Opinion: Ocean may solve Calif.’s housing problem

By Joe Mathews

Why can’t we solve California’s devastating housing shortage?

Perhaps it’s because the proposed solutions—sprawling construction, denser construction, granny flats, affordable housing mandates, and regulation exemptions—are all built on the same flawed premise: that housing must exist solely on land. And California’s combination of strict regulation and anti-density NIMBYism makes it impossible to build enough housing on land to serve our population.



Joe Mathews

So, what if we build our housing future at sea?

If you haven’t heard yet of seasteading—that’s the ocean form of homesteading—you soon will.

Because where else does California have to go?

Floating cities are an ancient idea; Consider Plato’s dialogues on the lost city of Atlantis. And communities at sea are a durable cultural trope, from the Kevin Costner film “Waterworld” to the “BioShock” video games. In this season of joy, it’s worth noting that the world’s hardiest seasteader is Santa Claus himself, laboring tirelessly among the Arctic ice floes of the North Pole. Less mythically, a half-century ago,

L. Ron Hubbard and other leaders of the Church of Scientology created the Sea Organization, or Sea Org, a training compound of ships that mostly stayed at sea, away from the prying eyes of the authorities.

More recently, seasteading has gained ground among libertarians, particularly those who drink from Silicon Valley's dream-inducing waters. For a time, techies contemplated how to build cities far out to sea, in international waters, so they could live by their own laws.

At the forefront now is the non-profit Seasteading Institute, which envisions such communities enabling "the next generation of pioneers to peacefully test new ideas for how to live together." In 2008, the institute received high-profile backing from PayPal founder Peter Thiel, who preached for ocean communities as an "escape from politics in all its forms." More recently, the venture capitalist has publicly soured on the idea, and sought to escape political reality by backing Donald Trump.

In some sense, Thiel's newfound skepticism is justified. Such experiments have yet to realize the vision of urban ocean realities—it's costly and complicated to build a city on the sea. Among the Seasteading Institute's findings: the open ocean may be too rough to support a city, but protected coastal waters look promising.

For California, that's good news: we have 840 miles of coast. While seasteading may sound like science fiction, it's no less Star Trekian than median housing prices that exceed seven figures in San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo counties, and approach $1 million for new homes in Orange County.

While previous visions of sea cities have incorporated futuristic aquafarms or novel modes of energy production, more modest cities—with the straightforward goal of providing housing for Californians—might be more viable. One might start

with boats providing badly needed housing for the state's homeless population. This idea recently got a boost when former San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos suggested turning the decommissioned USS Peleliu into a shelter for his city's homeless.

Of course, California's many land-based regulators and environmentalists would quickly raise objections to people living in coastal waters. So it's vital to sell the idea not merely as a response to housing (since the housing crisis demonstrably doesn't move Californians to action or reform) but as a far-sighted answer to the two problems our state's leaders care most about: climate change and the drought.

A proponent of seasteading recently suggested to me that offshore housing could provide a financing base to change the economics of desalination. Plans to turn ocean water into drinking water have long been considered costly and inefficient. But manmade islands with desalination plants financed with the proceeds from off-shore housing sales on those same islands might change the economics; the reclaimed water could supply these sea cities, thus offering a live experiment for a more sustainable water future.

Seasteading also could mitigate climate change. Sea-based cities would provide a dry run—OK, a wet run—for the not-so-distant future, when rising sea levels inundate California's greatest coastal cities, forcing millions of us to learn how to live on the ocean. In this way, cities on the sea would ease today's housing problems—while furthering our climate change leadership and preparations for a watery future.

It's hard to overstate how much the ocean can teach us. There's a great Golden State story from 1965 that I've always loved, about a California-born teenager named Robin Lee Graham who embarked on a five-year sailing voyage around the world, eventually publishing a book called "Dove" and becoming a celebrity.

“At sea,” Graham wrote, “I learned how little a person needs, not how much.”

That’s a lesson all of California could learn, if we’re willing to build a future just off the coast.

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

Opinion: Calif. losing its ability to speak Spanish

By Joe Mathews

How are Californians going to save Spanish?

