



National Extension
Association of Family
& Consumer Sciences



Network

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Annual Session 2025 Edition

If Not You, Who?



Greetings, NEAFCS Members and Supporters!

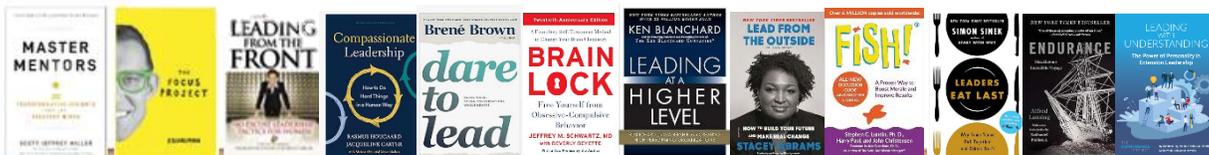
One of the highlights of my NEAFCS year is attending the national conference. In fact, some of my most memorable career moments have taken place at national meetings. This year, the central region is serving as our host in the beautiful city of Grand Rapids, MI. The tri-liaisons, Courtney Aldrich (MI), Samantha Roth (MN), and Melissa Rupp (OH), are doing an excellent job of keeping everything organized and on track! The newsletter contains all the details, so be sure to read on!

As I near the completion of my term as your NEAFCS President, I would like to express my appreciate to each of you who have responded to numerous requests and invested your time and talent in our organization. When I decided to run for this position, I did so out of a sense of moving our organization forward to reach beyond relevant. Serving as a leader is not a position of power, but rather a position of facilitation, moving us toward our shared future. I often ask myself "if not you, who?" Many times, it's not me, so I look to and encourage others. Are you our association's next who?

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Jennifer Bridge
NEAFCS President

Check out your Board's recommended books about leadership and watch for more recommendations with each newsletter!



ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Checklist

It's easy to feel overwhelmed with all the tasks needed to get ready for Annual Session. Use the checklist and links below as a handy guide!

- Get approval to attend** Annual Session, using your university's guidelines
- Review information on** [Annual Session webpage](#) for details on how to register, including [hotel information](#)
- Review** [in-depth session information](#) so you can pick one during registration process
- Register** for Annual Session **by September 1** for Early Bird Discount
- Explore** [Grand Rapids](#) and [Michigan](#) tourism options
- Plan your trip** to Grand Rapids, including air and ground transportation, as needed
- Coordinate** travel plans with colleagues
- Watch closely for emails** from NEAFCS for updates on hotel information and other time sensitive information
- Plan your** [silent auction donation](#), either own your own or with your affiliate (optional)
- Review** [executive board candidates](#) and [proposed bylaws revisions](#), then **share feedback** with your affiliate delegate(s)
- Check in** with your affiliate leadership for affiliate photo and state's night out (plan early for this Annual Session favorite!)
- Plan your outfits!!** (See infographic on next page!)
- Donate** to [Service Project](#)
- Budget spending money** for souvenirs at Welcome Event and Silent Auction
- Sign-up** to volunteer (watch for opportunities from Regional Directors and national office - coming soon)
- Block off the day** before Annual Session for a no meeting day, so you can tie up as many loose ends as possible.
- Block off the day** after Annual Session to respond to emails.
- Set your out of office message**, so you don't feel pulled into emails and can focus on being present during Annual Session.
- Pack** (Use [Facebook group](#) for ideas on what to bring)
- Travel** to Grand Rapids and get ready to **SPARK** new ideas and connections!!



ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Information Overview

Who Has a Question about Annual Session???



What time does Annual Session start on Day 1? Will there be concurrent sessions I'll be interested in? Who are the keynote speakers? What should I wear? Where can I find my morning coffee (tea/soda)!?!

Answers to these questions, and many others, can be found through the following resources:

Annual Session 2025 Webpage



All things Annual Session can be found [HERE](#), with links to many details and resources related to Annual Session and Grand Rapids

Annual Session Private Facebook Group



Ask questions, read responses, and help support each other get ready for Annual Session by [JOINING THE GROUP!](#)

Annual Session Emails



Watch for emails to our entire membership as well as detailed emails specific to those registered for Annual Session, prior to Annual Session as well as daily during the event.

