Letter: Collaborative effort for Bread & Broth holiday meal

To the community,

Thanks to a Secret Santa and the Kagan and Catton families, a very special meal was served at the Bread & Broth Christmas Eve dinner. Prime rib, generously donated by a local Secret Santa, was the main course for the dinner.

The Kagan and Catton family donated the remainder of the meal fixings which included mashed potatoes, mushroom gravy, fresh veggies, salad and drinks.

The tasty homemade dinner rolls and desserts served were provided by Jeanettee Shippee and the Culinary Arts Program at the El Dorado County Jail.

In addition to their monetary donations, Kagan family members helped in the meal preparation and serving.

Cherie Kagan, a B&B volunteer cook on the fourth Monday of every month, has sponsored the B&B Christmas week meal for the past three years and she once again led the cooking efforts for the Christmas dinner.

“It is a tremendous blessing to be able to gift back to our community in this way during the holidays when so many of our local families in need,” she said.

Bread & Broth is very thankful for and fortunate to have volunteers and donors like the Kagan and Catton families and our many anonymous donors like the Christmas dinner’s Secret Santa. It’s the generous donors of the community which provide funds and volunteer hours that have enabled B&B to provide nutritious and tasty meals to the neediest in the community.

If you would like to support the all volunteer, nonprofit Bread & Broth program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Time to implement TRPA's new plan

By Joanne Marchetta

The terrific start to Lake Tahoe's winter season is a fitting introduction to a year of positive progress for the lake and the communities that surround it. By the time spring breathes renewed life into Lake Tahoe's ecosystem, many property owners around the basin will be aiming to start some renewal of their own with new rules adopted by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board at the end of 2012.

Approval of the updated Lake Tahoe Regional Plan was a turning point of its own, coming on a wave of unprecedented cooperation and near-unanimous agreement that we must move this basin forward. I want to explain what happens next and settle some misconceptions about what the TRPA board approved in December.


Joanne

First, adopted changes fall into two categories – those that take effect this winter and those that are only effective once area plans from local governments are in place. Area plans are the next generation of community plans and they will be reviewed by the Governing Board in a public process. I also want to emphasize that no development projects were approved by the board in December and that regional growth caps for the Tahoe basin remain firmly in place.

While we hope the updated plan helps many lake-saving projects go from the drawing board to a public forum, environmental redevelopment projects in Lake Tahoe's town centers will take careful consideration by the community, local governments, land managers, and others. To facilitate more ecosystem restoration on private properties, these projects must use transferred development rights from sensitive stream zones or outlying areas in order to access new height and density incentives in existing town centers. Such projects can be proposed only after the adoption of area plans. There are a limited number of areas, about 10 commercial centers around the lake, where these types of projects would be concentrated in order to foster walkable, bikeable communities.

For residential properties, important improvements are being brought online that are planned to be in effect this summer for properties that have already completed their best management practices for stormwater and erosion control. These amendments allow modest home improvements for some residential properties that were previously impossible. Within certain site constraints, property owners who have a BMP completion certificate can make modest enhancements without exceeding their property's land coverage, which is the limiting factor for the total square footage of development allowed on each parcel in the Lake Tahoe Basin. With a BMP certificate, disabled access ramps, temporary backyard sheds, and up to 500 square feet of new decking will not count toward a property’s coverage limit. More information on these incentives will be featured in workshops this spring.

For properties that don’t have a BMP completion certificate, you can get started this spring installing simple measures that infiltrate stormwater and help reduce the fine sediment entering Lake Tahoe by contacting your local conservation district or go online.

Changes that only come into effect with an area plan may not be too far away in some locations and a few local governments are expecting to bring their plans to TRPA for review this year. For an area plan to be adopted, it must meet environmental standards and be consistent with the Regional Plan. However, area plans can also propose more innovative ways to regulate land coverage, provide further direction on local community character, and can streamline project permitting to a one-step process – all the more reason for you to contact your city or county planning department and get involved in bringing an environmental plan for your community forward.

I want to be sure the community understands that the purpose of TRPA’s updated plan is to increase environmental restoration and the well-being of Lake Tahoe’s communities. As the Tahoe basin comes together to move out of the negative spiral of decline, TRPA is working to implement land use policies that connect more people to recreation with less reliance on the private automobile. New zoning changes at Heavenly and Edgewood on the South Shore, for example, are intended to do just that, and any projects proposed there in the future will undergo significant environmental review and public input to assure these outcomes.

The positive momentum from the 2012 adoption of the Regional Plan update is a product of the creativity and cooperation of the many people who worked for years to establish a new approach to Lake Tahoe’s continued restoration. We’re poised for the next round of environmental gains to be made and for Lake Tahoe communities to play a greater role in the important work to protect and restore this world-famous region.

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

Opinion: Demography underlies big issues in California

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

The legislative session that reconvened this month faces no shortage of big issues, but underlying all of them is demographic change that is dramatically altering the face of California.

New data frame the change:

• Recent reports from the U.S. Census Bureau and the state Department of Finance agree that our historically high population growth has dropped to under 1 percent a year, a third of what it was in the 1980s.

• The slowdown stems from a virtual halt to foreign migration, a net outflow to other states and a rapidly decreasing birthrate – factors which, if continued, could see California’s population start to decline in a few years.

• A new study by the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health says that due to the declining migration and birthrates, the number of California children under 10 years old dropped by nearly 200,000 between 2000 and 2010 and is expected to decline by another 100,000 during the current decade.

“These trends are not yet widely recognized, but they should be a wake-up call for policymakers,” said report author Dowell Myers, a USC demographer.

“We will be increasingly dependent economically and socially on a smaller number of children. They are more important to the state’s future success than ever before.”

• Latinos now constitute more than half of the state’s children, and both the Packard Foundation and the Center for the Next Generation, in another new report, raise the specter of increasing child poverty. In fact, a recent Census Bureau study, measuring poverty by a new method, says California has the nation’s highest rate.

“We can’t honestly separate our state’s economic future from current poverty rates among our kids,” Ann O’Leary, co-author of the latter report, said. “Our ability to thrive as the world’s ninth-largest economy depends on having an educated, healthy and stable next generation of workers. We’re headed in the opposite direction.”

• Meanwhile, the state’s white population is declining (it will drop below 40 percent this year) and aging rapidly as the baby-boom generation moves from middle age (the youngest boomers are nearly 50) into retirement (the oldest will turn 67 this year).

• These California trends emulate states in the Northeast and upper Midwest, such as New York and Michigan, more than they do those in the South and Southwest. While California’s under-10 population was declining by nearly 200,000 between 2000 and 2010, for instance, Texas was adding nearly 600,000.

Gov. Jerry Brown understands that California is being buffeted by a demographic storm and reflects that knowledge in his new budget. “This is an aging society, and inequality is growing,” he said.

But do others in the Capitol grasp the stark challenge it presents?

Editorial: Give California cities, counties more tax leeway

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the Jan. 7, 2013, Sacramento Bee.***

With Democrats firmly in control in both houses of the Legislature, and Democrat Jerry Brown sitting in the governor’s seat, now is an opportune time to reform California’s convoluted tax laws.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento says he has no plans to launch a full frontal assault on Proposition 13, the 1978 property tax-slashing measure. Certainly no serious efforts are under way to fiddle with the residential side of Proposition 13.

A split roll that allows commercial property taxes to rise while retaining limits on residential properties has been discussed for years, but it would necessitate a gigantic political war with the state’s business community. At a time the economy remains very fragile, that seems foolhardy.

It makes far more sense for the Legislature to target its tax reform efforts toward giving local government greater authority to raise revenue.

Cities, counties and special districts are closer to the people and have the bulk of the responsibility to carry out governmental functions, but they are short on resources and face constraints on their ability to raise revenues. The two-thirds vote rule for special local tax measures is one unnecessary hurdle the Legislature can and should address.

In the November election, less than half – 19 of 43 local special tax measures – passed. Many of those that failed did so very narrowly.

Alameda County's special transportation measure B1 stands out. It garnered 66.5 percent of the vote, less than 800 votes shy of the two-thirds vote threshold needed for passage. Another transportation measure in Los Angeles County failed after winning 64.7 percent of the vote.

While special taxes require two-thirds approval, state law allows a simple majority vote approval for general tax increases, those tax measures that essentially give local governments a blank check to spend the extra taxes voters approve for any legitimate governmental purpose.

The distinction between general and special taxes grew out of a California Supreme Court decision interpreting Proposition 13. It provided that cities, counties and special districts could impose a "special tax" only after a two-thirds vote of the people. But Proposition 13 drafters neglected to define "special taxes." The state's high court defined a special tax as any that was earmarked for a specific purpose.

Voters reaffirmed the two-thirds vote requirement for special taxes when they approved Proposition 218 in 1996.

It's not right that a minority of voters in Alameda County, Los Angeles or anywhere else in the state can thwart the will of a sizable majority, but it happens every election cycle.