Yes, I know that a call to preserve the Spanish language might seem ludicrous in a state whose very name comes from a Spanish romance novel. Nearly half of us are either from the Spanish-speaking world, or trace our heritage there; an estimated 38 percent of Californians speak Spanish.



Joe Mathews

And, yes, my question about saving Spanish may seem daft now, as America’s deranged politics pit Trumpian xenophobia, with its fear of being overrun by foreigners and their languages,

against liberal triumphalism about growing diversity.

But the realities of immigration, education and language acquisition put the lie to the notion that Spanish has nowhere to go but up. To the contrary, there are clear signs that the Spanish language has already begun to decline. Which is why Californians should act now to preserve it.

Spanish is confronting the "Three Generation Death" law of non-English languages here. German, Italian, and Polish all but disappeared after three generations—a first, immigrant generation that learned some English, a second, U.S.-born bilingual generation that lost its proficiency in the non-English language over time, and a third generation that grew up speaking English only.

It's possible that Spanish in 21st century California may prove to be a little more durable, given the geographic (and now digital) proximity of the Spanish-speaking world. But it's far more likely that Spanish will simply become the latest tombstone in the language graveyard that is America.

Census statistics and Pew Research Center analysis tell the tale. While nearly 80 percent of all people who identify as Hispanic (and are age 5 and older) spoke Spanish in the previous decade, that number is expected to fall to about two-thirds by 2020. While 25 percent of Hispanics spoke only English at home in 2010, that figure is estimated to reach 34 percent in 2020. This reflects the law of the three generations. While 53 percent of first-generation Latino arrivals to this country are Spanish-dominant and 40 percent bilingual, about 80 percent of third-generation Latinos are English-dominant, and 15 percent are bilingual.

Other trends also will hurt Spanish. Even before the U.S. elected a bigot threatening a border wall, immigration to the U.S. from Mexico was at net zero, and immigration from Latin America was in deep decline. That's unlikely to change, given

growing middle-class prosperity, lower birth rates and higher education levels south of the border.

Another part of this story is the unrivaled and growing power of English as our planet's dominant tongue. It's become the language of global commerce, culture and technology. It's also wonderfully democratic, without the divisive gender distinctions of Romance languages, the tricky tones of Asian languages, or the complex grammatical constructions of German and Russian.

Californians should welcome the trend. Our more homegrown, more English-speaking population should be more cohesive. But English's rise also poses important questions for California, because of our state's special interest in Spanish.

The reasons for preserving Spanish here go beyond the desire to honor the heritage of Californians of Spanish-speaking ancestry. Spanish is at the heart of the history of California. First, we were a Spanish colony. Then in 1849, our state was founded in Spanish (an official language of our first constitutional convention that year), with a constitution that required laws to be printed in both languages.

Preserving Spanish would serve the present and the future as well. There's money to be made if we can increase trade with the Spanish-speaking world. And it would be a huge step up for our education system to make Spanish a core requirement. Right now, you can graduate from a California high school without taking even one course in a foreign language. And the UC and Cal State systems require only two years of foreign language for admission. That borders on the criminally negligent, given all we know about the good that learning another language does for our brains.

In November, California voters approved Proposition 58, but that modest measure merely removed bureaucratic barriers to

teaching California students in languages other than English. Spanish needs more, including state requirements and investment so that instruction is available to all.

If we preserve Spanish, we'll have a comparative advantage over the rest of the country, where the language doesn't have the same history and is more likely to die out. Spanish could become a special force in California, distinguishing us and binding us together.

With that happy thought, I wish you *Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo*.

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

Opinion: Trump may follow Schwarzenegger's lead

By Clay Russell

When newly-elected Donald Trump took his family to a restaurant for dinner without telling the public recently, the press flipped out. Journalists issued thoughtful pleas about the importance of documenting a chief executive-to-be's movements.

I'm not here to defend the president-elect's behavior or suggest that his unwillingness to play by traditional rules of engagement with the press is not a big deal. I'm a newspaper reporter, after all. Covering City Hall for the only newspaper in McComb, Miss., I hardly find it remarkable when the mayor travels the three blocks from his office to the Dinner Bell

restaurant without first notifying me.

I am here instead to suggest,—from unusual personal experience—that we all should prepare for a lot more breaking of protocol.

