

Happiness is not found in abundance

Living in America, we often lose sight of the true fortune we have in things that to us, seem so simple and automatic. Being able to see a dentist at a moment's notice, modern medical services that are safe and effective, an abundance of food, clothing, toys, or access to frequent and reliable transportation all seem commonplace. What we consider simple things in life and in some cases basic entitlements, are in fact true luxuries in other parts of the world. For many in remote and under-developed parts of the world, especially children, such luxuries lie only in imagination and in reality are far from reach.

On June 16-21 of this year, our surgical and administrative teams from Alegria in the USA set out to bring much needed medical relief, countless smiles, and most importantly, the gifts of hope and happiness to less fortunate children of Colombia.

On the banks of the Rio Magdalena, nestled deep in the interior of Colombia's Santander Department lies Barrancabermeja, a city

molded by the oil industry and home to some 300,000 people. Despite being a center of industry, many people in the city and surrounding areas simply don't have access to specialized healthcare, such as oral and maxillofacial surgery. Some people living with something so easily repairable as cleft lip or palate has few



LOCAL COLUMNIST
Andres Herrera

to no options for a brighter future. Enter Alegria ... supplied with equipment, instruments, medicines, and open hearts, our surgical and administrative teams set to work. Spending four long days, working more than 14 hours a day without breaks, our team screened more than 65 patients and conducted 44 cleft lip and palate surgeries. Ranging in ages from 17 days to 60 years old, the patients and their families traveled, often arduously for hours via improvised means from some of the most remote regions of Santander with the hopes of being treated by our team ... with hopes of cleft lip and palate repair ... with hopes of a chance at a new, happier life ... one where smiling, eating, and singing all take on a new meaning.

In the chaos of the screening and surgical clinics, if one passed but for just a moment and stepped outside the awareness of our own fortune, we found ourselves immersed in the true meaning of humanity. We were unmistakably reminded of the importance of humility. Every member of our team

was struck by the images, stories, and lives of those that had traveled so far to get our medical help. The elderly man, frail and weathered, who accompanied several children and their mothers many miles down the river in a small boat so that she could be seen. The mothers who waited in tireless vigil, often late into the night, while their children were in surgery. The children, frightened and worried, but at the same time so incredibly eager and courageous. Despite being subjected with poverty and depravity, so many people came and Alegria touched the lives of each of them.

From California, Virginia, Florida, and Colombia, our team from Alegria brought surgical care, medicines, toys, and a sense of hope and happiness. Administrative and facilities support from EcoPetrol, The Rotary Club, The Red Cross, the Secretary of Health, and local authorities coordinated our visit. Generous donations from McKesson, Keystone, Southern Anesthesia, and Santa Catalina School all helped to make the mission possible. The nursing staff at Policlinica de EcoPetrol, Ismael Dario Rincon, donated their own meals to the families that were waiting while their children were in surgery, as the families had traveled from very far, many with no money to buy food or in some cases, even afford transportation back home. The generosity

of everyone involved was overwhelming and what we all witnessed was the purest form of human kindness and the everlasting impact that it can bring. In those four short days, the kindness and generosity of all involved transformed into immeasurable joy for so many children. Their expressions of thankfulness and gratitude in return were likewise simple and pure. No pretenses, no contingencies, no debts whatsoever. Through this mission, Alegria served its purpose ... to provide joy and a true gift of humanitarian aid to those less fortunate.

As the mission work in Barrancabermeja came to a close, we realized just how deeply we had also been moved as individuals. It began to strike each of us just how much our lives had been impacted. Across our team, we set aside our own needs, our judgments, our egos, and created powerful bonds and lasting friendships. As we thought about all that we have in fortune back home, we realized that we had witnessed a richness in people for whom abundance and fortune means something so different than it does to us. We witnessed people for whom happiness does not come from abundance as we know it.

Dr. Andres Herrera is an oral surgeon based out of Watsonville and Salinas.

Watsonville Pride 2015 – Time for change

By STEVE TRUJILLO
CONTRIBUTOR TO THE R-P
After three years of dormancy, due to economic recession, Watsonville Gay Pride is back!

This year's Watsonville Pride was attended by a diverse crowd of about 250 people, including members of the city council, city personnel commission (the author of this article), and other people in the Watsonville public community. The theme this year could be summarized as: "No longer we will be 'tolerated'; we expect to be accepted as part of the community."

The Indigenous first nation's ceremony at the beginning of the program (taken from the culture of the Costanoan, Ohlone and Chumash peoples) was a blessing from within the circle of many of those who gathered on the lawn of the town plaza, attempting to heal the hate, distrust, mistrust and lack of acceptance from years past.

Unlike years past, there were no ugly reminders of homophobia at this year's event. People of all colors and all ages participated. As it is a political event with a decidedly progressive agenda, supporters of both Bernie and Hillary were in the crowd, with a Democratic party booth most prominent in its central location in the plaza. More than 20 vendors were present, including self-help organizations, food, beverages and civic organizations.

While the overall theme was positive, a glaring lack of support was evident in the

absence of County Supervisor Greg Caput, or any representative from his office. Why is this an issue?

When the author of this article attempted to contact him about this event some weeks ago, and suggested that our county form an LGBT affairs commission (as many other CA counties have done), the silence from his office was deafening.

