Sheri Linnell

*Health and Exercise Science, 1982 - 2008*

**Personal Narrative**

My involvement with CSU began after my daughter came to us in 1978. I had graduated with an undergraduate degree in chemistry from Wellesley College and a Master’s degree in education from Harvard, but I was looking for a different career path. Having spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching in Korea and another three years with the Peace Corps in Malaysia, I knew that helping others improve their lives was an important direction for me. I visited the Adult Fitness Program underway at the South College Gymnasium and was inspired by the enthusiasm of the participants and the student staff. That encouraged me to enroll in a Master’s degree program in the then PE department, which has now become the Department of Health and Exercise Science.

After receiving my degree from HES, the position of director of the Adult Fitness Program was vacant, so I leapt at the opportunity and began managing the program and teaching undergraduate courses in the department. The combined roles of supporting community members in their efforts to maintain or to regain their health and preparing students for positions in the health and fitness industry made my job at CSU stimulating and rewarding. I loved my job.

Of course there were challenges. In the early years the floor of the field house was dirt, and the roof leaked, so we had to dance around mud puddles on the track when it rained. Since then it has been resurfaced several times, but early on we operated with a tight budget and depended on donations from Adult Fitness members and fund raisers. The South College Gym is an old building, and the field house had not been painted in many years. One of our members, a painting contractor, offered to paint the interior of the field house one weekend, complete with scaffolding and a crew. It was lovely after that. Other members built us a storage shed and donated sound equipment, exercise equipment, computers and heart monitoring instruments! It was heartwarming to realize how attached these folks were to supporting the program.

Another avenue for raising funds to support Adult Fitness was the Homecoming Race. The practicum students and I began providing that race to the community as a way to support Adult Fitness and to provide a healthy activity for students, parents, alums, and community members on Homecoming morning. It grew from about fifty participants the first year to over 2000 recently. It was definitely a highlight of fall semester for me, providing an activity that encouraged fitness and brought joy to so many people.

Over the years, the program grew from a small group of clients and a dozen or so practicum students each semester to nearly 300 members on a consistent basis. At the same time, numbers of students majoring in the Wellness Program concentration grew tremendously such that I was supervising nearly fifty practicum students working with Adult Fitness each semester. It is rewarding to see how many of my former students have gone on to responsible jobs with the Heart Center of the Rockies and at other hospitals and fitness/wellness facilities around the country.