



Colorado State University Health Extension FY: 2023-24 Impact Report

CSU's Rural Health Initiative significantly enhanced Extension's capacity for improving health across rural Colorado and was instrumental in establishing our new Health Extension system. This system builds on the long-term successes of Family and Consumer Science while incorporating approaches based on prevention science and Cooperative Extension's National Framework for Health Equity and Well-being.

CSU Extension elevated its national presence by hosting a group of Health Extension leaders from across the country at Spur in October 2023, to engage in a strategic planning process for implementing the health equity framework. Then, in January of 2024, our Health and Well-being Program and Research Unit (PRU) was launched to coordinate and uplift CSU Extension's health-related efforts statewide. This PRU focuses on five key areas of health and well-being: Behavioral Health, Financial Well-being, Healthy Aging, Food Safety/Preservation, and Nutrition/Chronic Disease Prevention. Learn about some of the FY 2023-24 highlights in this report.

Behavioral Health

For over 25 years, CSU Extension's Colorado AgrAbility Project has supported farm and ranch families in the face of physical challenges and disability. In 2021, The Behavioral Health Recovery Act (Colorado SB21-137), expanded AgrAbility to include behavioral health support services, stress management resources, and suicide prevention initiatives for farmers, ranchers, ag workers, and rural communities. This investment not only increased Extension's capacity with the hiring of four new Rural Behavioral Health Specialists in July 2023, but it was also a catalyst for a larger focus on behavioral health within the Health Extension system. A few efforts have included:

- Needs assessment of 300+ rural behavioral health providers to identify and support future training efforts
- Collaboration with Elbert County Public Health to create a strategic plan that addresses rising suicide rates.
- Development/implementation of *Fostering Emotional Well-being, Empathy, and Resilience in Colorado (FEWER CO)*, a new program that addresses suicide prevention and lethal means safety in rural communities.
- Implementation of *Comics Connection*, a Colorado Department of Public Health funded program, which promotes youth mental health and belonging through the dispersion of representative graphic novels.
- Development of *The Ripple Effect*, a mental health curriculum for youth involved in 4-H.
- Completion of localized mental health resource mapping.

2500+



rural community members received behavioral health education or resources directly from AgrAbility in FY:23-24.

85+



community-based behavioral health programs and trainings offered statewide in FY: 23-24.



View the County-by-County Mental Health Resource Guides.
engagement.colostate.edu/health-extension/resources/#BH

Food Safety, Preservation & Preparation

CSU Extension Family and Consumer Science Specialists offer trainings and workshops tailored to the needs of individuals and communities in the areas of food safety (*Food safety Works*, *Cottage Food Safety*, and *Serve Safe*®), food preservation (canning, fermentation, freezing, drying, pickling), and food preparation (*Meal Planning with Confidence* and *High Elevation Baking/Cooking*).

1,093 

Coloradans across 58 counties completed the CSUE Cottage Foods Safety training, contributing to small business expansion and healthy communities.

Healthy Aging

As part of the 2024 State Plan on Aging, the Colorado Department of Public Health designated CSU Health Extension as a key “Community Education Partner”. A webinar in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association, “Brain Health: What You Really Need to Know” kicked off a 2024-25 statewide education series. Additional highlights included:

- Two Parkinsons Support Groups were developed in Chaffee and Logan Counties focusing on education, community building, and support services for those diagnosed, their families, and caretakers.
- El Pomar funding supported the expansion of *A Matter of Balance*, a program that reduces the impacts of falls and increases activity among older adults. Twenty-eight individuals completed the program this year and four new Extension Specialists were trained to deliver it.
- Extension partnered with Morgan County Senior Center to increase programming opportunities for Spanish-speaking community members. Over twenty people attended the first multi-cultural event since COVID.
- CSU’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) expanded their reach to older adults statewide through Extension viewing parties, virtual offerings, and local in-person courses.



La Juanta 2024 AMP Graduates

Aging Mastery Program Expansion

In 2024 the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) took place in eight communities across seven counties in rural Colorado. Spanish-language integration was offered at five of the eight sites.

CSU Extension was awarded funding from USDA NIFA’s Rural Health and Safety Education grant program to advance Healthy Aging efforts in Colorado. This 3-year grant will support:

- A new healthy aging training series for Extension professionals and community partners;
- AMP facilitator training for Extension professionals and community partners; and
- Robust funding and technical assistance for 8 new AMP host sites, including Spanish-language TA

Financial Well-Being

Family and Consumer Science Specialists and 4-H Program Assistants offered several educational programs for both youth and adults related to family financial management. In 2024, the Financial Well-being PRU Work Team updated the *Spend Some, Save Some, Share Some* program curriculum and translated it into Spanish. This curriculum is intended to be scaled across the state for underserved audiences.

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financial well-being programs were implemented in schools, businesses, and community centers across five counties (Arapahoe, Eagle, Jefferson, Lincoln & Weld).

