into each more thoroughly, and they discourage rote learning in favor of fuller understanding of the material. In math, for example, it might be less important for students to give the correct answer to a problem than to be able to describe the best process for reaching the solution. In California, the curriculum standards and the new tests that go with them are supposed to be implemented in the

2014-15 school year.

That’s soon, and at the rate California is going, it won’t be ready. The core curriculum standards lay out extensive guidelines about the knowledge and skills that students should master in each grade of public school, in both reading and math. But there are many complicated steps involved in turning those guidelines into a day-to-day educational plan for California schools, and the state isn’t even close to halfway through them. It hasn’t figured out how to go about training teachers, and won’t begin to adopt new textbooks – a slow and politically rancorous process – for at least two years.

What’s more, common core is expensive, requiring extensive new training for teachers, new textbooks and computers on which the new tests must be taken. It’s unclear where the state will find the money.

At the rate the state is going, teachers will end up being trained before the English curriculum is even in place, and instruction would start before the new textbooks are in anyone’s hands. Yet if the school reform movement has its way, teachers will be evaluated in part based on how well their students do on the very different standardized tests that go with the new curriculum. Reflecting the concern that teachers throughout the state have been expressing, one California teacher recently tweeted that within a couple of years, “we start testing on standards we’re not teaching with curriculum we don’t have on computers that don’t exist.”

Teachers justifiably fret that they’re being set up for failure. Schools worry about finding the money to make all this happen.

The situation led Arun Ramanathan, director of the reform organization Education Trust-West, to write a recent commentary for an education website saying: “Is this the best time for reformers to focus so much attention in Sacramento on

teacher evaluation legislation incorporating student growth? Or should we be working to focus policymakers on the investments necessary to prepare all teachers to successfully teach the new standards in order to accelerate student growth?" Considering that one of Education Trust-West's major objectives has been to include test scores in teacher evaluations, these are remarkable – and crucially important – questions.

Experts are divided over the value of the new curriculum standards, which might or might not lead students to the deeper reading, reasoning and writing skills that were intended. But on this much they agree: The curriculum will fail if it isn't carefully implemented with meaningful tests that are aligned with what the students are supposed to learn. Legislators and education leaders should be putting more emphasis on helping teachers get ready for common core and giving them a significant voice in how it is implemented. And if the state can't get the right elements in place to do that by 2014, it would be better off delaying the new curriculum a couple of years and doing it right, rather than allowing common core to become yet another educational flash in the pan that never lives up to its promise.

Opinion: Obama's betrayal of women

By Robin Abcarian, Los Angeles Times

President Obama spit his game, as the kids say, when he spoke to an enthusiastic crowd at a Planned Parenthood conference a little over a week ago: "You're making me blush," he cooed to

their thunderous applause. “I love you back.”

Oh, how he wooed them: “Forty years after the Supreme Court affirmed a woman’s constitutional right to privacy, including the right to choose, we shouldn’t have to remind people that when it comes to a woman’s health, no politician should get to decide what’s best for you.”

A week later, he spit in their eye.

His administration is fighting a federal judge’s ruling that the emergency contraception pill known as Plan B should be available to teenagers and girls of all ages without a prescription. Obama’s Justice Department appealed the ruling Wednesday.

Planned Parenthood is probably getting used to this shabby treatment from a president who loves them to their face but dallies with the right behind their backs.

In a news conference during his visit to Mexico on Thursday, Obama defended the appeal, noting that the FDA had just recommended lowering the age at which a teenager can purchase the pill without a prescription from 17 to 15.

“I’m very comfortable with the decision they’ve made right now based on solid scientific evidence for girls 15 and older,” he told reporters, according to Politico.

But medical groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics operating on solid scientific evidence, and U.S. District Judge Edward Korman, also operating on solid scientific evidence, agreed that the pill is safe for all girls of reproductive age.

Last month, in his ruling, Korman rapped the disingenuous claim by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius that the drug’s availability could pose dangers if used by 11-year-olds.

“This case is not about the potential misuse of Plan B by 11-year-olds,” Korman wrote. “These emergency contraceptives would be among the safest drugs sold over-the-counter, the number of 11-year-olds using these drugs is likely to be miniscule. … Instead, the invocation of the adverse effect of Plan B on 11-year-olds is an excuse to deprive the overwhelming majority of women of their right to obtain contraceptives without unjustified and burdensome restrictions.”

If an 11-year-old can buy an aspirin, wrote Korman, then by the FDA’s own logic, she should be able to buy Plan B.

We all agree that adolescents have no business having sex. Even older teenagers who engage in sex are often playing with fire. But we all live in the real world. It’s a place where kids have sex and face dire consequences. They need to be helped, not hindered.

You’d think the pro-choice father of two adolescent girls would have a more progressive stance on this important issue. He can couch his language in concerned-parent strains all he wants, but it’s the political heat he’s trying to avoid.

Obama’s relationship with Planned Parenthood is like a bad marriage where the put-upon spouse has nowhere else to go.

But he shouldn’t be let off the hook for abandoning the kids.