SPARK
New Knowledge
2025 NEAFCS
PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

- Capture the Flavor: Herbs & Spices
- Igniting Innovation in Aging Across Extension
- The Personal Finance Ecosystem and K-12 Financial Education: Implications for Extension Educators

neafcs.org/2025-annual-session

MIDWEST WEATHER
Pack Smart for Grand Rapids!

What to Expect
Past 3 years show chilly temps in the low 50s at the end of October.

Packing tip: Layers are your best friend!

- A pullover or light jacket
- Long sleeves, cardigans or cozy sweaters
- Base layers for added warmth & extra socks
- An umbrella

SPARK
Connections With Others
2025 NEAFCS ANNUAL SESSION

- ♥ Journey together
- ♥ Find a roommate
- ♥ Join a committee
- ♥ Attend an in-depth
- ♥ Explore local attractions

neafcs.org/2025-annual-session

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Grand Rapids, Michigan



Falling for Michigan!

Susan Moore (GA) *VP of Professional Development*

Here are a few fabulous reasons to join us in Grand Rapids, Michigan for an outstanding adventure guaranteed to **ignite your spark**:

- The second and third weeks of October are the peak time to see the **gorgeous fall foliage**.

- Our welcome event will be held at the [Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park](#) with the



world's finest horticultural display gardens!

- Our host hotel, the elegant **Amway Grand**, has a beautiful view of the **Grand River** and tons of **amazing onsite amenities**, including a heated indoor pool and hot tub, a spa, four restaurants, a bar, a speakeasy, a Starbucks, DuckPin Bowling, rooftop pickleball courts, and onsite shopping (a toy store, a boutique, a wine store, and a general store).



- The hotel is a short walk from some amazing attractions including **five museums** ([Grand Rapids Public Museum](#), [The Gerald R. Ford Museum](#), [Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives](#), the [Children's Museum](#), and the [Art Museum](#)), the [Meyer May House](#) (designed by Frank Lloyd Wright), and tons of different types of tours (from ghost tours to scavenger hunts).
- And finally, it's only 25 miles from beautiful Lake Michigan!

Don't get left behind, join us in October and **FALL** for Grand Rapids, Michigan!!



ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

National News & Updates

Read and RESPOND

Jennifer Bridge (KY) | *President*

Congratulations to Danielle Dinger, NEAFCS member from North Dakota State University! Daneille read and responded to the NEAFCS President after finding the featured word in the NEAFCS Newsletter Word Find. She received a \$525 scholarship to cover the cost of registration for the upcoming NEAFCS National Conference.



Congratulations, Danielle!

Thanks to everyone who participated!

The 2025 National Officer Candidates

Rick Griffiths (NM) | *Immediate Past President & Nominating Committee Chair*

Have You Watched the 2025 NEAFCS Board Candidate Videos?

The 2025 NEAFCS Board Candidate videos are now available! This continues the Nominating Committee's commitment to transparency and accessibility, allowing members to get to know the candidates before the Annual Session. Please note videos will not be shown onsite, and NEAFCS maintains a no-campaigning policy.

View candidate applications and videos here:

<https://neafcs.memberclicks.net/2025-board-candidates>

NEAFCS - MEET YOUR BOARD CANDIDATES
Candidates have pre-recorded their speeches to allow members, Affiliates and delegates time to watch and consider each of these individuals for National Office. These videos WILL NOT be shared onsite during Annual Session.

WATCH THEIR VIDEOS

 Christine Zellars President-Elect	 Jesse Ketterman Treasurer	 Carla Farrand VP Awards & Recognition	 Diana Reinhold VP Awards & Recognition	 Dhruvi Patel VP Public Affairs	 Melissa Rupp Central Region Director	 Joy West Southern Region Director
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Voting Schedule

- **Southern & Central Regional Directors** will be elected on **Tuesday, October 21**, during the Regional Awards & Business Meetings.

- **All other board positions** will be elected during the Annual Business Meeting on **Wednesday, October 22**.

Review the candidates and share your preferences with your state's voting delegates (*see box below*).

Thank you to the **NEAFCS Nominating Committee** for their dedication to assembling a strong slate of leaders.

NEAFCS Affiliate Delegates

What are Delegates & Member Roles

Each summer, affiliates designate individuals who will vote on behalf of their affiliates during the Regional and full Annual Business Meeting at Annual Session. Usually, these individuals are in affiliate leadership positions, but not always, as a delegate must be attending Annual Session. The number of delegates per affiliate is defined in our [bylaws](#) and based on affiliate membership.

