

# Impact

Sharing the difference CSU Extension makes in people's lives and their communities.

## Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging

Professionals who support older adults at work, home, and in health care settings learn the skills and tools they need for successful communication.

### Issue

Today's older Americans are working and living longer than previous generations. By 2030, it's estimated that almost one in every five U.S. citizens will be 65 years or older. Professionals who work directly with older adults are important links in the prevention and intervention of personal and family issues.

### Extension's Response

In 2007, Colorado State University Extension family and consumer science specialists and agents developed the annual Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging (RMCoA). Each year the program is designed to share research-based information to support older adults in the workplace and during challenging life issues. Faculty from CSU's Department of Human Development and Family Studies and Department of Psychology, along with partners from the University of Northern Colorado, and the Denver District Attorney's Office joined this effort.

Five conferences have been presented since 2007. The first two emphasized issues regarding aging in the workforce; the next two focused on prevention and intervention strategies related to financial abuse and exploitation. The most recent focused on the challenges grandparents face when they become the primary or sole caregiver of their grandchildren.

Conference themes are continually updated and selected from research, focus group interviews and post-conference participant surveys. They include:

- Aging in the Workplace: Maximizing a Valuable Human Resource
- The Changing Workforce: Challenges and Strategies for Success
- Financial Abuse and Exploitation: Prevention Strategies & Tools
- Elder Financial Exploitation: Investigation and Intervention Tool
- Strengthening Practices and Systems to Support Grandfamilies

Almost 500 people have attended one or more Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging. Each year a combination of grant funding, registration and exhibitor fees, sponsorships and in-kind gifts has meant that the conference could continue another year.



Conference participants learn to Walk in Older Work Shoes as they experience "instant aging."

### The Bottom Line

- Entering its sixth year, the Rocky Mountain Conference in Aging (RMCoA) is a primary Northern Colorado training resource that provides professional development for the human resource, legal, financial planning, health and human service, and faith community representatives who work one-on-one with older adults.
- The RMCoA has elevated the reputation and awareness of CSU Extension as a go-to resource for quality education on relevant and current family and consumer issues.

### By the Numbers

- Total RMCoA attendees since 2007: 478
- Total generated conference sponsorship: \$15,750
- Total generated registration fees: \$27,960

## Impact

Through the Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging, CSU Extension and its partners provide the latest research and information to address current aging issues. Entering its sixth year, the Rocky Mountain Conference in Aging (RMCoA) is a primary Northern Colorado training resource that provides professional development for the members of human resource, legal, financial planning, health and human service, and faith communities, who often work one-on-one with older adults.

Several positive outcomes have emerged from the Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging:

- Conference sessions have dealt with sensitive topics, such as intergenerational communication, universal design (designs to accommodate people with disabilities), ageism, Americans with Disabilities Act, and cultural implications around family communication and money decisions. According to program committee members, these sessions have helped conference participants understand the perspectives of older adults, practice strategies to overcome attitudes and social barriers, and discover solutions that honor diversity.
- CSU Extension forged a new relationship with the University of Northern Colorado through up-to-date research based information related to aging. Partnerships with Colorado AARP and the Area Agencies on Aging were renewed.
- The conference has become financially self-sustaining. Relevant conference topics attract the conference's target audience. The program committee established a fair registration fee that takes into consideration all program costs from promotional expenses and handouts to presenter fees and catering costs. Sponsor revenues help cover program costs.

According to post-session surveys from the 2012 conference, participant learning on a '1' (Disagree) to '7' (Agree) scale ranked high, as shown in the following responses. The Rocky Mountain Conference in Aging:

- Increased my knowledge about practices and systems to support grandfamilies (77.6%)
- Added to my understanding of the challenges and complexities of grandfamilies (81.7%)
- Provided me with useful information about programs and tools to support grandfamilies (79.6%)

After the 2012 conference:

- 79.6% reported being better able to recognize the issues and complexities facing grand families
- 67.3% have a better understanding of the tools and programs available to support grandfamilies
- 79.6% feel more confident in their ability to support grandfamilies

Overall, post-conference surveys indicate that the Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging has raised the reputation and awareness of CSU Extension as a go-to resource for quality education on relevant and current family and consumer science topics.

The Rocky Mountain Conference on Aging won the Epsilon Sigma Phi 2011 Zeta Chapter and 2012 Western Region Distinguished Service Team Award. The conference has qualified to provide continuing education credits through the Human Resource Certification Institute, American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, and the Colorado Continuing Legal Education process.

*Colorado State University Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. August 2012. Written by Carol Busch.*

*"This was a well-designed conference balancing research, best practices and theory as well as engaging organizations, community members, educators, extension and their applied professions."*

– RMCoA program participant

*"I now have additional tools (questions) to ask grandparent clients in order to get a more complete picture of their challenges. As a result, I can provide more comprehensive and targeted support and resources."*

– RMCoA program participant

## Calling all professionals

Conferences, located in Loveland, Colorado, at The Ranch Events Complex, include breakout and plenary sessions, key note speakers, and panel discussions. Conferences target professionals who have direct contact with older adults, such as representatives of legal, financial, health, human service, and faith communities. Conference presenters are recruited locally and nationally and include subject matter experts from businesses, other land grant universities, local governments, and nonprofits. For information on upcoming conferences, contact CSU Extension in Larimer County at (970) 498-6000.

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