I was the personal aide, aka Body Man, to a governor of California who was one of the five most famous people on earth. Like Donald Trump, Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed himself an outsider, a non-politician. His first campaign, like Trump's, was a circus, with the sheer force of his persona flattening most criticisms and every opponent.

There is of course a vast difference of scale between a president and a governor. But I believe there are lessons to be learned from Schwarzenegger's behavior as governor that will help us understand Trump's as president.

Early in the Schwarzenegger era—like Trump, even before he took office—calls of "It's always been done this way" began to be tossed about.

One thing people didn't press the governor to do was move his family from Los Angeles to Sacramento. California was then one of just a few states with no governor's residence.

Instead he took up part-time residence in a two-bedroom hotel suite across the street from the Capitol. Several nights a week, he slept in one bedroom, I in the other. Between the manly-man Republican action hero and the 40-something gay Democrat, we were an odd couple if ever there was one.

"What must people think … the two of us living here like this?" he said one night as he switched off the lamp in our living room before heading to his bedroom.

In 2004, Schwarzenegger agreed to speak at a Bush-Cheney fundraiser in Santa Monica. Our advance people and the California Highway Patrol team warned, "Governor, the Secret

Service says you have to be there 30 minutes ahead of the president or they won't let you in. They'll shut down access."

"Relax," Arnold said, just as I heard him say several times a day for the seven years he held office. "Let's go to Starbucks."

"But Governor, the Secret Service …."

"Starbucks. Do you really think they'll keep me out?" And he was right. He knew the power of his celebrity.

There is shorthand for a politician's unplanned events or stops on a tour. An OTR, or Off The Record, is an unscheduled stop. There was the OTR at an H&M store in Philadelphia, where Arnold had seen interesting scarves in the window when driving past.

"What are you doing here?" the lady behind him in the checkout line asked.

"Buying scarves."

"Makes sense," she said.

Then there was the Jet Ski OTR in Miami Beach. We were there for a conference on climate change but, as at most conferences, Arnold didn't attend every plenary and roundtable.

"Let's get some Jet Skis."

"Uh, you're supposed to be in the reception at 3."

"Relax."

Several staff members made quick trips to the hotel gift shop for swim trunks. It had to be an odd picture, Schwarzenegger and his posse traipsing across the sand to the surf, flanked by a team of plainclothes highway patrolmen in dark suits. It happened that we were crossing a topless beach; if the rest of

the posse was titillated, I was not.

More times than I can count, the governor visited construction sites or industrial facilities where hardhats were required.

“Not gonna happen,” he would say, not breaking stride, to the man waving a hardhat in front of him.

“But it’s required!” By then it was too late.

He acquiesced only once in the headwear department. At Yad Vashem, the Holocaust remembrance center in Jerusalem, a yarmulke is required when you enter the Hall of Remembrance to view the Eternal Flame. That time, the governor knew better than to quarrel.

Despite Donald Trump’s thumb-your-nose approach to the traditional ways of doing things, I don’t think we’ll see him in H&M buying $5 scarves or Sea-Doo-ing.

One thing we can expect from President Trump, is that “it’s always been done that way” won’t get us very far. We shouldn’t be surprised when he defies protocol.

After all, breaking the rules of presidential campaigns is what got him elected.

Clay Russell is a reporter for the McComb (Miss.) Enterprise-Journal and prides himself on his non-linear life path. A former professional chef, he lives with his husband and two cats in America’s Deep South.

Letter: Bread & Broth thankful for Hard Rock Café

To the community,

Thanks to the , Bread & Broth dinner guests had an unexpected surprise for their meal Dec. 12. Instead of the meal being held at St. Theresa Grace Hall where the Monday meal is normally served, the dinner guests were sent a few buildings down to Globin Hall. Once at Globin Hall, they were given food giveaway bags containing fruits, vegetables, dairy products and breads/pastries and a Box Lunch provided by the Hard Rock Café.

Once every seven or eight years, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe falls on a Monday evening and the St. Theresa Church's Hispanic community has a dinner celebration at Grace Hall and Bread & Broth needs to find a new location for its meal service. When the Hard Rock Café heard about B&B's need to find an alternative for our Monday Meal, they jumped right in to save the day. They provided a very tasty box lunch filled with chicken or vegetarian wraps, potato salad, chips and a big cookie and a bottle of water.

B&B would like to thank Hard Rock Café team members Sam Mellilo, Rose Hook, Jennifer Lynch and Dory Tollner for their work in preparing and assembling the box lunches and to Kimberly Templeton and Robert Perry for delivering and handing out the box lunches at Globin Hall. Hard Rock Café and manager Kimberly Templeton have been partnering with B&B for many years and B&B is very grateful for their support of our efforts to feed the hungry of our community.

Go **online** for more Bread & Broth program information.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Look before you shoot

By Marjorie “Slim” Woodruff, High Country News

I am getting tired of being shot at. The perpetrators may not realize they are shooting at me, but that only makes it worse.

People in the Wild West like to carry their guns with them when they venture into the outdoors. So far, so good. Problems arise when they get bored, pull out said guns and start plinking away at various objects. Shots from a rifle may travel more than a mile. The shooters cannot actually see that far.

Hiking in the national forest and hearing the *boom* of a high-powered rifle – one knows not where – is disconcerting, to say the least.

Someone who decides to get in a little target practice on the public lands may not know if there is a trail, road or recreation area close by. Some do not appear to care.

Read the whole story

Opinion: We must broaden the

notion of family

By Elizabeth Brake

Since at least the time of Aristotle's "Politics", families have been considered the building block of society. Strong families produce the stability—and reproduce the future citizens—needed for society to flourish.

But the inverse can also be true. When members of insular nuclear families lose understanding and empathy for those unlike them, the family can threaten liberal democracy itself.

This threat intensifies when citizens feel left behind, economically or otherwise. When a family's own economic survival appears to hang in the balance, voters can ignore the interests or rights of groups of others —for example Muslims or undocumented immigrants. Such a response undermines democracy, since democratic decision-making functions best when we can take the larger view of what is good for all citizens—including those unlike us.

Democracy requires a meeting place where people can share ideas, interact with those different from them, and—at least—not demonize them. This serves a few purposes. The better we understand the concerns and anxieties of those unlike us, the more we can empathize, and be persuaded to compromise or consider their good. This directly contributes to stability, since we are more likely to maintain our commitment to democratic institutions, and to uphold the rights of all, if we have some trust and empathy for our fellow citizens, especially those we aren't related to, or don't know personally.

Marxist theory co-founder Friedrich Engels saw the private family as foundational to capitalism, making possible the intergenerational transfer of wealth from biological father to son. The nuclear family also enables caring about one's own to

the exclusion of others, because focusing on the success of “one’s own” conceptually depends on marking off “one’s own” from others.

The nuclear family configuration idealized in America today, which draws sharp dividing lines between people, is historically atypical. Throughout human history, we lived in extended kin groups, working together in larger family configurations. Today as we enter our “single-family” homes through our garages without meeting our neighbors, it’s no wonder we’re grappling with an epidemic of loneliness. Working families are struggling to provide childcare, to pay bills, and to have time with each other. The greater distances workers must travel each day for gainful employment further isolates families.

In a society where people face so many pressures and have long experienced stagnant incomes, it’s only human to turn the focus inward. Anxiety about providing for our own family naturally overshadows concern about others when success seems to be a zero-sum game.

To surmount isolation, democratic theorists have stressed the importance of public schools, in which children from diverse backgrounds mingle, laying a foundation for respect and tolerance for fellow citizens. Public universities too can serve this process, when students learn from peers with different experiences.

But we have no infrastructure for a vibrant civil society in which adults interact with peers from different backgrounds—different religions, races and ethnicities, social and economic classes and educational backgrounds—to discuss issues of political importance. And that is distressing, when finding a way to bring disparate groups together seems especially urgent with regard to both racial tolerance and economic inequality.

Notions of family, are, of course, deeply intertwined with race—whatever race is. Tellingly, Derek Black—who defected from Stormfront, the Internet's first and largest white nationalist site, founded by his father—wrote in the *New York Times* that he'd viewed white nationalism as defending the interests of his "white friends and family." Of course, some families cross racial boundaries; but when families are racially homogenous, their separation allows members to be ignorant of challenges faced by others.