This year, delegates are scheduled to vote on executive board positions and bylaws edits. **YOUR VOICE MATTERS!!** As a member driven organization, your role in staying informed and letting your delegates know your opinions helps delegates better represent your affiliate during those votes, and helps our organization best reflect member driven direction!

Summer Town Hall Meeting

Danielle Jessup | *National Office*



What's can you expect at this year's annual session?

NEAFC leaders shared updates, changes, and deadlines during the **Summer Town Hall Meeting** in July. Access the recording [HERE!](#)

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Bylaws Committee

2025 Proposed Bylaws Edits

Cindy Thompson (IA) | *Secretary & Bylaws Committee Chairperson*

Bylaws are the legal governing document of an organization. They outline important organizational elements such as membership, dues, officers, elections, and so forth. Bylaws are so important that each year a committee of representatives across NEAFCS, including representatives from each region, meet regularly to review our bylaws to ensure they remain **relevant**, **clear**, and **consistent**. This year's Bylaws Committee was diligent in their review to ensure these criteria continue to be met:

1. **Relevant:** Everything in the current bylaws is still relevant and well reflects our organization. *No changes identified.*
2. **Clear:** Members of the committee interpreted a few lines very differently. *Rewording these lines would provide clarity.*
3. **Consistent:** Language in some places and not others caused unnecessary confusion. *Removing some phrases would provide consistency.*

During the Annual Business Meeting in Grand Rapids, delegates will vote on the acceptance of the minor edits suggested by the Bylaws Committee. Proposed edits and related rationale can be found [HERE](#).

If you have questions about this year's edits, please contact [Cindy Thompson](#).

Digging Deeper: Supporting Members Around Bylaws

Cindy Thompson (IA) | *Secretary & Bylaws Committee Chairperson*

In reviewing the bylaws early this year, the Bylaws Committee asked many questions about our national bylaws, as well as bylaws in general. It became clear that understanding what bylaws are and the important role they play in governing organizations can be confusing and feel daunting. Once the proposed edits were approved by the executive board to go before membership, the Bylaws Committee continued to meet to brainstorm how we could support our membership more around the topic of bylaws. As those discussions continue to unfold, your insights would be invaluable!

We are asking members to submit questions you have about bylaws.

What is one question you have about bylaws?
[CLICK HERE](#)

Do you have a question about our national bylaws? Your affiliate bylaws? Bylaws in general? The Bylaws Committee will look at themes across the questions submitted and use those themes to help identify our next steps.

2025 Bylaws Committee

Cindy Thompson (IA)	National Secretary & Chair
Rick Griffith (NM)	Immediate Past President
Lisa Peterson (IL)	Member-At-Large
Samara Purvis (FL)	Southern Region Representative
Susan Zies (OH)	Central Region Representative
Laura Sant (ID)	Western Region Representative
Jacqueline Amor-Zitzelberger (PA)	Eastern Region Representative

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Exhibit Hall

What is an Exhibit Hall, and what can you expect when you visit the Exhibit Hall at Annual Session?

An Exhibit Hall is an area at a conference where businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders with content relevant to attendees can share information and resources. This year's Exhibit Hall will open Wednesday afternoon and will include tables for many of different NEAFCS committees. Below are two articles highlighting some of what you'll find this year in the **Exhibit Hall!**

OneOp – Your Partner in Online Professional Development!

The exhibit hall offers valuable opportunities to connect with organizations. **OneOp** is here to support military family service providers through comprehensive professional development resources including research-based webinars, courses, and podcasts designed for service providers across multiple disciplines.



Military families are part of every community—often in places where their presence isn't immediately apparent. OneOp can help you better serve these families by providing you with resources and current data on issues affecting military families.

Visit Our Booth Stop by to learn about our work and pick up OneOp promotional materials. NEAFCS attendees who complete a brief survey will receive a special conference prize—an exclusive opportunity you won't want to miss!

Beyond the Exhibit We're not just at the exhibit hall—*OneOp will also be presenting at NEAFCS.* Connect with us to discover how we can work together to support military families nationwide.

*Ready to join the OneOp community? Come see us in the **Exhibit Hall!***

Extra, Extra.... Read All About it - Join the NEAFCS Ambassador Committee!

Michelle Wright (TX) Ambassador Committee Member

The **Ambassador Committee** would like you to join their dynamic committee. This committee offers a unique opportunity to network, communicate, and share resources during the Annual Session while actively contributing to the organization's success and growth.

