



STORIES & INSIGHTS

Meet Wendy Fisher

 STORIES & INSIGHTS // 4 DAYS AGO

We were lucky to catch up with Wendy Fisher recently and have shared our conversation below.

Alright, Wendy thanks for taking the time to share your stories and insights with us today. What's something crazy on unexpected that's happened to you or your business

You never know the impact of the work you do. We all want to believe that the blood,

behind saving this landscape and Utah Open Lands had taken the risk of taking on the enormous fundraising campaign to protect this land for the lands' sake. We received a donation with a hand written note. The donation was \$20 dollars and the handwritten note was from a soldier who was headed to the middle east. Many folks might remember in 2001 the world trade center had been attacked. Though the note said he couldn't tell us where he was it said that 'he hoped the conflict would be over soon and he could get back to climbing'. It was like that \$20 turned the tide in the campaign. About a year later we succeeded in raising the needed \$640,000 and we were out planning a celebration of the preservation of this grand landscape. As we discussed where the plaque honoring all of the donors would go and how we would toast the success a bunch of climbers were coming back from a successful climb up Castleton Tower. These climbers were spending the night on the very land we had protected and it was gratifying to see that this effort was already appreciated. One of the climbers walked up to us and asked if we were with Utah Open Lands. I responded yes and then the individual said "I don't know if you remember but I sent a note and \$20." Of course I remembered him and I recounted how his donation emboldened our efforts. But what was more amazing to me was that he was there between deployments climbing Castleton Tower for the first time ever. He had sent that donation for a dream, an experience that he hoped to one day have. It brought home to me that the work that we do undeniably has an impact on the community today, but more so it saves these experiences, these places for the next generation which will have a priceless impact on their lives.





Wendy, love having you share your insights with us. Before we ask you more questions, maybe you can take a moment to introduce yourself to our readers who might have missed our earlier conversations?

Growing up and riding my horse through the open spaces of Utah was a saving grace for me in my teens. As I watched development replace orchards with concrete and lush foothills with asphalt I decided that I wanted to see if I could find a way to achieve a balance that shifted what seemed like the inevitable loss of Utah's 'sense of place'. I joined a group of community members in 1990 in founding Utah Open Lands, the first local land trust in the state. Together we began saving vital landscapes in the Park City. At that time, Summit and Washington County had become two of the fastest growing places in the nation and the very thing that had spurred that growth was now in danger of being lost; the quality of life that springs forth from the scenic beauty and recreational opportunity that open space provides. Utah Open Lands pioneered land conservation in many communities throughout the state and created the momentum that was needed among state leaders to create the state's first open space fund. Now 33 years later Utah Open Lands has aided the passage of open space bonds in four counties and has over 100 conservation projects under our protection.





Can you share a story from your journey that illustrates your resilience?

I was very young when I became the only staff member at a fledgling organization. I was told by many that the idea of conserving land in the state of Utah was a non starter. It wasn't just that many had a knee jerk reaction to the idea of forever setting aside a landscape for the landscape's sake, it was even the reaction to a young woman going out and talking to farmers and ranchers, many of whom were transitioning into retirement. Time and time again I saw people resonate with the sincere devotion I had to what I believed would make Utah sustainable into the future. But perhaps what has remained a big part of my resilience is seeking out what we have in common. Instead of focusing on the differences of opinion, or the differences in life experience, I have focused on the common desire to save something for the next generation. I have focused on the common belief that we can and should ensure a legacy that includes the ability to touch the soil, to hear the bugle of an elk, to walk in silence through the woods and immerse ourselves in the natural world that has sustained past generations. Protecting the Lands we Love is Utah Open Lands' tagline, but it is also in many ways the path of resilience.



lost forever. The City of Park City had moved forward with an open space bond that would cover all but \$13,000,000 of the cost to save this landscape for the benefit of the community. Utah Open Lands made the decision to take on the fundraising challenge of covering the \$13 million gap. We knew that it would require building coalitions and even securing partnerships with agencies and entities that had previously not been good or even willing partners. Our belief was that the fate of the land and the enormity of the value of its protection would be enough to cross the barriers in relationships and even in support. In the end we were successful. We spearheaded the fundraising campaign and built a coalition of 11 different non profit organizations and gained funding from three different counties, three different cities, and two separate agencies. There were still hiccups and even obstacles thrown in our way, but in the end we kept focused on the magnitude of what this preservation would mean and the result was the financial support as well of over 3500 individuals.

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