The nuclear family contributes to economic inequality in two ways. First, by the so-called "marriage gap in the U.S." between lower-income people, who are less likely to marry, and higher earners, who are more likely to marry each other, further consolidating wealth. Secondly, a family's ability to provide a strong start for its children is directly tied to economic advantage. If, as studies suggest, an activity as simple as parents reading to their children can increase their life chances, consider the long-term effects of parents' ability to provide a stable home, decent food, and quality healthcare.

Political philosophers have long recognized that the nuclear family is in tension with the ideal of equal opportunity, precisely because different families will give children different head starts in life. To be clear, I'm not proposing the abolition of the nuclear family, as political philosopher John Rawls once suggested in a throwaway comment. While Rawls recognized that the nuclear family detracted from equal opportunity, he also saw that the moral development which occurs within families was crucial for citizens to develop a sense of justice which would keep liberal democracy stable.

In the family, we learn to move beyond self-interest to care about the good of others. The problem is that families may isolate us from those unlike us—religiously, racially, socioeconomically— and make it harder to care for their good because we do not understand their challenges.

How to fix this? We should start by broadening the definition of family. Why not create a new-old model that builds on the age-old notion of extended family?

Legal theorists have recently been discussing “in-between” legal family statuses. Currently, one is either a parent or a legal stranger to a child; either a legal spouse, or not. So why not create a path to recognizing the variety of relationships which reach beyond the nuclear family? For instance, “in-between” legal status for grandparents or friends of parents who help care for a child, or kinship status that allows legally recognized relationships within friend groups.

In this way, the law could encourage bonds beyond the nuclear family, and thus ease some of the burdens of isolated nuclear families. This first step could put us on the path to widening circles of trust and care, and to encouraging greater interaction within a vibrant, diverse civil society.

Elizabeth Brake is an associate professor of philosophy at Arizona State University. She is the author of “Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law” (OUP, 2012) and editor of “After Marriage: Rethinking Marital Relationships” (OUP: 2016).

Opinion: Is anyone in EDC government reading?

By Larry Weitzman

At the Dec. 13 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meeting, Item 32 was on the calendar for the receiving and filing of 11

five-year studies required for 11 special districts that collect fees pursuant to Government Code Sections 66000 to 66025, otherwise known as the Mitigation Fee Act.

As has been reported there is current litigation regarding EDC’s failure to have these reports prepared and filed in a timely manner. The consequence for this failure according to the code sections and pursuant to the recent Fourth District Court of Appeals case of Walker v. city of San Clemente which has become the law in California is the refund of all unexpended fees in the MFA accounts held by the County to the current property owners of record of property upon which those fees were assessed.



Larry Weitzman

I have studied all of the documents filed by the CAO’s office for this meeting including the resolutions for each district and the purported five-year findings. At the hearing an employee from the CAO’s office gave the BOS an explanation on how these documents were prepared. She said she gave the various special districts a template for doing their five-year studies and for all the districts, save for the EDH Fire, Rescue Fire and Cameron Park CSD Parks and Fire, they essentially filed the same page and a half, five-year nexus study. I have learned that county counsel was involved in the preparation of this template.

From the language of this template which is entitled Mitigation Fee Act 5-Year Report the reports for the Diamond Springs Fire, Pioneer Fire, Lake Valley Fire, Mosquito Fire,

Garden Valley Fire, Georgetown Fire are almost identical and don't meet the requirements of the MFA, especially pursuant to GCS 66001 (d) (1) (b) which says in part: "the local agency (which is El Dorado County as stated by County Counsel at the same meeting) shall make the following findings with respect to that portion of the account or fund remaining unexpended, whether committed or uncommitted: (B) Demonstrate a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose for which it is charged."

There is more to this entire Government Code Section, but I want to concentrate on that one requirement and the word "demonstrate." But first we need to understand what the MFA is all about. It was created about 30 years ago to help local jurisdictions pay for future improvements, such as roads, parks and fire protection, caused by real estate development. No problem there. But it is for future needs caused by development, not maintenance of existing facilities. If a developer builds 1,000 new homes, you might need a new fire station and a park or two. That's the purpose of the MFA. But once built, the money cannot be used for the maintenance or staffing of same. The MFA allows the charging of a fee for each building permit to pay for those things.

