

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

Humboldt County needs to host an Olympics.

This idea occurred to me during my recent visit to Sydney, Australia where their customer service is second to none. From the time I got in the airport van that took me to my hotel, to the hotel staff, to the store clerks, to restaurant wait staff—Sydney had the whole customer service attitude dialed in.

I was so impressed by the service that I started commenting on it to several Sydney-ites in casual conversation. They independently said that the change happened when Sydney hosted the Olympics in 2000.

They went on to tell me that before the Olympics in 2000, they were a laid back city that hadn't garnered much world attention.

Then, when they were preparing for the Olympics something happened. Something clicked. They galvanized as a City and they became determined to show the world how great their City was.

After the Olympics, tourism picked up in Sydney and they have kept that same resolve to show the world how proud they are of their City. And that pride is reflected in their amazing customer service.

So it seems like a great idea for Humboldt County would be to host an Olympics. It feels to me that we are very much like pre-2000 Sydney—laid back, not under a lot of national or world-wide tourism scrutiny. And we are not particularly known for our customer service. (Our spectacular Redwood forests are not under a lot of pressure to give customer service other than just being their regular majestic selves.) Are we ready to raise the bar in our County?

Here's the thing about great customer service for me. I can forgive a multitude of sins if the customer service is top-notch. I will go back to a retail store, restaurant, service industry business if the customer service is outstanding. Their product doesn't necessarily have to be outstanding. I probably won't go back to an establishment—even if their product is good—if they have lousy customer service.

Of course Humboldt County has establishments that are already known and highly regarded for their great customer service. Hummel Tire, Strehl's Shoes, Leon's Car Care and Six Rivers Optical come to mind. But overall, let's face it, we're lacking. Some of it is because we don't have a pool of steady workers here. We train people and then they are gone. I hear that a lot, particularly from restaurant owners. Service industry workers can make a heck of a lot more in our underground economy so why show up for work at the restaurant during trimming season?

One component of the Decade of Difference is readying and preparing our work force. And a huge part of most jobs is customer service. Humboldt, we can do this. We don't have to host an Olympics to up our Customer Service game. We can do this!

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