70 

youth attended the Money Habitudes financial literacy training at the annual 4-H State Conference.

1,942 

individuals were reached by a financial health media campaign that provided FAFSA education, budgeting advise, and investing tips.

Nutrition, Chronic Disease Prevention & Management

A Healthier Weigh is a 12-week program designed to increase physical activity and proper nutrition. Seven counties across the eastern and southern regions implemented the program. Among five eastern region counties (Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Washington and Yuma), 188 individuals completed the program and a cumulative of 716 pounds and 290 inches were lost among participants.

In 2023-24, new developments for A Healthier Weigh included:

- **Accessible Education:** Through collaborations with a radio station, audio versions of all twelve lessons are available, making the material more accessible to those who prefer audio learning
- **Language Justice:** A Healthier Weigh curriculum and materials have been translated to Spanish.
- **Medical and Community Partnerships:** Clinicians and community-based support services have begun referring their patients to the program and hosting joint educational workshops.

Garden to Kitchen provides Coloradans knowledge and skills to grow their own produce on a limited budget with minimal outdoor space and to prepare and enjoy that produce at home. This program aims to improve accessibility, affordability, and consumption of local, quality produce as part of a healthy diet.

- 99 Coloradans across 6 counties engaged in Garden to Kitchen (provided in English and Spanish)
- 67% of participants identified as Hispanic or Latino

Health Without Barriers in La Plata & Montezuma Counties

CSU Extension is partnering with the Department of Human Development and Family Studies on recently awarded USDA Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) and CO Dept of Public Health and Environment grants to expand the Health Without Barriers program in La Plata and Montezuma Counties. This whole-family health program will reach 100 teens and their siblings, with a specific focus on serving the Southern Ute Indian Tribe community and Spanish-speaking populations. The program supports teens in developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to support healthy and happy lives. Lifestyle behaviors such as mindfulness, nutrition/cooking skills, and physical activity are taught and encouraged through family goal setting and structure. Health Without Barriers aims to addresses:

- Mental health and stress management
- Access, equity, and opportunity for diverse, underserved youth
- Social-emotional learning
- Access to healthy foods and proper nutrition



Engaged Scholarship & Information Dissemination

Seven Health Specialists represented CSU Extension at the 2024 National Health Outreach and Engagement Conference in May. The team presented *CAPEs for Rural Health: A Collaborative Framework for Advancing Health Equity in Colorado*. Additionally, Sue Schneider, CSU Extension State Health Specialist, was presented with the Priester Leadership Award at the conference. This award recognizes Sue for providing exemplary, impactful, and transformational leadership within Extension's health-focused work.

Campus- and field-faculty collaborations have expanded significantly over this last year. CSU Extension's Rural Health Leadership team consists of nine campus-based faculty (representing the Prevention Research Center, School of Public Health, School of Social Work, and Departments of Human Development & Family Studies and Occupational Therapy) and ten Extension Specialists who actively collaborate on grant proposals, student engagement and research projects. The following publications were developed this year that highlight our collaborative efforts:

- Fruhauf, C. A., Delgado, M., & Schneider, S. (in press). Faculty Roles and Responsibilities Supporting Extension Health Initiatives: Suggestions to Maximize Campus-Field Partnerships. *Journal of Extension*.
- Brothers, A., Luxton, I., Noble, C., Schneider, S., O'Connor, A., Jiao, Y. (in press). Market Days for Older Adults: Addressing Healthy Aging among a High-Risk Population at the Downtown Farmers' Market. *Journal of Extension*.
- Fruhauf, C. A., LoTempio, S., Schneider, S., Bachmeier, N., Dhimitri, E., Timmerman, C., Nelson, G., & Juritsch, R. (2024). Nature & Urban Health Issue Brief: Assessing Opportunities for Cooperative Extension.



Sue Schneider presented with Priester Award.

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Health and Well-Being Extension Internships were supported by a campus/field faculty partnership to address community-specific needs across Colorado.

Funding Awarded

This year, Extension collaborations have helped to secure over \$450,000 funding for health-related programs and initiatives statewide.

- \$350,000 from USDA NIFA Rural Health Safety Education Grant to expand Healthy Aging efforts statewide.
- \$65,000 from CDPHE to expand Comic Connections, a program to support youth social connections and mental health in the Mountain Region.
- \$35,000 from Colorado Creative Industries Arts in Society for a Latino-driven community art project in Northeastern Colorado.
- \$35,000 from Bohemian Foundation and Take Note Colorado to increase access to instruments for at risk youth in Northeastern Colorado.
- \$7,000, from CO Clinical and Translation Science Institute to expand rural food banks on the Western Slope.
- \$6,000 from the Colorado Health Foundation to support the 2nd Annual Cinco de Mayo celebration in Sterling.
- \$5,000 from Boettcher Foundation to create an Eastern Region strategic plan for behavioral health workforce.