Avery Martin:

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

Matt Hickey:

And I'm Matt Hickey, associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies. In our college, we make it our mission to optimize human health and wellbeing through discovery and innovation. But don't just take our word for it. Each episode we sit down with people who fulfill that mission, our college faculty and staff.

Avery Martin:

Today we get to sit down with Dr. Lauren Shomaker, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Colorado State University and director of the Adolescent Wellness Lab.

Matt Hickey:

Lauren, welcome.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you.

Matt Hickey:

So we want to start with your research agenda and sort of the big problems that you and your collaborators pursue.

Lauren Shomaker:

Well, thanks for the opportunity to tell you about my research and the research of my team. I'm biased, but I think we address some pretty important topics that I think have been gaining some national and international recognition lately, which I'm pleased to see. So we study, you may have heard there's a mental health crisis.

Matt Hickey:

Yes.

Lauren Shomaker:

So that's a big part of the work that we do, particularly the mental health crisis in youth. And our particular interest is in how those concerns, those mental health concerns, play a role in preventable chronic diseases. So when we think about heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and most of us think about those things occurring in older adults.

Matt Hickey:

Indeed.

Lauren Shomaker:

But unfortunately there have been increasing manifestations of those problems, particularly type 2 diabetes in adolescents in the young adult years. And so we believe and think that there's some evidence to show that mental health and stress play a role in that.

Matt Hickey:

Sure.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

And so our work is really centered on addressing the intersection of those problems and figuring out ways that we can partner with communities, particularly communities that are most affected by these health concerns and develop solutions that work so that we can promote health and wellbeing both mentally and physically.

Matt Hickey:

And that intersection is so important, of course, that we tend to keep them in their own sort of lanes. And I think those lanes are better conceived of as interwoven in many ways. And I think for many of our listeners, what we know about type 2 diabetes in its natural history tends to be sort of in the 40 to 60 age range when we think about this, right, because of the traditional conception of a later onset of diagnoses. And so for somebody who's 10 or 11 or 12 and gets diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, we really don't know what are they going to look like from a risk standpoint when they're 30, 35 years old. And that's a rather alarming concept in many ways.

Lauren Shomaker:

Yes. And I think that unfortunately what we do know so far is that earlier manifestation of type 2 diabetes is really concerning in the sense that not only are people living with the disease for a longer amount of time, but kids who present with type 2 compared to adults, in the demographic that you just mentioned, they tend to present with more health comorbidities or co-occurring health problems. And it's difficult to treat, often requires specialty care.

Matt Hickey:

Right. Yeah, gosh.

Lauren Shomaker:

And a host of inter-disciplines to address it the best that we can. And many kids will develop type 2 and live long and healthy and happy lives, but if we can prevent that from occurring even better.

Matt Hickey:

Early awareness and intervention is certainly going to be part of the solution for sure.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

So you talked about your team getting some recognition, and I want to give you an opportunity to feature one. This is an institutional recognition, a Montfort professorship. And so if you would tell our listeners what that means, we want to celebrate that part of your very impressive CV.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you. Yeah. So the Montfort professor is a distinction given to two faculty every year by the Montfort Fund.

Matt Hickey:

And this is two faculty out of all of CSU, not just the College of Health and Human Sciences. I want to make sure our listeners understand the impact here.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you for that, Matt. Yeah, I was really very honored to obtain that distinction. I will say for anyone listening who has tried for awards and not received them, note that I was nominated several times before I received it. That I think speaks to both the persistence needed for research and getting recognition for research sometimes, but also just our incredible pool of excellent-

Matt Hickey:

Well said.

Lauren Shomaker:

... Research candidates here and people doing really important work at the university.

Matt Hickey:

Well, congratulations.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you.

Matt Hickey:

We're proud of you.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you very much.