Voters have already reduced the two-thirds vote threshold for school bond measures to 55 percent. Two constitutional amendments have been introduced this legislative session that would reduce the voter thresholds to 55 percent for school parcel tax measures and library taxes. More are expected.

Rather than this piecemeal approach, it would be cleaner and, frankly fairer, if all local tax increases were decided by a simple majority vote.

Such a change requires a constitutional amendment, which means a two-thirds vote in the Legislature, something that Democrats with supermajorities in both houses now have the numbers to achieve. Of course, the final decision would be made by the voters, probably in 2014.

So as they ponder what of real significance they can accomplish with their supermajorities, giving local governments more flexibility to raise their own taxes should be high on Democrats' list.

Letter: Sierra Valley Electric gives back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

The guests at the evening meal provided by Bread & Broth on Jan. 7 were graciously served by the willing and helpful employees of Sierra Valley Electric Inc. and two of their family members.

The volunteer crew representing the evening's Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor included Nick and Hailey Chandler, Craig and Megan Hall, Sandy Herback and Tim Coolbaugh.

It was the first time that Sandy Herback had volunteered at a B&B dinner and found it to be a "very thought provoking and gratifying experience." She also "highly recommends to other people this volunteering opportunity."

Bread & Broth, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing hot meals to the hungry of our community, is sincerely grateful to Sierra Valley Electric for their sponsorship and donation of $250 for the costs of the dinner. With the financial support of individuals, club/organizations, churches and local businesses like Sierra Valley Electric, B&B has been able to provide full course meals every Monday for the past 23 years at St. Theresa Church parish hall and soup dinners every Friday at the Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church for the past three years.

The volunteers of Bread & Broth appreciate the commitment of Sierra Valley Electric, Inc. to the goals of B&B and the less fortunate members of our community. If you are interested in supporting the B&B program in any way, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Congress is failing to help Postal Service

By Patrick Donahoe

The 112th Congress adjourned without having passed postal legislation. Such legislation could quickly restore the Postal

Service to profitability and put the organization on a stable, long-term financial footing. This lack of action is disappointing.

The Postal Service has worked closely with the Congress over the past two years to advance a framework for a viable business model that will allow us to quickly respond to the evolving needs of our customers. As a result of frequent communication with Congressional leaders, we have modified important parts of our five-year comprehensive business plan, including the pace of consolidation of mail processing facilities, to give Congress maximum flexibility to make needed legislative changes.

Unfortunately, Congress has not enacted these changes.

As we sought to provide solutions to enable legislative change, we pursued cost-reducing and revenue-generating activities.

Over the past two years we have reduced head count by approximately 60,000 career employees. We have consolidated 70 of our mail processing facilities. We moved to reduce hours at many of our post offices. We also have worked to substantially increase our package volume along with introducing a same-day delivery service.

As we look to the coming year, we are on an unsustainable financial path. We are currently losing $25 million per day, we have defaulted on $11.1 billion in Treasury payments and exhausted our borrowing authority.

The Postal Service should not have to do business this way, which has undermined the confidence of our customer base and the $800 billion mailing industry we serve.

We will be discussing with our Board of Governors a range of accelerated cost cutting and revenue generating measures designed to provide us some financial breathing room.

We encourage the new 113th Congress to make postal reform an urgent priority, and to work steadily toward the quick passage of reform legislation. We will continue to work with leaders of our House and Senate oversight committees and all members of Congress to help make this happen.

Patrick Donahoe is the postmaster general.

Opinion: Children should have to earn their rewards

By Ruben Navarrette Jr.

I often describe it as my most important job. It’s the one that is the most difficult, and yet the most fulfilling. It consumes the most time, and it’s the one where I most often feel as if I’m in over my head. It’s also the one where the stakes are highest.

The job is being a parent to my three young children — ages 3, 5 and 7. And this New Year’s, my resolution is to do it better.

There are no raises, promotions or awards for good parents. In fact, if you earn the title, most people won’t even notice. The only evaluations that matter will come from your children, and the jury could be out for years.

But if you’re a bad parent, the effects will be obvious and felt long after you’re gone. As your children go through life, they’ll be like a human billboard that announces your parenting “score” to the world.

There are countless ways to be a bad parent. Abandoning or failing to provide for your kids tops my list. Yet you can also get there by abusing, neglecting, smothering, bullying or belittling.

Yet what has me worried lately – both with my own kids, and with the rest of society – is that we're producing in the next generation a sense of entitlement. We're teaching kids that desiring something is the same as deserving it.

Along the way, we're diminishing the importance of what experts call "earned happiness" and replacing it with a system that gives awards and rewards across the board based solely on needs and wants.

These days, it seems as if parents and teachers are more reluctant to reward good behavior in children, let alone punish bad behavior. In fact, in an era where building a child's self-esteem is the ultimate goal, we've become terrified of words like "good" and "bad."

The problem seems to be that we're confusing good or bad behavior with being a good or bad person. We must never tell our children that they are bad people – i.e., "You're a bad boy." But we can't be afraid to explain to our kids what it means to engage in bad behavior and make clear that we expect them to refrain from it. In trying to not be too hard on our kids, I fear we've gone too far in the opposite direction.

I knew this was happening in our society – that too many parents were surrendering their expectations, throwing in the towel and forgetting how to be parents. I recognized that the word "bad" had been shelved along with a host of other negative words that many parents today are reluctant to use – "no," "don't," "stop."

But I needed to hear it from a third party. When listening to a radio show, I recently heard a professor of psychiatry insist that even Santa Claus has been co-opted. He noted that it used to be natural for Santa to sit a child on his lap and ask: “Have you been a good girl?” This doesn’t seem to happen much anymore, he said.

He’s right. I crossed paths with several Santas during this holiday season, and I don’t remember a single one making that inquiry. Instead, children – mine included – would walk up and Santa would ask only one question: “What do you want for Christmas?” What happened to the idea of a child earning his or her present through good behavior? You know, the difference between being naughty and nice.

That idea is gone. In our shopping-mall culture of materialism and consumerism, every child gets a present. Just like, in sports, everyone gets a ribbon. We can’t leave anyone out, so we no longer expect anything from anyone. In fact, now the tables have turned, and it is the recipient who expects something for nothing.

This parenting business is tricky. You want to give your kids nice things, but you have to be careful not to give them too much. You don’t want to tear them down, but you can’t demand too little. Being a good parent is a balancing act. It’s more art than science. A pinch of this, a dash of that. Most of us will never get it exactly right. Mistakes come with the territory.

Even so, this year, I’ve got to do a better job of it. And it starts not with settling for less but with expecting more – from my kids, and from myself.

Ruben Navarrette Jr. writes for the Washington Post Writers Group.

Editorial: New Congress must act on judicial appointments

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Jan. 4, 2013, Sacramento Bee.***

You could call them casualties of the "fiscal cliff" talks that consumed far too much time and energy. Before ending its term Wednesday, the U.S. Senate failed to act on 11 judicial nominees awaiting floor votes, including two for federal courts in Northern California.

Those stranded nominees have to start from scratch with the new Senate sworn in Thursday. Meanwhile, Californians will continue waiting, and waiting, to have their cases heard before these federal district courts, both "judicial emergencies" because of numerous vacancies and severe backlogs.

Troy L. Nunley was nominated in June by President Obama in the Eastern District of California, which has courts in Sacramento, Fresno, Redding and South Lake Tahoe. Nunley, a former prosecutor who has been a Sacramento Superior Court judge since 2002, had his confirmation hearing in September. The Senate Judiciary Committee didn't sign off on his nomination until Dec. 6.

William H. Orrick III was also nominated in June, he in the Northern District of California, centered in the Bay Area. Orrick, a corporate lawyer in San Francisco for 25 years, was most recently a deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights in Washington, D.C., who worked on the Justice Department's challenge of the Arizona immigration law. He has been waiting even longer; he had his hearing in July and was endorsed by the committee on Aug. 2.

On Thursday, Obama quickly renominated Nunley and Orrick, along with Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Beverly Reid O'Connell in the Central District of California and 30 other nominees around the nation whom the previous Senate failed to confirm. As one liberal advocacy group noted, 25 of the 33 are women or minorities — part of the president's important effort to diversify the judiciary.

Now, it's up to the new Judiciary Committee whether the nominees have to go through another confirmation hearing. They definitely have to win committee approval again to get to the Senate floor.

Obama said that his list included "many who could have and should have been confirmed before the Senate adjourned." "I urge the Senate to consider and confirm these nominees without delay, so all Americans can have equal and timely access to justice," he said in a statement.

Unfortunately, judicial nominations have, even more than usual, become collateral damage in the partisan wars in Congress. There are more vacancies than at the end of George W. Bush's first term; the delay between committee approval and a vote on the Senate floor has grown dramatically on Obama's watch.

For nearly all the stranded nominees, there's little question that they're qualified. Many have bipartisan support. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, in his annual report on the judiciary, pleaded with the president and lawmakers Monday to fill vacancies that he said are handicapping federal courts.

