Column: California's football losers

By Joe Mathews

No one can know for sure whether any of California's four National Football League teams—the 49ers, Raiders, Rams, and Chargers—will emerge as big winners in the new season.

But we already know who the losers will be: California cities foolish enough to host NFL teams.

Joe Mathews

In the rest of America, major cities try to attract the NFL because they see football franchises as providing a publicity and economic boost. But in California, where the economy is nation-sized and our big cities already are globally famous, the dynamic is the opposite. Our big cities have been shedding their pro football teams, and avoiding the headaches of devoting valuable California real estate to stadiums within their jurisdictions.

In this contest, the biggest winner is San Francisco, which got free of its NFL headache by "losing" the 49ers to Santa Clara. Across the Bay, Oakland, which resisted building a new stadium for the Raiders, will get its reward in three years, with the team's departure for Las Vegas.

San Diego registered its civic triumph when—after its voters defeated the last of 15 years' worth of proposals for lavish new Chargers stadiums—the team left town this summer for a temporary home in the city of Carson. In 2020, the Chargers, along with the Rams—who relocated to Southern California in 2016, after two decades in St. Louis—will move into a new, shared stadium in the small city of Inglewood.

The destinations of these teams are telling. The only places in California willing to risk permanently hosting an NFL team are smaller, poorer, obscure cities that sit in the shadow of global municipalities. Desperate for high-profile development, they are willing to devote land and resources to teams that won't even use their new cities in their names. The teams are called the San Francisco 49ers, and Los Angeles Rams, not the Santa Clara 49ers or Inglewood Rams.

And that represents the least of the indignities of being an NFL city. Economic studies show that sports teams deliver few economic benefits—they merely siphon dollars from other entertainment-oriented businesses. And then there's the costs of civic conflict that greedy NFL teams can engender.

Three years after the 49ers relocated to Santa Clara, city and team are engaged in a bitter fight. The Santa Clara-49ers conflict has involved the team's use of kids' soccer fields for parking, the amount the 49ers pay in rent, massive traffic jams on games days, and a city audit of stadium spending.

"We learned we cannot trust the 49ers," Santa Clara's mayor, Lisa Gillmor, told the *San Francisco Chronicle* this spring.

Things aren't that bad in Inglewood yet. The opening of that stadium—part of a larger entertainment development—is still three years away. Construction is already a year behind schedule, and community opposition is growing. There's also the whiff of bait-and-switch.

The stadium was sold as a private project that would cost the city next to nothing. But it turns out that the city could end up giving the project an estimated $100 million in tax breaks.

None of this should surprise. Most NFL teams are wildly profitable, so those teams that must relocate all carry the stink of failure. It’s no coincidence that their owners show up on media lists of the worst owners in all sports.

These include the Rams’ owner, Stan Kroenke, who got super-rich by marrying a Walmart heiress, and who has produced teams with miserable attendance and losing records for more than a decade. The Spanos family, which owns the Chargers, alienated most of San Diego with poor management, and farcical plans for new stadiums. Raiders owner Mark Davis, perhaps the NFL’s poorest owner, inherited the team from his late father, Al Davis, a litigious scoundrel who moved the team from Oakland to L.A. and back.

And the 49ers? *USA Today* this year said owner Jed York had turned the team into “the NFL’s biggest joke.”

No wonder cities have let these owners leave. And life after NFL football looks pretty good.

San Francisco, sans the 49ers, is more prosperous than ever, and is using the land at Candlestick Park, its former home, for developments more valuable than the stadium was. San Diego is still wrestling with the costs of the Chargers’ old stadium. But it is also starting to imagine the happier possibilities of what could replace it.

And Oakland should find that the departure of the Raiders from O.co Coliseum, as well as the exit of basketball’s Golden State Warriors from the arena next door to the Coliseum, opens up transformational opportunities for land that sits next to a transit center.

But enough about the winners. NFL football in California is for losers. Pity the home teams.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Opinion: LTCC denounces DACA decision

By Jeff DeFranco

Lake Tahoe Community College joins the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office and Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley in denouncing the White House’s action on Tuesday to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.


Jeff DeFranco

The program protects 800,000 immigrant youth who were brought to the United States by their parents from deportation, and gives them the freedom to work, learn, and live their lives. These young people attend high schools and colleges, hold jobs, and in some cases serve in the United States Armed Forces. This is the only country, and sometimes the only language and culture, many of them know.

On Tuesday, Oakley described ending DACA as a “senseless decision that goes against American ideals and basic human decency. In California, we don’t put dreams – or Dreamers – on hold.”

