



S3:E3 COMMITTED TO CREATIVE RESILIENCE

Matthew Che Kowal & Molly North

in conversation with Stephanie Fortunato

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[THEME MUSIC]

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Stephanie Fortunato: Hello and welcome to The Three Bells. This podcast is one of a series brought to you by AEA Consulting and the Global Cultural Districts Network. This podcast explores what's happening around the world at those busy, and sometimes congested intersections of cultural and urban life.

You'll find the series and supporting materials at www.thethreebells.net. And if you like our content, of course, please tell your friends, subscribe, give us a positive review on your podcast listening platform of choice.

Today, I'm speaking to you from Rhode Island, the ancestral land of the Narraganset, the Pokanoket, the Nipmuck, and other indigenous peoples. I pay my respects to those who have and continue to live here, and to all the First Nations people on the many lands on which we're listening from today.

My name is Stephanie Fortunato. I'm the Director of Special Projects for the GCDN. Today I'm speaking with Matthew Che Kowal, and Molly North, the co-founders of Majestic Collaborations. Matthew is a festival coordinator, artistic director, spokesperson, musician, and community leader. Molly is a progressive, multimodal transportation leader with a master's of engineering, and a skillset that includes technical policy and planning skills. Both Matthew and Molly are committed to community resilience in the face of the climate crisis, environmental and structural racism, and declining mental and physical health. They believe in the immense power of gatherings.

Together they've created an innovative experiential learning platform called The Art of Mass Gatherings that catalyses emergency and disaster preparedness training.

So let me welcome Matthew and Molly. Hello!



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[00:01:52]

Matt & Molly: Hi, Stephanie.

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Stephanie Fortunato: Hello, how are you guys?

[00:01:55]

Matt: We're doing good. We're calling you from Denver, Colorado, the unceded territories of Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Thanks for the starting us off right there with some, where you're coming from, and I'm also on the land of the Su Teatro Community Theatre. Chicano history here is deep. And before these lands were all, you know, divided and conquered, it was the place where the Platte and Cherry Creek River came together in a confluence that started Denver. And this place where people have been gathering for time in memorial. They'd follow the two rivers till they met and then they would meet once a year. And these tribes, it's sort of an interesting place to start, I guess, these confluences, why people get together like that.

Molly and I got together around a festival many years ago and a radio show that she was hosting. And we're married now, and have a little baby. What else Molly? Setting the stage, where are we?

Molly: (laughs) We're in our home in North Denver with our dogs. Our daughter's napping. And we're excited to, to get into some of the content with you today.

[00:03:00]

Stephanie Fortunato: Oh, we better start talking because I remember those naps. They can be pretty, pretty brief. You got to do a lot of work really quickly, right? (laughs)

Molly: Right. We're very good at sprints these days.

Stephanie Fortunato: (laughs) Well, thank you. Thank you for giving us context on place. And I think, yeah, you sort of alluded to it but I wanted to hear a little bit more about those origins of Majestic Collaborations, how it came to be.

Molly, will you tell us that story?

[00:03:25]

Molly: Yeah, so, Matt and I met in 2013 and we really have always spent a lot of time thinking about how to make the world a better place. And a lot of times it shows up in volunteering at kids' schools and you know, shovelling for a neighbour. But we also have bigger ideas about how to create systems that, you know, affect bigger change.

And so, in 2017, we both left our jobs and took a couple months off together. And then came to this idea together in summer of 2017 to really launch this Majestic Collaborations business that would seek to activate the arts and cultural space in a way that allowed more activation in the emergency response space.



So one of the places of genesis for this idea was uh, Standing Rock. We went up there and volunteered a week of our time and got to know a lot of people and a different style of leadership. And we had to be involved in some protests and we really served that community for a week.

And in that space and in that time, we really started to – on our very long, like 10 hour drive home, we just, I had a computer on my lap and Matt was, uh we were both kind of talking and I was just writing down ideas.

