

Out & About with Lori Sunflower

What challenges have you faced as a business owner in Crestone?



Carmin Teeple (Ragpicker Used Books)

When I opened the bookstore, my first challenge was to find a place to do the business, and I was successful at finding a very small space. Then the next challenge was not having enough space! But by taking a wall out, I ended up with enough space. Another one of the challenges was making enough money to keep it going. And I did pretty good in the seasons where we had a lot of visitors to town because I got a lot more business from visitors than I did from local people. But I still had months that I wasn't making any money, so I decided to move the business to my house a few months ago. Now, the challenge is to get people to come to my house! I'm working on that now with a sign, and I plan to put an ad in the paper and put up posters.



Matthew Johnson (Crestone Mercantile)

A big challenge is finding employees that stay. It's a transient kind of town, people coming and going all the time. Also, a lot of customers assume your business isn't going to last long—it's just kind of how things have been around here—making it more difficult to establish a customer base. Everything costs a little more with delivery fees, and we try to compete with big city supermarkets, but people just assume we can't, so they make that weekly trip outta town. Our business is also really dependent on other businesses in town doing well, which fluctuates. For example, the gas pumps not

working for a month hurt our business quite a bit because people had to leave town, and when they do, they purchase other things. So, basic small mountain town problems of being really far away, not having as much of a labor pool, that labor pool also being more independent minded and wanting to enjoy life more, not just slave away at the 9 to 5. But we don't have much competition around here, being so far away, so that's a positive!

It also depends on the business. The diner was challenging because there was never really a lunch rush in town. Not many people have a standard 9 to 5, noon take your lunch, hurry, 30 minutes, come back. This town floods with people all of a sudden, so you often have to have more staff than you need. Some days are really slow, but some days are insanely busy for no real reason whatsoever. So, predicting how many people are in this town at different times is another challenge of being a business owner.



Lonny Roth (Crestone Creative Trade)

The biggest challenge for me has been government: when my property taxes went up suddenly and when the Town Hall restricted me trying to do business. Of course the customer base is always a challenge in a small town, getting customers to come in. There's a dichotomy between the people who don't want a lot of people here and the people trying to make a living here, which is another challenge. The customer base has risen and we're doing a little better, but paying people what they deserve to be paid is a huge challenge. I believe the quality of the goods brought in is key to customer satisfaction. I want customers to have a good experience, leaving happier than when they walked in. It leaves a good impression of the town on the customer, makes them talk to other people and bring their friends or whatever. For me, the hardest thing I did is re-framing my business, spinning it around. Most businesses I see start with what they want to do. But you really have to revise it to where you're still really enjoying what you do while building

the business from the perspective of what people want to come in for. That is really difficult for people to figure out, and I've seen 9 out of 10 businesses fail in Crestone because of that very thing.



Linda Behrns (Mobile Veterinary Service)

Probably the hardest was deciding on prices. My expenses are about the same here as they were in Denver, but I can't charge the same as in Denver. And getting a good fit where people felt comfortable calling me and we could at least work things out, regardless of what they could afford, and to try to fit in to the general average of the community. In a way, it's easy to start up here because the word gets around pretty quick, especially being the only vet! Although, that's another challenge. Being the only vet is hard because there's no backup or emergency clinic around, so there's a lot of things I really can't do. Sometimes people just have to go in, and that's hard for people who can't afford it or can't get there. I like doing what I do and I like not having the clinic or employees and not having to deal with all the emergencies, but it does limit what I can do, and that can be hard, not being able to take care of everybody all the time. And I also have the issue of setting boundaries so I have a personal life as well, and time to do the things I wanna do, the things I moved the Crestone to do—not just be working 90 hours a week!



Cynthia Nielsen (Gentle Yoga with Cynthia)

The biggest challenge in Crestone over the last 4-5 years teaching yoga classes has been finding a space consistently. However, I've found if you're willing to knock on doors, a space opens up. Over this time, we've had 7 spaces in the town of Crestone, so it has allowed for flexibility and impermanence! Another challenge would be how some students are here part of the

year and perhaps they live in another state part of the year. And what I've found to work in my classes is to offer a discount on buying 4 classes for any particular month, which motivates some commitment from students. There's still a good number of drop-ins that see *The Crestone Eagle*, hear about a class, or they're here for vacation. My philosophy is, "Teach and share, learn and grow," which all of us can do, and we've found a nurturing space in which to do that. The space we have now feels wonderful in the Little Shepherd Fellowship Hall. Lots of light, large enough for a pretty good class, good acoustics and just fun-loving energy. So my two largest challenges were finding space and finding students that often travel, but I'm passionate about teaching and I love Crestone. It's a great energy to bring and be a part of!



Madolyn Davis (Crestone Inn)

The challenges of being a business owner in Crestone for me have mostly come from within: learning a new business as a first-time business owner, getting to know a new community, balancing being a single parent with work, and learning my own strengths and weaknesses in all these areas.

Regarding Crestone-specific challenges, the biggest problem I see is for the employees. Finding affordable decent housing that's stable is tough, and keeping motivated workers is difficult when they can't make their lives work here. So they come and they go, and this has affected our business and many others here. Just when you think you have a great team, poof! They're gone. One of the many things I learned from a ship captain's course a few years ago is "there's no such thing as a bad crew, only a bad captain." An interesting concept that keeps me humbled. I try to keep this in mind when things go astray for an employee.

As of right now we have a great team of bubbly, motivated people. With their help, we've been able to recently open our new clothing and souvenir store called Gift Horse, where we sell products of many local artists, in addition to lots of other things! We feel privileged to hold this space here for Crestone.

If you have feedback or suggestions for future topics, please email peacelovilove@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.