

Gender gap on wages wider locally, report says

By PAUL SHOCKLEY

Paul.Shockley@gjsentinel.com

A gender wage earnings gap is notably wider in Mesa County compared to Colorado as a whole, but women statewide have made progress on pay equity over two decades, according to a study presented Monday at Colorado Mesa University.

"The Status of Women & Girls in Colorado" report, released this summer by the non-profit Women's Foundation of Colorado, said that the median earnings for a woman in 2011 in Mesa County was \$35,530, compared with \$49,115 for men.

In 2011, Colorado women working full time and year-round had median earnings of \$40,000, which were 80 percent of men's full-time, year-round earnings, \$50,000, according to the report.

Cindy Willard, programs director for Women's Foundation of Colorado, said that although Colorado women are earning roughly \$13,500 more annually than what was recorded during the 1997-1998 Current Population Survey, the gains are still just 80 cents for every dollar earned by men.

"If we continue at this same rate, women close the gap in Colorado by 2057," Willard told local residents at CMU's University Center.

Nationally, women and men in 2010 earned \$36,100 and \$46,000, respectively, according to the report.

"The Status of Women & Girls in Colorado" also estimated that of the approximately 3,400 single-mother households in Mesa County, nearly 42 percent live below federal poverty standards. The study estimated households in Mesa County must earn around \$20 per hour, or just over \$43,000 per year, in order to meet a "self-sufficiency standard." That's an income level meeting family needs, without the help of subsidies or "external resources," Willard said.

In Mesa County, Willard said the average median single-mother income with children was recorded just over \$35,000 annually.

The gap between income and "self-sufficiency" isn't unique to Mesa County, she said.