

## UCCS award recipient: Americans too willing to trade opportunity for economic security

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Joe Woodford has always believed in opportunity. Entrepreneurs should have the opportunity to succeed or fail, his employees should have the opportunity to earn a share of profits earned by his family's company and Americans should have the opportunity to better their lives.

But the 73-year-old chairman of [Woodford Manufacturing Co.](#) believes too many Americans are willing to trade opportunity for economic security, and since retiring as the company's CEO five years ago, has devoted most of his time and the resources of his family's charitable foundation to backing or creating organizations that promote individual liberty and limited government.

"We still have lots of opportunity in our country, but if we're not careful our drive to security will kill the American experiment," Woodford said in an interview about his 47-year career as a business owner and philanthropist. "I believe you shouldn't have government doing any more than it absolutely has to."

Woodford will receive the [Lifetime Entrepreneurship Award](#) Friday from the [University of Colorado at Colorado Springs College of Business](#) during a luncheon that will raise funds to support scholarships for the school. He becomes the third person to receive the award after former

Current executive Gary Loo in 2009 and longtime Colorado Springs developer Bruce Shepard last year. A committee of business school officials, alumni and local business and civic leaders selects the winners.

Woodford never intended to run the company started by his father in Des Moines, Iowa, just weeks before the 1929 stock market crash. He had spent two years with General Electric Co., working at the federal government's plutonium production plant in southern Washington when he decided to return to Des Moines in 1964 to fill a vacant production manager position at Woodford Manufacturing. Three years later he was named executive vice president, a role that put him in charge of day-to-day operations of the company.

Three strikes by the company's unionized workers between 1966 and 1977 convinced Woodford he had to move the company to escape labor problems; he chose Colorado Springs because of its favorable wage and utility rates, but worried whether the area's abundant population of retired military personnel would make good manufacturing employees. He moved the company gradually between 1978 and 1988 and tried to convince the company's 30 employees to make the move, too, though few did.

Woodford Manufacturing, which makes outdoor faucets for homes that automatically drain when turned off so they don't freeze in the winter, grew rapidly after moving to the Springs, benefitting from a growing housing market as baby boomers started families and bought houses. The family started a holding company called [WCM Industries](#) in the 1990s after buying a Kansas City, Mo., area specialty plumbing fixtures firm called [Watco Manufacturing Co.](#) and now employs about 130 people between Woodford and Watco.

While CEO, Woodford began a profit-sharing program that paid 15 percent of the company's profits to employees. He also transformed its marketing, purchasing and quality control operations to turn Woodford

Manufacturing into a leader in the specialty plumbing market. The company still makes the original product it started manufacturing in 1929 — an agricultural water pump that never freezes — and is still owned by the Woodford family; it's now headed by Joe Woodford's son, Steve Woodford.

Joe Woodford has been a tireless volunteer and financial supporter of many local nonprofits including Goodwill Industries, Leadership Pikes Peak, the Myron Stratton Home, Penrose-St. Francis Health Services, Pikes Peak United Way and Silver Key Senior Services. He started the [Woodford Foundation](#) in 1995 to promote freedom, liberty and self-reliance by making donations to conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute, the Independence Institute and the Mountain States Legal Foundation.

Through separate nonprofits, Woodford set up the [Center for the Study of Government and the Individual](#) at UCCS with political science professor Jim Null in 2000 to analyze the appropriate role of government, its limitations and restrictions; the [Pikes Peak Economic Club](#) with Paul Prentice in 2005 to promote economic and civic literacy; and the [Limited Government Forum](#) in 2007 to promote the ideas of individual responsibility. The forum sponsors Peak Freedom Festival, formerly called Limited Government Week, and periodic Food for Thought Luncheons.

He also started [Local Liberty Action](#), which promotes individual freedom locally, with Sean Paige, a former city councilman and former editorial editor of The Gazette, and Cheyenne Mountain Civic Solutions, which has done several business climate surveys, with Jon Stepleton, a former Gazette editor.

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