Community Comment
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New year choices

Christmas 2014 and New Years Day 2015 have come and gone. As much as I like the mid winter holidays, there is something to be said for life returning to normal. I think most of us work out a pattern in our lives; routines that accommodate work and family and recreation. For me, at least, life gets pretty chaotic when I'm not able to keep to some semblance of my normal routine. Even when we travel we try to keep to a daily pattern of early walks, work, and sleep times. This doesn't keep us from being spontainious, but we think about the costs or effects of making different choices.

The holidays are a time of being extra sensitive to those less fortunate. We hear from charitable groups more for donations of time and money more than other times of the year. We replenish food banks, open more shelters from the cold and collect coats for those in need and toys for kids for Christmas. Most of us have only so much we can give after taking care of our families. But, Humboldt County is famous for the money and time we all give to help others. This is one of the many reasons I choose to live here.

As we are confronted with the extra demand for resources during the holidays, I often find myself asking the question How did this happen? How did this person become homeless or how did this family lose the ability to fend for themselves? We can even ask our local governments why they can't fix the roads or the bridges? Why does the cost of water and sewer keep going up? I am often disappointed with stories in print or on television news that present a situation but never seem to ask how did this happen.

The answer is simple but complex. We all make dozens if not hundreds of decisions every day. These choices affect the next one and so on. They may be simple choices but one choice adds to the complexity of the next. Most of us know this and have learned over the years to recognize a bad choice early on and make corrections in decisions that follow. We have more successes in life when we correct bad choices sooner than later. Frankly, mistakes are easier to fix before then become too complicated.

I've thought about New Years resolutions for this year for me personally and for those organizations around me that impact my life and my family. Making specific goals is fine and good; lose weight, do better on the job, study harder, be more tolerant and the like. But what I would ask of myself and those around me is to seriously consider the choices we make. Ask some simple questions like does this make my life better? Is it the responsible choice? Does it help me in my work? Does it help me in my important relationships? Is it based on the truth or accurate information? Does it complicate my life or fit in with my successful patterns? In other words, does the choice I make , make my

life better for the long term? For local organizations, is the choice one that makes life better for the long term for those we impact?

We can't always know the impact of each decision we make; only time will tell. But we can look at what others have done and what history teaches and can predict the result. And if it's a mistake, we can have the courage to face it and began to fix it.

I wish you all health and good fortune in the new year.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.