But to protect the taxpayers, the MFA put in a five-year finding requirement of which the findings as per subparagraph (B) says to keep collecting the fees the agency has to "demonstrate" a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose for which it is charged.

After reading the aforementioned five-year fire district reports, it is obvious that no one, including our $250,000 a year county counsel read the language in the statute. Here is the entire paragraph B from the Mosquito Fire report (it corresponds to the requirement of paragraph B of the statute) which is almost identical for all intent and purposes to the other five-year reports:

“There is a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose for which it is charged, as defined below:

New development will create additional demand on the District’s fire protection and emergency response services, requiring additional facilities and equipment and more frequent replacement of existing equipment to meet the increased demand (spelling corrected) while maintaining the current level of service.”

The foregoing paragraph is hardly a demonstration of a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose for which it is charged. There are no demographics, growth studies, need studies based on new development whatsoever. All seven of the small districts, Rescue included didn’t attempt to demonstrate the reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose. For Rescue, there was a 34-page study, but when it came to that same issue, there was a short paragraph saying the same thing above. But it did correctly state on page 24 of the “study” “Fee revenue may not be used to fund operational, maintenance or repair costs.”

Cameron Park CSD for Parks and Fire used an in-house resolution of the CSD in an attempt to say they did a five-year Nexus study and then attached some financial data meeting the requirements of the completely separate annual report required by GCS 66006 which has nothing to do with the requirements of GCS 66001 (d) (1) and (2). It is almost unbelievable. Perhaps that is why less and less people trust the administrative aspect of their government.

Our new CAO is attempting to comply with the MFA, but what was done at the BOS meeting on December 13, 2016 doesn’t cut it. Our CAO is well educated with a Master’s degree and he is a bright guy and is trying like gangbusters to straighten out EDC. Politics makes that difficult. But for purposes of complying with the laws including the MFA we have a County Counsel and a staff of about a dozen lawyers. Other counties

are now complying with the MFA, why can't EDC? This issue of not filing the appropriate reports was brought to EDC's attention three and a half years ago, and still the problem is not solved. The County has filed appropriate studies in the past, why not now? The reports that have been filed will not stand up to scrutiny. Even EDH Fire who filed what appears to be an appropriate Nexus study also has a problem. The report is not current but was prepared almost four years ago as it is dated 2013-2018 and according to the cover page was adopted Oct. 17, 2013, hardly a current study. EDC deserves better legal representation. That might be a good start.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: If you plan to sled – then read this

To the community,

The holidays are here. They are always festive and special times at Lake Tahoe. Hopefully, the snow gods continue to bless us with more white, fluffy stuff, so we can all get out and enjoy the magic of Tahoe's snow-covered mountains.

Now is probably a good time to talk about what else happens during the holidays when it snows. We go sledding – wherever we can find open hills with nearby parking. When full of people, these places tend to look like resorts, the throngs screaming in delight as they shush down the hills.

In reality, they are open spaces with very little land management. In the summer, they would just look like pretty parts of the forest. What does that mean? It means there

probably won’t be trashcans nearby, there won’t be park rangers or friendly staff, and there won’t be anyone there to remind you to take your belongings with you when you go.

Unfortunately, as we have seen in years past, at the end of the day this can mean sled hills covered in litter and broken sleds. We get it, when it is cold and your kiddo has just bonked themselves on the way down the hill it is easy to make a mad dash to the warmth of your car. If there isn’t a trash bin, it can seem fine just to leave your now mangled sled by the pile of other mangled sleds. But let’s be clear, it’s not really OK.

It doesn’t take much to remember the principles of Leave No Trace. Take only memories, leave only sled tracks. Please remember to take home anything you bring with you to the sled hill. Broken sleds can be easily tossed in a garbage at home. Litter can too. Don’t be afraid to speak up for the mountains and remind others of this too. If we all do our part, we can make sure our mountains feel as loved as we all do on the holidays.

While we are talking about snow, let’s also remember to pick up after Fido and Spot. Dog poop, even when buried below the snow, is not only gross to step in, but it carries harmful toxins into the lake when the snow eventually melts. So this holiday season, please do your best to be No. 1 at picking up No. 2.

