

Supervisor says goodbye 2016, hello 2017!

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As we begin a New Year it's time to reflect on our accomplishments of 2016 and focus on opportunities for the New Year. While impossible to cover it all in this short space, I wanted to share a few thoughts.

Humboldt County may be small, but we're mighty! We're well represented in many associations across the state. In December, I became the 2nd Vice President for the California State Association of Counties and Supervisor Rex Bohn will soon become the Vice President of the Rural County Representatives of California.

These positions allow us to develop strong relationships with key members of the governor's administration which is invaluable. Should Humboldt County need something very specific, these relationships may give us an advantage and enable us to have a direct, quick conversation with key state policy makers to get the help we need. At times these positions require us to travel out of the county, often to Sacramento as our duties include meeting with policy makers including the governor himself. What we do there directly impacts you, the citizens of our community.

Such relationships enabled me to travel with a team on behalf of the Mental Health Services Accountability and Oversight Commission to tour facilities in Texas and Florida to see different ways to deal with the intersection of mental health and law enforcement. What we learned was absolutely amazing, but most likely beyond our ability as a rural county with unique challenges. However, that doesn't mean we can't look at some of the approaches that are being used to make a difference and I've been working to bring people together to talk about some of these ideas.

While complications from mental illness can certainly lead to intervention from law enforcement, we need to keep people who are struggling with this disease out of the jail system. Jail isn't the place to treat individuals who are struggling with mental illness. People often get worse not better under these circumstances, plus it isn't law enforcement's job to provide this service. Unfortunately, jails throughout the nation have become the largest mental health institution in most counties, but now that's changing. Next week, teams from 52 counties will attend a summit that aims to help provide tools that counties can use to lessen the number of individuals suffering with issues of mental illness in the criminal justice system. As a panelist, I will be able to share what I learned with many of California's Counties and help bring real change.

As we saw in recent polling, the commercial airport is very important to our community. Working together, multiple community stakeholders and committed members of your

county team have had measurable success in improving our passenger flying experience and increasing the traffic at the California Redwood Coast Humboldt County Airport. As a result, the number of departing passengers increased by 26 percent in 2016 to the highest level since 2011.

Our long-standing partnership with United/Skywest is doing better than ever. If you haven't been on the new jets that are now in service, you are missing a great flying experience. Last April, PenAir became part of our community, offering flights to Portland. Even better, they partner with Alaska Airlines so booking reservations is easy and seamless. This service has been so successful that they just added an additional evening flight to Portland making connecting to "red eye" flights to the East Coast more convenient. Many travelers were asking for more than one option for connecting flights and we were happy to help make that happen.

Last, but not least, Ramone's opened up their newest location at the airport. Be sure to arrive a little early to grab a great cup of coffee to drink while you wait to go through security and a snack to take with you on the plane.

The airport and our entire aviation system is an "enterprise" of the County of Humboldt... meaning it must be self-supporting. Over the past eight years we have had budget challenges. To address this, we will be moving forward in 2017 on a plan of action to increase revenue, enhance operational efficiencies, increase passenger service and find other opportunities for economic development and innovation on our airport properties.

In an effort to keep the community apprised of some of the issues that your Board of Supervisors works on throughout the year I will be starting a newsletter. If you are interested in receiving this please let me know by either emailing vbass@co.humboldt.ca.us or calling 707-476-2394.

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<http://www.times-standard.com/article/NJ/20170114/LOCAL1/170119852>