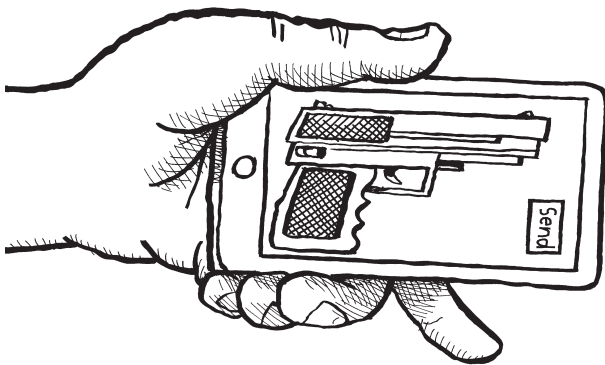
This is important because: 1. The census bureau shows a dramatic increase in the LGBT population in small- and medium-sized cities along the west coast of the U.S., including Santa Cruz County. 2. While same-sex marriage is now legal throughout the U.S., there are still many discriminatory practices in housing, jobs, public access and taxation that exist. 3. Few resource centers exist in these small cities in California to assist the LGBT population. 4. The economic power of the LGBT population is strong and growing. 5. Few elected or appointed officials in Santa Cruz County are LGBT; an underrepresented electorate.

While the author hopes the County of Santa Cruz will seriously consider the idea of an LGBT commission, the fact that our county supervisor, Mr. Caput, shows no interest in contacting an interested constituent regarding this issue is troubling. You can call Supervisor Greg Caput at 454-2000.

Steve Trujillo is a resident of Watsonville.

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A taste of freedom

When I first moved out of my folks' home in 1972 in San Diego at 18 I figured I was pretty darned well-equipped to take on the adult world.

"Bring it on," was my thinking. I was making \$3.40 an hour at the San Diego Community Concourse in the Bullgang, a group of young men that set up and broke down concert and convention settings. My little room in a four-bedroom home in Ocean Beach was \$25 a month so I was ready to get on with living my own life in a place I could afford.

Now, I'll admit, my stomach was full of butterflies as I loaded up the last box of my stuff and crammed my Gibson electric bass guitar and amp into the back seat of my friend Joe's van for that big final departure. When I stomped back onto the house the last time to bid farewell, my face streaked with triumph, my dad waved me aside because I was standing between him and a San Diego Padre's game on the TV. It was obvious his baseball was far more important than his son packing it off, mainly because, I learned later, he knew I'd be back time and time again — which was true. And besides, I was only moving a few miles away.

"OK, so forget the ol' man



Tarmo Hannula

— I'm out of here," I thought. I had already bid farewell to my mom before she headed off to work that day so I was good to go.

Off Joe and I went to Ocean Beach. We hauled my junk into my room on Saratoga Street, which was about five blocks from the beach and a few blocks from Newport Street, the main drag of OB where most of the shops and businesses were.

In less than two hours I set up my room and bingo! ... I had a new place, with my lamp, a little desk, a tiny bed, the closet loaded with my clothes and — most of all — freedom. What I didn't realize was that I also had just gained freedom from practical things I had always taken for granted: taste of like food, prepared meals and laundry being done for me. Imagine my surprise when I went to the fridge in my new digs, swung open the door and saw that it was near empty. "Heck, this house didn't come with food," I pondered.

I brought this up with Joe, who was renting another room in the same place and he said, "No problem. Let's make some quesadillas."

"What's that?" In Safeway we rounded up corn and flour tortillas, sharp cheddar cheese, some veges and hot sauce. By the time we fired up the burner on our kitchen stove we were famished. These little quesadillas would become a staple for me throughout my college days and still remain a satisfying, relatively quick bite for lunch or dinner.

Joe learned to make them from his high school pal, Bob Bueno's mother. So over the years we called them Bueno's quesadillas. Here's how to make them:

- Bueno's quesadillas**
- 1 medium-size carrot, chopped finely in tiny cubes
 - 2 stalks of celery, chopped finely
 - corn or flour tortillas
 - hot sauce
 - 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
 - 1 yellow onion, chopped finely
 - 1 avocado, sliced thinly (optional)
 - butter
 - 1 lime, cut into wedges
 - salt

Bring a skillet to medium heat. Toss a thin pad of butter into the skillet and fully melt it, being careful not to burn it. Place a tortilla in the skillet and twirl it around a few times with your fingers to coat the tortilla with butter. Repeat on the flip side.

Quickly sprinkle a thin layer of cheese over the entire tortilla and then sprinkle about a tablespoon of each of the chopped veges over the cheese. Splash a few dashes of your favorite hot sauce over the veges. If you choose to use the avocado, put a few slices in last and then fold the tortilla in half. The crucial part of this is getting the tortilla to the right degree of golden brown. It's easy to burn the tortilla so be careful. Squeeze some fresh lime juice over the quesadilla and add a sprinkle of salt. Serve piping hot.

This recipe should make about four quesadillas. You can always toss in some shredded cooked chicken, beef or pork for a heartier meal. I went on to cook up these little taste treats over the years and once in a while Sarah, my wife, coaxes me into tossing a few together for a mid-day snack so thanks to Bob Bueno, his mother and my friend Joe for passing on this handy kitchen treat.

READER OF THE MONTH



Congratulations to Cathy Chavez-Miller for becoming the Register-Pajaronian's reader of the month for September. Cathy was chosen to receive a free one-month subscription. She is shown here reading the R-P at a blues festival in Redwood City. Do you love reading the Register-Pajaronian? Details on the next contest will be announced soon.

FROM FACEBOOK

- Auto section rolls out** Cheri!
- Sounds like a section for all ages. *Ellen Dobbs Everlove*
- Adam James** Liz Villegas Castellanos, I spy you.
- I was addicted to the hokey pokey, but I turned myself around (Photo of the Day)** *Janet English*
- That's what it's all about! *Firefighters subdue grass fire in Struve Slough*
- Shelly Crandon** It's the homeless people that stay out there.
- Love it! *Steven Diaz*
- Esperanza Castaneda Aceves** **Mayor presents proclamation to the Register-Pajaronian**
- Watsonville's pride parade** Congratulations!
- Yeppers! That was me and *Eric Wilson*