For a reminder of all the things you can do to help take care of the Tahoe environment any time of year, please go **online**.

The Take Care Team,

Amy Berry and Diana Dorman, Tahoe Fund

Devin Middlebrook and Adam Jensen, TRPA

Marilee Movius, League to Save Lake Tahoe

Nicole Cartwright, Tahoe Resource Conservation District

Heather Segale, UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center

Opinion: How friends affect your health

By Pete Bissonette

How many friends do you have?

If your doctor isn’t asking now, they may start soon.

According to researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, your social circles are as important to your health as diet and exercise.

Researchers evaluated data from four U.S. population surveys from adolescence into old age spanning three dimensions of social relationships: social integration, social support, and social strain. They then compared the social relationships to blood pressure, waist circumference, body mass index, and systematic inflammation—four key markers for mortality risk.

The team’s results, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, not only back up past research directly linking social circles to longer life in old age, they also show a healthful impact during early and middle adulthood.

For example, the study shows that social isolation in young adulthood increases inflammation risk as much as physical inactivity.

In old age, the researchers say social isolation is more

damaging than diabetes in controlling hypertension.

In middle adulthood, the strength of social connections—not the size of the social network—was a greater factor to health. Contrary to younger and older adults, the quality of social relationships matters over quantity, explains sociology professor Kathleen Mullan Harris.

“Based on these findings, it should be as important to encourage adolescents and young adults to build social relationships and social skills for interacting with others as it is to eat healthy and be physically active,” Harris says in the study.

Having the charisma to attract a large social circle doesn’t always come naturally. To embody the attractive mannerisms and cool and reserved energy of a magnetic personality, try this exercise from our Instantaneous Personal Magnetism Paraliminal at your next holiday gathering:

Think of a person with strong magnetic qualities. The person could be any man or woman you know or have seen on TV or in the movies, or perhaps an imagined person. Consider what characteristics of this person you would most like to emulate and instill as a habit.

Next, enter a heightened awareness of yourself, focusing especially on the relaxed stillness of your facial and body muscles.

Now imagine yourself and the role model you selected in front of you. Notice posture, clothing, walking, talking, and the qualities of voice and physical movements. Notice the dynamic magnetic qualities of the role model and your own detracting behaviors. Imagine shoring up the leakages of your energy by establishing new habits of living that foster the magnetic qualities.

When the image of you is right, affirm it as a choice and step

into it.

Fully experience through all your senses the new characteristics you have selected. Project yourself into a near future situation in which you rehearse how well you demonstrate the qualities you have gained.

Do this exercise any time you're about to enter a social situation. Although a dramatic change may be short-lived at first, your body and mind will get the message, and your magnetic personality will blossom in time.

Pete Bissonette has been the president of Learning Strategies for more than 30 years. The company develops, publishes, and supports programs to help people maximize their potential through personal learning courses and live events.

Letter: Heavenly crew assists Bread & Broth

To the community,

"It is important work that we enjoy giving back to the community in which we live," said Leslie Amato about her experience as a sponsor volunteer crew member from Heavenly Mountain Resort at Bread & Broth's dinner on Dec. 5.

As the evening dinner's Adopt A Day sponsor, Heavenly hosted the meal which consisted of a hearty shepherd's pie served with oven baked zucchini, green salad, fruit salad and a variety of pies and cakes.

The hot, nutritious, full course meals served every Monday to any and all that come to St. Theresa's Grace Hall are made

possible by the efforts of many caring and dedicated volunteers and financial donors such as Heavenly Mountain Resort. B&B would like to thank Amato, Heavenly day care manager, and her fellow sponsor crew members Shylo Schumaher, human resources specialist; Peter Spellman, finance; and Joshua Gonzalez and Erin McAvoy, mountain dining managers, for their great service at the evening meal.

According to Leslie, the Heavenly sponsor crew's favorite comment came from a dinner guest who was "thanking us for sharing our smiles." It is a very rewarding and fulfilling experience to share your time and concern to help others in need and the smiles are just a byproduct of those feelings. Kudos to Heavenly Mountain Resort and their outstanding team members who partner with B&B to give hope and care to hungry, at risk people.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth