

**Colorado State University Cooperative Extension programs are helping Coloradans**

- **increase knowledge and skills related to the challenges of adult development and aging;**
- **improve the social, economic and physical health of the state's senior population.**

*The Costs...*

- *Financial concerns, health and long-term care emerge as leading issues among Colorado older adults surveyed by AARP; 70% reported being extremely concerned about the security of pensions and benefits; 64% about finding affordable health insurance; 73% were concerned about consumer fraud; 62% said if they need long-term care, they want to remain in their own homes as long as possible.*
- *Family caregivers are the backbone of the U.S. long-term care system--they provide about 80% of the care for people who need help with daily activities. 45 to 52 million individuals provide informal, unpaid care; one study estimated the value of family caregiving at \$196 billion annually if the number of hours of informal caregiving was replaced with paid services.*
- *Caregiving responsibilities seriously affect the American economy through lost productivity of employed caregivers (mostly women) because of altered work schedules and lost opportunities--40% reported it affected their ability to advance in their job; 29% passed up a promotion, training or assignment; 25% passed up an opportunity for a job transfer or relocation; 22% were not able to acquire new job skills.*

**Addressing Issues Faced by Colorado's Senior Population and Their Families**

During the next 3 to 4 decades, there will be a dramatic increase both in the number of elderly persons and in the proportion of elderly persons in the population. The current proportion of elderly persons, 13%, will rise to perhaps 20% by the year 2030, when the number of elderly is expected to double. Many areas of public life will be greatly affected by the aging of the baby-boom cohorts, the very large numbers of children born between 1946 and 1964, who begin to turn 60 in 2006. These projected demographic changes have given rise to a general concern about the social, economic, and physical "health" of our nation's population. Current concerns about the aging of the population arise from three conditions: 1. the proportion of elderly in the total population; 2. the increasing number of elderly and their requirements for special services (health, recreation, housing, nutrition, etc.) and formal and informal care, as well as their participation in entitlement programs; 3. the implications of an aging society for the whole range of social institutions, from education and family to business and government. Colorado State University Cooperative Extension established a Gerontology Team in 1991 to consider issues and address the needs of Colorado's growing population of older adults. Colorado's 60+ population is among the fastest growing in the nation. In some rural counties, seniors account

for 20%-30% of the overall population. Cooperative Extension education is targeted at this growing audience to help meet their needs related to housing, nutrition, health care, financial management, self-sufficiency and long-term care.



*Colorado State University Cooperative Extension programs address issues of later life through education targeted at the state's rising senior population.*

## The Payoff...

*Cooperative Extension programs are designed to provide education to Colorado's seniors and their families who provide care. The average caregiver is a 46-year-old woman who is married and employed outside the home; more than one in five say they take care of someone with mental confusion, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or forgetfulness. Providing financial management education to families is important to the 22% of persons aged 45 to 55 who are caring for or financially supporting older relatives. Also because more than one in 10 grandparents at some point raise a grandchild for six months or longer, and more than half of grandparent caregivers are aged 60 and older, Cooperative Extension is meeting the educational needs of these audiences with programs and resources such as "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren," "When Dependency Increases,"*

*"Healthy Aging" columns, "A Delicate Balance," Senior Nutrition newsletters, "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?" "Growing Older and Smarter," and Financial Security in Later Life.*

*(National Alliance for Caregiving, 1997; AARP, 2002; CSU Cooperative Extension Gerontology Team Report, 2001)*



- Colorado State University Cooperative Extension offered "Healthwise for Life" to more than 5,000 older adults in 23 counties to help them improve communication with health professionals and increase awareness about health issues. Of 800 participants surveyed, 40% reported saving up to \$100 per year; 26% reported saving between \$100 to \$1,000 a year; 48% reported an improved quality of life; 39% said they had fewer doctor visits; and 42% said they took a more active role in their personal health care--because of the information they received from Healthwise.
- Gerontology team members assisted in presenting a "Seniors Against Fraud & Abuse" Conference, with a follow-up survey to evaluate change in participant's behavior. Of those respondents, 56% learned to check phone bills to avoid slamming, 38% adopted new behaviors to discourage telemarketers, and 31% knew to call the District Attorney's Office for suspected fraud.
- A video titled "A Delicate Balance" was created to show the positive aspects of caregiving in rural Colorado. Programs around the topic were presented to more than 300 families and additional agency personnel and caregivers. A survey of participants showed 97% increased information on consequences of caregiving stress, 88% increased knowledge about caregiving resources, and 86% understood the importance of caregivers also meeting their own needs. The video received national recognition from the National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, and the Telly Award for outstanding non-network video production.
- Last year, Cooperative Extension educational programs in family and consumer sciences provided education for families and caregivers that showed 96% improved their communication skills, 91% increased their knowledge of adult developmental stages and changes associated with aging; and 86% reported making better decisions.

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## Putting Knowledge to Work

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