

Southern Region Update

Keishon Thomas (GA), NEAFCS Southern Region Director

Hello NEAFCS Family! As the new Southern Region Director, I have been learning new things (read getting my footing) and getting to know the NEAFCS Board Members. I am honored to serve in this role for the next two years as I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of the work that FACS Extension professionals conduct. As a 14-year Extension professional, I know that the impact we have on our communities and families is unmatched. Keep up the good work!



I am honored to highlight some of the successful programming initiatives from our affiliates throughout the year in our newsletter. Networking is the cornerstone of working smart and sharing is essential as we continue to do more with less.

NEAFCS and by extension the Southern Region is committed to ongoing professional development having had 331 Southern region members attend National Conference, winning 43 National awards, in addition to the 13 Continued Excellence and 12 Distinguished Service awards.

Please read on for highlights happening in a few states in the Southern Region:

Melinda McCulley from Kentucky shared:

After the success of our online networking sessions at the 2020 Virtual KEAFCS Annual Meeting, our affiliate hosted monthly networking events called Fellowship Fridays. Two of our area presidents, Kelly Burgess and Cabrina Buckman, coordinated the monthly events featuring break-out rooms, jam boards, guest speakers and of course, fellowship time. Those who were available on the second Friday morning of each month popped in for an opportunity to spend time learning and growing together. We opened Fellowship Fridays up to all employees associated with Family and Consumer Sciences Extension (not just KEAFCS members) so that it might encourage non-members to join the association.

Olivia Jones from North Carolina shared:

The North Carolina Affiliate is working hard to plan the 2022 National Meeting which will be held in Raleigh, NC. We hope to see you all there!

From more than 21,721 educational activities in the areas of Nutrition and food safety agents have increased fruit and vegetable consumption among 13,573 adults and reduced the sodium intake of 3,992 adults. They have also worked to increase the physical activity levels of 2,965 adults. Additionally, over the past year agents have worked to increase safe food handling in the home and food preservation in 21,585 adults.

Rachel Stewart from GA shared:

Nineteen members from GEAFCS attended the FACS Day at the Capital. Alexis Roberts represented GEAFCS during the "Get Connected to FACS" session, and spoke to the UGA FACS students about Extension, the opportunities for students and ways to get connected. Alexis and MaryBeth Hornbeck designed an infographic, showing the impact of UGA Extension FACS, which we shared with the legislators, along with a thank-you note for their support, via email.

Georgia had 12 Regional and 9 National Award Winners. MaryBeth Hornbeck received the Thomas F. Rodgers Outreach County Agent Award for 2021.

Rebecca Gartner from Virginia shared:

VEAFCS held a Membership Meeting and Open House in November to encourage new memberships and to plan for 2022. We are proud to have our very own VEAFCS member, Glenn Sturm, to be serving as NEAFCS Treasurer.

Amy Ressler from Texas shared:

Since September 2021, Texas has been celebrating the 25th Anniversary of their signature program: Walk Across Texas! (WAT!). The program began in 1996 in Harrison County and has since reached over 615,000 participants and has contributed to an estimated economic impact of over \$2.2 billion dollars! The current challenge includes 4,625 participants and 781 teams, with 103 leagues and in 103 counties across Texas participating who have added up 739,137.46 miles in the WAT! Adult program. WAT! Youth teams have added up 62,361.6 miles, with 4,796 participants and 118 teams, with 25 leagues and in 37 counties across Texas.

Texas has developed a mindfulness curriculum for youth in grades 6-8 called Mindful SELF, a six-lesson series that integrates mindfulness with social and emotional learning concepts of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness. Each structured lesson consists of key background information and definitions, instructional discussion guide, an interactive activity, a lesson closure and "explore more" activities such as weekly affirmation, self-care exercise, video for a short, guided meditation, and a journal prompt that encourages parent involvement. The curriculum is in the pilot phase with 20 agents testing in a variety of settings

Finally, I would like to extend Happy Holidays filled with Joy, Laughter and Rest! Happy Holidays NEAFCS!!!!