

# **Speaker: Home schooling lets parents ‘be fully present’ to children**

DENVER – Elizabeth Foss, a home educator, author and lecturer, told attendees at a regional home-schooling conference in Denver that she and her husband decided to teach their children at home because they wanted to be with them and “be fully present in their lives.”

Foss described the routine of her home as “fluid.”

The routine changed as she and her husband added to their family – now numbering eight – but two things remained constant: Both parents were always present at the children’s bedtime and there were always plenty of good books in the home.

“These two things have been a guiding parenting principle at all times,” Foss said in her keynote presentation June 22 during the June 21-23 Rocky Mountain Catholic Home Educators Conference.

Several hundred participants from the Midwest convened to hear presentations on the conference theme, “Teaching the Art of Living,” and to participate in discussions, share their own stories about home schooling, and check out the latest in materials and supplies from more than 50 vendors.

Foss’ topic was “Home Education: Attachment Parenting Grows Up.” She said she does not remember the first time she heard the term “attachment parenting,” but knew it represented the sort of parent she wanted to be.

“When children are young, it’s simple,” she said. “We answer their wants and needs. But when they get older, it’s more complicated.”

Challenging though that may be, Foss said, the attached parent will make every effort to stay connected – to be a guide and to inspire. It is important to stay close to a child during his or her formative years, she said, and help the child benefit from

the wisdom of parents' relationships and peers.

"We need to stay close so as the child approaches adulthood, the parent can pass on an adult understanding of the faith in all its facets in the world," Foss said.

Using stories from her own family, she led the audience through a journey of growing up, for both the child and the parent. In a broad sense, planning and patience are key, she said, but in the end it's a matter of showing up and leading.

"The real learning lifestyle is a lifestyle called love," she said.

Presenter Kelly Roper, consultant for a home study program called Mother of Divine Grace School, said home schooling takes organization and a positive attitude. For the last 11 years, Roper has been home-schooling her eight children.

From taking care of children to doing the chores around the house, Roper asked her audience to reflect on whether they do these day-to-day things for God to help them grow in holiness or just grudgingly proceed through the day?

"It's our attitude that makes the difference in how we approach these things," she said. "Whether we make an offering to God or get upset and wear a frown, it will make a difference on us and our children."

From the organizational standpoint, Roper said that streamlining the day to make things more efficient is what makes all the difference - everything from juggling the daily schedule to meal planning to making sure that all in the home take an active part.

When everyone acts as a team, all benefit, Roper said, but she emphasized that for all the work and planning of a family to be successful, one goal is primary.

"I want people to realize that everything they do is for the glory of God," she said.

Colorado musician Eric Genuis performed during the conference and also gave a presentation about the effects of modern media on culture.

"Our awareness of the arts has dwindled significantly," he said. "Plato said given the choice of governing the nation's laws or music, he'd take the music. Laws tell people

how to behave, but people can be moved by music.”

Historically, art has had a profound impact on culture, Genuis said. It is a powerful tool parents should use to cultivate in children an appetite for beauty, which represents God, he said.

“I believe that God created us to have a certain wonder about life,” he said. “Unfortunately, many of the youth today don’t have that. They are cynical toward their families, their future and about their life.”

Youths have “settled for whatever is considered cool,” he added. “There is a price to be paid for that.”