Opinion: Thanking those who give back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Hard Rock Cafe, Heavenly Mountain Resort,and Hope Lutheran volunteers for recently, and yet again, adopting a Day of Nourishment.

Volunteers from these three teams spent their time helping Bread & Broth volunteers serve a hot meal to those in need of one. They served a well balanced, hea;thy meal to all who came in hungry.

All of our co-coordinators that Monday were delighted the Heavenly continues to support our Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment through the Bread & Broth program.

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe in large part because of the generosity of the local community. A $250 sponsorship covers the cost of food and beverages for the approximately 100 people who visit each Monday evening. To find out how your family or business can Adopt A Day of Nourishment, contact Connie Yale at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 208.8707.

Bread & Broth

Opinion: Why businesses

choose Douglas County

By Lee Bonner

I have been a proponent of bringing new businesses to Douglas County long before I ran for county commissioner. Since 2007, we have lost more than 3,000 jobs and we must bring them back. Our county has invested time and resources in economic development and our economic vitality plan, so it’s crucial that we diversify our economy. To be honest, we should have started in the last decade; but, thanks to great leadership, we are headed in the right direction now.

With counties across the nation competing for jobs, we must ask: Why Douglas County? What makes Douglas a good fit and why should a business move here? We have challenges in not being a metropolitan area or a major transportation hub, but that may also be a strength.



Lee Bonner

Let me start by comparing companies that everyone can recognize and evaluate how they operate strategically. Companies that bring something special. Not by simply copying another product, but actually making things better and more usable. Which companies are game changers? Which companies change the way we live?

It’s much like comparing GE to Apple. To be fair, I admit I worked for GE for years and love the company. However, when you compare the two models, they are much different. GE takes

a product and makes it better and makes it available across the world. Apple creates products that literally change the way we live. By creating the iPod, they changed how we buy our music. Music stores are now dwindling because of Internet delivery. By the creation of the iPhone and iPad, they changed the way we use phones and computers. People are trying hard to duplicate what Apple has created using their own technology, but none can do it better. They created a following and a lifestyle in the products they design and manufacture. Don't get me wrong, GE is a great company, but even as big as they are they don't invent many new products; they primarily take existing products and make them better and then make them more accessible to the world. They have their place and they do it well.

So when I look at these examples, I ask myself, who is Douglas County? What type of community are we and what can we offer to companies that other counties cannot? Do we make them better? What is our strategic selling point? Are we reselling what other communities have? I believe if you compare our county to others, we have our place and it will not take away from other counties. We need a strong region for us all to succeed and all of our neighboring counties have their own strengths.

When it comes to the real strength of Douglas County, I believe we offer a lifestyle to people and new businesses moving to the area. Our community is unique; from the ranchers, the Washoe Tribe, and our Basque community, to the recreation areas of Lakes of Tahoe and Topaz. In addition to that, our citizens give back in many ways through local charitable and volunteer organizations. It's a part of our DNA and our county vision says it all, "A community to match the scenery."

When I moved here from Atlanta, I no longer had a two-hour, 10-mile commute. Our unique "rush minute" traffic allowed me to gain some life back. I have free time to ride horses and be with friends; thus, my quality of life went up. Working for

GE, we had one of the highest employee retention rates across the company. People want to live and work here, so there are many reasons to move to Douglas County. World-class technology, outstanding scenery, outdoor adventure, safe streets, but most of all we have the Douglas County lifestyle. A lifestyle built on quality of life, open spaces, wild horses, awesome trails, the best Tahoe skiing, bald eagle viewing at calving time, and some of the best people you will ever meet. If you are thinking of moving your business to Douglas County, that decision will change the way you live … for the better. It's truly a lifestyle.

I hope to see you all at the many outdoor events across our community this summer. If you see me, please come say hello. You are all an important part of the Douglas County lifestyle.

Lee Bonner is chairman of the Douglas County Commission.

USFS: Looking back at Angora provides lessons for the future

By Nancy Gibson

The Angora Fire was a significant and emotional event for the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, just as it was for the community as a whole. Many of our employees are members of the Meyers community, and experienced the emotional trauma of evacuation or learning of homes that were damaged or

destroyed. Our wildland firefighters joined firefighters from our local districts and CalFire, among others, all of them true heroes as they fought to contain the wildfire and protect our neighborhoods from further harm.