[00:04:48]

Molly: And we just kind of wrote a curriculum trying to articulate what we were, had seen in that week, in that space, where there are people who came together out of this urgency that there were some really beautiful, joyful things about it, like we see at festivals. And there were also some really hard things about it, like, like things that we see at a refugee camp or you know, people sheltering in place after a large disaster. So we started to kind of see those, through both lenses. One space can kind of, operate in both ways. Kind of a sunny day and a cloudy day. And we just started to write and write. And then when we got home, it just kind of took off.

[00:05:26]

Stephanie Fortunato: I'm wondering a little bit about this relationship between community resiliency, between gatherings, the arts.

You know, maybe we should take a moment here to kind of define what a gathering is. Matthew, do you want to take that one?

[00:05:41]

Matt: Sure they uh, you know, a lot of times a brand will want to do it, right? I worked for New Belgian Brewing company, this employee-owned brewery that decided that they're going to do cause marketing, field branding, those are the marketing terms.

But, if you're lucky, you might have a cultural moment where people really want to get together for a reason to move things forward. In the case of our festival, the Tour de Fat, it was about bicycles. And so, there was a friction in cities saying, we don't have the infrastructure we need.

We're seeing a lot of bad outcomes. You know, critical mass was, was hitting a lot of cities and we thought there was a positive way to get about that, right? You know, and there's a need for protests, but there's also a need for gathering to kind of celebrate and so we threw these festivals around the country and saw up to 25,000 people come out in a hundred events over the 10 years that I was the creative director and the host and of those, and we raised \$5 million for bicycling with that.

And we thought, you know, that you're kind of in an interesting moment there. So that was my classroom a little bit was like, okay, how do you, work to get to or 500 volunteers at this event to get thousands of people out and then see that money funnel back into good. That was the kind of thing we repeated enough times I started feeling familiar with that sort of lemonade stand, you know, like what the inputs were and um and Molly's



introduced me to a lot of these ideas around tactical urbanism and the cosmopolitan canopy, which I think is such an interesting overlay with these ideas of civics. Um –

[00:07:06]

Stephanie Fortunato: What's a cosmopolitan canopy?

[00:07:09]

Matt: What's the cosmo-? Well, Elijah Johnson is a professor who wrote this great book about what's necessary to um, see a gathering, self-regulate.

[00:07:19]

Matt: And he looked at like Philadelphia farmer's markets and other parts. And he is like noticing that racial and cultural frictions are reduced when there's a lot of food and kids around. And then we've kind of expanded on that a little bit with the Art of Mass gatherings approach and what we teach with introduction to festival safety is to look at how you create these gatherings where we would add like music and green spaces and you see people gather without need of a lot of like security interventions and then Art of Mass gatherings also, I would say a first one, which we could talk about if you want to a bit was Pride Fest in Denver. It was a really interesting gathering for, you know, that reason of, pushing things forward for, you know, civil rights. But then how they went about making safety programming was really interesting.

Molly: I want to jump in really quick because uh, we always want to give credit where credit's due and I told Matt the wrong name, so I'm going to correct us. The author's name is Elijah Anderson. And he's a professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Yale University.

Matt: Oh, yes!

Molly: I just want to give credit for that author of that really great idea.

Stephanie Fortunato: Thank you for setting the record right. We'll make sure that it's correct in our show notes.

Molly: Thank you.

Matt: All right, so, um, not to make light of it. Anyways, so Pride Fest, they've had to do emergency planning for decades because of threats of violence. And the way that they've done it is sort of sharing these safety plans around the world with each other.

And then they activate these volunteer groups with a lot of parents to do a different training in Denver, like every year, like a Stop the Bleed training one year or trauma-informed security the next or weather emergency. So after many years you end up with hundreds or thousands of people who are like starting to get those sort of skills that you'd want to see in like cert programmes.

That's the community emergency response teams that FEMA's (Federal Emergency Management Agency) put together. So we've had some really exciting conversations



with the national cert team about the Art of Mass Gatherings being this like opportunity for field learning, for expeditionary learning, for using the festival set up with all of this infrastructure, this wastewater power systems at these festivals are exactly the kind of stuff you need to rent if you're throwing a drill out at the fair fairgrounds, but you're actually able to do it in a moment that is kind of in the best of times, but you're also juxtaposing this preparedness for hard times.