Matt Hickey:

So that's one way to talk about impact, recognition by peers, recognition by your institution. But I wonder if you could share an impact story in terms of the people you work with because that's something, again, that's easy to miss. We count publications and dollars and all these metrics for how productive we are and can sometimes lose sight of the fact that often our desired impact is in fact not in what journal am I publishing in, but can I move the needle in terms of health crises?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. I have so many stories of that.

Matt Hickey:

We've got plenty of time.

Lauren Shomaker:

Okay. Well I think one of the things I'm really grateful for with my career track is that I get to do science, and I love being a scientist, and I'm also a clinician. So my background is I'm a child clinical psychologist and licensed in Colorado, got licensed in Maryland, and have been working with adolescents in the space of adolescent health and adolescents and their families for a really long time. So I get the joy, I think, of seeing the benefits of our programs both from a scientific perspective but also from a human perspective.

Matt Hickey:

Sure.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

And so that's something that is very rewarding. And of course, don't pretend that we have the panacea for all the ailments of mental health or diabetes prevention. But when I think you see cases where you do have that impact on people's lives, it really inspires you to keep going on because this work is hard. It's hard working with mental health crises and diabetes, and a lot of our families are facing a lot of adversities. They've overcome a lot, but there's a lot of resilience. But there can be also sometimes just some feelings of overwhelm when you're working with families who are just facing so many odds working against them. So I'll share a story recently from a program that we're delivering in partnership with Nicole Clark who is with CSU Extension, and she is in La Plata County, the southwest corner of Colorado. And she and I have been working together to deliver a family inclusive lifestyle intervention that includes components around physical activity, nutrition, cooking, and also mindfulness skills.

Matt Hickey:

Great.

Lauren Shomaker:

Learning how to regulate emotions, skills for better handling distress and stress in one's life. And we teach those skills primarily to teenagers but also to their parents. And it's a pretty intensive curriculum. It's about 26 hours, over about six weeks. And families really make a commitment to do the program, and the whole family comes. And really the goal of the program is helping families to facilitate the health changes that they want to make in their lives for their family. So we've tried to be very attentive to diverse family needs. Not everyone has the same goals. Not everybody wants to, for example, lose weight or stop drinking soda, even though that would be a good goal for all of us. Really, it's about, "Hey, what do you want to achieve as a family?" "What would help you to feel healthier and happier?" That's really what we're about.

So you do the program and families have their wins and they have their obstacles. But we ran in the summer, end of summer, our first cohort that was entirely bilingual. And primarily actually monolingual in the sense that all of the parents spoke Spanish and our facilitators of the parent portions of the curriculum are native Spanish speakers and the teens spoke a hybrid of English and Spanish. And the families, we collect focus group data after the program, the things the families were appreciative about the program included things like feeling accepted and a sense of belonging. Feeling a sense of community support. And really feeling celebrated in their own cultures, getting to bring Hispanic foods and learn healthier versions of those foods. And one teen, I don't have the quote in front of me, but one teen could be our spokesperson because in the focus group, she shared that the program, something to the effect of the program really had everything. It had learning to go to the store and choose better, healthier options. Learning mindfulness skills for dealing with stress. And her parent described that I knew she really wanted to do this because she would be dragging me out of the house, "mom, come on, we've got this health program. Let's go".

Avery Martin:

That's incredible.

Matt Hickey:

Neat to see.

Avery Martin:

So it's really neat to see. Then just add briefly that another joyful thing about this program is we follow up with them in six months. And that's really a neat time. We don't have any expectations. If the families are struggling, it's a time to get a little boost of let's revisit a time that things were working. How could you get back to that or what weight, what support do you need? But we also often get a lot of stories of success, and we did have one father figure who was really struggling with pretty significant obesity, and he had lost, I think over 60 pounds.

Matt Hickey:

Oh my goodness.

Avery Martin:

And their goal as a family was really to cut back on making fast food a regular part of their diet. And the program ended and they just really committed and they're exercising and the kid's doing well. She'd been struggling a little bit in school. I'm sure there are many factors, but the fact that we could be some part of that, of developing something that would really help support people to follow their health goals and to feel really good about, it's really rewarding.

