# Health and Human Science Matters Season 1, Episode 6: Jill Zarestky

Jill Zarestky: I think sometimes, faculty view their role as gate keeping, and I think students often don't know why they have to be there or how that's going to relate, and there's a big communication gap. And I know that there are a lot of brilliant folks working on exactly this problem, and in trying to tackle that problem in my own work, I got to a point where the traditional lecture model wasn't working. And in retrospect I'm like, "Yeah, duh, Jill, of course." Like, "No, shake that up."

Avery Martin: Welcome to Health and Human Science Matters, a podcast by Colorado State University's College of Health and Human Sciences. I'm your co-host and digital media strategist, Avery Martin.

Matt Hickey: And I'm Matt Hickey, Associate Dean for Research & Graduate Studies. In our college, we make it our mission to optimize human health and wellbeing through discovery and innovation. Don't just take our word for it. Each episode, we sit down with people who fulfill that mission, our college faculty and staff, and today, we've got my friend, Jill Zarestky, from the School of Education. Jill, we're so thankful you're able to come and spend some time with us. Welcome.

Jill Zarestky: Well, I'm so glad to be here. Thanks for having me, Matt and Avery.

Avery Martin: Of course.

Matt Hickey: We're looking forward to our conversation. We're going to start with Jill outside the academy, if we can think a little bit about that. I've got a couple of prompts, but again, we just want to have fun and get to know you a little bit better. So, when we think about tell us about Jill, this could be family memories. This could be early formative influences on how did I end up in the academy, it might be some special memories, et cetera. We're interested in getting to know members of our community outside their academic persona, if that's at all possible.

Jill Zarestky: Absolutely. That's a lot of different qualities to work through. I grew up in East Tennessee in Oak Ridge, which is where there is a national lab.

Matt Hickey: Indeed, yeah.

Jill Zarestky: So being in a national lab town, it was a really focused community when it came to science and technology and education. So from an early age, it was always very clear from my student peers and from the school system and from community and family engagement that education was critically important to a person's trajectory in life.

 And growing up in a national lab town also had just excellent science and mathematics teachers. My dad was a physicist, so we got a lot of that at home too. So, I knew from an early age how important education was, and I got my start in academia in mathematics. The best teacher I ever had in my life was my high school calculus teacher-

Matt Hickey: No kidding!

Jill Zarestky: ... Benita Albert. She was just phenomenal in terms of her enthusiasm for the subject, her support for students, her creativity and innovation in the classroom, and her real desire to see students grow and succeed.

Matt Hickey: That's really cool.

Avery Martin: Yeah. That makes for a great teacher.

Matt Hickey: And it's amazing how often we hear about awesome calculus teachers. I'm kidding of course.

Jill Zarestky: I know. Math is everybody's favorite subject.

Avery Martin: Yeah.

Matt Hickey: That's great.

Jill Zarestky: But at that point, I didn't realize that I was interested in education. I thought I was interested in mathematics. I was, and I went on to the University of Tennessee, where I earned my Bachelor's degree in mathematics with a minor in computer science, and then was ready to see some other parts of the country. So, I moved to Texas to complete a Master's degree in computational and applied mathematics. And it was-

Matt Hickey: Where in Texas where you?

Jill Zarestky: At University of Texas Austin.

Avery Martin: Oh, nice.

Jill Zarestky: And Austin is such a fun town to be in your 20s. That was a great time. It was there that I... Yes, I really deeply appreciate mathematics, but being a TA in the math department, I think I really started to see how I could enjoy and get a lot out of and have a lot to give through teaching as well.

 So, when I finished my Master's degree, I started teaching at Austin Community College, which is a transfer feeder in large part for the University of Texas, but a lot of students, they're finishing up high school programs that they hadn't completed or working on an Associate's degree. And I think it was there that I really started to understand the times when people struggle with math, and the times when people struggle with formal education systems.