Lake Tahoe Community College remains committed to serving all students, regardless of their backgrounds or immigration status. We are committed to providing them with a safe learning environment. And, we will continue to protect the private information that all of our students provide in the college application and registration process.

I have met many of our DACA students, and I know they are contributing members of our college and our community. I want our DACA students to know that we stand with them and remain fully committed to helping them achieve their educational goals.

The decision to “unwind” DACA does not impact LTCC students’ ability to attend college, qualify for an exemption from non-resident tuition fees under AB540, or to apply for financial aid under the provisions of the California Dream Act. These are state programs that are entirely separate and distinct from DACA and the federal enforcement of immigration laws.

Current DACA students should know that the action taken by the White House does not mean that the DACA program has been terminated. Instead, a six-month window was created by the Trump administration for Congress to put the program into legislation. For now, current DACA students should know that:

- Anyone with a current DACA status can continue to enjoy the benefits of the program, including deferred action and work authorization.
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not intend to terminate an individual’s DACA status prior to its stated expiration date.
- An individual whose DACA status is set to expire between now and March 5, 2018, may still apply for a renewal of their DACA status. However, the application for renewal must be accepted by Oct. 5, 2017.

This information comes from a DHS memorandum released on Sept. 5. A link to the entire memorandum is **here**.

For more information about the California Dream Act and Tuesday's DACA announcement, please go **online**.

Jeff DeFranco is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

Opinion: Tahoe the talk of Hollywood

By Carol Chaplin

This past week is one for the record books in South Lake Tahoe. I know, you're thinking record temperatures, attendance at one of our special events or our filled-to-capacity lake. All wrong – I'm referring to ABC's Emmy Award-winning hit TV comedy series "Modern Family" and the filming of the show's season premiere here at South Shore.

Carol Chaplin

Now in its ninth season, the television mockumentary sitcom follows the lives of an extended family living in suburban Los Angeles. This year's premiere is centered around a joint houseboat vacation on Lake Tahoe. The episode is scheduled to air on ABC Sept. 27.

How does a hit television series go on location? It takes partnerships and coordination. A lot of coordination.

It all started with a call from Kathleen Dodge with the El Dorado County Film Commission to us/LTVA to explain the opportunity. She worked tirelessly with LTVA team and partners on strategy meetings, phone calls, emails, text messages, scouting trips, planning, etc. Dodge also worked with the production team to secure permits through the U.S. Forest Service, coordinated with Matt Green of California State Parks, and the El Dorado Service Office Marine Division. She had the support from El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel as well as El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce CEO Laurel Brent-Bumb and director of tourism, Jody Franklin.

In initial planning stages, Dodge had a site visit brunch at Riva Grill with "Modern Family's" creative team to showcase the destination. Councilmember Tom Davis, local photographer Tim White, and Greg Almos with El Dorado County Sheriff's Office joined them to brainstorm turning this into reality.

Our team assisted with Dodge for cast/crew accommodations and leveraging local business involvement in South Shore/El Dorado County. All of this gave us an up close behind the scenes look at how Hollywood magic really happens.

The Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe was headquarters for the cast during their week of shooting, while the crew made Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel their home away from home. Camp Richardson's marina became a set staging area as the cast took over the resort's marina duplex for hair and makeup, and added barges, boats, Jet Skis, and security. Bob Hassett and team at the marina were flexible, patient and accommodating. The production crew of approximately 150 people were amazing, courtesy and the kind of guests you dream of working with.

Word that the celebrities were in town started to spread as the cast and crew expressed their awe of Lake Tahoe on their personal social media accounts, starting with actress Julie Bowen’s Instagram post of a Tahoe sunset from Edgewood Lodge the night of her arrival, tagging it simply, “Ok, Tahoe. You got me.”

Sofia Vergara, who plays Gloria Pritchett on the show has 13 million-plus Instagram followers and posted 20-plus images/video on her channel with majority of posts garnering a minimum of 100K likes each. The cast enjoyed South Shore’s offerings during their time off including mountain biking, escaping Trapped in Tahoe’s rooms, dining, and sunsets. Jesse Tyler Ferguson sang the destination’s praises at the end with, “Lake Tahoe, you have been amazing.”

These posts did not go unnoticed by journalists and resulted in national media stories about the filming including Travel + Leisure, Hollywood Reporter and UK Daily Mail.

You can’t buy this kind of exposure – it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Through the EDC Film Commission and our local partners, we will continue to garner millions of impressions of our incredible destination.