Serving on the Ambassador Committee is more than a role; it's a chance to make a meaningful impact. Members develop ambassador engagement strategies to strengthen connections nationwide and foster a welcoming, supportive environment. Their efforts inspire the next generation of leaders and enhance member participation.

Why should you serve? Joining this committee provides valuable leadership experience, professional growth, and collaboration with peers. Members gain the skills to guide engagement efforts while forming lasting relationships within NEAFCS.



When you join the Ambassador Committee, you don't just represent NEAFCS...you help shape its future. Embrace the opportunity to **Serve. Connect. Grow.** Visit us in the **Exhibit Hall** at Annual Session!

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Member Resources

Mastering the Art of Learning & Networking with Member Resources

Troy Anderson (MD) | VP Member Resources

Attending a national conference is a whirlwind of sessions, networking, and exploration. To maximize your experience, it's crucial to find a



balance between attending sessions and networking opportunities. Below are valuable tools in crafting this balance, ensuring you leave the 2025

Annual Session with both new knowledge and meaningful connections.

- 1. Plan Ahead:** Before attending, review the schedule. Identify sessions that align with your goals and interests.
- 2. Set Objectives:** Determine what you want to achieve. Is it gaining insights on a specific topic, or meeting leaders in your content area? Setting clear objectives will help you allocate your time wisely. Find a helpful tool [HERE](#).
- 3. Mix and Mingle:** Attend social events, join discussion, and leverage Member Resources to identify attendees with similar interests. Sign up for a committee to connect with colleagues across the country.

- 4. Stay Flexible:** Embrace spur-of-the-moment chances for fun at the pool, energizing workouts at the gym, lively state night festivities, city tours, and engaging leadership events. A random interaction could spark a valuable connection or open the door to a transformative new perspective.

By thoughtfully balancing your schedule and using available resources, you can turn the annual session into a rewarding experience that fosters both personal and professional growth.

CONNECT BEYOND STATE LINES

Where to Connect?



Traveling Alone?



Take a deep breath, step out of your comfort zone and start a conversation!



ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Endowment

Pay It Forward

Dianne Drennan (TX) | *Endowment Committee Member*

What does **Pay It Forward** mean? In simple terms, when someone does something for you, instead of paying that person back directly, you pass it on to another person.



Paying it Forward can be as simple as holding a door open for someone, paying for the next order at the drive through, or contributing to a charity you have benefited from.

Benefits of Paying It Forward:

- The gratification of knowing a kind word or act of generosity can lift another's spirits.
- The warm glow you feel from being nice and having someone be nice to you has physiological effect.

I have often heard Board candidates talk about giving back to the Association, in essence Paying It Forward. How can NEAFCS members Pay It Forward?

Think about the benefits you have received – attending Annual Session with professional development and networking; receiving an award, a scholarship to attend Annual Session, ELC or PILD, or an NEAFCS Endowment grant. Maybe you have participated in the Leadership Experience, served as an Ambassador or on a committee.

NEAFCS has so many benefits we can take advantage of to grow in our profession and personal life. How do we give back to an Association that gives so much to us? One way to Pay it Forward is through a donation to the NEAFCS Endowment. The Endowment accepts donations of any amount, one time or recurring.

Please [support the Endowment](#) with a one-time or ongoing donation!

How the NEAFCS Endowment is Supporting Members at Annual Session!

Dianne Drennan (TX) | *Endowment Committee Member*

This year, thanks in part to First Timer Scholarships provided by the NEAFCS Endowment, **nineteen**



new attendees will

have the opportunity to experience the NEAFCS Annual Session for the very first time!

Annual Session in Grand Rapids will also shine a spotlight on the **impact of the NEAFCS Endowment.**



Recent Endowment grant recipients will be showcasing their innovative projects through Poster

Presentations and Concurrent Sessions, including:

1. **Explaining the Safety of Low-Acid Home Canning through Thermal Processing Curves**
Shauna Henley, Emily Morales, Rohan V. Tikekar, Carla L. Schwan

This session will explore the science behind USDA-validated home canning methods, helping consumers and educators understand how tested recipes ensure food safety and quality.

2. **The Marion County Church Potluck Food Safety Program**

Learn how this program improves food safety at church gatherings by equipping meal-preparing members with essential food safety training.