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Stephanie Fortunato: That's right. I mean, I think many GCDN members were called into service during the pandemic because of their event expertise and their ability to manage public spaces.

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Stephanie Fortunato: You know, that ability to be adroit and adept at crisis response. And so, coming back to Denver Pride, so you're invited to work with them, you're seeing how they're organising volunteers, how they're doing the training. How did you get from there to the work that you're doing now, which is bringing the art of mass gatherings to other communities?

[00:10:12]

Matt: I'll have Molly jump in a second here, and, but I guess I know this one pretty succinctly. So The Art of Mass Gatherings has been partnered with Performing Arts Readiness, which is funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, and I took a webinar with like emergency preparedness for arts and culture, like three webinars on their website.

And afterwards I talked to Tom Clareson, who's the director of that programme, who you met when we did the Indigenous People's Day event in Newton. So Tom Clareson said, this is cool stuff. Um, first of all, do you want to be a circuit writer? Which was this emergency preparedness consultant that gets hosted by a cultural organisation – in our case it was Denver Arts and Venues. So I was like, heck yeah, let's do this because I just left New Belgium. So then simultaneous to doing that circuit writer work where we did emergency preparedness, like consulting – Arts and Venues owns and operates Red Rocks and McNichols Civic Center Building and Performing Arts Complex. The people of Denver own those.

But The Art of Mass gatherings was the seed of an idea where they said, all right, let's get our own grant for this and then do them starting in Colorado at Pride Festival. We had funding for 50 people to attend. And it's free. And then we have honorariums for national luminaries to come in and talk about the four pillars, which we can talk about in a minute.

Hopefully that's exciting. Molly can jump in there. And so then that model says, all right, let's identify the local luminaries who know a lot about sustainability, a lot about accessibility, or they're from lights and sirens organisations like police, fire, emergency management.

And then we're going to do a mutual aid, a skill sharing here, where the people who need to know about each other's work get a chance to share. And it was out in the middle of this civic centre park with a hundred thousand people going around half



naked with the Pride Fest moment. But it was, that was the classroom and I was just excited as heck that we'd get out of PowerPoint presentations and get into real life.

[00:12:10]

Stephanie Fortunato: (laugh) Well, I mean, if there's an actual emergency, that'll be a lot more useful.

[00:12:20]

Molly: Well, so the benefit for us on that, or the, you know, the model for us was, that was our proof of concept, so, we engaged community members. We worked inside of a beloved community event. And we, we really developed further this curriculum that we had been writing on the road and put it into practice.

[00:12:39]

Molly: And we had a really great you know, granters and collaborators to help us do that work. And we learned a lot. And then we found more funding through an extension of a grant through the Mellon Foundation and Performing Arts Readiness to take it on the road. And so I guess there's kind of two reasons that it expanded from Denver.

One is logistical, functional, is that, you know, the grantor wants to see this impact in many communities, right? So that's the simple answer. The other answer is that the work that we're doing in these Art of Mass Gatherings symposiums, is we're bringing together people who might not already have connection to one another, might not already understand one another's crafts.

And we're helping them to make those connections, understand one another, hopefully formalise some of these relationships and some of these skill sets into emergency plans and master plans that cities are always in the process of writing and drafting and implementing. And so it makes sense for us to move on to another community to help make those connections and formalise those networks and help another community.

So it's, it's kind of twofold.

[00:13:53]

MUSIC TRANSITION

[00:14:01]

Stephanie Fortunato: So last year I did have the opportunity to experience the Art of Mass Gatherings first-hand through some festival audits. And I was really impressed with the way that the events were undergirded by the four pillars. And so I did want to hear a little bit more about those four pillars and how you integrate them into planning and operations of an event.