And the show just keeps on giving. A “Modern Family Supporting Local Families” themed-airing party will benefit Tahoe Women’s Community Fund on Sept. 27. The evening includes viewing the premiere, featuring South Lake Tahoe, raffle prizes, snacks and beverages for purchase at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, from 7:30-9:30pm. Tickets are available for $20 in advance by emailing khaven@gmail.com.

We look forward to exploring more partnerships with the film commission. We already knew South Shore was a star. Now where’s our Emmy?

Carol Chaplin is CEO and president of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

Letter: Heavenly helps at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Another Bread & Broth Monday meal and another Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsored by Heavenly Mountain Resort. Thanks to funding provided by Vail’s EpicPromise grant, Heavenly Mountain Resort hosted B&B’s Monday meal on Aug. 28.

Signing up to support the B&B volunteers were Heavenly’s hospitality market team members Michelle Beall, Chris Eckert, Katie Ficeto and Carley Piper.

The sponsor’s $250 donation helps to pay for the food, supplies and utility costs that are needed to provide the full course, nutritious meal that fed the dinner guests that arrived at Grace Hall for the evening’s dinner. The guests were treated to roast beef covered in gravy, roasted potatoes, broccoli, and a beautiful fruit salad, all lovingly prepared by B&B’s talented cooks and warmly served by Heavenly’s sponsor crew.

According to Eckert, he and his team members were excited about their experience at the Heavenly sponsored dinner. “Experienced the connection with the community. Recognized people we see out in the community and are stoked we are able to help and support our South Lake Tahoe neighbors.”

Eckert and his team members were really helpful and were kept busy serving the 106 dinner guests and then dishing out seconds to 33 diners who returned for another serving.

Kudos to Heavenly and their sponsor crew members for their dedication to improving the quality of life for those struggling with hunger.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Good governance an oxymoron in EDC

By Larry Weitzman

Thomas Jefferson said it best as to what is good governance when he said, “Those who govern least, govern best.”

I wonder how many high school seniors are aware of TJ’s quote?

Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County is currently spending (wasting) tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in trying to figure out good governance using consultants and massive amounts of time being devoted by high ranking county officials, both elected and in the EDC administration. At a meeting on Aug. 28 a draft of a 12-page document was produced called the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors Governance Manual.

It’s all part of a “strategic plan.” The main purpose of a county is public safety and roads and acting as a fiduciary to make sure county revenues are first spent on those priorities wisely. Everything else is secondary. When I hear the word strategic, I think of the Strategic Air Command or SAC, not some county bureaucrats trying to reinvent the wheel. If the residents of El Dorado County want “good governance” we don’t need 12 pages of government speak with buzz words like protocol, rules of engagement, vision, mission, strategic goals, governance principles, the Board of Supervisors governing as a team, shared purpose, and I could go on. What a crock! We don’t need a team, we need checks and balances. What they want sounds more like socialism (shared purpose).

On Page 8 of this manual is their definition of good governance which states, “achieving the best possible process for making and implementing decisions; characterized by honesty, integrity, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitability, inclusion, effectiveness, efficiency and following the rule of law. If you have to have inclusion, it might be a hindrance to effectiveness and efficiency. But as to honesty and transparency (notice the words “absolute, complete and total” are missing and the using of the word “characterized” as the weasel word), there is no such thing in our current government except for a very few. Honesty and transparency certainly didn’t come in to play with the CAO’s “decision” to cut senior legal. That was pure politics, as are many decisions inside government. It wasn’t about saving $250,000; it was about retaliation. But we were told some big lies, particularly from the head of HHSA. Things like this happen all the time in EDC. Manual or no manual, “good governance” will continue as “old governance.”

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to administer public safety, road construction and maintenance. What it does take is holding government employees accountable in performing the functions for which they are hired and to perform those functions properly in a timely manner. And maybe more important is for those employees at any level in government to always understand that they work for the public, the residents of El Dorado County. Most of those residents never use any other county functions other than the sheriff, district attorney and probation department to provide for our public safety and to maintain our roads and appurtenances (gutters, culverts, etc.) of which even those jobs get colored by politics.

You want honesty and transparency then the following six words needed to be added to the Constitutional Oath of Office: I will perform my duties and all job functions with "Absolute Honesty, Complete Transparency and with Pristine Ethics." Each employee and government functionary will swear to those six words in performing their duties. Failure to comply will subject an employee to an immediate dismissal.