Matt Hickey:

Well, and it's neat to see the ripples when we are focusing on a spectrum of, again, the complex life of a family, and there are positive outcomes that weren't actually the target of what we're doing, but it's the ripples of stirring the pot in a positive way. I think that's always fun to see, isn't it? And I want to commend you and I push a little bit further on the discussion. Working with people, groups who are at the margins in society is so important. And so you tailored your program to be culturally competent, number one. I want to commend you for that. And number two, I want you to unpack a little bit. So how do you go about thinking about, we know some of this in a particular population, a majority population perhaps, we want to move it elsewhere. How does one go about doing that?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. I think the first thing I have learned from doing this work is humility. I'm a white cisgender woman and I've grown up with a lot of privilege.

Matt Hickey:

Sure.

Lauren Shomaker:

And you have to be humble and you also have to realize that you do not have all the answers.

Matt Hickey:

Indeed.

Avery Martin:

Right, yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

Quite the opposite. So we have relied very heavily on a framework that you all are probably familiar with called Community-based participatory research. And that can mean a lot of different things. But really the guiding principle is that we partner with communities as equal stakeholders and that everybody has something to bring. I have some expertise from the work that I've done as a psychologist, as a scientist, my own background as a mom and et cetera. But community members have so much inherent wisdom about their communities. And partnering with Extension I think is really such an incredible opportunity that we have at this university

Matt Hickey:

I agree.

Lauren Shomaker:

To be able to bridge that gap between we are up here in Fort Collins and we can't know what life is like in rural southwest Colorado.

Matt Hickey:

Sure, yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

I can't know what it's like to live really on the low income. Or to face discrimination, racial or ethnic discrimination, on a day-to-day basis. But we partner with Extension agents who are members of the community and goes far beyond that. So to launch this program, we did interviews with parents and their teens. We put together a nine-month series of intensive meetings with a group of about 10 community stakeholders who had identities that reflected the lived experiences of people who we wanted to have this program before. And now we have a community advisory board that meets quarterly, and we also have experts who do Native American studies who identify as Native American Hispanic. And so I see myself as using my privilege to garner resources for the program and to really let everyone else lead the work. I think that's how the program has been so successful. It's been very stakeholder and community heavy.

Matt Hickey:

And this is a key piece, the partnership approach that you've embedded into your work. Kudos.

Lauren Shomaker:

Well, I think it's important we talk about successful partnerships. And one of my PhD students, Megan Moran, who is a Dean's fellow.

Matt Hickey:

Indeed.

Lauren Shomaker:

And also just received a National Research Service Award. She also works with Rachel Lucas Thompson, who's a fellow faculty member in our department. Megan has been such a forward-thinking person around community research and partnership building, and she has a paper she's preparing. She collected some data as part of this project to really look at just what you're talking about, how does trust develop? And there's really not a lot of research about that. So I'm excited to see what she can contribute. I know she has a lot to contribute drawing from this project on how do we form successful partnerships? And I can tell you from just a qualitative perspective as you really have to suspend your agenda. We just work on a different time clock. You have to be transparent about what your agenda is and then really be willing to put it aside because things do not go at the same pace in communities often that they do or they don't work the same way, different rules.

Matt Hickey:

But when community partners can see, not just hear, because sometimes we can say something and do up things that are contrary to that, right? To say that this partnership is to serve you and your community health needs, not to serve me and my professional development. And if we do that right, it can be win-win.

Avery Martin:

Right.

Matt Hickey:

But if I focus on me, the potential to build that community partnership is probably not realistic. It's a shortsighted perspective. The long view, if you cultivate nice relationships, that's going to be a fruitful partnership for years.

Avery Martin:

Of course.

Matt Hickey:

It just doesn't happen overnight.

