The Colorado Health Foundation™



A Piece of the Truth

This year's Colorado Health Symposium, in Keystone Aug. 2-4, is titled Let's Talk About…Inequity. Inequity… Some are lucky enough to never experience it, while for others it's a daily occurrence.

I once heard that everyone has a piece of the truth. That saying affected me and has been one of my core beliefs ever since. If you want to get the truth, you have to talk to as many people as possible to get their piece or you end up with an incomplete truth.

My truth about experiencing health inequity is something I will never forget. I was a new mother, in the process of finalizing the adoption of my two kids. Before the adoptions were final, both kids were on Medicaid. My daughter's adoption was final first, so she was able to move over and receive coverage from our commercial insurance plan, while my son was still on Medicaid. One day, I called the pediatrician to make an appointment for my daughter. Together, the receptionist and I set a time that was convenient for me a few days from that phone call. A few weeks later, I called back to schedule an appointment for my son. The receptionist said, "We'll see you Thursday at 2:30, as we only see Medicaid patients one afternoon a week."

I thought to myself: I'm the same person, and they are the same system. With my daughter, I had a few days' notice and plenty of time options. But with my son on Medicaid, I had zero flexibility and zero options. How is that fair? How is that equitable?

Which brings me back to the Symposium. At this year's conference, we will dig into the issue of inequity and its connection to poverty, unemployment, immigration, geography, behavioral health, gun violence and more.

When I first arrived at the Foundation I reviewed the lists of attendees from the past few symposia. I noticed the many wonderful people who come to the conference and the organizations they represent. But I also noticed it was an incomplete group – and an incomplete story and perspective of Colorado's health. We were missing a stronger presence from those who work and lead in rural, minority-led, grassroots and community-based organizations. It wasn't that people from these organizations didn't want to be at the table, but their institutional or other circumstances may have kept them from having a place at the table. So we did intentional outreach to those leaders in the form of a scholarship program and we added 62 new voices to our Symposium conversation last year.

So, for the second year, I'm delighted to say we are offering a scholarship program to make it possible for even more diverse voices to be heard at the Symposium. If you are from a rural, minority-led or community-based organization — or you know someone who is — scholarship applications are due by next Friday, March 31. Join the conversation and share your important piece of truth with us in Keystone. We need you at the table to share the perspective, depth and richness of your truth. We need to better understand what health equity means to you in your daily life, your work and to the Coloradans you serve. Without you, we cannot succeed at achieving health equity for all Coloradans in all communities across the state.

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