This is another black mark against the 112th Congress, one of the least productive in recent history. By confirming these judges quickly, the new Senate can start making amends.

Opinion: Get ready for the new workforce

By Ron Ashkenas, Harvard Business Review

I recently heard a stunning statistic: For the next 19 years, 10,000 people per day will turn 65 years old, and (presumably) retire shortly thereafter. While this graying of the Boomer generation certainly has implications for health care and social policy (and for me personally, as one of those eventual retirees), it may have even more significance for the nature of the workforce and the job of the manager.

First, there will be a shortage of workers for key jobs. This may sound hard to believe at a time when U.S. unemployment hovers around 8 percent and parts of Europe have 25 percent of their people out of work. Yet as millions of boomers leave the workforce, there are far fewer younger people to replace them. In the trucking industry alone, for example, it's estimated that there will be a shortage of over 100,000 drivers in just a few years.

Moreover, the replacements will have far less experience and know-how, and will need considerable training to get up-to-speed. This will lead to significant gaps in areas such as engineering, petrol-chemicals, utilities, defense manufacturing, education, healthcare, and air traffic control.

Perhaps equally significant for managers is that the new workers – no matter how many of them there are – will operate differently than their predecessors. According to Dan Schawbel who has studied Millennials extensively, they differ from Boomers in a number of ways: They want immediate feedback and attention, and prefer the instant gratification of texting to the slow response of email; they prefer casual attire so they can “be themselves” at work; they want more flexibility with scheduling and work location; they value the nature and importance of the work over the pay and benefits; and they want to be involved in strategy and not just told what to do.

Some recent studies also suggest that growing up with so much media and technology is creating a generation of people with shorter attention spans and less willingness to dig deeply into subjects.

Given these implications, managers (whether you’re a Boomer or a Millennial) should take steps now to deal with the new workforce. Here are a few thoughts about what you can do:

Conduct a demographic risk-analysis of your team or organization. Not long ago I worked with a software firm that supported hundreds of legacy applications for the telecommunications industry. When they created a long-range plan to roll-up the applications, they realized that many of the experts – the only ones who knew the code – were going to retire before the planned integration dates. The management team revised the entire plan so that they wouldn’t get caught without the needed expertise.

Accelerate training and transition planning. Most companies have some sort of yearly process for assessing talent and creating succession plans – but don’t follow through on these plans with a sense of urgency. If you realize however that much of the knowledge and skill in your organization will be walking out the door – and not returning – in just a few years, it might change the way you think about it. For example, I recently made a presentation about best practices for acquisition integration to a company that was struggling with the aftermath of some recent deals. What’s regrettable is that many of the best practices I discussed had already been developed in this company – and then lost as people retired.

Create an environment in which the new guard will thrive. Finally, build on the experience of high-tech and start-up firms and begin creating a different work environment in traditional organizations — with more flexibility, transparency, engagement, and fun. As my colleague Robert Schaffer wrote in HBR, we need to make the job a game so that Millennials will be attracted to join and stay, and commit the same energy to work that they expend on other activities. In the coming competition for talent, this might become one of the keys to creating a winning organization.

The current generation of Boomers, of which I am a charter member, has held sway over the work place for much of the past 20 years. But like an inevitable wave, the new workforce is on its way, and may already be here. And for our organizations to continue to thrive, all of us need to get ready.

Letter: Time share employees give back at Bread & Broth

To the community,

On Dec. 17, the Stardust and Americana Vacation Resort hosted the evening meal served by Bread & Broth to over 90 community individuals. This was not the first time an Adopt A Day of Nourishment was sponsored by the Stardust and Americana Vacation Resort and B&B is very thankful for the Resort's continued support of the program's goal of feeding the needy in South Lake Tahoe.

In sponsoring an AAD, the resort donated $250 which covered the cost of the food needed to provide a healthy, well balanced meal and the supplies and utilities necessary for the preparation and serving of the evening’s meal.

A volunteer sponsor crew from the resort also provided assistance to the regular B&B volunteer crew members. The enthusiastic sponsor crew included Joey Hannel, reservations; Linda Adams, Americana manager; Victor Sarabia, activities director; Karla Higareda, activities; and Lorena Sarabia, Stardust manager. During her stint as a B&B volunteer, Linda Adams viewed the experience as “a blessing to be able to contribute to our community through such a generous organization. I hope to be able to come back and help more in the future.”

Bread & Broth is very grateful for the help and generosity of the Stardust and Americana Vacation Resort and their employees so that this meal could be provided to any and all who were hungry.

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

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth