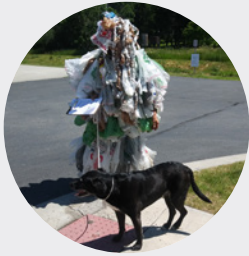


## ☕ Coffee Talk with Wren



**Please tell us about yourself, who are you and what do you do?** My name is Wren Kilian, and I am a grassroots grandma with a vision for helping my community become more sustainable. I work full time as property caretaker and gardener and run a small, all volunteer-run non-profit in Bozeman, Montana, which educates about plastic pollution through BYO Bag for Change/Boomerang Bags programs, zero waste through BoZERO Zero Waste Market, and GOZero Environmental SteWARDS, and local foods through an urban farm and donations based corner veggie stand.

**How did your journey towards sustainability begin and how did you come up with the initial idea?** I have always had a deep love of nature since my childhood, but it was becoming a mother, reading *Our Stolen Future* by Paul Ehrlich in the late 90's, and moving to Montana that really spurred me into action to try to make a difference. After many years of activism but making little progress, I rode my bicycle 2,500 miles from Montana to Washington, D.C. in 2013, with a petition with 10,000 signatures for National Bottle Deposit and Single-Use Bag Law. After that ride, I realized the government was not the answer, and made my own life more sustainable by

creating the urban farm and developed a strategy to work directly with businesses to improve our environmental stewardship locally.

**What are the biggest challenges you face?** One of the biggest challenges is in educating people about the dire need to address the plastic pollution issue and to take action in whatever ways we can immediately. Another challenge is in keeping hope alive in folks who feel powerless with so many problems in their own lives and in the world. "We are changing the world and having fun while we're at it", "think of the Butterfly effect", "the power of our love is infinitely multiplied and can bring miracles to help bring healing to the Earth. Einstein believed that all of existence is a miracle", "we are each on our own path and are all like pieces of a giant puzzle that is coming together to bring healing to the Earth," "we outlawed lead in gasoline, and CFC's to protect the ozone, and we can eliminate petroleum based plastics as well. All the solutions and alternatives already exist and just need to be implemented on a mass scale", are some of my go-to phrases I use to help people stay positive.

**What is a possible future for your initiative? Where do you want to be within five years?** I believe the awareness is growing to a point where BYO Bag for Change and Boomerang Bags will be in dozens of stores in 5 years, GoZERO will

Insights about the project

### "Valley of the Flowers"

by Wren Kilian, United States

have hundreds or even thousands of local environmental stewards involved, proudly displaying their sticker and becoming more sustainable, BoZERO will have a retail space as a year round local foods mart/community center with community gardens/earth sheltered greenhouses surrounding it, a tool and recreational equipment library with intergenerational programs for recreational and academic mentoring, plus volunteering in the community to do trash pick-up events, harvest local fruit, and help elders with lawn/garden/household maintenance.

*After many years of activism but little progress, Wren began to take action and help her community to become more sustainable.*





“We are changing the world and having fun while we’re at it.”

**If you have three free wishes, what would you wish for?**

My first wish would be that humanity takes action quickly to solve the plastic pollution crisis, and other environmental devastation we are causing, and that humans learn to live in harmony with deep respect and compassion for all life and all Creation. My second wish would be for Valley of the Flowers Project to grow to help the above wish come true by becoming a model for communities to grow sustainable and environmentally responsible. Maybe add in to this wish a long time dream I’ve had that local celebrity musician John Mayer would donate some of his line of reusable bags and do a benefit concert to help this go big in Montana to having paid staff and programs throughout the state, then nationally! My third wish is for the first wish to come true faster than we could possibly imagine through a miraculous turn of the tide based on believing in the truth of the ancient wisdom that 35 ancient traditions share, 2 of which include the native peoples of the Valley of the Flowers, and the story of Pentecost

in the Bible. The local version is that a great Spirit Maiden appeared in the sky many thousands of years ago and spoke with a booming voice to warring tribes who all understood in their different languages when she told them, “Live together in peace, lest the bloodshed spoil the flowers. You may only come to the Valley of the Flowers in peace, healing, rest, and love.”

**What do you think we all can do to solve the plastic pollution problem in general?**

Reducing plastic use, especially single-use, in our daily lives as much as possible is a very important step, as well as supporting businesses that are working to reduce plastics. Helping to educate others, is also key, and getting involved in local and national efforts to impose legislation, as well as supporting and implementing grassroots efforts like local clean-ups, bag programs, community gardens, zero waste events, etc.

“Another challenge is in keeping hope alive in folks who feel powerless with so many problems in their own lives and in the world,” says Wren.