When you work for government you are a fiduciary to the people, and that fiduciary is critical in governing. The ultimate fiduciary rests with the sheriff as he has the power of arrest just as the district attorney has the power to prosecute. The people bestow this power upon people who must uphold that fiduciary.

If you think there is complete transparency, then why have we hired a spin doctor to keep the public away from those very people who are supposed to perform services? The idea of a spin doctor is the antithesis of transparency. If you are doing the right thing in government, why do you need someone to toot your horn or spin the facts to make you look good? Our current spin doctor, Carla Haas, has done it time and time again, publishing excuses or throwing out red herrings when failing to provide "good government." Government employees need to answer to their employers (the people) directly. It will make them honest, even though they should be sworn under oath that they would only act in such a manner.

In fact, this whole “good governance” is a PR stunt, in and of itself. The current administration and Board of Supervisors want to make themselves look good: “Hey look we’re trying to have good governance.” It’s a lot like the Affordable Care Act, which in fact for most working, middle class people became the “Unaffordable Care Act” as coverage went down and premiums skyrocketed. But for those who didn’t have insurance, for whatever reason, and got insurance, it was paid for by the government (taxpayers). It was the biggest welfare program since the Great Society.

In the past, and even in the future, with all this good governance stuff, there will still be no written justification and record keeping requirements to spending the people’s money on sole source contracts. That’s outrageous. The motto “Share the wealth, hire your friends” plays a big role here. Several public servants were more prone to the hiring of friends than to meet county needs: Terri Daly, Kim Kerr, Pam Knorr and Larry Combs were pros at that. Things need to drastically change in our hiring, especially with respect to sole source contracts. We need thorough background checks. Job evaluations are mostly rubbered stamped and real evaluations are seldom performed.

This all requires Board of Supervisors to make drastic changes with respect to hiring, retention, evaluation and firing policies while demanding absolute honesty and transparency from staff and themselves instead of the self-serving platitudes of the draft “good governance” manual which is, in fact, an oxymoron.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Embracing change on Labor Day

By Kathryn Reed

It was in 1894 that Congress passed legislation making the first Monday of September a holiday in honor of those who labor.

More than 120 years later the labor force is dramatically different, and yet not so much. There are still carpenters, teachers, nurses and many other professions from the 19th century.

But who could have envisioned the shared economy we have today that is upending the norms of long-held traditions? Visionaries. That's who.

Innovation and progress are the American way. People are always looking for new ways to provide an old product. We are looking for new products to improve upon what we have. And then there is the creation of entirely new commodities and services.

The world today is moving fast. It's easy to fall behind. Technology is a blessing and a bane.

I look at when I was in college. I had an electric typewriter. There were students who couldn't type who paid me to type their papers. Today, every elementary school student can type because they are using computers in the classroom. I think about the discs I had for old computers. Now I'm on the couch typing this on a laptop; my work is automatically saved in the cloud.

(This device also serves as my Kindle, stereo and primary communication tool to the world.)

As a kid I looked forward to watching certain TV shows on set nights. “The Wonderful World of Disney” was on Sundays, and was family time. Is there even that sense of anticipation anymore? It was a big deal when I got my first VHR player. Then a DVD player. Now I don’t own either. I stream and watch shows at all hours of the day and night, nothing to record. Binge watching – gotta love it.

It’s easy to take these advances in technology for granted. It’s easy to ignore that these “improvements” displaced some workers. Jobs were eliminated. It was more than downsizing; it was that the actual job no longer existed. It’s happened in my own profession. While I don’t remember lead type, I do remember newspapers being pasted up. I even remember paper.

Nothing stays the same. That can be sad. We all have a sense of nostalgia for the good ole days – whenever those were for each of us.

I hear a lot of grumbling about the shared economy from those who are content with the status quo. Change is hard. It’s especially difficult when you’ve built a successful business – the model has worked for years – and suddenly you feel blindsided. It’s not an enviable position to be in.

But change isn’t new.

Successful businesses provide the consumer with what they want. Steve Jobs, the late Apple Computer co-founder, told *Business Week*, “A lot of times, people don’t know what they want until you show it to them.”

Who knew people wanted lime colored bikes to ride in South Lake Tahoe? Apparently the owners of LimeBike. Much to the consternation of some folks this concept of renting a bike for a few minutes and dropping it off pretty much anywhere is too much for them. It’s upending their business model.

Ah, those words – change, adaptability, innovation, progress.

It’s hard when it’s forced upon you. It’s hard when you are the follower and not the leader. It’s hard when all you want to do is keep things just as they are and the world around you won’t let that happen.