[00:14:23]

Molly: Oh, we love to talk about the four pillars. So one of our other common loves between us is cooking and we really like Nosrat Samin. She wrote a book called Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat. It's really foundational. So she start, you know, she talks about how if you're making a perfect mayonnaise, if you haven't, you know, you give it a taste and you



haven't quite arrived, think about the salt, the fat, the acid and the heat, and which one's missing, and then you kind of amp that one up and then, oh, and then you've arrived.

So it gives you kind of this tangible like four, we called them the four pillars, these four things that you can kind of lean back on and figure out which one you need more of in that moment. So we used that as our kind of guideposts for figuring out for us to make a successful event. And let's define that as successful, joyful, sunny day event in the park, or successful response to an emergency, right.

It's a successful event in either case that those would have four things in place, and we define those four as safety, sustainability, accessibility, and community engagement.

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Stephanie Fortunato: I really like the way you don't make distinctions between – well, first of all, the kinds of gatherings, right? And I, it's really interesting the way that these pillars can be applied no matter what the kind of event it is, right?

[00:15:46]

Molly: That's right. Yeah. And we might imagine that a community celebration is going to be all beautiful and magical, and as everything's going to go right.

Stephanie Fortunato: But it never does. (laughs)

Molly: Right! But there might be, you know, on the same day, there might be a protest that's using the same space, or on the same day there might be a weather event, or on the same day there might be something that causes that, you know, what should have been an ideal gathering to have to face some challenges.

And likewise, there might be, it might be that after a hurricane when people are all sheltered in place together you know, we think that's the hardest time. But, you know, things might be, if the, if all the people and the places and the services and resources are all in place, that gathering might just click along.

[00:16:34]

Matt: Yeah. And I think it, how do you get in and outta civics conversations in one piece, whether it's at the Thanksgiving table with your uncle, or if it's in a community meeting, or it's, you know, trying to lead a city, you know, as a whatever stakeholder or job you got. Like, Molly and I have learned a bit in this too from some disasters we've been in, you know, that you're kind of moving fast and you're trying to build some muscle memory and some situational leadership.

And another metaphor I'll say sometimes too is that a sustainability problem let go too long, becomes a safety problem. And then the interesting intersections are super fun. Like there's a Denver festival venue that said hey, half off if you come in your bicycle on your bike or you took public transportation.

And so then 8,000 people arrive at the venue and a hailstorm comes in and there's no cars in the parking lot – which was their emergency plan for shelter in place. And so their sustainability initiative, you know, screw it up their safety plan. And then, boy, the



accessibility stuff has been just a blessing to work with some smart folks like Betty Siegel from Kennedy Center and Laura Grunfeld, who you met from Everyone's Invited.

And our newest addition to the Majestic team is Jessica Wallach, who has worked with the Justice Department and done a lot of accessibility work as a person with cerebral palsy and is one of the most brilliant people I've met. And every day is just blowing us away. That video that we just shared with you, she may, but her cool way of putting it is like, we've arrived when the built environment is a love song to the body.

Like, have we built an environment that respects, you know, everyone? And that's a high bar, but really worthy.

[00:18:13]

Stephanie Fortunato: Well, and the kind of incredible thing is that when you are putting together a festival, an event, right, you are doing that in a temporary setting for the most part. So you are creating a little city within a city. And so the care of thinking about these things up front and making sure that they really are executed across the work plan or implemented across the, you know, all aspects of the festival is, is really, almost as important as leveraging all those different community expertise that you're talking about, you know, from the creative side to the public safety side, to accessibility experts along the way, and then of course communities and celebrating the lived experience of different cultures in these places.

I know you are actually just back from an Art of Mass Gathering training in Puerto Rico, a place that has been really devastated by natural and human disasters. What was that like? Can you tell me a little bit about that training?

[00:19:18]

Matt: Yeah, we were hosted by La Goyco, which is this school in downtown San Juan that was turned into Resilience Hub. It's also the home of La Plena music, which is this amazing Puerto Rican music form that's kind of call and response with news and humour and seriousness that is like right in the moment.

