

Community Comment
December 29, 2017
Sam Pennisi

Wishes for a New Year

As I look ahead to this coming year, there are a few things on my mind for how we all might have a successful and prosperous new year.

On the family front, Sharon and I are active in the raising of our grandchildren. Their parents are building careers and work at demanding and meaningful jobs. They are lucky to have us to help in the logistics of managing the busy lives of children aged 13, 7, and 3.

Emily, at 13, is going to high school next year. She takes multiple dance classes and enjoys the performances. But her primary activity outside of school is swimming. She is on the Humboldt Swim Team and shows some talent. Much of the daily routine means needing rides to dance class and swim practice. Once a month for most of the year there is a swim meet to travel to. We travel from Grant's Pass to the San Francisco Bay area and beyond.

Caden, at 7, is just emerging into after school activities. Soccer, baseball, and tap dance are some of his interests with Boy Scouts coming on.

Collin, at 3, spends mornings at the Child Development Lab at HSU and afternoons at our house. They are lucky to have all four grandparents to contribute to their lives and we are lucky to help. Sometimes I think I should sign up to be an Uber driver.

We think our support is a positive impact for these kids and hope it continues into 2018.

Locally, I think this coming year will be important as cannabis for recreational use becomes legal. My hope for this year is we take this seriously and manage it well as a community and a state. I worry about this because it has been underground for so long we don't really know all the impacts this will have on our communities. Growers have not only acted illegally, they have been anarchists. Will they really comply? Will we protect our children enough? Will parents control access within the home? Will we figure out what it means for drivers and workers on the job? Will we see the revenue from taxes that pay for the infrastructure to accommodate this new legal business? These are issues I hope we figure out in 2018.

For California, among so many issues, is the one of land use planning in the age of climate change. The two that stand out to me are the reality of sea level rise in a state where so much of the population and commerce exist on the coast and the expansion of residences into wildlands ripe for fires on a massive scale. We can act like an ostrich and put our head in a hole; and be flooded or burned before we know what hit us. Or we can begin to manage for the reality of the world around us.

At the national level, I simply wish for less chaos and more competence. We need tax reform that benefits lower and middle class people, most of us, and less to line the pockets of the rich. We also need to recognize the fact that the current administration and congress are dismantling our institutions of government including our legal system. These systems have served us well for over two hundred years and still do. But for how long?

These wishes and questions are in our hands. I think we are up to the task

Happy 2018.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.