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## Colorado Fourteeners Initiative highlights work on Holy Cross

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Friday, June 22, 2012

Author Mark Obmascik visits Avon on Tuesday

Daily staff report  
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Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew members strain to move a boulder during trail reconstruction work last year on the Mount of the Holy Cross summit trail.  
*Eli Allan | Special to the Daily*

### If you go ...

What: Colorado Fourteeners Initiative with award-winning author Mark Obmascik.  
Where: Walking Mountains Science Center in Avon.  
When: 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, the presentation follows at 7 p.m. and the book signing will occur after the presentation.  
Cost: Free.  
More information: RSVP by emailing [cfi@14ers.org](mailto:cfi@14ers.org).

Book Award for Outdoor Literature.

Obmascik was the lead writer for the Denver Post team that won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize, and he is the winner of the 2003 National Press Club award for environmental journalism. His prior book, "The Big Year," was recently made into a movie starring Owen Wilson, Jack Black and Steve Martin.

The 14ers are Colorado's signature mountains that exceed 14,000 feet in elevation. Collectively, the peaks experience an estimated half-million visitor-use days annually, with most of that use occurring between early July and late September on the accessible peaks in the Front, Tenmile, Mosquito and Sawatch ranges.

CFI partners with the U.S. Forest Service, youth conservation corps and numerous local businesses, youth camps, schools and colleges to build sustainably located and designed summit trails, maintain previously constructed trails, close and restore user-created trails and educate the hiking public about "Leave No Trace" practices that help limit impacts.

While climbing all of the 14ers, Obmascik became a fan of CFI's alpine trail-building and restoration work, since it helped facilitate access to many of the summits. "My time in the mountains convinced me that these peaks need help," wrote Obmascik in "Halfway to Heaven." "One of the best ways is to donate time or money to the trail builders of the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative."

The season kick-off event will also feature a multimedia presentation of CFI's extensive trail reconstruction work slated for nearby Mount of the Holy Cross, the closest 14er to the Vail Valley.

The peak's primary ascent route, the Halfmoon trail, is notoriously difficult to follow in places — especially on the descent. The poorly delineated trail has caused hikers to get off route, precipitating many search-and-rescue efforts in past years to find lost or injured hikers. Trail reconstruction is designed to make the route easier to follow, which will limit trampling of very sensitive alpine vegetation through which the trail passes.

Colorado Fourteeners Initiative kicks off its 2012 field season protecting summit hiking trails on Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks with an evening program and book signing featuring award-winning author Mark Obmascik on Tuesday at the Walking Mountains Science Center in Avon.

A reception begins at 6:30 p.m., the presentation follows at 7 p.m. and the book signing will occur after the

presentation.

"The seasonal migration of 14er hikers from across the country to Colorado's high peaks is already under way," said Colorado Fourteeners Initiative Executive Director Lloyd Athearn. "We want to kick off the season in style with an evening that both celebrates 14er hiking and educates the public about the tremendous efforts required to build, maintain and restore trails on these high-altitude peaks. Nobody can do that better than Mark Obmascik, someone who has chronicled the 14er experience and seen firsthand the work produced by past CFI trail crews."

Obmascik is best known to climbers through his book, "Halfway to Heaven: My White-knuckled-and-Knuckleheaded-Quest for the Rocky Mountain High," that chronicled his effort to climb all 54 14ers in a single year. The book is packed with humorous stories about the colorful characters he encountered and climbed with along the way. The book won the 2009 National Outdoor

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Work on the Mount of the Holy Cross summit trail began during the summer of 2010 with the assignment of a three-person mobile CFI trail maintenance crew during a three-week period. The crew quickly sized up the scope of the project as being well beyond their capacity.

A year later, bolstered by significant grants from the Colorado State Trails Program and the National Forest Foundation's Ski Conservation Fund, CFI began a two-season, base-camp supported project that will put an estimated 1,100 person-days of labor into the project. Most of this labor will be provided during the three-month-long field season by CFI's two seasonal project leaders and a 10-person Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew. Several "Adopt-a-Peak" volunteer projects will augment the crew's work.

Beyond more clearly delineating and constructing a sustainably located route to the summit of Holy Cross, CFI will close and restore user-created campsites along East Cross Creek, designate campsites in more durable locations farther from the creek and clear downed trees from the Notch Mountain trail.

The Holy Cross trail reconstruction project is one of three that CFI will conduct this summer. The other two projects, both of which are starting the first of two anticipated field seasons, will take place on North Maroon Peak near Aspen and San Luis Peak near Gunnison.

To date, CFI has constructed 24 sustainably located 14er summit trails on 22 peaks. The organization has been recognized many times by the Forest Service, foundations and other organizations for the high-quality and innovative work CFI completes in some of the most difficult locations in the country.

CFI's Tuesday kick-off event is free. However, attendees are asked to respond in advance by emailing [cfi@14ers.org](mailto:cfi@14ers.org). Walking Mountains Science Center is located at 318 Walking Mountains Lane in Avon.



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