

August 4, 2015

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

This past weekend I had a chance to see the new movie “Amy” about the heartbreakingly tragic singer Amy Winehouse. I have been fascinated by Amy Winehouse since first seeing her on an American talk show. By then, she was already deep into drugs but her pure voice and unmistakable style was seemingly unaffected.

Watching her story—which was intriguingly told using hours of real video, including her ride in a cab on the way to meet the record label manager for the first time—you can almost see the moment when things went so terribly wrong for her.

In the beginning you could see the honest joy she had just singing. She captivated everyone that heard her. And she was having fun. She knew she was blessed to be making a living at what she loved doing.

Her friends talk about her heavy drinking from an early age. Her life changed when she turned nine and her parents divorced.

Then she meets Blake. He introduces her to crack cocaine and heroin and she’s off to the races. That, on top of heavy drinking, leads her to wasting away.

She tries to get clean, while her famous song says “no” to rehab, she eventually went for help. The first time she insisted on going to rehab with Blake. When one doctor turned down her request for both of them to attend the same facility and the same time, she searched until she found one that did. Needless to say, she didn’t stay sober.

Between the enablers, her drinking and bulimia, and the hard drugs, she didn’t have a chance.



During one of her clean times when she was a big winner at the Grammys, she took a friend aside and said “it’s no fun without the drugs.”

Her session with Tony Bennett was devastatingly beautiful. She was vulnerable and nervous and he was the consummate professional—encouraging her and propping up the tragically talented jazz singer.

She had everything to live for—a talent that will not be duplicated. And yet—and yet. Her demons were too many and her coping skills too few.

Her father and her new manager let her down. Touring was their main source of income—and it eventually killed her.

It made me think about the drug addicts here in Humboldt County that are living without treatment--either by choice or lack of opportunity, and I wonder how they can ever overcome it. A talented, wealthy singer couldn’t do it. What are they supposed to do?

While watching the movie it seemed like drugs and drinking brought comfort, and she could count on them—she knew what to expect. So she hid away with them.

We all know we need to find a way to fight drug addiction. It killed Amy Winehouse and it’s killing Humboldt County. But how? It almost seems beyond what our services and our budget can handle. Tough love? Rehab? Shipping the homeless drug addicts back to their city of origin? If we want to address crime and homelessness, we need to address drug addiction. It’s a tough one.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.