



**Contact:**

Louise Snodgrass, Communications Manager  
[louise@local-first.org](mailto:louise@local-first.org) | 970-799-6618 ext 3

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LOCAL FIRST FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES LAUREN BERUTICH AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Local First is thrilled to welcome Lauren Berutich to the role of Chief Executive Officer, a visionary new role for our local nonprofit organization.

Berutich joins Local First with 20 years of experience in conservation, advocacy, policy, and nonprofit leadership with a background in environmental education, grassroots organizing, volunteer and stewardship coordination, and public work for sustainable community development. Most recently, she served as the Associate Executive Director for a women's led national nonprofit, Great Old Broads for Wilderness and prior to that, managed Northern Arizona University's (NAU) Campus and Community Based Action Research Teams to support democratic, civic action for justice and sustainability through education, outreach, and advocacy campaigns.

Lauren served as Volunteer Coordinator with the Grand Canyon Trust engaging stewards of all ages in conservation and preservation activities across the Colorado Plateau. She served as the President of Friends of Camp Colton board and now sits on the Durango Bluegrass Meltdown board of directors. She has a B.A. in Environmental Geography and a Masters in Sustainable Communities from NAU.

"Local First is excited to have Lauren join our organization as the new CEO," says Tim Wheeler, Local First Board Chair. "She brings a wealth of experience and local knowledge to our organization that will further our work of ensuring local independent business prosperity for La Plata County."

Local First is a 501(c)6 that was founded 15 years ago to represent the voice of area independent businesses, while leading initiatives and programs that further support buying local, and educating Durango consumers on the importance of supporting locally owned independent businesses for the benefit of the community. Local First Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that was formed to further the mission of education, research, and outreach on the importance of local self-reliance in order to build an economy that values people, the planet, and prosperity for everyone.

As CEO of Local First, Berutich will be responsible for the oversight of the organization's left and right arms—the Local First Independent Business Alliance, 501(c)6, and the Local First Foundation, 501(c)3. She will play an integral role in launching impactful programs and initiatives to leverage the power of local independent businesses and shape a thriving local economy. Lauren joins a talented and powerful team of staff and board members and looks forward to diving into everything local.

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