

Impact

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

Extension expands food safety across Western Colorado

Grant funding from the Colorado Trust expanded CSU Extension's food safety education efforts to Western Colorado communities while strengthening the region's public health infrastructure.

Issue

In 2006, the West Central Public Health Partnership (WCPHP), a coalition of Western Slope county public health and environment personnel, received a \$375,000 Colorado Trust grant to improve regional health services and infrastructure. Following a needs assessment of Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties, WCPHP set a goal to improve safe food preparation practices in retail establishments through food safety education. In Colorado, county public and environmental health staff typically provides this outreach. However, none of the six counties involved with WCPHP offered food safety classes. CSU Extension, which has provided *Food Safety Works* classes in Montrose since 2003, offered WCPHP a trusted teaching alternative.

Extension's Response

CSU Extension Tri River Area agents were contracted to teach 35 *Food Safety Works* classes throughout the six counties between 2006 and 2010. In 2009, Tri River Area Extension alone offered *Food Safety Works* to 485 food handlers in 13 communities. The grant subsidized the majority of the class fee so participants paid \$5 instead of \$30. It also covered costs related to agents' time, travel and supplies.

The *Food Safety Works* program has trained food handlers statewide since 2001. Food and nutrition specialists developed it to teach how to prevent foodborne illness in the work place by properly washing hands, cleaning and sanitizing equipment, safely handling and storing food, and avoiding cross-contamination. The two-hour class features fun and engaging hands-on activities that help participants understand and retain course content. The *Food Safety Works* curriculum was originally developed in partnership with the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment. It is currently taught in over 20 counties around Colorado by family and consumer science agents.



The Bottom Line

- By teaching *Food Safety Works* at the county level, CSU Extension provides much-needed public health education that many county health departments have eliminated due to budget cuts, or do not have the ability to provide.
- Extension's commitment to teaching *Food Safety Works* contributes to the future stability of public health across Colorado's Western Slope.

By the Numbers

Tri River Area Food Safety Works in 2009:

- Total number of food handlers trained: 542
- Total number of FSW trainings: 34
- Number of food handlers trained since grant began: 1,401

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Upon completion of the class, 51% of participants said they would make some changes in their food handling practices, while 46% said they would make multiple changes in their practices. Follow-up evaluation over time is needed to know the long-term impact of the program.

Overall, CSU Extension has helped WCPHP meet its goal to improve environmental and public health services and infrastructure by offering a critical educational resource available nowhere else. The most rewarding outcome of Extension's involvement in the program was in 2009. Food Safety Educator Jeanne Rice taught *Food Safety Works* class to 66 employees at Crested Butte Mountain Resort. Later that same day, Rice taught a second training to 33 employees from restaurants throughout the town of Crested Butte.

Colorado State University Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. October 2010.

Tri River Area *Food Safety Works* Partners

Delta County
Gunnison County
Hinsdale County
Montrose County
Ouray County
San Miguel County

County Partners

CSU Extension family and consumer science agents offer *Food Safety Works* in over 20 counties statewide:

Bent
Boulder
Delta
Douglas
Eagle
El Paso
Fremont
Gunnison
Hinsdale
Larimer
Las Animas
Moffat
Montrose
Otero
Ouray
Pueblo
Routt
San Luis Valley Area
San Miguel
Summit
Weld

Contact Information

Rhonda Follman
CSU Extension, Tri River Area
Director and Family & Consumer Science Agent
(970) 224-1839
rhonda.follman@mesacounty.us