

NEAFCS Network
May 2021

President's Message

Dianne Gertson (TX), President



Please click the image above to view this month's President's Message

The first 5 people to [email me](#) with the location of the icon will be entered into a drawing for a free registration to the 2021 NEAFCS Annual Session.

USDA NIFA FCS Welcome and Update

Suzanne Stluka, PhD, RDN, LN, Division Director, USDA NIFA DFCS, Kansas City, MO

I am pleased to extend my greetings to you all from USDA NIFA's [Division of Family and Consumer Sciences](#). I began my role as Division Director in July 2020 and am thrilled with the work being done in the FCS community. Prior to my role in NIFA, I spent over 15 years working in the Cooperative Extension System. I am thrilled to now be able to work alongside you as a federal partner in my role at NIFA.



There was a [webinar](#) providing an overview of NIFA Competitive Education Programs on Friday, June 11. Learn more information about these programs [here](#).

Our competitive panels are underway, and I am excited to share about the programs DFCS has recently been implementing. DFCS is representing USDA-NIFA in its first agreement with the

CDC and Cooperative Extension for a vaccine education effort in rural America. The [Extension COVID Immunization Training and Education \(EXCITE\)](#) program is to help promote vaccine confidence and uptake in rural and other medically underserved communities. The press release with more information on this program can be found [here](#). Additionally, please find information about other DFCS programs focusing on topics from economic development to rural safety: [Smith Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program](#), [Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans](#), [Farm Business Management and Benchmarking](#), and [Rural Health and Safety Education](#).

Endowment Contributions in 2021

Dianne Gertson (TX), President

What is an endowment? Endowed funds differ from others in that the total amount of the gift is invested. Each year, only a portion of the income earned is spent while the remainder may be added to principal for growth. One of the advantages of an endowment is that it provides dependable, perpetual income to a cause, in our case, NEAFCS.

A little history. The NEAFCS Endowment was started in 2004. The initial goal was \$300,000 by 2009. It took a bit longer to reach the goal. The \$300,000 goal was reached in 2017 with contributions from the NEAFCS operating account. Now that the Endowment is fully funded, the *investment income* is available for NEAFCS to use for member benefits, while we never touch the principal. For the first few years, this income was used to fund scholarships for Annual Session, JCEP Extension Leadership Conference, JCEP Public Issues and Leadership Development Conference as well as leadership development for the Board and members.

In 2020-2021, the Endowment Committee created a proposal process to award funds to committees or groups of members. The four target areas for proposals are: Leadership and Professional Development; Awards and Recognition; Public Issues; and Diversity. In the first year of the new grant process, four proposals totaling \$10,000 were awarded. For more on the proposal process, visit the following link - <https://neafcs.memberclicks.net/endowment-grant>.

I have selected the NEAFCS Endowment for the 2021 President's Charity. I'm encouraging each member to donate \$21 or more in 2021. The Endowment Committee has set a goal of \$21,000 for 2021. Let's work in *Unity* to reach our goal. As an NEAFCS Member, please consider making a contribution to the Endowment.

Why contribute to the NEAFCS Endowment?

- Create a lasting imprint on NEAFCS.
- Interest from the Endowment works in perpetuity to provide financial assistance year after year.
- Support targeted projects such as international, marketing, awards and professional development.
- Mentor new FCS educators.
- Provide a steady income for quality and permanence to the profession.



- Strengthen the profession.
- Champion our profession and its impact in the community.
- Create a memorial in honor of a co-worker, friend, family member, or colleague.
- Support the profession you believe in.

Thank you, in advance, for supporting the NEAFCS President's Charity!

FCS Extension in the News!

NEAFCS Staff

This month NEAFCS members Vice President for Awards & Recognition, Julie Garden-Robinson and Shauna Henley (MD), were interviewed for a Washington Post article "[Extension services are the best free cooking resource. Here's how to use them.](#)" Also interviewed were experts from the University of California Cooperative Extension.

In the article, Julie mentions that people in the profession call themselves "the best-kept secret". She went on to say "We don't want to be a secret. We want people to access our resources." Help us spread the word by reading and sharing the article.



Looking forward to the 2021 Annual Session

Pat Brinkman (OH), Vice President for Professional Development

As I worked to plant a garden this year, I started to think about all the knowledge, skills, tools we provide to our clientele on how to prepare and preserve their food. As Extension educators we are a reliable and trusted resource to help people have nutritious and tasty food to eat all year. We provide information to assist people to make informed choices to live healthy lives and thrive with healthy finances and positive relationships, along with preparation for the future and sustainability. We spark people's creativity to solve many problems and enjoy life through individual expression with textiles, clothing, home furnishings, etc. With our vast content areas of knowledge, NEAFCS assists us in our continued quest to provide reliable, up-to-date, and timely knowledge to our clientele. I am excited and hopeful that we will be able to see one another and learn from each other in Grand Rapids, MI the first week of November for our 2021 Annual Session. I know many interesting and timely Concurrent Sessions are planned along with our Showcase of Excellent programming. See you there!



