

Community Comment
April 8, 2016
Sam Pennisi

The Wine Fest and the road north

The Rotary Club of Arcata, the old club, held it's annual Wine Festival in March. Final figures for our fundraising effort are not complete as of yet, but we did make enough to fund our community and international projects. Our club's emphasis is supporting our young people. This community event seems to be enjoyed by those who attend. We have local wineries for tasting and some cider was in the mix this year. I want to thank all of you who came and enjoyed the wine and the games and the socializing. Your support makes our projects possible. As you know, Rotary is an all volunteer club so all the money made after expenses goes to our work.

An event like the wine fest requires a lot of work by a lot of people. As incoming president for next year, there are a few people I want to thank. Our current president, C.J. Ralph put the team together that pulled this off. The wine committee spent countless hours organizing the event. There is a lot to do; contacting the wineries, securing the venue and so much more. This committee worked hard and made this a success. Also, thanks to the winemakers for being part of our fundraiser. I hope it boosts your business as well.

Thanks to HSU for the use of the Kate Buccannon Room on campus. Former HSU President Roland Richmond helped with this venue and his work is appreciated. We also enjoy his membership in our club. We always get great comments on the food that is served. It's not dinner, but you wouldn't know it; the appetizers are great. We couldn't do this event without the great food and I would like to thank three people especially; Mary Ann Brown, Assistant Dining Director, Ryan Silva, Catering coordinator, and John Erickson, Operations manager all at HSU. Thank you for your contribution to the success of this event. Come join us next spring at the Rotary Wine Festival.

On a different note, we have a major issue in our county and in Del Norte that I fear is not getting the attention it deserves. That is the section of 101 know as last chance grade. It is now clear that this road is failing. It seems only a matter of time before it gives out. There is no alternative. The likely location for a new road is within Redwood National Park. As you can imagine, this is problematic at best. Any rerouting of this road will be really, really expensive and will be years in the planning. Many players will be involved and any route will be controversial.

The closure of 101 north of us would be devastating to Crescent City and Del North County of course. But don't think for a minute that it would be any less so for Humboldt County. Highway 101 is our lifeblood. This road supports everything we do. All local businesses, small and large, all public agencies, all schools, all hospitals and all of us who

live and make a living here would be significantly affected by a dead end 101. Interstate 5 goes North and South in the middle of the state, Highway 101 is the other route possible. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. Some discussion has started but we need to recognize the urgent nature of this issue. Our local public officials need to get to work now. This one can't wait.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.