Lauren Shomaker:

Very true. And I also think as a university, as an institution, we have to think about this because we believe that. What you're saying, that this takes time, relationships take time. And yet often as early career, when we're in our early career as an academic and a scientist, it's not part of your payroll, your effort necessarily, to spend a lot of that time. We have these metrics we have to meet. And so I think that being solidly in mid-career, maybe toward the end of mid-career, that's been really I think a good insight for me to realize and to think about, I don't have the answer, but how to create opportunities so that our bright and diverse early career faculty really have designated time and space for this. Because it takes years and you're often not then going to have immediately the products. So I think I have some ideas about that, maybe for a different conversation, but I think it's an important question.

Matt Hickey:

I agree. There have been, and again this will be an aside and we'll get back to our task at hand, but conversations for years about the moral economy of science pushing us in a particular direction that doesn't lend itself to the invested community, engaged kind of work that really is the hallmark of what it means to be at a [inaudible 00:17:50] in many ways. And so their intention, you're hitting on something that I think is important, not easy to change because some inertia perhaps, right? But perhaps a conversation for another day. So thanks for bringing it up. I appreciate it.

Lauren Shomaker:

I'll put in one plug, and that is that I think team science plays a role.

Matt Hickey:

Agreed.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

Because instead of individual faculty having to go out on their own, create these partnerships, I think we work as part of teams. I hope to do that on our team that we formed. We have a fabulous new faculty member, Anna Gutierrez Kalina, who is also a psychologist and in human development, family studies in the college who is exceptional in every way. And I hope that the partnership she's been working on a little bit can be opportunity for her to utilize that as a foundation. So I think that there's other, it's just one example, but I think teams.

Matt Hickey:

Well said.

Lauren Shomaker:

Teaming.

Avery Martin:

Love it. Love it. So Lauren, take us back a little bit. Back when you were one of those bright early career scholars.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you for that.

Avery Martin:

And even before then, when was the beginning of your interest in research and this interest in blending the worlds of psychological and physiological health. When did that start?

Lauren Shomaker:

Well, those are probably two separate landmarks-

Avery Martin:

Okay.

Lauren Shomaker:

... In terms of my journey. But just in terms of being interested in psychology, I think as a teenager I was interested in psychology. I think I had a real interest in understanding people and understanding the influence of people's relationships, in particular people's social health on their wellbeing and on particularly their mental health.

Matt Hickey:

Now, if I may, is that innate or were you observing somebody you looked up to and thought, "I want to be like them", or was it a family influence? I'm always curious about the genesis of, of course we look back, hindsight's always 2020, right?

Avery Martin:

Right.

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. That's a really good question. I mean, my own upbringing, my mom was a stay-at-home mom, but before that, she'd been a social worker.

Matt Hickey:

Okay.

Lauren Shomaker:

My father, my biological father, is a physician. And I think they both in their own way probably modeled just an interest in understanding people. And so I think probably within my family, that was something that was encouraged or there were just opportunities to discuss those sorts of things. And it is also interesting because I think about the fact that my interest in psychology started when I was an adolescent, and I study adolescence.

And I joke that now I really have some expertise now that my children are both in the valley of adolescence.

Avery Martin:

Right on.

Lauren Shomaker:

So they're solidly in the valley of adolescence. So I thought I knew something, but now I really feel like I know something. So I think that period of time in life is one that is, I think it's the most fascinating. There's lots of other fascinating periods. But I think it's when you're often your most creative and you're most interested in the world around you. And there's high emotions running in all directions, and a lot of, as you said, kind of sensitivity to outside influence. But then when I went to college, I had a fabulous undergraduate mentor named Joseph Allen.

Avery Martin:

And where was this at?

