

For August 20, 2013

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

It has become clear over the last few years, that in order for non-profits to survive in the current business and economic climate, we must be champion collaborators.

No longer do we have one industry to support local causes or needs. No longer can our cities support programs that once seemed like necessities.

I've talked at length about the collaboration that is happening with the Fortuna Dog Park. Why it's happening now and not five years ago is collaboration and partnerships. The City, the Chamber, business, foundations and dog owners had to come together to make it happen. With just one of those components missing it wouldn't be happening.

We're working on another collaboration to save what has become a Fortuna treasure—the People Mover. That's the open air tram kinda thing that is pulled by a truck that you see in parades and other events around town.

Ed Tanferani has owned the People Mover for years and for the same amount of years, has donated the use of the invaluable piece of equipment to many civic, youth and non-profit groups. He has done so quietly and without payment for labor, gas or insurance.

We built the concept of Grave Matters and Untimely Departures around the use of the People Mover. We didn't want cars up at the Cemetery during the performances so we picked up people in the mover in the Newburg Park and hauled them up 25 at a time and dropped them at the back gate. It was one of the first logistical pieces we dealt with when we started that event.

So now Ed is retiring and closing Fortuna Motors and selling all of his stock. And for the first time, we are faced with only how spoiled we were when Ed owned the mover, but imagining how we are going to go on without it.

Ed offered to sell it to the City of Fortuna at a fraction of the value. Our city, like most municipalities in California, has to deal with holes in the budget left by the dissolution of the redevelopment agency. So they had to pass.

How do we keep the people mover, the icon of rural America, in Fortuna?

We have to build a coalition and collaborate.

It's up to those of us who want to keep it Fortuna to figure out a way to fund it. It's going to take Business, Tourism, and additional funders to find a way. The McLean Foundation and Sequoia Gas have already opted in. We're confident we will keep the people mover in Fortuna. It's time to get creative and collaborate.

And that's the model of cooperation and funding that most non-profits are going to have to accept and embrace. Rare is the organization that can make it with just a major fundraiser these days. We need to be creative and find ways not to put a huge burden on one or two funders.

Collaboration isn't only needed in Fortuna. It's going to have to be the norm and not an after-thought for all of us in Humboldt County as we finish up 2013 and look toward 2014.

This has been Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce.