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## **News Release**

### ***AskColorado Celebrates Seven Years, Nears 300,000 Questions***

AskColorado will celebrate its seventh anniversary on Thursday, Sept. 2, having quietly and efficiently provided responses to nearly 300,000 questions from students, parents, business owners, military personnel, and other residents of Colorado.

Launched Sept. 2, 2003, AskColorado ([www.askcolorado.org](http://www.askcolorado.org)) is staffed by qualified information professionals, librarians from Colorado libraries. It is a free service for Colorado residents to ask questions from the comfort of their homes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The librarians utilize sophisticated chat technology to communicate one-on-one and push links and other information to their clients, using the same Live Help technology currently being used by large e-retailers such as REI and Godiva Chocolatier.

“We offer the human touch to an oftentimes impersonal internet, and help put people in touch with information that they would otherwise be unable to locate themselves,” said Kris Johnson, AskColorado operations manager. “And judging by our numbers, people need us!”

The Colorado State Library, a division of the Colorado Department of Education, helps to facilitate AskColorado operations through the allocation of federal funding from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) that off-sets software, staffing, and operations support.

Early on it was recognized that despite the plethora of easily-obtainable information via the internet, people were having trouble

finding the precise, credible information. To address this problem, Colorado libraries joined forces to create AskColorado in 2003.

AskColorado was one of the first statewide, multi-library-type, virtual reference services to open in the U.S., and remains one of only 15 or so states that continue with such a service today.

"While states such as Massachusetts and California have discontinued their services, ours continues today to offer high-level service, along with other states such as Ohio, Maryland, and New Jersey," added Johnson. "Our per-capita usage rivals that of those larger states."

Residents from every county in Colorado have logged in, with nearly 25 percent of those questions coming from rural areas. Questions range the gamut, from homework help for kids, to how to start a small business for adults. Recent research questions include:

- *I am trying to find research studies on effective classroom routines or how such routines help with classroom management.*
- *What is the amount of water the entire state of Colorado uses in one day?*
- *I am researching the effectiveness of LinkedIn as a job search tool. I have lots of short articles but no substantial research. Help!*
- *I am sending invitations to our state senators and representatives. How do I address them on the envelope?*

AskColorado also receive its share of whimsical questions:

- *Can you help me find an article that has a list of the top 500 fictional villains...the evilest?*
- *What is the circumference of a moose?*

Interesting questions received on the service are posted at the AskColorado Twitter account (<http://twitter.com/AskColorado>) nearly daily. AskColorado also participates in popular social networking sites, including Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/AskColorado>) and Delicious (<http://delicious.com/askcolorado>).

Libraries throughout Colorado of every type -- public, academic, school and specialized libraries -- contribute money to pay for the software and 24/7 service. Local libraries also provide the staff time to work online with Colorado students and residents.

The AskColorado service works on a model similar to public radio—it is grant-funded and paid for by member libraries. Federal monies through LSTA are supplied via the Colorado State Library, a unit of the Colorado Department of Education. In addition, member libraries contribute financially and through staff support.

For more about AskColorado see [www.askcolorado.org](http://www.askcolorado.org) or contact the operations manager Kris Johnson at [johnson\\_k@cde.state.co.us](mailto:johnson_k@cde.state.co.us) or 303-866-6922.

Web site: <http://www.askcolorado.org>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/AskColorado>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/AskColorado>

**For more information about CDE, contact** Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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