Lauren Shomaker:

University of Virginia. And he's a psychologist who studies, also a clinical psychologist, who studies adolescent development. And I was really enamored with his research and his style of mentoring and his classes. And I just thought, "wow, this is so neat. You can actually get paid and have a job to study relationships". He studied adolescent attachment. "I can go to grad school and you mean if I do research, someone will pay for it". So it's like, "well, I thought maybe I wanted to be a therapist, but I think I'll just do that". And one thing led to another. I had a great graduate school experience at the University of Denver, and then I really started to get interested in the physiology and diabetes when I did my postdoctoral work. And that was at Intramural National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and also the Uniformed Services University. And I had two wonderful mentors there, Jack Janowski, who's a pediatrician and an endocrinologist, and Marian Tosky Kraft, who's a psychologist. And they were studying obesity and eating behavior.

Matt Hickey:

Both very well known.

Lauren Shomaker:

They were terrific. They really gave me great training to just start this journey toward the intersection of mental health and other health related outcomes.

Matt Hickey:

Do you see in yourself elements of any or all of these mentors in terms of the way you conduct yourself?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think that you pick up the things that you like.

Matt Hickey:

Sure.

Lauren Shomaker:

And you maybe drop some of the things that you don't like as much. But I mean, that's true of everyone. I'm sure people who work with me, I hope that they will do the same thing. They'll choose the things that they like and change the things that they feel like better fit them. But yeah, I completely attribute any successes I've had in my career to the incredible mentors I have had, and they have all really been fantastic. And so now I'm at this point in my career, that's my passion area, is mentoring.

Matt Hickey:

That's great. If you were to try to distill your mentoring ethos into a sentence or two, what does that look like?

Lauren Shomaker:

I think that structure is important. I think that having mentoring that is not like I'm shoving it down your throat.

Matt Hickey:

No, I agree.

Lauren Shomaker:

But I'm going to be here. I'm going to be scheduling these meetings with you whether you think you want it or not. And the reason I say that, and I guess I mean that especially for early career faculty, because I think faculty come and they think probably like I did. "Oh, this is great. I'm on my own. You've got all these things to do". Or they're like, "ah, how am I going to survive?" But in both settings, and they'll probably experience both of those experiences. I think that we often, especially if people, we think, oh, they've made it to this level. We know they have what it takes to be successful, and yet it's still really hard. And so I think that rather than waiting for people to say, "I need this", or "I need a meeting with you", I really try to have a foundation of just, this is our regular meeting schedule, and so I am available for you whether you need me for this or that. And then of course, the content takes over the rest based on their needs individually. But I think being available and having some structure is really important.

Matt Hickey:

And I don't think structure and rigidity are synonyms, I think being intentional about mentoring is the only way you can do it. If we're flying blind or by the seat of our pants, we're really probably not mentoring. At best I might be catching some things, but not being taught. Again, to play that distinction a little bit further. And I think to think about your example of the influence of your own mentors and this wisdom of some things I take on others that I don't. For any of a number of reasons, I can't see myself doing that. That's a real strength for them, but I don't have it. And I'm self-aware enough to not try to force myself into a position I know that I'm not going to be comfortable in. It seems to me a good mentor is going to equip a trainee, give them the room to make mistakes and to grow to be the best that they can be, not to be the best copy of me that they can be.

Lauren Shomaker:

That's exactly right.

Matt Hickey:

And it's so much fun, isn't it?

Lauren Shomaker:

It is, really is.

Matt Hickey:

It so rewarding. Yeah. Thank you for all that you do in that regard. And of course, I look forward to partnerships that are looming as well in that sense. Fun stuff, awaits for sure.

Avery Martin:

Yeah. Tell us a little bit about that. There's some subtext there with partnerships. What does that entail?

Matt Hickey:

Nothing gets by this [inaudible 00:26:42].

Lauren Shomaker:

So I have two, one formalized mentoring role and another formalized mentoring role that we could consider pending or in the pipeline. So one of those roles is that I am the assistant director for the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institutes training and education programs for early career faculty. And we call that a K series, so K12 pre-K, which we were discussing earlier, the acronyms, but basically a series of programs that are really designed to foster research independence primarily for early career faculty. And the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, or CCTSI for short, is a big grant from the National Institutes of Health to the University of Colorado's School of Medicine, Colorado State University, and a host of other local hospitals. And that's been a fun role, in that role I get to mentor faculty from a range of different disciplines and also have my eye on different opportunities that can be really helpful for early career faculty. Right.