 So, I eventually went on to teach as a non-tenure track faculty at Texas A&M University. Those giant freshman classes that nobody wants to take, which you can imagine what a unique challenge and opportunity that is, and really diving deep into how can we make math accessible to folks? What does it look like when it goes well? I think especially in those freshman classes, there can sometimes be an adversarial component to it.

 I think sometimes, faculty view their role as gate keeping, and I think students often don't know why they have to be there or how that's going to relate, and there's a big communication gap. I know that there are a lot of brilliant folks working on exactly this problem, and in trying to tackle that problem in my own work, I got to a point where the traditional lecture model wasn't working.

 And in retrospect I'm like, "Yeah, duh, Jill. Of course." Like, "No, shake that up." That was when I started needing to read a lot of education literature and rethink my approach to teaching from my own perspective as a practitioner and from a structural perspective in terms of how does this math department function? How do these courses function? What are the systems that this fits into?

 And then, also really thinking about the student experience like, "How can we shake this up? How can we make this fun? What is the thing that I, as the educator, really need to be doing?" It's not talking at students, it's interacting with them and it's answering their questions and it's making that experience really personal. This trajectory of being very content focused, to moving to being very student focused is what eventually led me into going back for my PhD.

 So, working full-time as a lecturer in the math department, I started my PhD and at that time, I was exploring things like active learning and flipped classrooms, which was not the model that others in the department were interested in pursuing. So there was a key moment, and this is what I use as my example in a lot of different kinds of conversations, I had a colleague come into my office and she said, "Jill, all this stuff that you are doing, why? What is this about? What are you trying to do here?" "Well, this, that, and the other."

 She said, "Jill, no, the only way you will be a better mathematics teacher is if you learn more mathematics." I had a hard stop in that moment of just, "Oh, that is the exact opposite of what I believe is true of teaching and learning, and the role of faculty and the role of students." Yeah, you've got to know your content. Absolutely, but that's like step zero. You don't walk in that door if you don't know your content, but the teaching and learning experience is a relationship and it's an exchange.

 And me knowing more content doesn't help with any of the human qualities of that process, and that was the moment where I realized I need to shift gears. And that was really a great push for me to go work on my PhD, to dig deep into the literature, to start to ask some questions, not just of myself as an educator, but of education systems and processes and the relationships between educators and their learners.

 And frankly, to look for a place where my perspectives on that were valued, which is there's a direct line from that conversation in my office with that colleague to where I am today here at CSU and the things I value in my teaching and scholarship.

Matt Hickey: I'm really struck by this, because we often find ourselves in these conversations asking for mentors who have had an enduring positive influence on your formation as an academic, and this particular vignette is one that was a clarifying moment in many ways, but a little different in a sense.

 And I don't know if they even came to give you the proverbial shove out the door, but there's a sense of appreciation to say you're laying out a landscape for me.

Jill Zarestky: That I don't want to be a part of.

Matt Hickey: That's inconsistent with my educational vision. So not necessarily a bad thing, but I do want to probe the notion of after that event, are there people you might think of and maybe even before, and that influence you didn't appreciate until years later that were formative in terms of your identity as an educator?

Jill Zarestky: Yes. My colleagues at the Texas A&M Center for Teaching Excellence, that was a place where I was spending a lot of time when I was trying to figure out who I was, and who I wanted to be. So the folks there, particularly Prudence Merton and Deborah Fowler were so generous in having conversations with me and I think also saw what I had to offer other educators and invited me to participate in delivering some of the faculty professional development.

 So I think it was the people who saw what I had to offer, even though I wasn't fitting in and said, "Jill, come hang out with us. Come do this thing. Here's this opportunity that we think you could really excel in." And I think that was an office and the individuals there who helped me to really see my potential. I mean, I'm talking mostly about my teaching practice, which of course is faculty in the School of Education, is directly connected to what I value in research and scholarship too. So even though I'm focusing on who I was as an educator, that's also a direct influence on who I am as a scholar and a researcher.

 Because now, the things that I used to do and coach others to do are things that I will continue to coach others on, continue to do, and now also study in a scholarly, rigorous way.

Matt Hickey: That's really neat. And I love the vision of mentors who help clarify our vision of ourselves. Sometimes, our self-perception, sometimes is frequently, can be blurry in some ways. Right?

Jill Zarestky: Well, and yeah, when some of the messages in your life are, "This isn't right, you shouldn't be doing this, you're on the wrong track, I don't think you can do this," to have other people say, "No, no, come here. This is what you need to be doing." And that was also the big part of going back for my PhD as a non-traditional student working full-time, and I started out in a math education doctoral program, where I was having the same kind of tension.

 I just don't care what third graders think about the equals sign. That is important. Some people need to care about that. I don't. So it was my colleagues at the Center for Teaching Excellence who said, "Jill, math education is fine. That'll get you where you want to go probably. But we think that you're an adult educator, that your focus isn't on nuanced understanding of content, your focus is on the relationship. It's about who the learners are, not about the content you want them to take in. I think you need to shift from a content perspective to a generalist learner demographic perspective."

 And that was the other true light bulb moment for me is, "Oh, yeah, that is it. That's what I really want to care about. I want to find out who my students are, what is important to them, and then build something with them that helps them get where they want to go, whether they're learning mathematics content or something else entirely." What my students want, I want that to be the thing that drives everything else we do together.

Matt Hickey: That's great. I have to ask you, what does Jill do when she's not thinking about math education? When she's not wearing the professor's hat? Give us a peek behind the curtain of life outside the campus.

Jill Zarestky: I do a lot of stuff. I'm busy, you guys.

Matt Hickey: I'm not surprised to hear that.

Jill Zarestky: I'm a knitter.

Matt Hickey: All right.

Jill Zarestky: And I have leaned into that hard during the past year and a half, and knitting has gotten me through a lot of Zoom meetings.

Matt Hickey: Oh, sure.

Jill Zarestky: So if you angle your camera right, then people can't see what you're doing with your hands. But if I'm knitting, I'm not tempted to be checking email or looking at my phone.

Matt Hickey: That's a smart move.

Jill Zarestky: That is my strategy for staying engaged when it is really easy to not be engaged.

Matt Hickey: And do you have a particular specialty? Are we talking socks, or sweater?

Jill Zarestky: Lace?

Matt Hickey: Oh, well, I'm impressed.

Jill Zarestky: Lace. Mm-hmm.

Matt Hickey: All right.

Jill Zarestky: Yeah, and knitting, it's a comforting kinesthetic activity. I enjoy the artistry of it, the color and the feel of the materials. And I enjoy learning new things and there's always something new to try in that. And then it's also really portable. So great for walking around. I always have a knitting project in my bag, perfect for airplanes and travel and watching TV. So I'm constantly knitting, and that-

Matt Hickey: Does that emerge from a familial influence or late life?

Jill Zarestky: Nope.

Matt Hickey: I just think this would be interesting to learn kind of thing?

Jill Zarestky: I just always wanted to learn.

Matt Hickey: How about that?

Jill Zarestky: And then when I moved to College Station, I had a lot of free time. There's just not as much going on there. So really learned to fill some free time, where I wanted to feel productive, I didn't want to just sit around, but I also didn't want to work constantly. So it was a very conscious strategy of, "I need to feel like I'm doing something and that something can't always be work." And then it's been a great way to meet people.

 So I'm part of a knitting group that bounces around week to week to all the breweries in town.

Matt Hickey: Oh, that's great.

Jill Zarestky: It's called Pints & Purls. So we visit breweries and we knit and we chat. So it's been a great way to meet people, being new to Fort Collins. And then I'm also a runner, which is a thing I have done my whole life. So Fort Collins has an excellent trail system and a really active running club. So I've been fortunate to meet a lot of people and blow off some steam in that way too.

Matt Hickey: Good for you.