It's like total expression of um, it's just a, it's very powerful music. And they just lost their, one of their patron saint musicians, Tito Matos was the husband of Mariana, who's the director of La Goyco. So they were our hosting site. And so we went into this beautiful big school, like this U-shaped school with a kitchen that has solar panels on top and Tesla batteries.

And we learned a lot about these resiliency hubs where community just grabs this unused building. They form it into a, a resilience hub. And then they tell – the government just has to kind of like, let them have it because they're like, look what we're doing here. And then their kitchen had wonderful stories. Uh, um, Maritza, the, the chef that made our food talked about when her apartment building was out for a month – this 13 storey building and how they took care of each other. We had a chef Jose Enrique, who's like the most famous chef in town who cooked for 8,000 people in the Ukraine just a while ago, talked about the intersection of culinary arts and disaster response and meeting people with soul food in their hardest times.



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And the two of them were talking in this kitchen interview when this was the classroom, right, and then we walked up on these stairs and looked out over the whole place at the solar panels; talked about microgrids and how people with disabilities are the first people impacted during these power outages and have, how to try to turn around those outcomes.

We've talked to the director, Arturo, who's Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas and is an internal, is the gold standard of like a community that first started fighting back about the mining. Um, and, and sort of, uh, serenity questions of what a town could fight back against, who have now created this solar festival that is really cool. And then we had um, MAVI, this independent people with disabilities, independent living institution talking about the intersection of disaster and accessibility.

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Matt: And, then we did this cultural asset mapping session with all kinds of people, sort of talking about the people, places and things that from the four pillars, like what are the resources for safety, sustainability, accessibility that they know of on the island.

Um, really interesting for everybody to do that together in this collaborative asset mapping. And we were hosted by FEMA and HENTF – which everybody should know about, the historical emergency response task force that looks at like, preservation of cultural, like a community level during disasters.

And then we went down to the south of the island to pick up a solar trailer. And Pontsay that footprint project is an organisation that's partnered with us. Um, they had a trailer that went bad. The batteries failed. So we, we went down earlier in the week, fetched the trailer, brought it back, replaced it with some new lithium batteries. We used it as a learning station during the Art of Mass Gatherings and it was pretty cool. And then the, that next day they had a festival that we studied, which was their La Goyco's holiday party and lots of different musicians and bands and food.

And we did a bingo where we went around the site and looked at all the different kind of features of the four pillars that we could identify, take pictures of. And, but we kind of do it through a Roses and Thorns methodology where we say, here's something that's working great, and here's an opportunity for growth.

[00:22:58]

Molly: And I'll add that all of the planning meetings and all of the kind of in-person learning moments, kind of gatherings during the symposium time in Puerto Rico was all primarily in Spanish. It was bilingual; Spanish, English, which was a stretch for us and a lot of our team. Um, but it was the way that we want to do this work.

It was meeting the people that we're working with and learning from, where they're at and what, you know, and they are primarily Spanish speakers.

Matt: And Performing Arts Readiness has made it possible too with the funding.

Molly: That's right.



[00:23:35]

Stephanie Fortunato: Oh, it's terrific. I mean, that's like at the heart of the capacity building that you guys are collaborating with communities to make possible. I love the way you just shared sort of the overview of the schedule and your itinerary in your time there. But really it was sort of an activation of those cultural assets all over the island and, and the way that it came together.

I mean, it just shows how vital and alive these trainings can be.

What comes next? How does your relationship, or what do you hope happens after the training ends? And the work itself, how does it carry forward in communities?

[00:24:15]

Molly: Yeah. So, connecting people and networks and hoping that some of the relationships and ideas get formalised – that's really been kind of the first chapter of this Art of Mass Gatherings work, has been working with resilient people. And the next chapter is creating resilient places. And we envision doing that through working with venues like La Goyco. You know, where we can find these, buildings that are in some kind of transition or not being used or even buildings in active use, like a civic center or a performing arts space.

Because these venues tend to have generators, they tend to have ADA resources, bathrooms, things like that. They tend to have a lot of the resources already in place that just need to be envisioned and, kind of assigned to be reused in the, in the case of an emergency. But we also have this vision of repurposing and reinvigorating parks across the country. We want to see these community gathering spaces become really vibrant. For similar to, the Art of Mass Gatherings – the way that on a sunny day we've got a ring around the park with electric vehicles charging, we have micro mobility stations with scooters and bikes that people can share.

We have structures that can be used for shade on a sunny day, we have water stations that people can use to refill their water bottles, we have all these systems in place for people to use these parks even more than we're currently using them. And in a way that's safe, sustainable, and accessible right? And that totally engages our communities. And then in the planning phase of how we're designing these parks to do that on a beautiful day, we're also thinking about how to assign those resources when someone needs to go shelter there for days or weeks while their house is repaired, or someone needs to, you know, be able to go and have water and power and shelter while they have, you know, a short to medium shelter in place experience.

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Stephanie Fortunato: I think it's so important to look at our civic infrastructure and to see how we can make it work for communities today. In the things that you're talking about, they're so often value engineered out of plans, and yet what you're saying is that we need to make them the sort of central organising principles for how we not only design the physical layout of these spaces, but how we invite people to socialise in these spaces too.



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[00:26:55]

Matt: Totally. And you know, one of the fun briefs would be that if you want a sneak preview of how your community's going to perform under disaster and how much resources they have for sustainable, accessible response, look at the festivals today. And so it's an x-ray, if you will, for these cities to kind of see what they do and don't have figured out.

And then it's an opportunity to get muscle memory and to feel leadership models, feel their way through that, look at how to operationalise response at these more like trauma reduced opportunities. So it's kind of a paradox, you know, to insert that in there.

But um, you're going to know what the city's capacities are to handle different streams.

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Stephanie Fortunato: It'll be interesting to see how the Art of Mass Gatherings does impact policy and practices in places. I imagine that was actually part of why the state of North Carolina engaged you, right? Because they must be thinking differently about their special events administration.

I mean, that, that's a whole bunch of assumptions there, but what is the state of North Carolina hoping to do, post the Art of Mass Gathering symposia?

[00:28:04]

Matt: Catherine Swain has been so awesome. I know she's got a lot of irons in the fire, so I don't know all her cool ideas. But it was funny. We were at a Folk Alliance International festival. Molly and I were speaking out, and I think we both, we all know Shane from Sound Diplomacy, I think talked to Catherine about the Art of Mass Gatherings.

And so she was talking to me after I kind of made some comments about this Music City stuff where people are like, hey, let's do music and tourism and I kind of tended to be that guy standing up be like, look, this music tourism stuff is great, but New Orleans could be on its feet and we could be looking at like massive cultural, you know, diasporas.

Like, are we talking about this in our plans? And it was before Covid and – but so Catherine, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources is an interesting office, you know, for the state. And they got their eyes on a lot. And they certainly have their share of disasters and, you know, this American rescue planned dollars or wanting to see professional development, professional networking, job work restoration.

And so I think in a nutshell, our pitch was like arts and cultural workers and event workers, ace workers need to have another arrow in their quiver that says I, I can also activate during these times with some competency. So let's do some classes for that. And she was like, done. We need to, you know, so she asked for three of them.

Geographically diverse places in the state: We've done one in the Outer Banks, we've done one in Asheville. And then we're hoping to do another one in Robeson County with Lumbee Tribe.



[00:29:32]

Stephanie Fortunato: Well, and remind me, all different kinds of events too. I mean, talking about, again, the sort of level playing fields here. What were the, what were the different events so far?

[00:29:41]

Matt: We did the Cucalorus, a film festival in Wilmington, that's in the Outer Banks. A lot of interesting intersections of like, um, climate change and then people interacting with the natural environment, you know, with the surfing, which I always loved that cause I always thought the bicycle was a great vehicle for getting people into environmentalism, because you feel the wind in your, all that stuff.

