Colorado State University Extension

Volunteer Profile: Community Development

Barbara Holthaus has nearly sixty years of involvement with and service to Extension and 4-H youth development programs in Colorado. She started her first 4-H club, the Lucky Leaf 6-8 Club, in 1947 and subsequently organized two more clubs.

From 1948 to 1980, Holthaus presented workshops to 4-H clubs, and judged exhibits, demonstrations, and contests throughout the state and at the Colorado State Fair. Now, some of Holthaus’s grandchildren are enrolled in 4-H, while others have already graduated. Her three daughters were involved as 4-H members and won national awards. Now, some of Holthaus’s grandchildren are enrolled in 4-H, while others have already graduated. Her three daughters were involved as 4-H members and won national awards. Holthaus has nearly sixty years of involvement with and service to Extension and 4-H youth development programs in Colorado. She started her first 4-H club, the Lucky Leaf 6-8 Club, in 1947 and subsequently organized two more clubs.

She served on the Colorado Extension Advisory Council, lending her forward thinking perspective and her ability to creatively address tough programming, policy, and funding issues. Holthaus has touched the lives of thousands of people by her generosity, commitment to building community, integrity, and dedication. She stays involved because she believes in the power of giving and she truly cares about the organizations and the people who are part of them.

Volunteer Profile: Colorado Master Gardener

Ask Kim Schmidt why she volunteers for Extension and she will tell you it is all about helping people. As a Colorado Master Gardener in Pueblo, she takes her message on the road every year, working in urban areas and across county lines to encourage others in their gardening endeavors. Her mission is simple: make it easy for people to grow their own food.

“Till making opportunities for people to teach them how to feed themselves and their families,” she says. Volunteering over 160 hours per year, Schmidt reaches out to young and old alike, holding seminars in elementary schools and libraries, at community gardens, and garden and home shows. In 2004, Schmidt joined the Master Composters in Boulder County, then moved south to Pueblo where she has donated her time as a Master Food Preserver and Colorado Master Gardener. Her passion for gardening inspires over 1,000 people annually to feed their green thumbs.

Volunteer Profile: 4-H Youth Development

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Bringing Extension to Local Residents

More than 6,000 volunteers reach out to people throughout Colorado with Extension programs. Because of volunteer efforts in diverse Extension programs, more people learn how to make better choices for their families, homes, and businesses. Volunteers often delve into a subject area and are anxious to spread the word to others in their community.

They are an essential part of Colorado State University’s outreach.

Some ways that volunteers contribute to Extension programs include:

- exploring opportunities with the 4-H youth development program
- growing the front lawn to gardens to benefit their neighbors
- teaching Colorado residents how to care for the home landscape
- sharing their passion for 4-H and helping others learn to preserve them
- communicating the importance of native plants

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics has established the current value of volunteer time at $20.25 per hour; the bureau has adjusted the value slightly higher for Colorado—to $20.84 per hour. Multiply this by the number of hours volunteers contribute every year and it adds up to over $518 million annually.

The benefits to Colorado counties as a result of that investment can be measured in young people who are more engaged in their communities, improved family economic stability, improved parenting and family nutrition, saving water through appropriate landscaping, and individuals engaged in making their communities better places to live.

Extension Advisory Council

Extension agents develop programs that address the educational needs of county and area residents. Local advisory groups, made up of volunteers representing a cross-section of the community, help them to further identify local issues.

The Colorado Extension Advisory Council (CEAC) includes individuals selected for their leadership, demonstrated concern, and involvement in significant areas of social and economic issues in Colorado. In addition, there are ex-officio members representing the Colorado Farm Bureau, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Colorado Counties Inc., Green Industry of Colorado, and the Colorado Association of Family and Consumer Education.

The council provides direct communication between the CEAC, Extension Director and leading citizens of the state for the mutual exploration of a broad range of educational needs and problems.

Agricultural Producers

Farmers and ranchers have always been an important asset to Extension programs. Producers are crucial in conducting farm- or ranch-based agricultural research. By allowing CSU Extension staff to use a working farm or ranch for research purposes, scientific findings carry real-world credibility.

Producers are often asked to present at conferences and workshops on topics relevant to other farmers and ranchers, adding an essential peer-to-peer learning aspect to Extension educational outreach.

Additionally, producers function as mentors to beginning farmers and ranchers in the Colorado Building Farmers Program. The relationship continues as producers serve on advisory boards and share the message of CSU Extension with their peers.

4-H Youth Development

Volunteers with the Colorado 4-H program are involved in direct service to youth: teaching, guiding, and advising them in community-based groups. They work at county and state fairs, 4-H club and in after-school programs. At both Extension volunteer programs, the Colorado 4-H program helps to ensure the emotional and physical safety of participants by conducting national background checks of all paid and unpaid adult volunteers who apply to the program. According to the national 4-H Volunteer Research, Knowledge and Complexity study, a 4-H Volunteer contributes an average of 128 hours each year.

4-H International Programs

Volunteers host families are the key to the success of an international exchange. The mission of this program is to help young people and their families understand the importance of knowing about other countries and the U.S., and their respective cultures.

By living with a host family, participants from other countries become real community members, rather than guests or tourists, and discover daily life in the United States. Families are not paid, but rewarded with the unique opportunity to learn about another culture in their own homes.

- Shooting Sports Certified Volunteers

Volunteers who apply to the program are trained educators who provide the public with research-based information on food safety and food preservation from Colorado State University and USDA.

There is a great appeal for youth to learn how to use guns, but it’s the long-term development of life skills that members cite as the most important aspect of their involvement in 4-H shooting sports. The 18-hour volunteer training is the most comprehensive required program for 4-H leaders prior to working with young people.

Volunteers learn about program development, basic instructional methods, risk management, and essential elements of youth development.

Volunteers are certified in a variety of shooting sports disciplines such as archery, pistol, muzzle loading, rifle, outdoor skills, and shotgun/trap. Additional responsibilities include range safety officer, coordinator, coach, and instructor.

Colorado Master Gardener Program

Volunteers in the Colorado Master Gardener Program have played an active role in the education of gardeners for over 35 years. Program participants learn their knowledge through 18 weeks of classes, beginning with basic botany and building upon plant biology topics such as nutrition, disease diagnosis, insect identification and control, and turf grass and tree care. Those courses are taught in person and online by Colorado State University professors, specialists, and agents. During the first year, Colorado Master Gardeners apprentice for 50 hours of volunteer time per year. After the second year, Colorado Master Gardeners continue to get 12 hours of training and give 24 hours of volunteer service per year. Projects are combined partnerships with the green industry, elementary and secondary schools, and Colorado State University programs to promote environmentally responsible horticulture.

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Master Food Safety Advisor (MFA) volunteers are trained educators who provide the public with research-based information on food safety and food preservation from Colorado State University and USDA. Trained became certified after participating in 30 hours of intensive training on methods of canning, freezing, freezing, dehydrating, food safety, and prevention of foodborne illness. Master Food Safety Advisors commit to providing at least 40 hours of volunteer service per year.

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Native Plant Master™ Program

Anyone can sign up to get to know the plants of Colorado, but to become a Native Plant Master, participants take these courses and give back some time educating others.

The mission of the Native Plant Master Program is to educate the public about native plants in order to foster stewardship, sustainable landscaping and management of woods that threaten native ecosystems. As a result of the program, over 1.1 million acres of land in the state have been the target of need control efforts. The program is offered in 10 different locations across the state. Volunteers who complete three courses and educate at least 60 citizens are certified by Colorado State University Extension as Native Plant Masters.

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