Announcing: The 2021 Silent Auction!

Cheryl Spires (OH) - Sponsorship and Support Subcommittee - Silent Auction team



Make plans to participate in the 2021 Silent Auction to raise funds for our awards program.

Follow our Silent Auction Countdown on social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#),) and via your affiliate leaders. Our first step is to have you plan your Virtual Auction item donations. Details on the In-person Auction will be released after Annual Session registration opens.

Virtual Auction Item Tips:

Some items ship simply. Please consider small, sturdy items for the Virtual Auction, as items will be shipped at the donor's personal expense.

Shipping Your Donation to the Winner Tips:

Consider using USPS Flat Rate Boxes; they ship for a set price regardless of weight. If you choose to donate fragile items, pack with plenty of cushion.

Action Steps:

1. Purchase and take a picture of your item for the Virtual Auction.
2. Submit a [Silent Auction donation form](#) for each item.
3. For each item donated, email a picture and a donation form to: Will Ferguson (WFerguson@executiveoffice.org).

Suggested Items to Donate:

- Food items that represent your state, such as: muffin, cookie or soup mixes, hot sauce, jellies/jams of fruits that are found in your state (e.g., Prickly Pear for Arizona)
- Gift cards
- Hand-made gifts such as: cutting boards, quilts or wall hangings, wood carvings, jewelry.

Please NOTE: We will NOT be accepting alcoholic beverages for shipping or in-person auctioning, however, gift cards for alcoholic beverages, shipped from the company, will be accepted.

Please direct questions to Will Ferguson (WFerguson@executiveoffice.org) or Cheryl Spires (spires.53@osu.edu).

Frederik Meijer Garden

Madeline Bielecki (MI), 2021 Annual Session Planning Committee Member

Hello NEAFCS members! We are looking forward to welcoming you to Grand Rapids this November. My name is Madeline Bielecki and I am a member of the NEAFCS planning committee.

While you are in Grand Rapids, I hope that you have the opportunity to experience Frederik Meijer Garden & Sculpture Park. Since opening in 1995, Meijer Gardens has made it their mission to have not only the environment and gardens be respected and relished, but sculptures and the arts as well.

Although we will be in Grand Rapids in the fall, there will still be plenty to do at the gardens. If you want to experience crisp, fall weather, you can visit the Frey Boardwalk or Wege Nature Trail. The outdoor gardens are filled with plants that thrive in each specific season so they can be enjoyed by the community year-round.

If you would prefer to stay inside, there are five different indoor gardens. Each of these gardens features its own theme: tropical, Victorian, arid, seasonal, and carnivorous plants. Within each of these gardens, be sure to look for various highlights and sculptures such as: The Orchid Wall, Cacao Trees, Five Meerkats (by Tom Hillis) and the Aristilochia Vine.

With Meijer Gardens being such a large exhibit, I was only able to share the tip of the iceberg on how you can spend your time here! To learn more about the gardens, sculptures, and other attractions at Meijer Gardens, please visit meijergardens.org.



Eastern Region Update

Lisa McCoy (MD), Eastern Region Director

The Eastern Region continues to work strong through the changing guidelines due to COVID restrictions. The Penn State Extension sponsored a Spring Professional Development day on June 3rd that was open to all members in the Eastern Region. During this multi-state session, colleagues shared successful programs they have created or continued during the pandemic. The six presentations included Responding to Financial Impacts of COVID on Consumers (New York), Virtual 4-H Cooking Camp and follow-up cooking classes on Saturdays (Pennsylvania), WVU Extension Kinship Care Program, Home Food Preservation Series/Drinks from the Garden (Maine), Work Well – Live Well – Stay Healthy (New Jersey), Farm Stress: Building Family Farm Resilience (Delaware). Following the presentations, participants attended breakout sessions on a specific program that interests them and they would like to implement in their state.



New Educators and Diversity Laissez-faire Educators: Diversity Refresher to Hedge Against Extension Program Discrimination

Michael Elonge (MD), Diversity Subcommittee Member

Is there anything potentially discriminatory about Extension programming?