Avery Martin:

That's incredible.

Matt Hickey:

For our listeners here, pre-K has got nothing to do with kindergarten.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

So K is a designation by the National Institutes of Health that really talks about an umbrella for career development awards. I've often wondered why they didn't use C, but that's a conversation for another day of course. Anyway, and you've got a new one as well, right?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. So I have a pending grant, which was the crown jewel of my, as I think about it, of my sabbatical. So I was on sabbatical last year, and the one thing I really wanted to do was to write, ideally to obtain a K career development award that's called a K24. And that award in the series is an award for mentoring. And so that'll be a five-year award with the possibility of renewal, just waiting on the official check in the mail. But it's looking very promising, and that'll carve out 25% of my time over the course of 12 months to dedicate specifically to mentoring faculty.

Avery Martin:

That is so great.

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. Pretty cool.

Avery Martin:

That is awesome.

Lauren Shomaker:

I know. I'm pretty pumped about it.

Avery Martin:

Yeah, I'm pumped for you.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Lauren Shomaker:

You can come help me out if you want.

Avery Martin:

Hey, I'd love to. I'd love to. So tell us a little bit about your mentorship practice with your adolescent wellness team and talk about the lab there. What is the work that you all are doing? What does a typical day look like? And to echo, Matt, what is your mentorship ethos there?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. So my mentorship ethos is really a combination of having that structure. So we have a fair amount of regular meetings to discuss various tasks, small to large, for our various studies and people's different roles in the projects. With that, people getting the direction and leadership that they need from me and making goals and expectations clear. And at the same time, really using the principles of shared leadership so that I am not the only one steering the ship. But that people have autonomy that is indicated for their skillset, and they can really have a say in steering the ship together. And that's been really, over the last 10 years that I've been at CSU, it's evolved a lot from me having a person or two to now we have a relatively large team spread over mostly CSU, but also the University of Colorado and other institutions.

And I've been very blessed and very grateful that we've had folks who've stayed with us and figured out new ways to grow. So one of the things I think that's made our lab really successful is looking for ways to have... Being part of a land grant and academic institution, we have the turnover that you're supposed to have. People graduate, people come in the lab and then go off to have other experiences. But we've also had some people who've come as undergrads, stayed as research associates, decide to stay in a research associate track. We have had postdocs turn research scientists, turn faculty. So it's been fun to get to see people be able to carve out growth no matter their position, and that everyone's needs are important.

Avery Martin:

That's great.

Matt Hickey:

I want to talk about a day in the life, but move it off campus. So you have a family, you've got kids that you've hinted at. Tell us a little bit more about your family and things that interest and appeal to you and your family when you're not doing the business of a teacher, mentor, scholar, et cetera.

Lauren Shomaker:

Well as anyone who's ever taken any science class knows that case studies have their cautionary tales. They're only an N of one, one perspective. So you've heard about my scientific and professional interest in adolescence. I also met my husband as an adolescent.

Matt Hickey:

Oh, wow.

Lauren Shomaker:

I know. Yep. As I said, don't take that to mean that should be you. But yeah, my husband and I started dating when we were 17 years old in high school, and we went to prom together. I wore a beautiful purple sequin floor length dress, very stylish at the time.

Avery Martin:

Nice.

Lauren Shomaker:

And yeah, we've been married for 18 years. Just celebrate our 18th anniversary.

Matt Hickey:

Congratulations.

Lauren Shomaker:

Thank you very much. I'm very, very grateful. I have a wonderful partner in life, and I have two healthy and happy daughters who are as discussed adolescents. We've got dance, and my younger daughter does golf. She really likes golf.

Matt Hickey:

That's good for her.

Lauren Shomaker:

It's kind of an interesting thing. We have some-

Matt Hickey:

Do you or dad golf?

