

## Voices from the Past – Present – Future

*Christine Kniep (WI), Past President & Historian*

**On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1933, in Milwaukee, WI, during the annual meeting of the American Home Economics Association, the National Home Demonstration Agents' Association became a reality. Twenty-one home demonstration agents from 13 states were present:** Alabama, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming.



The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has asked each of these 13 states to collect stories of their work and membership in NEAFCS from a retired or life member, the affiliate president, and a "new" member – the start of an ongoing narrative history of NEAFCS. Between now and our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, stories will be collected from all of the affiliates. These stories will be included in our newsletter, on our website, and in our historical records.

**It is with great pleasure that I share the next set of stories from the North Dakota Affiliate, featuring:**

\* **Past-Anita Rohde, Life Member**

\* **Present-Kari Helgoe-NDEAFCS President**

\* **Future-Katie Henry-NDEAFCS Vice-President**

### PAST

I am beginning anew. My original story is more interesting (to me, perhaps). On May 3, 1969, as a green graduate of North Dakota State University, I drove to Fort Berthold Indian Reservation (terminology of the Tribe). I had no home and knew no-one. The next day I reported to work at the extension office and met the ag agent, secretary and the recruiter who hired me. They left before noon with the advice to "just get started and have a little fun every day!" It was good advice, so I started by meeting the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) assistants and the Native Americans that were to be our clients. I cannot tell you how many kind people welcomed me, even as they must have wondered what on earth this stranger could contribute.

We had many miles to travel as each EFNEP assistant worked from home and we were separated by 60 miles one way and 100 miles the other way. Each EFNEP assistant was required to have a telephone and a working car. Of course, cell phones did not exist at that time. Fort Berthold lacked infrastructure and was poverty stricken at that time. Thankfully much, much better times have come.

With very few culturally appropriate materials available at the time, our EFNEP program developed our own materials, with the help of the local USDA Commodity Program, our



secretary, the EFNEPs and our clients. What a team! The USDA “commods” were the only major food source for low-income people who might live 30 to 50 miles from a grocery store. Foods stamps were not available to them at that time. This is called a food desert now.

Since the commodities were distributed monthly, we needed to help families stretch their food, and increase the use of USDA foods including powdered eggs and milk. These foods were not instant, had a distinct taste and did not work in standard recipes without adjustments. We met monthly and the EFNEPs returned to their areas and shared lessons that promoted nutrition, food preparation and food safety.

We also showed up at motley facilities to offer samples of nutritious foods and to recruit families. Our secretary did wonders with a mimeograph machine! (Remember those?) Eventually the USDA program asked for and funded the cost of printing a cookbook. At the beginning, we started with recipes and basic nutrition, and later editions grew with the times when the Food Stamp Program was made available in the nineties. There were eight editions. We shared it with other reservations in North Dakota and eventually across several states.

The first book was quite a project because our office had a small supply budget, and no kitchen or meeting room at the beginning. Most of the testing and meetings took place in our homes. The USDA program furnished commodities for our tasting, teaching and testing. I purchased a lot of kitchen equipment with my first paychecks! Nowadays this work seems quaint in view of modern technology and convenience that wasn't available to us then.

The challenges in my early Extension career were great but fulfilling. My National Association of Extension Home Economists (NAEHE) [the previous name of NEAFCS] colleagues are friends to this day. My invitation to join the association in 1969 was treasured, and valuable especially during my 31 years as an Extension agent in Fort Berthold. Our national meetings were great for connecting with others who had similar programs. There was also the support and patience of our North Dakota State Extension specialists who were also NAEHE members. These opportunities for growth were invaluable to me and my family.

## PRESENT

My name is Kari Helgoe, and it is my privilege to be the 2024 North Dakota Extension Family Consumer Science (NDEAFCS) President. Within my first year of Extension work, NEAFCS was the first professional organization I joined. From the very beginning of my career it helped define me both personally and professionally. The networking and support, leadership experiences and professional development opportunities pushed me outside my comfort zone and energized me to deliver innovative family consumer science programming to not just my corner of the state but throughout North Dakota.



My favorite experiences center around the national conference opportunities from NEAFCS annual sessions to PILD to JCEP. Each conference has introduced me to new ideas, different ways of approaching leadership and exposure to amazing people who have generously shared their experiences and stories with me inspiring me to continue to want to strive to make an impact in others' lives. But most importantly, conferences have given me the chance to get to know my colleagues on another level and deepen relationships. My fellow attendees are not only my coworkers, but dear friends.

Serving as North Dakota's president has been an honor. I am so proud of our current and past members who are constantly pushing themselves to find creative and effective ways to bring the newest research-based information to improve the lives of North Dakota youth, families and communities. Each member brings their special gifts to their work but it's the teamwork that I have experienced that elevates our educational efforts within Extension. Wishing the NEAFCS another brilliant 90 years of service, professional development and enduring friendships.

## FUTURE

I am the Vice President of the North Dakota Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (NDEAFCS). I have been a member of NEAFCS for 3 years. The amazing mentor I was paired with through NDSU Extension, Kari Helgoe, encouraged me to join. As she went through the extensive list of benefits of being a member, it was an offer I couldn't refuse. Since then, I have learned so much and have benefited from the professional experiences I have encountered.

There have been many amazing experiences I have been able to be a part of because of my involvement with NEAFCS. Attending a national conference during the turmoil of going virtual and benefiting from other professional development opportunities are to name just a few. These experiences have opened my eyes to what the organization offers and how amazing, adaptable, and supportive members are. I look forward to digging deeper into the organization and learning more about how we have helped the world and how we can continue to do so.

As the Vice President of NDEAFCS, I have had the privilege of working with the amazing officers of our organization in a close manner. The amount of knowledge I have learned and experiences I have gained through committees and being our representative on the North Dakota 4-H Foundation Board, have not only benefited me, but also the organization as a whole. I am excited to continue to represent the organization as a result of the support and knowledge. I feel as though I have been welcomed with open arms. I look forward to being a part of the growth of our organization. The visions on the horizon are positive, uplifting, and achievable. The collaboration of our organization and the encouragement of others is insurmountable, and I wish to continue the positivity and growth.