The founders of Airbnb didn’t really create something new; they put a modern twist on a short-term boarding house. The lodging industry is adapting.

Ride sharing companies have turned the taxi industry upside down.

Food trucks and delivery services are changing what it means to eat out.

Massage therapists travel to people’s houses; not everyone needs a spa.

Businesses don’t need their own four walls, but instead are content to share space with others – even on an hourly basis.

The news comes to an inbox and not the front porch.

Change. It happens in every business. Sometimes if feels like it comes at a glacial pace, sometimes at the speed of light.

Fighting it is rarely successful. It’s the consumer, really, who will dictate what succeeds.

Hopefully, it’s a labor of love that keeps you punching that proverbial time clock. Just don’t get too complacent, change is coming – it always does.

Kathryn Reed is publisher of Lake Tahoe News.

Editorial: Labor bill bad for counties, taxpayers and residents

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Aug. 24, 2017, Santa Rosa Press Democrat.***

Even after eight years of economic expansion, California counties continue to struggle to keep budgets in check under the growing strain of retirement and medical costs for public employees. But that problem would grow substantially worse under a contemptuous bill now working its way through the halls of the state Legislature.

Assembly Bill 1250 by Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, D-Los Angeles, would severely limit the ability of counties to contract with community-based organizations, nonprofits and other groups to provide homeless shelters, mental health care and other services that local governments are not set up to provide on their own.

Why? The intent is clear. This bill, supported by public employee unions, would essentially force counties to use only public employees to deliver services. It would raise costs or, worse, force governments to give up on providing some needed services.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Importance of fire rating system

By Lisa Herron

As we drive through the state and national forests we have all seen the Smokey Bear fire danger rating signs. What do those signs mean and what are the criteria for low, moderate, high, very high and extreme ratings?

What is the National Fire Danger Rating System?

The National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) is a system allowing fire managers to estimate today's or tomorrow's fire danger for a given area. The system combines the effects of existing and expected states of selected fire danger factors into one or more qualitative or numeric indices reflecting the area's fire protection needs. It links an organization's readiness level (or pre-planned fire suppression actions) to the potential fire problems of the day.

Knowledge of these levels can guide forest visitors to make decisions regarding whether or not to have a campfire or ride their OHV in a grassy area. Homeowners may choose to postpone burning a debris pile if they are aware of the fire danger level for that day. Contractors working in the forest may consider extra precautions when using equipment which might produce sparks. In some cases, the National Forest may even restrict certain activities based on the fire danger levels.

· What fire danger factors are used to get the fire danger rating?

· The key inputs into the NFDRS model are: fuels, weather, topography and risks.

· How is fire danger different than fire behavior predictions?

Fire danger is a broad scale assessment while fire behavior is site specific. In other words, fire danger ratings describe conditions reflecting the potential, over a large area, for a fire to ignite, spread and require suppression action. Fire behavior deals with an existing fire in a given time and space, describing the movement, intensity and indicators of rapid combustion of an ongoing fire.

What do you mean by adjective rating?

The "adjective ratings" are a public information description of the relative severity of the current fire danger situation in a general area. Adjective ratings are generally posted on signs as visitor enter public lands or at agency offices. Many people associate these signs as "Smokey Bear signs".

What are the different levels and what do they mean?

We use five different color-coded levels to help the public understand fire potential. The purpose of this is for visitors to understand the current conditions and help mitigate their actions to prevent human-caused wildfires.

Fire danger level: Low

When the fire danger is "low" it means fuels don't ignite easily from small embers, but a more intense heat source, such as lightning, may start fires in duff or dry rotten wood. Fires in open, dry grasslands may burn easily a few hours after a rain, but most wood fires will spread slowly, creeping or smoldering. Control of fires is generally easy.

Fire danger level: Moderate

When the fire danger is "moderate" it means fires can start from most accidental causes, but the number of fire starts is usually pretty low. If a fire does start in an open, dry grassland, it will burn and spread quickly on windy days. Most wood fires will spread slowly to moderately. Average fire intensity will be moderate except in heavy concentrations of fuel, which may burn hot. Fires are still not likely to become serious and are often easy to control.

Fire danger level: High

When the fire danger is “high” fires can start easily from most causes and small fuels (such as grasses and needles) will ignite readily. Unattended campfires and brush fires are likely to escape. Fires will spread easily, with some areas of high-intensity burning on slopes or concentrated fuels. Fires can become serious and difficult to control unless they are put out while they are still small.