3. **Illinois Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner Testing Expansion**

Presenter: Caitlin Mellendorf

Discover how Extension staff are expanding access to dial-gauge canner testing, enhancing food preservation safety for home canners across Illinois.

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

Historian

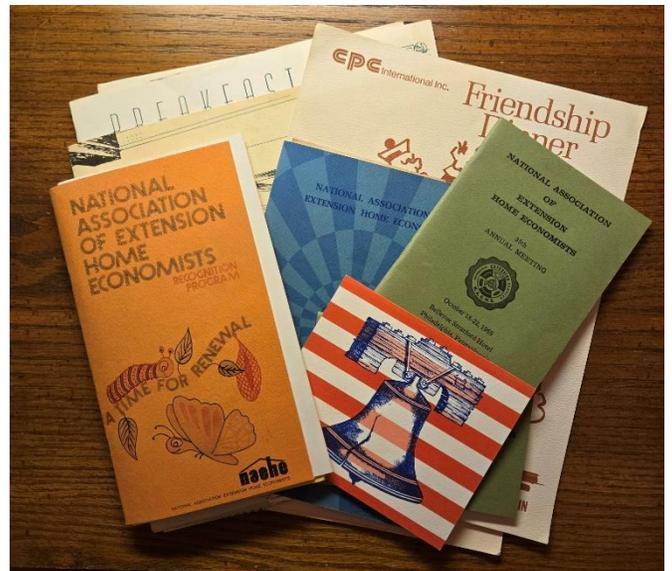
Annual Session Connection: Peggy Prucnal

Christine Kniep (WI) *National Historian*

When Peggy Prucnal's, AL, name popped up in my e-mail this summer, offering materials from the 1969, 1970 and 1973 Annual Sessions, I was eager to receive the materials, and I was also reminded of the MANY benefits of attending Annual Session.

Peggy was a very active association member, at the state level and national level. One national level position she held was chair of the Exhibits Committee – a BIG job in the '90's. I served on her committee and every year hang on my Christmas tree a crocheted angel with a tag saying, "from Peggy Prucnal, NEAFCS Exhibits Chair." Peggy gifted each of us on the Exhibits Committee that year, one of these ornaments that her Mom had crocheted.

While our paths haven't crossed in years, the ornament and her message this summer reminded me that attending Annual Session creates a network of friends across the country, as well as opportunities to serve on working committees, learn about evaluated curriculum materials, experience life in the host site and so much more! Attending the Annual Session is an amazing opportunity to invest in yourself professionally and personally.



Archiving Historical Materials

Do you have items to place in our Historical Records? Please let Chris Kniep know, and if you are attending the Annual Session, bring them along for Chris to place in the files.

e-mail: ctkniep@new.rr.com

ANNUAL SESSION EDITION

The “Back” Page

Staying Connected

Jessica Dunlap | *National Office*

With recent funding changes, including SNAP-Ed reductions in some states, we recognize that some of you may be facing unexpected transitions or questioning how to remain involved with NEAFCS. Your connection to NEAFCS doesn't have to end with a position change.

There are several ways to stay engaged with our professional family. See the NEAFCS email from August 6, 2025 for information on your membership options and how to keep your contact information current.

If you have questions about membership or how to maintain your involvement, please don't hesitate to contact the NEAFCS National Office at membership@neafcs.org.

Job Opportunities

Post and find employment opportunities across the country on the [NEAFCS Job Posting Board](#).



In Memory

Submitted by Members

Michael Elonge (MD)

Passed away in July 2025

Ann Marie Parsons (IN)

November 2, 1930 — August 5, 2024

[Obituary](#)

Robin Rex Stuart (PA)

November 23, 1954 – March 8, 2025

[Obituary](#)

The August 2025 Edition of NEAFCS Network Newsletter is brought to you by Cindy Thompson, National Secretary, with support from the National Office.

Mark Your Calendars!

SEPTEMBER

9/1/25 | Early Bird Registration Closes

9/30/25 | Delegate Assignments Due

OCTOBER

10/15/25 | Impact Report Portal Opens

10/20-10/23/25 | Annual Session, Grand Rapids

NOVEMBER

11/15/25 | 2026 Awards Manual Posts

DECEMBER

12/1/25 | 2026 Annual Session Call for Proposals Portal Opens

12/1/25 | 2026 Awards Portal Opens

12/31/25 | Affiliate Annual Reports Due