Lauren Shomaker:

Dad golfs.

Matt Hickey:

Okay.

Lauren Shomaker:

My personal past time-

Matt Hickey:

I take it mom does not golf.

Lauren Shomaker:

Mom does not golf.

Matt Hickey:

Okay.

Lauren Shomaker:

Mom has limited patience for the length of time that is the commitment of golf.

Avery Martin:

Nothing wrong with that.

Lauren Shomaker:

Just rather be spending that in other pursuits, but hey-

Matt Hickey:

That's fine.

Lauren Shomaker:

The dad's side of the family is into golf. My personal things I do to unwind when I'm not at work are, well they fall into a lot of categories, but the top ones are yoga. When I was on sabbatical, I got my teacher certification to teach yoga, and I practice yoga regularly. And I also like anything that evolves being outside. So maybe not golf, but-

Avery Martin:

Almost anything.

Lauren Shomaker:

... I really like being in the mountains. I love hiking, like trail running with my dogs. It's my happy place.

Matt Hickey:

We live in a beautiful state, don't we?

Lauren Shomaker:

We live in a beautiful state. Colorado, I was born in Virginia, but Colorado is my home at heart. I love the mountains.

Matt Hickey:

So as you project into Lauren's future and the future of the team and the people, you continue to be able to influence and mentor and put yourself five to 10 years down the road and talk about aspirations. To be considered a success, a win, I would like to see the following things...

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. I mean, I think that I'm really grateful that what I'm doing now is some things that I love.

Matt Hickey:

Yes.

Lauren Shomaker:

Taking a break, figuring out how to carve out a little more balance in life. For me, last year was really important, and now I've been able to come back to the university with just a renewed energy and passion. The things I've shared with you today, I genuinely and authentically really care about.

Matt Hickey:

That's clear.

Avery Martin:

We can tell.

Lauren Shomaker:

And I'm really grateful that I get to do that for my job. I'd like to still be doing that in five or 10 years. I don't see any major career shifts. And I think that, would I like to still do what I do and not have to write as many grants. Yes. But being good at grant writing, getting skilled at grant writing is important because it gives your team resources. And having grant funded projects helps the university. It helps you as faculty. And it helps everyone working with you just to have that cushion, to really steer your ship in more directions of where you really want to go. So I hope to continue our funding success simply because it gives us resources to do what we really want to do.

Matt Hickey:

Well said. We often use this imagery when we talk about mentoring of individuals whose fingerprints we still bear as we sort of go forward. So what do Lauren's fingerprints look like in terms of the professional, the personal, the academic development of your trainees? What does that look like?

Lauren Shomaker:

Yeah. Well if I am able to meet the goals as outlined in my pending career development award for mentoring, I will have generated clinician scientists who are really making an impact in the field of whole health. Meaning addressing mental health in various ways, and its impact on cardiovascular, metabolic, physical aspects of health that are important for chronic disease prevention. There's so many ways and needs to do that.

Matt Hickey:

Where else to go before we sleep?

Lauren Shomaker:

Indeed. But sleep is important too.

Matt Hickey:

Well said, well said. [inaudible 00:36:32] Light on our feet. Well done.

Avery Martin:

That's great. Yeah. You are the exemplary Health and Human Sciences faculty member because your work influences nearly every discipline in our college. So thank you so much for your time, sharing your great wisdom and your mentorship. I feel mentored by you, just by proxy. So thank you so much, Lauren.

Lauren Shomaker:

It was a pleasure. Thanks for the invitation.

Avery Martin:

Of course.

Matt Hickey:

Thank you, Lauren. Another great interview is in the books. Thank you for listening to this episode of Health and Human Science Matters.

Avery Martin:

Stay tuned for the next episode. It's on the way. In the meantime, go listen to our episodes from Seasons one through four. And if you want to learn more about our College of Health and Human Sciences at CSU, go to www.chhs.colostate.edu.