Surprisingly, the answer is yes, there is a potential for Extension program discrimination, especially when the designed program is not accessible and does not demonstrate reasonable efforts to reach its diverse communities. Think about communities that are targets for discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and other identifying factors; ask yourself if your programs reflect diversity to hedge against discrimination. In other words, the program should be capable of reaching out to serve these various communities. Incidentally, not all programs can serve every diverse community, and if such is the case, a review of the programs is necessary to ensure that it does not intentionally promote inequality. Parity is to neutralize inequality and propel program equality such that the program does not discriminate towards any diverse community. Many seasoned educators use the national census data of their city or county to identify the diversity ratio by race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and other required categories. This approach allows educators to engage in programming that attains greater parity and mitigates program discrimination. In circumstances where parity is not attainable, documentation of reasonable efforts is necessary. The educator should use all reasonable efforts to ensure equal access, equal opportunity, and integration of diversity (race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, ability, and more) to reflect entirely in Extension programming (program planning and design, promotion, dissemination, contacts, implementation, and outcome). Consequently, if this is accomplished then the outcome should be nothing less than best practices in diversity programming.

Beware of Extension program discrimination. Remember diversity in your program development and implementation to avoid becoming a promoter of discrimination. Make affirmative action your companion for program development and dissemination, and make civil rights, your practical integrity.

For more readings visit: NIFA's Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights.; <https://nifa.usda.gov/civil-rights-equal-employment-opportunity>).

Meet the Board

Mary Liz Wright (IL), NEAFCS Vice President of Public Affairs

It was 2014 and I was attending my first Annual Session in Lexington, KY when I met President Terri Mayhew in the hallway. She invited me into the Public Affairs Committee meeting and, as they say, the rest is history. Full disclosure, I am a joiner, an extrovert, and a Real Colors® Green/Orange. I thrive on controlled chaos. I like to work “in community”. I felt and continue to feel that members of NEAFCS are “my people”—smart and fun and caring. I have enjoyed my time as an officer of NEAFCS and have grown to appreciate the process and policies of our organization.



I was born and raised in the rural Illinois county where I currently live and work as a Nutrition and Wellness Educator. My journey to FCS is a somewhat circuitous route. I earned a BA in Theology from Loyola University of Chicago and went on to serve as a Jesuit volunteer on the Colville Reservation in north central Washington. I then came home, got married, started a family, and did not work full time until my youngest child entered school. Although I am a 4-H alum I never thought of Extension as a career possibility until I was told there was a job opening that was “perfect for me”. I began as a SNAP Ed community worker and while in that position returned to school for my MS in FCS, opening the door for my current position, which is also a “perfect fit”. I am passionate about helping people learn how to take better care of themselves and therefore live better lives.

I am a firm believer in community service and am currently involved as a director on the following boards: Edgar County Fair, Edgar County Community Foundation, Unit # 4 School Board, and the Paris Community Hospital Board. I am a member of St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Paris. We are the parents of three daughters and three sons in law. We have one granddaughter and another grandchild on the way. Our family are avid gardeners and raise beef cattle and sheep on our Edgar County farm. In my spare time I like to hike, read, and spin/knit with wool.

21 tips for ‘21

Lisa McCoy (MD), Eastern Region Director

When it came my turn to write my 2 tips, I took some time to reflect on what things I have found helpful to me not only with work but life in general. The work of Extension is never done as all of us realize but it is important to keep our sanity through it all. My 2 tips are practices that I try to use in my life when it becomes overwhelming and I feel like a hamster on a wheel.



1. When I have an overwhelming task, whether it is writing an article, creating a curriculum, or cleaning out a closet or room, I use the “Pomodoro technique”. This is a time management method that was developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. This technique uses a timer to break down tasks in short intervals of time, separated by short breaks. The traditional time interval is 25 minutes, but I tend to go a little longer, 30 or 45 minutes. I start working on my “project” and take a break when the timer goes off. You will be surprised how much you can accomplish in this short period of time. Take a break for 15 minutes and then do another short work interval using the timer. I use this practice when doing projects around the house and writing my dissertation. Our minds can only stay focused for a short period of time so working in smaller increments helps to keep me focused.
2. My other tip is to find “joy” every day. Joy is defined as “an emotion comprised of feelings of happiness, contentment and harmony”. Joy is not the same as happiness, but it is an emotion that comes from within. We often get so busy in our lives that we forget to slow down and look around to appreciate the beauty of nature, the kindness of others and the simple joys that are with us. Joy is that contentment that we can feel knowing that life may not be perfect but there are good things going on in our lives. Take a few moments to appreciate joy every day and you may be surprised how it changes your outlook and maybe even those around you.