

# Out & About with Lori Sunflower

• Part 1 •  
How can we as a community become more resilient?



**Matthew Crowley**

By spending more time outdoors! I need to spend more time outdoors. And I think it would serve us well as a community to spend more time outdoors. I read Mary Oliver this morning, and it brought me to that simple metaphor of—we have all this wind in the spring in the valley, and the bushes and trees that bend in the wind are resilient. The ones that are rigid and inflexible break and fall to the ground. So it's very simple, but we put up with 4 or 6 weeks of wind here, so those of us who have been here for a while are pretty resilient to things like that. The sand blows in the wind, and it doesn't matter. The seeds blow in the wind and they land where they do and the plants and the trees that will grow in this harsh environment grow. There is great, profound, simple wisdom all around us on how to be resilient. We all know how beautiful this place is, but I am as guilty as anyone, I don't spend enough time in it. When we get together and spend more time in it, it really helps. Right away it changes our attitude when we're outside. The sky is blue, the sun is shinin', Spring is here, the birds are singin' and it's like right away I feel more resilient. Of course, there's the tangibles we're all thinking about in terms of resiliency—being sustainable, growing as much food as practical, being more energy independent—but it starts with our sense of community, with our compassion towards each other, our flexibility with each other. I think we get jaded, or I have become jaded, being here 13 years. A lot of initiatives come and go. I met a new person to the community yesterday who was filled with inspiration and enthusiasm. I don't want to just talk them down and say, "you're just not being realistic," like I'm jaded. We need that inspiration and somehow as a community we need to learn how to channel that, to sit down with new people and say, "yeah, you're right, you're inspired and enthusiastic—let's support that!" I think we need to know each other's stories. If we consciously bring new people and longtime people together and really listen to the stories of new people, and share our own experiences of living in this community for a long time, that may help us become more resilient as community to old-timers

and the constant tide of people coming and going. Maybe we're missing the boat with a lot of that energy that comes to this community.



**Nick Chambers**

That's an interesting question. There's a lot of kind of resiliency that I think about. There's the emotional, spiritual, familial, which entails practicing forgiveness, having love in your heart, being good people, staying close to your family, etc. Then there's the resiliency as far as a society, a community, food, energy, utilities, waste water treatment, and those types of things. What I think about then is standing on the shoulders of what's already been done and what infrastructure is already there. I think we have a great backbone infrastructure as far as the great stores that we have—the Mercantile, Elephant Cloud, the hardware store, the Brewery—there's also that kind of resiliency. And so I think that's really important. Baca Water & Sanitation and the town government and the Saguache government, I think we have a really great support network—they all want to see us be resilient, too. I think it's in their best interests. I'm in the food business, so utilizing what we have as far as food in the valley is huge, and realizing that we have an amazing farming community and producer base here, and that our restaurants and our grocers are great supporters of that, so, go to the store! Go to the local stores, more than City Market and Safeway, and really invest here and buy here. It goes a long way to tap in to what we have growing in the community. I mean, Crestone's local food has been a clear demand of expression here. A great dis-

service to achieving our resiliency is putting a ton of energy and time and money into, for example, the free-energy thing. I don't think anything comes out of anything that's free. And I don't think humans deserve anything that's free. And there's no excuse or substitute for just rolling up our sleeves and just gettin' going. And I think that the greatest limiting factors that I see are labor and capital. There's no shortage of ideas and there's no short of opportunities, there's really just putting the boots on the ground and gettin' r' done! Capital and labor are the big constraints.



**Kate Steichen**

I looked up "resiliency" in the dictionary, because I love words, and it's, "the capacity to recover from or adjust easily to difficulties or change." There's inner resiliency, of course, and there's outer resiliency. We often don't think about both of those. The inner-resiliency to me is having a spiritual practice that creates inner peace, appreciation, and acceptance of all. So, I lead the Sufi circle chants. I find now, in this time, even just my own personal, daily practice is so important. People are more fearful than usual now and that tends to make us contract. So we need a practice, whatever it is, we need something, that can day-to-day help bring us back to ourselves and bring us back to what we love. And then of course there's the outer resiliency, which is probably more what you were thinking of when you asked this question. Again, I think first of all it's the ability to work and play well with others. That's a real outer resiliency which involves an individual sort of integrity, but especially acceptance of differences and especially forgiveness of ourselves and others. And minimal drama (laughing)! This community is like one big family, and family has good and bad aspects. The bad aspects are, when we have an unpleasant experience, we tend to hold that against the person. "Oh, I don't want to do anything with them cuz they're blah-de-blah." We've got to get over that. Going outward more, how do we develop community independent systems that are flexible with backups? That

could be solar/wind power, access to water, access to local food, security, care for the least among us, the elderly, the children, the sick, the needy in whatever way. And I also think we need to look at governmental solidarity. Having a town government and a POA that are distinct doesn't really make sense in terms of our own resiliency. We need to develop co-ops. We need to develop our own banking system. There are a lot practical things and the ideas for these things will come out of this Crestone Baca Resiliency Search conference that will already have happened by the time this comes out. The conference brings people together to get to know each other better and meet people they'd never maybe talk to or meet. And then to work together to make this place more resilient. I don't know what's going to come out of that. People keep asking me, "Well, what's your action plan?" Well, there's no action plan. Whoever comes will create the action plan. I'm just setting it up and offering it as a gift to the community because I can do that. And it'll be up to us what happens. And then what happens long term after that. That's the key, is how do we do these other things, how do we forgive each other? How do we appreciate each other no matter what? Because that's what it takes to create, to work together. So that's the place where I see us falling apart. This is a place where it's easy to have ideals, that's the energy of this place. It's really hard to implement those ideals.

I'm in my 27th year here and I've seen a lot of community projects succeed. There's a lot here that wasn't here 27 years ago, including a lot of people, of course. One thing I've seen over the years is that sometimes someone has an idea for something, and it doesn't manifest for 5-10 years afterwards because the right people have to move here to make it happen. So, even if things don't look like they're happening on the surface, they really are underneath, the seeds are planted. This search conference should plant a lot of seeds like that, and they will mature. Most of them do, actually!

If you have feedback or suggestions for future topics, please email [peacelori@love@gmail.com](mailto:peacelori@love@gmail.com). In addition to being the Staff Photographer for The Crestone Eagle since 2012, Lori Nagel is a freelance photographer, graphic designer & web designer. [www.sunflowerstudios.us.com](http://www.sunflowerstudios.us.com).

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