Letter: Bread & Broth thanks LTN

To the community,

Sponsoring their first Adopt A Day of Nourishment, *Lake Tahoe News* hosted the hot, well-balanced meal that was served at St. Theresa Church parish hall on Sept. 3.

The evening dinner provided more than 100 meals to less fortunate members of the South Lake Tahoe community. In addition to donating $250 to supply the food, supplies and utilities necessary for the meal preparation, *Lake Tahoe News* contributors gave of their time to assist B&B volunteers during the preparation, serving and cleanup for the meal. The volunteer crew was very enthusiastic and wrote in B&B's Adopt A Day ledger that is was: "Our privilege and pleasure to serve. Thank you for the opportunity."



Roni Davis, Brenda Knox, Kae Reed and Kim Wyatt hold up Sue Wood after a night at Bread & Broth. Photo/Provided

Bread & Broth is very grateful for the support provided by *Lake Tahoe News* and the other many generous sponsors. Providing a weekly meal and distributing bags containing vegetables, baked goods and diary products donated by local

community stores, is the mission that Bread & Broth has been providing for more than 23 years in South Lake Tahoe.

To find out how you can support Bread & Broth's program, contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Letter: No votes on Props. 30 and 38 are bad for Californians

To the community,

California schools are in trouble. For the past four years, the state has been cutting and "deferring" payments to school districts, requiring the local school districts to operate with fewer and fewer funds. Schools all over California have cut expenses by every means possible to keep their doors open.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District alone, a small district when compared to other California communities, has experienced nearly $4 million in state cuts, but has managed to protect most of its programs and small class sizes by reducing costs in every "non-teaching" department.

The superintendent, for example, also fills the roles of assistant superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Human Resources director, and principal of the magnet school.

Many California schools have already been forced to increase class size, reduce the number of days of teaching, and cut sports and arts programs.

The state’s newest school budget calls for another $1.6 million cut to South Lake Tahoe if Proposition 30 fails … a cut that the district can no longer absorb without drastic consequences. To make ends meet, the district may have to reduce the school year by 12 class days in addition to cuts in other areas. We cannot let this happen.

Propositions 30 and 38 have been put before the voters to stop these continued budget cuts and restore funding to schools. Neither proposition replaces the funds that have already been cut. Both are designed to stop the bleeding. These two propositions address the increased taxes in different ways.

Prop. 30 imposes a four-year statewide one-quarter cent sales tax increase plus an additional income tax on individual earnings above $250,000. Prop. 38 imposes a 12-year income tax increase for all persons earning more than $7,316 per year … basically, everyone paying income tax.

Each of these propositions will generate about $6 billion annually for schools K-12. Prop. 30 also generates additional funding for community and state colleges, and funding for fire and police protection. Prop. 38 adds a provision for early childhood development, but does not provide funding for colleges or fire and police safety.

Hopefully, as least one of the propositions will pass, and if both pass, the proposition with the greatest vote will take effect. But, having both measures on the ballot has the potential of splitting the “yes” vote and allowing the “no” vote to beat down both measures.

If you agree that we cannot allow any more cuts to education, then I urge you to vote “yes” on both propositions, and do not vote against either. An alternative is to vote “yes” on the proposition you prefer, and simply not vote on the other. But most important is that you do not mark a “not” on either proposal.

There are many voters who automatically vote “no” on any tax measure and will vote “no” on both propositions. We cannot afford to split the “yes” vote between the two propositions. If the majority of voters support education, but split the vote between the two propositions, the “no” voters will win and our children and future generations will lose.

Barry Keil, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Placer County departments among the best in state

By Jennifer Montgomery

One of the best ways to get a clear picture of the Placer County budget is to sit through workshops held each August by the Board of Supervisors.

They are long and exhausting, but illuminating.

Each department gives a presentation loaded with facts and figures to let the Board of Supervisors know what it has been up to and its goals for the coming year. What I find particularly enlightening are the accounts of new initiatives, projects, accomplishments and challenges that accompany the statistics.



Jennifer Montgomery

This year’s workshops on Aug. 16-17 were exceptionally interesting.

Two themes came up again and again:

· Departments are continuing to do more with less, because the demand for many services is on the rise, but staffing is down; and

· Succession planning is a priority for departments that have many key employees who are near, at, or beyond retirement age.

I left the workshops deeply impressed by the department presentations and the commitment of County employees at all levels to serve the public to the best of our abilities.

Challenges remain for Placer County. We continue to grapple with difficult budget issues in such areas as library services and fire protection. The state’s mandated Public Safety Realignment initiative has resulted in early release of some jail inmates in order to make way for the increased influx of new prisoners. We have deferred necessary work, especially on infrastructure, and we struggle to catch up.

It is clear, however, that departments and staff are doing a great job making the best of a tough situation.

Several departments reported being recognized for outstanding public service.

The Veterans Services Office is regarded as one of the best in

the state at assisting veterans. It ranks fifth in California in terms of total revenue collected on behalf of veterans, falling only behind counties such as Los Angeles and San Diego that have much larger populations.

Child Support Services is among the top 10 programs in California for cost-effectiveness. For every dollar it spends, it collects $3.35 on behalf of families. The statewide average is $2.29.

Human Services, a division of the Health and Human Services Department, was recognized by state officials recently for having the best-performing call center in the state for helping its clients quickly and effectively.

During the budget workshops, departments reported on a long list of projects and initiatives that are under way or soon will be.

Construction of the county's new jail in Roseville is almost complete, the Foresthill Bridge is well on its way to a federally mandated retrofit and planning and design work on a new regional sewer system has begun.

Facility Services is getting ready to expand the popular 220-acre Hidden Falls Regional Park across 980 acres of county-owned land located west of the park. The expansion will provide more access to the waterfalls, new picnic areas and 23 miles of additional trails for the public to enjoy.

Public Works plans to start work next year on the final phase of the Auburn Folsom Road widening project. When it is done, the road will be a four-lane thoroughfare from Douglas Boulevard to the Sacramento County line.

Public Works is continuing on frontage and scenic improvements along Highway 49 in North Auburn.

Progress also was reported by Public Works on a project that

is very important in Eastern Placer County: the Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project. The department is putting the finishing touches on the project's funding plan and hopes to break ground on the first phase next summer.

Public Works is working on a small project that promises to be a big help to bus riders who frequent Placer County Transit. It is a smart-phone application that will allow riders to determine in real time where buses are at and how soon they should arrive at the stops were riders are waiting.

Several departments reported on their success handling increased workloads with fewer staff.

The Assessor's Office, for instance, is working hard to deal with an unprecedented number of properties being evaluated for reductions in appraised values. The Placer County Library is facing tough budget issues because its property tax revenue is down significantly, but is finding innovative ways to better serve the public. On Oct. 1, several branches shifted operating hours to 10am-6pm some days in response to requests from patrons.

During the workshops, I was also impressed by the efforts of the Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, District Attorney's Office and Health and Human Services to handle public safety realignment, a state-mandated program that is shifting responsibility for many adult parolees and lower-risk offenders from the state to counties.

Realignment has created unprecedented challenges for counties but the response of our public safety departments has been outstanding. They are finding ways to deal with realignment that are cost-effective and achieve our highest priority: protecting public safety.

The decision made years ago to build a new jail in Roseville will give Placer County extra flexibility in handling adult offenders who in the past would have been the state's

responsibility.

That decision illustrates the importance of two themes that will be the focus of the last installment of my state-of-the-county series: the county's commitment to long-range planning and the critical role planning initiatives will play in the years to come.

Jennifer Montgomery is chairwoman of the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

Opinion: Prop. 30 is a good thing for LTCC

By Kindred Murillo

As the debate on how to vote on Proposition 30 has raged on, many of us have stayed in the background because it is hard to advocate to our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to vote yes on a proposition that has been described as "holding a gun to the voters' head." While it is unfortunate that automatic "trigger" cuts have become the preferred method of the Legislature for addressing our state's budget woes, it also provides an opportunity for us as Californians to be clear on what we value by even more closely linking our voice to our vote.

It is for this reason that it is important to really understand what is at stake. If Proposition 30 fails, the reality is that California K-12 districts, community colleges, and university system will suffer further reductions that will have crippling effects on the education of our youth. These reductions would be on top of the past four years of continued

cuts of more than $800 million for the community college system alone. Most of our educational systems are operating at pre-2007-08 budget levels.



Kindred Murillo

Further reductions to education, particularly for community colleges, threaten our ability to maintain access to higher education, and in particular access for small rural communities like ours. Small educational districts are already stretched to the maximum trying to provide a quality education to their local communities. Here at Lake Tahoe Community College we have had to cut classes and reduce staffing over the past four years. This next round of cuts to our budget will force us to cut critical services that will directly impact our students.

Until now we have kept many of the cuts away from services to students because of our commitment to access and student success. This next reduction of almost $700,000 will begin eroding the critical educational and student support services of our local college that have been essential to not only access, but the success and achievement of our students.

Did you know Lake Tahoe Community College transfers more students to the University of California system that colleges two and three times our size? Did you know that last year we graduated the most students in the 38-year history of LTCC? Not only that, but we issued $2.5 million in Pell grants to our students and gave out almost $80,000 in scholarships last

year. This is on top of our almost $10 million payroll and multiple services provided to our local area. We are an integral part of the South Shore community and economy as well as the only public higher education institution in the basin.

Ensuring access to higher education is critical to our local economy and the well being of our local community. As you fill out your ballot, please consider the future of our local community, our state, and our nation; and the importance of educating our current and future generations.

A continued cycle of reductions to education means less opportunity for our children, grandchildren, and their children. This is why I am writing to urge your yes vote on Proposition 30. While I disagree with the way the budget "trigger cuts" have been focused on education, I am more concerned with the harm to our students, our staff, and our community of further reductions to our K-12 and higher education systems.

Kindred Murillo is superintendent-president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

Letter: Is Superstorm Sandy the new normal?

To the community,

In the popular movie "The Day After Tomorrow" audiences are confronted with disturbing scenes of a "superstorm" that

dwarfs all other storms. At the time, most experts derided the movie and questioned whether such sudden catastrophic superstorms are really possible.

Today, with the emergence of Superstorm Sandy, there is no longer any doubts about the potential for massive superstorms to emerge from our global climate change. Many people believe we are headed for global warming, but new evidence suggests global cooling may be where we are actually going.



Steve Kubby

Until recently, scientists considered any theory of catastrophic change to be heresy. However, science has undergone an astonishing paradigm shift and now accepts the compelling evidence that catastrophic climate change can occur much more rapidly than previously thought.

An example of an extremely quick climate change came during a period of time known as the Younger Dryas, which happened right after the last ice age ended, about 12,000 years ago. The Younger Dryas itself lasted about 1,000 years. What we didn’t know until recently was just how quickly the Younger Dryas started and stopped.

In a period of less than 50 years, the climate from the eastern U.S. and Canada to much of Europe went from climate conditions much like today’s, to frigid readings more like the Ice Age, at least a ten degree Fahrenheit change. That’s how it stayed for a thousand years – and then the climate flipped back to normal in as little as 20 years.

Greenpeace released a classified study, prepared for the

Pentagon, that warns of increasingly unstable and violent weather. This Pentagon Weather Report paints a grim picture of the Gulf Stream failing to deliver warm water to the North Atlantic, triggering widespread weather disasters: “A world thrown into turmoil by drought, floods, typhoons. Whole countries rendered uninhabitable. The capital of the Netherlands submerged. The borders of the U.S. and Australia patrolled by armies firing into waves of starving boat people desperate to find a new home. Fishing boats armed with cannon to drive off competitors. Demands for access to water and farmland backed up with nuclear weapons.”

The idea that the Earth has been molded by sudden, catastrophic climate change is something that scientists have resisted for many decades, according to a scientific analysis of the past few decades of climate research by Spencer Weart, director of the Center for History of Physics at the American Institute of Physics.

In an article published by *Physics Today*, Weart explains how weather scientists have historically refused to comprehend the evidence before them supporting rapid climate change. Each new discovery keeps shortening the time in which massive global climate changes are recognized and understood to have occurred.

Here’s how the National Academy of Sciences describes the situation: “Paleoclimatic records show that large, widespread, abrupt climate changes have affected much or all of the earth repeatedly over the last ice-age cycle as well as earlier — and these changes sometimes have occurred in periods as short as a few years.”

The sudden appearance of Superstorm Sandy may be a freak event, or it may become the new normal. Is Superstorm Sandy the harbinger of things to come? Are we headed toward a new Ice Age?

Apparently, we are about to find out.

Steve Kubby, South Lake Tahoe

Letter: Stracener should not continue as judge

To the community,

Judge Warren Stracener is mailing literature that uses smear tactics to hurt his opponent.

This win-at-all-costs approach is what we expect from sleazy politicians, not judicial candidates.

Is this the kind of person we want for our judge?

Eddie Keller, retired El Dorado County Superior Court judge, Shingle Springs

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Letter: Hoffman should be on El Dorado County bench

To the community,

Hypocrisy? At a forum I attended, Judge Warren Stracener spoke compassionately about the kids he encounters in juvenile court. But last spring and again this week, he mailed campaign flyers that proudly displayed his family photo on one side and

recklessly smeared his opponent on the other.

How does Mr. Stracener explain to his daughter that it’s OK to degrade someone before thousands of people? How might his opponent’s kids feel if forced to defend their dad at school?

I guess the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree in politics, either. Mr. Stracener was appointed to our bench by Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose ethics and morals are unquestionably poor.

Joe Hoffman is by far the better choice for judge. Ask yourself why so many judges and members of our District Attorney’s Office think so. And ask parents like me about Joe’s incredible dedication over many years to coaching youth sports and teaching our children the right lessons.

The choice is clear. Please vote for Joe Hoffman on Nov. 6.

Kelly Costamagna, El Dorado Hills

Letter: Thanks given to Tahoe Improv Players

To the community,

Unity at the Lake would like to express appreciation to the Tahoe Improv Players for a successful fundraising event.

The troupe’s improv games, led by Gerry Orton, brought out uproarious laughter to a packed house. A good time was had by all.

Thank you Tahoe Improv Players.

Unity at the Lake is a safe and sacred community that honors people of all faiths and welcomes everyone, wherever they are on their spiritual journey.

Kathi Olsen, Unity at the Lake

Letter: Heavenly ensures South Shore residents don't go hungry

To the community,

"Heavenly really enjoys partnering with and supporting such an important and valuable organization" is how Frank Papandrea describes the relationship between Heavenly Mountain Resort and Bread & Broth.

Papandrea is Heavenly's environmental manager and a frequent Heavenly volunteer crew member at Bread & Broth's free Monday evening meal. Heavenly sponsored its eighth and ninth Adopt A Day dinners of the year on Aug. 27 and Sept. 17. In addition to Papandrea, the two AAD Heavenly sponsor crews included Jo Hearn, Tyler Morris, Nancy McCoy, Tom Fortune, Mike Allen and Paul Hopkins.

Feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe is the goal of the Bread & Broth program and Heavenly Mountain Resort is a major contributor and ongoing supporter of the the program's goals. Heavenly employees over the years have demonstrated their commitment to their community by volunteering their personal time to set up, serve and clean up at Heavenly's Adopt A Day meals. Tom Fortune spoken for many Heavenly employees when he

wrote “Bread & Broth is a very rewarding way to give back to the community.”

Bread & Bread is very thankful for Heavenly Mountain Resort’s generous sponsorships.

If you are interested in how you, your family, club/organization or business can support B&B, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Big Bird is a Republican

By James Poniewozik, Time

I wasn’t surprised that during the Oct. 3 presidential debate in Denver, Mitt Romney pledged to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). For Republicans, PBS threats are as reliable as Ken Burns reruns during pledge drives. But I was surprised by how he said it: “I like PBS. I love Big Bird … [But] I’m not going to keep on spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for.”

That’s right: Romney called Big Bird out, pulled his big yellow weave. Ordinarily it’s PBS’s defenders who bring up Big Bird – and Elmo, Arthur and Curious George–to emotionalize the debate, to make it about protecting your kids’ favorite cuddly animals. PBS cutters usually want to talk about anything but Big Bird: liberal bias, waste, coastal elites taking your money to foist their values on you. Sesame Street, they argue, will be fine, because it makes more off licensing than the

Count can calculate.

By citing Big Bird – as he has before on the stump – Romney put the argument on his opponents' favored terms. A Fired Big Bird Twitter account sprang up, and the Muppet himself responded to Romney on "Saturday Night Live". At a rally, Barack Obama quipped that Romney would "get rid of regulations on Wall Street, but he's going to crack down on Sesame Street."

Maybe Romney was trying to give austerity an empathetic face. ("You can kill things and still like them," GOPer Rick Santorum helpfully explained.) But focusing the debate on the fate of one flightless avian muddies the real issue. No, Romney's cuts wouldn't kill Big Bird. But they would deeply hurt a program, public TV, that in fact exemplifies his party's values and serves his voters.

To understand why, you first have to look at how public broadcasting works—which is pretty much the opposite of how most people assume. A CNN poll in 2011 asked Americans what percentage of the federal budget the CPB gets; the median guess was 5 percent ($173 billion) a year. In the 2013 budget, it actually gets $445 million – that's million, brought to you by the letter m – in a federal budget of nearly $4 trillion. And where does that money go? Not, mostly, to PBS headquarters. Commercial TV is top-down: NBC collects the money and programs the series. In public TV, local stations make (and buy) the shows, set their own schedules and, by law, receive most of the public money.

So "defunding PBS" wouldn't defund PBS. It's stations in poorer rural areas that would be devastated, maybe killed. Coastal elites like the Romneys and Obamas will still have Downton Abbey; Cookie Monster will not want for chocolate chips. But good luck finding a channel on which to watch him—and literacy programs and other services—in the low-population heartland regions that reliably turn GOP red every

four years. As with interstate highways, it’s one more way the same states that vote for small government get back more in federal spending than they contribute in taxes.

There’s the irony in all this: lots of Republicans rely on Big Bird. And Big Bird is in many ways a Republican. That is, in its finances and ideals, public broadcasting is about as little-c conservative a government program as you can find.

For starters, it’s frugal. We get a national TV and radio network for the kind of money Oprah has under her couch cushions. Progressives might prefer a lavish all-public program like the BBC – the single-payer plan of TV – but PBS uses its seed money to leverage corporate and charitable dollars. If PBS were a space program or a school system, conservatives would love that. It’s also decentralized: major decisions are made locally, just as Romney would have with health care.

And for all the culture warriors against it, public TV is proudly, dorkily family-values-friendly, an Edwardian hemline in a sea of booty shorts. If liberals love PBS’s pluralism, cultural conservatives love that their kids can watch free TV without being bombed with ads and inappropriate content.

Frankly, cutting PBS funds might be better for me personally. Here in rich, evil, liberal New York City, I’d still have public TV, now free from political pressure to be safe and bland. And I could keep the buck and change in taxes that I spend to offer PBS to the heartland. Screw you, South Dakota. You’re on your own!

But public TV is for all the public, which is why it’s amazing we’re fighting over one federal program that manages to be cheap and bipartisanly popular. You may think that this election is about how to best serve “the 100 percent” or that it’s about using money wisely in tough times. Either way, PBS is the definition of educational TV.