Jill Zarestky: And my house backs up to one of the Fort Collins natural areas. So that's been a silver lining of this past year and a half too, is okay, well, I've got an hour break, I'm just going to head out for 30 minutes and run through the park and then be back for the next meeting, which is not a thing I felt like I had the time or space to do under ordinary circumstances.

 So I've really leaned into that too. So I think that's a nice balance of I've got my creative artistry outlet, I've got my physical fitness outlet. Both of those are great ways to build community and get to know a town, so I feel like I'm getting settled in Fort Collins, having only been here for a few years, so.

Matt Hickey: Nice. Time does fly when you're having fun, doesn't it?

Jill Zarestky: It really does.

Matt Hickey: Yes, good. So let's talk about that transition from this decision to pursue the PhD as a non-traditional student to us being lucky enough to recruit you here to Fort Collins. What did that look like for you?

Jill Zarestky: I mean, an academic job search is brutal.

Matt Hickey: Yes, it is.

Jill Zarestky: So I feel like the stars aligned, that Colorado State has one of the largest and most active adult education Master's programs in the country, so I had my eye on the Colorado State folks on at our professional conferences.

 Colorado State was definitely on my radar. I'm also part of the two-body problem, the academic joke of two academics in one family. My husband is also faculty in mathematics. That's probably not a surprise.

Matt Hickey: What are the odds?

Jill Zarestky: I know. Shocker! So when I was interviewing here, certainly one of the key points on my mind was am I going to come here and be happy? And does the School of Education and the adult education and training program match my priorities as I just described? But also, could Wolfgang be happy here, and could we navigate two hires and what might that look like?

 So those are the considerations. Colorado, Fort Collins, total upgrade in terms of lifestyle. So that part was a no-brainer. So I just feel like the stars aligned that worked out. I'm grateful to Jeff McCubbin and George Kamberelis who were the leaders in the School of Ed and the College of Health and Human Sciences when I was hired, who did the legwork and worked the connections with the College of Natural Sciences to find space for Wolfgang, and I hope everybody will agree that that turned out great for everybody.

Matt Hickey: Indeed. Well said.

Jill Zarestky: Does that answer your question, Matt?

Matt Hickey: It does.

Jill Zarestky: Is that what you're-

Matt Hickey: I was just going to say, we're lucky to have you.

Jill Zarestky: I'm lucky to be here.

Matt Hickey: So talk to us about what excites you the most about what you've got going on in terms of your campus activities, your research portfolio, your life as an academic.

Jill Zarestky: So even though I've moved away from math as my academic departmental home, I've still stayed really connected to math and other scientific disciplines in my work. So a lot of the projects that I've been involved with since coming to CSU have involved STEM education of some kind, but primarily for adult audiences.

 When I say adult, I mean that really broadly, like 18 plus, which sometimes does include university students, so adult audiences, and often in not formal settings. So away from schools, away from universities, what does it look like when a grown adult at a school wants to learn some science? Where is that happening and what are ways that we can create good opportunities for people to learn?

 And we need a lot of scientific knowledge to participate in society. And I think we've all seen a lot of examples of how we understand climate change and issues of conservation sustainability. We've got a ton of work to do to help people understand how medicine and health interventions work and make good choices about that. So what does it look like when somebody wants to learn some science and where do they go?

 So my work has been with a group of sites called biological field stations, which is typically where scientists do field work. But often those sites are also open to the general public in some way through outreach activities, citizen science programs, nature education programs, those kinds of things. So how can we create good experiences for learners there?

 And a lot of that work has been in partnership directly with the biological field station scientists who aim to reach the general public in their work. And more recently, I've had some phenomenal partnerships with CSU extension agents. So for example, I'm working with Lisa Mason, who is an extension agent out of Arapahoe County. She designed and developed a program called Native Bee Watch, which trains people to identify and monitor the populations of Colorado native bees. So she and I have been working to think about how can we grow this program?