[00:30:03]

Matt: So it's a cool film festival. They set up these stands on the beach. They have to move when the tide comes in. A lot of infrastructure needs to get, be kind of temporary. And so we studied that event and we worked with the Wright Brothers Museum and worked with a lot of interpreters and people talking about like language justice.

And then we did one at the LEAF Global Arts Festival in Asheville, which is like a five or 8,000 person camping festival. One of the best like family camping festivals anywhere with like a world music focus. And we did a harm reduction workshop there um, that looks at fentanyl overdose prevention. Everybody got NARCAN (nasal spray).

And we did a first aid class. We did a lot on solar power with MAC Solar, brought out some solar trailers and then a lot on accessible design with Jessica's great cadre of self-advocates that she can be.

[00:30:52]

Stephanie Fortunato: We'll definitely keep an eye on what comes out of all of that work. Um, but I wanted to just ask, you know, sort of a big question here, about creative resilience. How do you define creative resilience?

[00:31:08]

Molly: Um, well, gosh, it's such a – we're gonna start our own podcast, let's call it creative resilience so that we can explore this very big idea. (laughs)

Matt: You'll be our first guest.

Stephanie Fortunato: There's so many ideas, right? (laughs)

Molly: Yeah. Yeah. You know, we've done a couple FEMA trainings together as well, and, you know, FEMA's kind of formal format or of a way of talking about resilience is mitigation and preparation, and then response and recovery.

And I actually, in grad school, I did a paper about how artists are really essential parts of all four of those, and found some really cool case studies about how, you know, like in New Orleans there was a, there was an artist after the hurricane who put up these massive structures that were pointing in the direction of safety, of like, this is how you would exit if there were another event.



But anyway, each of those four categories has really good examples of how arts can be a part of the solution for preparing communities, for mitigating risk for communities, for that immediate response after an emergency as well as – and maybe especially that long-term recovery, because people want to gather around art and music and find peace and joy and grief together.

And art can do that for people. And so, I guess that's, that's one of the ideas about creative resilience for us, is that resilience can be these four formal words, these four formal things that we work on in a strategic way. But integrating creativity and art and music into those – we think is the most effective way to do that work.

[00:32:55]

Stephanie Fortunato: Ah, so many beautiful statements there. So, so many beautiful thoughts in that you guys are really hitting a sweet spot for me in terms of not only like how we adapt, but how we take optimism and, and reality that are sometimes, they feel like they're in conflict. But how do we channel that towards productive and generative means for coming together?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Matt: Right on. I wonder if anybody's got a song that kind of like..

Molly: Oh I know a guy, I know a guy –

Stephanie Fortunato: Oh, oh, wait a minute! Hold on. We have just a few minutes here. I'd love to hear a song.

Matt: Okay, well luckily I got a guitar in my lap. Molly, take your microphone. Put it on your knee.

[GUITAR STRUMMING AND MALE VOCALS]

[00:35:14]

Stephanie Fortunato: (applause) Oh my god, that was amazing.

Molly: And that's how creativity enters our work.

Stephanie Fortunato: What an invitation for everyone who's listening today to get involved. Matthew, Molly, I think we are unfortunately out of time, but I wanna thank you for joining us today for applying your expertise to the great of goods. So creatively, so essentially for helping make it a little more possible for people to gather joyfully, safely and sustainably, and for helping people activate their collective imagination, activating collective leadership across communities to make this Art of Mass Gathering possible, this is truly a majestic collaboration. Thank you so much for being on The Three Bells today.

Matt & Molly: Thank you Stephanie. Any chance we can to work with you again we're excited and we'll be lucky.



<https://www.thethreebells.net/episodes/s3e3>

Stephanie Fortunato: Listeners, if you want more, check out www.thethreebells.net to find all the external references and resources linked to this episode. The Three Bells is produced by AEA Consulting and the Global Cultural Districts Network. If you like what you heard today, do subscribe to our feed and rate our show on the podcast listening platform of choice. My name is Stephanie Fortunato. Thank you for being with us today, and I look forward to joining you again soon.

[00:36:42]

THEME MUSIC