Fire danger level: Very high

When the fire danger is “very high” fires will start easily from most causes. The fires will spread rapidly and have a quick increase in intensity, right after ignition. Small fires can quickly become large fires and exhibit extreme fire intensity, such as long-distance spotting and fire whirls. These fires can be difficult to control and will often become much larger and longer-lasting fires.

Fire danger level: Extreme

When the fire danger is “extreme” fires of all types start quickly and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious and can spread very quickly with intense burning. Small fires become big fires much faster than at the “very high” level. Spot fires are probable, with long-distance spotting likely. These fires are very difficult to fight and may become very dangerous and often last for several days.

Red flag warning/fire weather watch

A red flag warning is a forecast warning issued by the National Weather Service to inform area firefighting and land management agencies conditions are ideal for wildland fire combustion, and rapid spread. These agencies often alter their staffing and equipment resources dramatically to accommodate the forecast risk. To the public, a red flag warning means high fire danger with increased probability of a quickly spreading vegetation fire in the area within 24 hours.

The weather criteria for fire weather watches and red flag warnings usually include the daily vegetation moisture content calculations, expected afternoon high temperature, afternoon minimum relative humidity and daytime wind speed.

Outdoor burning bans may also be proclaimed by local law and fire agencies based on red flag warnings.

A separate but less imminent forecast may include a fire weather watch, which is issued to alert fire and land management agencies to the possibility that red flag conditions may exist beyond the first forecast period (12 hours). The watch is issued generally 12 to 48 hours in advance of the expected conditions, but can be issued up to 72 hours in advance if the NWS agency is reasonably confident. The term fire weather watch is headlined in the routine forecast and issued as a product. The watch then remains in effect until it expires, is canceled, or upgraded to a red flag warning.

Lisa Herron works for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

Letter: Liberty takes turn at

Bread & Broth

To the community,

“Here at Liberty, one of our core values is community. We are all part of this community and enjoy participating by giving back whenever we can.” This was the collaborative comment given by the sponsor crew members from the Adopt A Day of Nourishment host Liberty Utilities at the sponsorship dinner on Aug. 21.

Representing Liberty Utilities were team members Theresa Faegre, James Martin and Kelsey Zieba who had a fun time serving the solar eclipse themed dinner proved by Bread & Broth’s creative and talented cooks.

Taking advantage of the excitement of the Monday solar event, the B&B Monday Meal menu featured eclipse chicken, half moon salad, cosmic fruit salad, lunar luscious zucchini, galaxy garlic bread and out of this world desserts. In addition to staffing the serving line, the Liberty crew helped with bagging fruits, vegetables, dairy products, canned goods and bread and pastries for the food giveaway bags and ending their evening with the meal’s cleanup.

It is always a treat to have a sponsor crew that is excited and happy about donating their time and effort to help their neighbors who struggle with hunger. Through Liberty Utilities’ donation of $250 to help cover the costs of their sponsorship dinner, B&B was able to welcome and feed over 100 community members full-course and nutritious meal. Kudos to Liberty Utilities and their incredible volunteer crew for their commitment to their community.

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Explaining electric rates

By Paulette Sproul

Liberty Utilities wants to help customers understand the often complex and confusing world of electric rates and billing statements, and have developed several documents to do just that.

Customers continually tell us that they don't fully understand how electric rates are determined and specifically how they can read their bills. We want to explain this as fully and transparently as possible to our customers, so we developed several tools to help with this.

Electric rates explained: This four-page document answers basic questions like: How are rates determined? What is my rate class? How do I know what rate class I'm in? How am I charged? How is my bill calculated? The information is presented in a color-coded format, and includes a breakdown of the specific charges for the four major customer classes.

Sample bills with glossary of terms: Liberty Utilities has also prepared a sample bill for residential, budget payment, small commercial, medium commercial and large commercial customers with an associated glossary of terms. Customers can reference the numbered item on the sample bill to the corresponding definition in the glossary of terms.

All documents are available **online**. Simply click on the "my account" link at the top and scroll down to the "understanding my bill" section. Customers can download and print at home or visit any local Liberty Utilities office for a printed copy.

Customers are also encouraged to call the local customer care number, 800-782-2506, with any questions about their bills.

While we hope these documents will help customers understand their bills better, we hope they will call our local customer care representative if they ever have any questions.

Also, beginning Sept. 5, the South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Vista Liberty offices will open one hour earlier; regular office hours will be 8am-5pm Monday through Friday.

Paulette Sproul is Liberty Utilities’ director of customer care.