Five years later, I want to take a moment to look back and see how far we've come. But I also want to look to the future, and the work that's left to do.

In the fire area itself, we've made significant progress, including addressing immediate safety concerns, preventing erosion and runoff, and thinning trees to reduce fuel that could feed another wildfire in the decades to come. We've also planted thousands of native trees to help restore a healthier forest. During the summer, we'll be continuing fuels reduction and working to improve our road and trail system. In the next few years, restoring Angora Creek and Seneca Pond will close out our efforts to restore the fire area.



Angora Fire --
5 years later

Most residents of the Lake Tahoe Basin probably know by now what I mean when I say fuels reduction – thinning trees and removing brush that could allow a wildfire to spread rapidly and with greater intensity. The Angora Fire gave our fuels reduction treatments their first test. These treatments proved very effective, performing as intended in dropping the fire down to the forest floor and providing firefighters a safer place from which to defend the neighborhoods. Their effectiveness could clearly be seen in the still-green trees

that remained in many of the treated units.

In the early days of our fuels reduction efforts, we often heard from residents and long-term visitors who were taken aback by the appearance of the forest after we thinned the trees. In the years since Angora, the community has become much more accepting of fuels reduction and prescribed fire. We will depend on this support for active management as we implement the South Shore Fuel Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project, meant to help protect Lake Tahoe's largest community from wildfire.

During a span of eight years, we will complete initial treatments to reduce forest fuels on more than 10,000 acres, from the Nevada state line to Cascade Lake. For the first time on the California side of the lake, we've reached agreements with regulatory agencies that will allow us to effectively treat stream environment zones, using chainsaw crews and mechanical equipment. We're working with our partners to develop projects that reduce risk to our communities while respecting our environment. With the Incline, Carnelian and West Shore projects in the planning and permitting phases, we must all remain committed to streamlining the approval process and getting projects on the ground.



LTBMU Forest

Supervisor Nancy Gibson plants trees in the Angora burn. Photo/Provided

While we're making progress on many fronts, I am concerned that we've failed to heed one of the most critical lessons of the Angora Fire. On June 24, 2007, the simple, thoughtless act of making an illegal campfire and leaving it burning on a windy day caused hundreds of families to lose their homes and forced thousands of others to evacuate. Despite the teachable moment provided by this devastating fire, human activities remain the cause of most wildland fires in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The Forest Service is proud of our record for wildfire suppression. But given the wrong mix of conditions, any one of these fires has the potential to become another Angora.

As we approach the summer after an exceptionally dry winter, I know we're all a little uneasy. Let's focus that energy on remembering the hard-taught lessons of Angora and preparing the best we can. As forest supervisor, I'll be working with our staff to implement forest health and fuels reduction projects. At home, I'll make sure I've done my defensible space, stay alert to fire danger and prepare an emergency plan for my family. I hope you will do the same. Please stay safe this summer.

Nancy Gibson is forest supervisor for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

Reflections of Angora Fire 5 years after the devastation

Life goes on, but that does not mean we can or should forget the past. To do so means the likelihood of forgetting what we have learned. Complacency can set in – which is never a good thing.

That is why with the five-year anniversary of the Angora Fire coming up later this month *Lake Tahoe News* is taking a look back and a look forward. This fire that started on June 24, 2007, wiped out 254 houses on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe. These were homes primarily filled with our friends and colleagues.

While no one has been brought to justice for not fully extinguishing the campfire near Seneca Pond that started the fire, the investigation continues.



Angora Fire -- 5 years later

The people living in the Angora burn at the time of the fire and today are resilient folks. They had to endure heartache and suffering, and still today all the wounds are not healed. Perhaps, they never can heal. But the people are moving forward.

We know it can be hard to do so when reminders of the fire can't be ignored. Charred trees still dot the landscape. Winds blow like they never did before. Lights from neighbors are visible when before the trees blocked that glare.

Vegetation and animal life have changed. It's not just the people who were affected by this inferno.

Plenty of lessons have been learned from this fire that burned about 3,100 acres – mostly on U.S. Forest Service land, caused more than $150 million in damage and cost $23 million to fight.

About 80 percent of the terrain burned in Angora was charred within eight hours.

What has happened to that land in the last five years and do we have the resources to fight another Angora?

Those questions and more will be answered during the course of the next four Sundays as *Lake Tahoe News* explores various aspects of this wildland fire.