 How can we maintain the high quality of these trainings when it's really just her and maybe a summer intern? So building an online portal, and really designing and developing virtual training, which was really important, and that's also really difficult because bees are tiny and they move fast. And seeing those identifying details is really hard, even when you're in person.

 And creating opportunities for online and distance training has opened up this program to the entire state. So we've broadened our reach and we've gotten into places we never could've gotten into in person. And the training just became that much more difficult to make sure that people got the support they needed to build their skills and feel confident in their monitoring processes.

 So my work is about training the trainers, training the STEM experts to do the outreach and to engage with these adult populations in non-formal settings. And also on the learner experience, did you get what you need? Did you feel supported? How can we improve that? So a lot of work in that space around educator professional development and the design and delivery of the programs and really trying to think about how can what we learn at biological field stations and through extension outreach scale to a larger audience? What do we learn here that's going to help other citizen science programs or extension educators doing other kinds of content or biological field stations in the US and internationally and beyond?

Matt Hickey: This is really neat, and I've had the pleasure of knowing Jill for a few years, so I'm familiar with some of her research. But again, part of why I love these conversations is the closer look into what's going on. And I think what you do is so perfectly consistent with CSU as a land grant. I mean, it's dead center.

Jill Zarestky: I'm a total nerd for the land grant mission. I love it so much.

Matt Hickey: We're going to come back to that in a few minutes. Yeah. One natural follow on, and I was interested in this question is, well, we want to get a picture of a day in the life. So we have such an eclectic college. For some people, it's going to be white coats and PPE and pipettes and for others, it's going to be off-campus. And we all know that no two days are going to be identical.

Jill Zarestky: Sure.

Matt Hickey: There's quite a bit of [inaudible 00:21:57]-

Jill Zarestky: And there's a lot of just boring sitting at the computer.

Matt Hickey: Yeah, and I want to shift to the other end.

Jill Zarestky: Sure.

Matt Hickey: So give us an example of those days where we find ourselves at the end of the day reminded once again, this is why I set out to do this. I just had the wind in my sails, I got energized. Talk to me about a day like that for Jill and what it looks like.

Jill Zarestky: Oh, the best days are when I get to go observe and sometimes even participate in the programs that my research partners are delivering. So when Lisa's delivering a training in person or is offering some sort of extra support where we meet the citizen science volunteers at the garden and she talks them through some big things, and then we're just walking around and looking at bees and "What kind of bee is that?" And, "I think it's this," and "No, maybe it's not."

 And seeing that interaction between the educator and the learner, the enthusiasm for the content that they're excited to learn bees, they're excited to learn the flowers that bees like to visit, and I get to be a learner myself. I'm still not a great bee identifier, but I've grown a lot. I get to be an observer and watch Lisa and her enthusiasm for bees, and the way that transfers to the volunteers and builds a connection between her and them and the program, and then I get to talk to folks like, "What's exciting to you about this? How did it go? What can we do better next time?"

 And I mean, it all comes back to that human interaction. The story I was telling earlier, that it's about relationship and interaction and there's enthusiasm for the content, but it's really the human piece of that and getting to observe and experience that, and feel like I have something to contribute either from my own expertise base or through what we will uncover in our research processes that I can help make this better for everybody.

 And that's always really exciting. Plus one of the things I really love about this work is that I get to be outside when we're doing these projects. I get to be in the trial garden. I get to be in Acadia National Park, where there's a biological field station, which is the thing that I love.

 I'm a runner in part because I like being outside and being in nature and seeing the seasons change, and getting the great views of beautiful places. I get to do a lot of that in my work, that biological field stations are situated in places of natural interest, which tend to be also really gorgeous and really fun to visit. When we're looking at bees, we're outside in gardens, that there's a selfish interest, I think-

Matt Hickey: Yeah, a very understandable one.

Jill Zarestky: ... in this.

Matt Hickey: We live in a beautiful state, so opportunities to get out and enjoy that are certainly understandable. As I've listened to you over the last 20 minutes or so, Jill, it seems to me your description of your best day, for me at least, there's a homecoming element to it. Because I instantly reflected back to your description of that first teacher who really lit your fire. And roles are reversed now in some ways, but there's still the thread through this whole thing is education, this conversation for me.

Jill Zarestky: Absolutely.

Matt Hickey: There's a British philosopher of education, a guy named Michael Oakeshott who talked about that all the time. Education is conversation, and that continues to come up for you and I enjoy hearing about it. Now we're going to ask you to exercise your imagination.

 This question is almost a cliche, but we really are interested. It's the flash forward five years scenario. What do you see yourself doing and celebrating and enjoying about your research activities five years from now?

Jill Zarestky: Well, honestly, I'm gunning for your job, Matt.

Matt Hickey: Oh, be careful what you wish for. It's a great job. I enjoy it.

Jill Zarestky: I think this is sometimes a thing where I need to really stop and think. I want to think big, and I also want to stay grounded because a lot of social science research is grains of sand on a beach. It's hard to see how it adds up. It's hard to see how it makes a difference. It's hard to see how it fits into a big picture of what we know in ways that we help people.

 So I also really do want to do work that matters and that helps people, and because my work is so practitioner focused, because I am so interested in and working in the weeds of the function of an educational program, that I hope that I will have a substantive body of work that people can say, "Oh, we need help with that. We need to go look at what Jill's written. Oh, we need help with this. Maybe Jill, maybe we need to call Jill." But to be the person that folks in this adult STEM education space, in this non-formal/informal programming space recognize that there are good ways to do it and are connected to the resources that they need. I think there's a lot of flying by the seat of our pants sometimes at-

Matt Hickey: I can relate.

Jill Zarestky: And especially when we get folks trying to do something new, but you should try something new, and try something new with support from people who have expertise not just in the content, but in the educational processes. And that's where I think my work is building. And that's been tricky too because the adult education community is really intensely focused on adult basic education and literacy programs and language education.

 And that's where I would say 75% of my field lives. And then there's maybe another 15% that's really focused on workplace training and helping people build skills in the workforce specifically for their job function. And all of those things are exceptionally important. And I'm not minimizing that at all. And there's a space that I think we don't often think about.

 And that's like I was talking about before, where does somebody go when they want to learn science or participate in that? How can someone have a meaningful personal experience that helps them understand climate change or conservation or sustainability? So in some sense, I'm on the fringe of adult education, because I'm looking at these things that don't fit with the bulk of what my colleagues in the field are doing.

 And the same thing goes for STEM education, which is really largely focused on K-12 and university experiences as it should be because that's where most of the learning in those disciplines is happening. So I've got this funny fringe mix of I'm on the fringe of adult ed and I'm on the fringe of STEM education and I have no questions whatsoever about the importance and value of my work. So I think when I think about the long term that I need, I need visibility for this as important and valuable for society, for people when they're out of school.

 We don't spend our lives in school. We spend our lives outside of school doing things. So how can we create that really good experience? And that's where I want my work to live, is when the adult educators want to branch into STEM, when the STEM educators want to branch into adult ed, that's where I am and I'm there and I'm ready to support those educators, to support those learners, and make sure that everybody has a really positive experience.

Matt Hickey: So education transcends bricks and mortars, and we can take it out as a distributed model to where the learners are at. We talk about access all the time. What if we go give it to them?

Avery Martin: Go to them.

Jill Zarestky: Matt, duh.

Avery Martin: That's what she's been saying this whole time.

Jill Zarestky: Have you been listening?

Matt Hickey: I have. I have. I think it's wonderful.

Avery Martin: It's incredible. Incredible stuff.

Matt Hickey: We can get stuck in what our blinders are sometimes, and we think this is the way we deliver things. And I think expanding our vision is a good thing. So I'm delighted to hear that. And I'll say on a personal note, I hope it's here. I look forward to celebrating and seeing your victories and learning from you and with you over the next five years and beyond.

Jill Zarestky: Thanks, Matt.

Matt Hickey: So we have two related questions as we wrap up. The first one is about the college. And I just ask you to reflect a little bit about your favorite aspects of working within the College of Health and Human Sciences. What appeals to you?

Jill Zarestky: I think the diversity of departments in the College of Health and Human Sciences is one of my favorite things. Sometimes it's hard to see how we fit together, and we absolutely have these threads of connection that are so fun and interesting to sit down with a colleague from OT, and see how adult education fits into that. And see how old OT connects to adult education.

 So much fun to have great conversations with folks in social work and construction management. I see how I connect to them. I see what our partnerships could look like if we wanted to pursue those. And sometimes we do and sometimes we don't, but I love being surprised by, along the lines of what you were saying about these conversations, Matt, being surprised by how much connection there is across our departments and how we do all fit together in our pursuit of scholarship, our care for students and our desire to conduct research that makes the world a better place, which is cheesy and I still totally mean it.

Matt Hickey: Hear, hear.

Jill Zarestky: I love that part.

Matt Hickey: And this is a story that I'm keen to tell, to contribute to, that we do fit together. This 20 plus year perception of what's the connection, and I think we sometimes focus on the health piece. And that's where I cut my teeth, but human sciences, that's a bit of everything.

 And speaking to your own interest in needles, we've weaved together a tapestry of what it means to be a human being in human community. And that by definition is multifactorial, isn't it?

Jill Zarestky: Absolutely. And we can't separate human health from environmental health.

Matt Hickey: Exactly.

Jill Zarestky: That there are ways that we are all contributing. And you just have to look past the department titles.

Matt Hickey: Well said. Yeah. Yep. It's the people, right?

Jill Zarestky: Absolutely.

Matt Hickey: We can learn from, we might collaborate with. And collaborations can range from conversations, as you've talked about, and they may emerge as we're going to submit a grant together, or we're teaching a class together. But these are layers of collaboration. Doesn't always have to be that end point that we sometimes look for as a metric. There are a lot of collaborative opportunities that transcend some of our metrics.

Jill Zarestky: And part of what's great about being an academic is getting to have good conversations with smart people.

Avery Martin: Hear, hear.

Jill Zarestky: That's just the fundamental great quality of this job, is I'm surrounded by brilliant folks, and if we make the time to talk to each other, there is always something to learn. And that is just the best perk of my job.

Matt Hickey: And who knows what might happen from some conversation? Surprises abound. That's a great part of the job. So I'm going to circle back to some allusions you have already hinted at about the land grant vision and mission. So talk to us about the appeal.

Jill Zarestky: Well, I think this ties to some things that I've already mentioned in this conversation, that I want my work to matter for people. And I think a lot of us, most of us, hopefully everybody here feels the same way. And extension is just the thing that I focus on when I think about the land grant mission and the ways that we take our research and scholarship and innovation and use that to directly benefit the people in the state of Colorado.

 It's exciting and it's interesting, and you can really see how your work makes a difference when you are out working with extension agents and the people that they're aiming to serve. I just think that's one of the best things we as a university do. And I almost always say yes. I'm going to phrase that carefully.

 I almost always say yes when there's an opportunity to partner with extension agents and sometimes, extension agents see the value of the adult education and training Master's program for their own work. So I'm also fortunate to have extension professionals in my classes, and that's a way that I know this body of expertise supports them in their work as well. So I'm an extension superfan, and I'm constantly in awe of how hard folks work-

Matt Hickey: Indeed. Indeed.

Jill Zarestky: ... and how much a difference they can and do make. I want to come back as an extension agent in the next life.

Matt Hickey: But you're at home and flourishing in the land grant model, and that's great.

Jill Zarestky: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Matt Hickey: And your work is just so consistent with it. I think it's fantastic. And that's our show. As always, thank you for listening to Health and Human Science Matters.

Avery Martin: Be sure to check out our other episodes. If you want to learn more about our CSU College of Health and Human Sciences, visit our website, chhs.colostate.edu.