

This is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

Did you know that Humboldt County has its own Cribbage Club? We meet every Tuesday night at the Moose Lodge in Eureka and play nine games against nine opponents, starting promptly at 6:30 p.m. Cribbage is a wonderful way to exercise your mind as well as foster friendships that cross generations. Our youngest member is in her twenties and our oldest will be 93 in January. If you're interested in learning more about this fun competition, just Google American Cribbage Congress. There you can find out information on, not only your local Grass Roots Club, but also read about opportunities to play Internet Cribbage or out of town tournaments, which are held every weekend all over the country and can have hundreds of participants. We recently held our annual tournament during the first weekend in August at the Blue Lake Casino. People came from Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and various parts of California. We even had the eight-time national champion attend. They all commented on how beautiful our area is and how much they enjoy our mild climate. One of them was running around the tournament showing a newspaper article that stated the highest temperature ever recorded in Eureka on that date in history was 70 degrees. It was amazing and shocking to him and most of the attendees in the tournament. I am proud of the beauty and uniqueness of our area. The gorgeous setting we live in is unparalleled in its scenic diversity. Unfortunately, along with bragging rights, I also had to try to explain a few of the unpleasant parts of our county, including the highest gas prices in the nation, motel rooms that are more expensive by \$20-\$30 a night, and the volumes of street people in Eureka. I was told numerous times that they had never seen so many homeless-looking people. This might not matter much, but these observations

were made by cribbage players who travel to tournaments almost every weekend, so they are exposed to many cities on a regular basis. What do you say to a visitor who asks why our pristine area is literally infested with societal dregs? When you live here your whole life, you gradually get used to the climate of street people. However, hearing the concern described through the eyes of newcomers makes you question your acceptance of our county's policies and be a bit more observant. So, that Monday, I made a point to pay attention, and I counted 13 street people between Wabash and the Bayshore Mall on Broadway. We all know who they are: they talk to telephone poles or shout at the sky or mumble to themselves as they walk along. Or they dart out in front of traffic. It's not that I don't feel compassion for these people: I do. I agree they need food and shelter, but what about the next step of getting them to work - or even making them work for the handouts they currently receive? Give a man a fish and he eats for a day, but teach him to fish and he can eat for a lifetime. Our county means well, but we are stuck in the mode of enabling our poor to remain poor and dependent on assistance. It must be too easy to get money in Humboldt County - why else would tourists notice such a disparity from other cities? And speaking of tourism, this type of sight-seeing, along with our high gas and hotel prices, deters people from returning. We have a new look on the Board of Supervisors, and hopefully, with their business backgrounds, they should have the skill set to tackle these issues.

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