We have not attempted to cover every angle of this fire and the aftermath. We are not here to point fingers.

What we hope the four-day series will do is provide a glimpse of what has gone on in the past five years. It's also an opportunity for people and agencies close to the fire to offer their perspectives.

Anyone who was here while the fire raged has a story to tell. We hope you will share yours during the question of the week that is posted on Wednesdays, through letters, or in comments.

But, please, be respectful in your comments on stories.

We want to thank everyone who wrote a story for this endeavor, who shared his or her stories. Thank you to the U.S. Forest Service and Lake Valley Fire Protection District for providing many of the photos. Thank you to Tahoe Production House for compiling the video and slideshows.

Thank you to the firefighters, law enforcement and others who contributed to ensuring not a single life was lost and that the fire, while horrendous, was not any worse than it was.

Thank you to the people of the Angora burn area – those who stayed and those who moved elsewhere – for showing everyone what courage, tenacity and community are all about.

Facts:

• June 24, 2007, Angora Fire started

• July 2, 2007, fire fully contained

• 3,100 acres burned

• 254 houses destroyed

• July 5, 2007, bi-state commission formed

• Aug. 9, 2007, Stan and Diana Freeman are the first to pour their foundation.

• 56,317 tons of ash and rubble were removed and transported for disposal (2,823 truckloads); 6,134 tons of concrete (352 truckloads) and 2,001 tons of metal were recycled (90 truckloads); and 8,511 tons of trees were recycled for lumber (405 truckloads).

• El Dorado County waived building fees for people not expanding their footprint. However, more than half went bigger.

• May 27, 2008, governors declare state of emergency in Lake Tahoe Basin. Fire commission's 247-page report's six categories are: Environmental Protection, Issues of Governance, Community and Homeowner Fire Prevention, Forest and Fuels Management, Fire Suppression, and Funding.

• June 2008, 63 percent of the homeowners had filed building plans with the county. Of those 161 permits, 153 applications were filed in 2007 so they could use California's old building regulations.

• June 2012, of 499 affected parcels, seven vacant parcels have changed ownership, 77 single-family residences have changed ownership.

Opinion: Ideas for the ice rink and a S. Tahoe event

To the community,

Two items that might be of interest:

First, after I left the City Council, I met with City Manager (Tony) O'Rourke two or three times. At one of the meetings, he told me about the plan to privatize the ice rink. He said the contractor wanted a 10-year contract. I said I favored a five-year contract for openers. Mr. O'Rourke said that a 10-year contract was needed because of the capital improvements that the contractor had in mind. I said, OK, but if privatizing doesn't work, I suggested the ice rink be turned into a city hall. It is, I said, an ideal location with parking, etc. Mr. O'Rourke, as I recall, agreed it's a good location.



Bill Crawford

Second, several weeks ago I suggested to the city an idea for a special event. I thought a film festival of the movies based on several of John Steinbeck's novels would be a natural because Steinbeck for a time lived at Fallen Leaf Lake. Steinbeck was quoted as having said that Henry Fonda's performance in "The Grapes of Wrath" got him, Steinbeck believing his own words. With what's going on these days, we need to again hear those words. The city did listen to my idea, and there has been some feedback. But lately it's pretty quiet.

Perhaps in July things will pick up in the city.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

PS: In Steinbeck's "The Red Pony" Tahoe is mentioned.

Opinion: Measure F ensures funding for North Lake Tahoe projects

By Sandy Evans Hall

In 1996, North Lake Tahoe residents voted to increase the existing transient occupancy tax from 8 percent to 10 percent, which is paid by overnight visitors to the area. North Lake Tahoe residents do not pay this tax.

This 2 percent tax increase, which was renewed by voters in 2002, has been used to fund approximately $30 million in public improvement projects and services, such as beaches and bike trails, throughout the North Lake Tahoe region.

These monies have also been leveraged via local, state and federal funding to generate $160 million for projects the area could not otherwise afford.



Sandy Evans Hall

Since 1996, North Lake Tahoe's 2 percent TOT dollars have helped pay for improvements at Commons Beach and Squaw Valley Community Park, the construction of the Midway Bridge to Squaw Valley Bike Trail and the Tahoe City Lakeside Bike Trail, funding for the North Lake Tahoe Express Airport Shuttle and area bus shelters, and the Tahoe City Beautification Project and regional way-finding signage.

On June 5, 2012, North Lake Tahoe voters will again put the 2 percent renewal to a vote. It is not a tax increase, but a renewal of an existing measure that will continue to be paid by lodging guests – not North Lake Tahoe taxpayers.

The approval of Measure F requires a 50 percent plus one affirmative vote, and the passage of Measure F ensures funding

for the next 10 years – until 2022.

It's important to note that Measure F funding will only be used for projects and services in North Lake Tahoe, and will continue to require an annual independent audit of all funds and expenditures by a non-county, private CPA firm.

If the 2 percent TOT is not renewed, North Lake Tahoe will lose more than $2 million in revenue per year for public improvement projects and services.

I encourage you to educate yourself about Measure F and what it means to our North Lake Tahoe community, and plan to vote on June 5, 2012.

Sandy Evans Hall is CEO-executive director of the North Lake Tahoe Chamber/CVB/Resort Association.

Opinion: Congress' politics getting otter

By David Helvarg

The U.S. economy remains in such dire straits that Congress barely has had time to introduce a bill to exclude sea otters from migrating into Southern California waters. And if you think they ought to take a more commonsense approach to our coastal economy, they just voted to defund that, too.

Rep. Elton Gallegly, a Republican from Simi Valley (Ventura County) has introduced the Military Readiness and Southern California Sea Otter Conservation Act, on what must have been

an Opposite Day because the bill's aim is to exclude sea otters from migrating back into their historic range south of Point Conception, though no one at the Pentagon seems to care.

The bill was inspired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recent decision to give up on a failed 25-year policy – supported by commercial fishing interests – of trying to stop otters heading south. Past captures and relocations killed a number of young otters trying to colonize new territory. But in recent years, the small population around Monterey has failed to grow and so is at risk of extinction should a major oil spill or other disaster strike.

The bill claims that if the otters are allowed to establish a new population off someplace like Malibu, then they'll interfere with military exercises. Six months ago, I spent time with the Navy and Marines training off Southern California and not one sailor or Marine expressed fear of otters to me. In fact, they got kind of excited when we'd spot dolphins, whales and sunfish in the waters off our ship.

Still, a California sea urchin diver told a House committee, "We need to balance the needs of all species, including human beings." Apparently California's sea otters, now numbering around 2,700, threaten to crowd out California's 37 million people. The citizens group Friends of the Sea Otter calls Gallegly's bill "dangerously counter-productive."

It's stories like this that make one wish that President Obama's National Ocean Policy, which he signed in the wake of the BP oil blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, would get implemented sooner rather than later. This initiative, after all, is based on the recommendations of two blue-ribbon commissions, one appointed by President George W. Bush and the other headed by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.

David Helvarg is an author and executive director of the Blue Frontier Campaign. His book, "The Golden Shore – California's

Love Affair With the Sea," will be out in 2013.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Unnatural forests are depleting water supply

By Helen M. Poulos and James G. Workman

Ronald Reagan once justified logging with "a tree is a tree; how many more do you need to look at?" Besides, he warned, "trees cause more pollution than automobiles." We cringed at his biases. Yet due to forces none foresaw, Reagan's gaffes may now ring true.

Today, the hottest and thirstiest parts of the United States are best described as over-forested. Vigorous federal protection has stocked semiarid regions of public land with several billion trees too many. And day after day these excess trees deplete a natural resource that has become far more precious than toilet paper or 2-by-4's: water.

Scientists and water managers report that 39 states face water scarcity. Much of the nation's freshwater shortfall comes from our population growth, waste, hunger and contaminants. But we must also now implicate the escalating thirst of unnatural forests.

Water depletion from afforestation – the establishment of trees or tree stands where none previously were – is the unintended consequence of a wildly popular federal policy. For millenniums, fires set by lightning or Native Americans limited forest stocks to roughly a few dozen trees per acre.

All that changed after the nationally terrifying Big Blowup wildfires of 1910, which led the United States to in effect declare war on wildfire. The government's wartime-like tactics included security watchtowers, propaganda, aerial bombing and color-coded threat alerts. Uncle Sam trained elite Hotshot and Smokejumper crews to snuff out enemy flames. Congress annually funded the war effort with an emergency blank check, now $2.5 billion.

Helen M. Poulos is a fire ecologist and postdoctoral teaching fellow at Wesleyan University's College of the Environment. James G. Workman, a former wildland forest firefighter, is a visiting professor at Wesleyan and the author of "Heart of Dryness".

Read the whole story

Opinion: Law governing loss of pet dog needs to change

By Kenneth Newman

Is the loss of a pet is akin to the loss of furniture, a computer or a car?

As a 33-year veterinarian and author of "Meet Me at the Rainbow Bridge", I have proposed a law that answers this question. Gracie's Law recognizes the emotional bond between pet and owner by entitling the owner of a pet killed through an act of malice or negligence to $25,000 in damages.

It's time we change the laws to more accurately reflect what pets mean to the average American.

Gracie's Law would not supersede current laws which entitle owners to the property value of their pet. And it would not replace criminal prosecution for acts of malice. And owners who decline a recommended veterinarian procedure to save a pet would not be held accountable under the law, he says.

My dog Gracie was killed in April 2008 when a negligent driver backed up 25 yards without looking, crushing me and Gracie between two vehicles. I escaped with a broken leg; Gracie saved my life.

An attorney looked me in the eye and said that my dog was a piece of property, that I wasn't entitled to anything for the dog, and that this was a simple broken-leg case.

In every state, laws view pets as property. Owners are entitled to no more than replacement value; no law takes into consideration the loss of companionship, grief, or pain and suffering.

That doesn't jibe with Americans' attitude toward their pets. According to an American Animal Hospital Association survey, 90 percent of owners consider their animals part of the family.

Other findings:

• 52 percent of Americans would rather be stranded on a deserted island with their pet than with another person.

• 83 percent call themselves "mommy" or "daddy" in reference to their pet.

• 59 percent celebrate their pet's birthday.

Cases involving pet owners' bonds are increasingly showing up in the courts:

• Matrimonial law: Attorneys have experienced a 23 percent increase in pet cases, according to the American Academy of

Matrimonial Lawyers. This includes custody battles over pets, veterinarian bills and visitation rights. Harvard now has a course dedicated to pet law.

• The North Carolina Court of Appeals: While the plaintiff's wrongful death lawsuit was denied, animal activists applaud a judge's willingness to at least hear a case involving a Jack Russell terrier that died while undergoing tube feeding at a state facility.

• Texas justice: On Nov. 3, 2011, Fort Worth's 2nd Court of Appeals ruled that value can be attached to the love of a dog. That overruled a 120-year-old Texas Supreme Court case, which held that plaintiffs can only recoup the market value of their pets.

• Largest award: In April, a Denver judge awarded Robin Lohre $65,000 for the death of her dog, Ruthie. Lohre had accused Posh Maids cleaning service of negligence for allowing the dog to get outside, where it was hit by a car. Newman notes this sets a new precedent for pet value, but that such uncapped awards may threaten affordable veterinary care.

Kenneth Newman graduated from Purdue University with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree in 1979, and has since been a practicing vet.

Opinion: A time to remember those who died for the U.S.

Memorial Day is often called the kick-off to summer. The real meaning of today goes much deeper.

Memorial Day is about honoring those in each branch of the military who have died for the United States.

As much as it’s easy to say war is not necessary. It is a reality. People have been dying for this country for close to 250 years. They die every week.

The names of these men and women whose lives are cut short are seldom mentioned unless they are from the town where you live. But they were a daughter or son, a mother or father, a niece or nephew, a sister or brother, a friend.

South Lake Tahoe has had its share of recent losses – Pfc. Brandon Williams, 21, died in October 2006; Sgt. Tim Smith, 25, in April 2008; Spc. Garrett A. Yant, 21, September 2011.





Tim Smith's family remembers him every day with this memorial

in the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe. Photos/LTN

Walking through Happy Homestead Cemetery tells a story about this areas rich military history. Men and women here have been and continue to serve in the military. Some serve during times of peace, others during war, or other conflicts.

Lake Tahoe News believes a debt of gratitude is owed to the people who today serve on a voluntary basis. And we can't forget about those who were told they would serve or face the threat of being jailed.

How many of us have the courage to wear one of those uniforms? It's a small percentage of the overall population.

As you gather with friends and family today, take a look around. Many families are without someone today because they were killed in action, a training mission or some other circumstance. They did die fighting for our freedoms.

Yes, we all suffer loss, but would we be willing to die for our country?

—

Ceremonies:

• 11am, Happy Homestead Cemetery, South Lake Tahoe.

• 11am, El Dorado County Veterans Monument, Placerville.