

NEAFCS HISTORICAL ANNUAL REPORT

2024–2025 Association Year

Jennifer Bridge

President • Kentucky • Southern Region



Jennifer Bridge
NEAFCS President, 2024–2025

Prepared for the NEAFCS Historical Record

Report Overview

Item	Information
Report Year	2024–2025
President	Jennifer Bridge
Goal for the Year	Increase communication among all affiliates to increase member engagement in the organization.
Strategic Focus	Focus on the goals of the strategic plan to further the organization, making it relevant to professional development and member needs.

Board Meetings

Meeting	Date	Location
Post-Board Meeting	September 19, 2024	Tucson, AZ
Winter Board	January 22–23, 2025	Zoom
Mid-Year Board	May 13–14, 2025	Albuquerque, NM
Monthly Board Meetings	November, December, February, March, April, June, July, August, September	Zoom
Pre-Conference Board	October 19, 2025	Grand Rapids, MI

Leadership Workshops

Date	Location
October 9, 2024	Zoom
February 18, 2025	Savannah, GA
October 20, 2025	Grand Rapids, MI

Annual Session

Item	Information
Dates	October 20–23
Location	Grand Rapids, MI
Hotel	Amway Grand Plaza
Theme	SPARK! Connections, Innovations, Communities, Growth
Attendance	660 total, including full and single-day registrations

Objectives

- **Fostering Collaboration:** Expanding professional networks and sharing outreach innovations.
- **Policy and Systems Strategies:** Discussing how to implement Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) changes to address community and aging-related challenges.
- **Enhancing Skills:** Providing concurrent learning sessions and pre-conference workshops focused on emerging subject matter in Family and Consumer Sciences.
- **Recognizing Excellence:** Celebrating the public value of Extension professionals and recognizing member achievements.
- **Note:** The 2025 conference was a rescheduled in-person event. In 2021, the Amway Grand allowed NEAFCS to delay the contract and reschedule in the future due to COVID restrictions. Contracts were already in place for future locations, and the first opportunity was the 2025 conference. The format also featured multi-state liaisons and member committees to plan and host the conference.

Keynote and Featured Sessions

Session	Speaker	Presentation
Opening General Session	Joseph V. Sowmick, Hon. Ph.D.	Finding Your Spark: Traditional Approaches to Cultural Health Literacy
Closing Session	Mark Ostach	Fostering Connection and Wellness in the Future of Work

Major Accomplishments

During the 2024–2025 NEAFCS Association year, many new initiatives were introduced to members. The focus was to increase member involvement and encourage greater ownership of the organization. The “Read and Respond” mantra was used throughout the year to encourage members to read the newsletter and the monthly What Members Need to Know communication, increasing awareness of the organization and encouraging members to take action and become active participants.

A closed Facebook page was developed for members attending the Annual Session to provide detailed information and give attendees the opportunity to ask questions and comment. Member Resources created the “I’m A Proud Member” campaign to increase awareness of the organization. Designated marketing pieces allowed members to show their support of the organization.

Awards and Recognition began an extensive review of award sponsorships, guidelines, and processes to meet the changing needs of members. This work continued into the 2025–2026 year.

The year was also marked by federal budget cuts that greatly impacted states using SNAP-Ed funding for programs. NEAFCS wrote a letter members could use to contact congressional leaders through their personal email accounts. Several states lost employees as a result of the cuts, which had a slight impact on membership for the 2026 year. A government shutdown prevented federal partners and employees from participating in the Annual Session.

First-Time Events, Activities, and Initiatives

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NEAFCS Board and Leadership



2024–2025 NEAFCS Board of Directors

Position	Name	State	Region
President	Jennifer Bridge	KY	Southern Region
President-Elect	Dianne Christensen	NM	Western Region
Secretary	Cindy Thompson	IA	Central
Treasurer	Lance Hansen	ID	Western Region
VP for Awards and Recognition	Donna Jung	OK	Southern Region
VP for Member Resources	Troy Anderson	MD	Eastern Region
VP for Professional Development	Susan Moore	GA	Southern Region
VP for Public Affairs	Christine Zellers	NJ	Eastern Region
Central Region Director	Barb Wollan	IA	Central Region
Eastern Region Director	Lisa Fishman	ME	Eastern Region
Southern Region Director	Samantha Kennedy	FL	Southern Region

Western Region Director	Sheila Gains	CO	Western Region
Past President	Rick Griffiths	NM	Western Region
Historian	Christine Kneip	WI	Central Region
Annual Conf. Tri-Liaison	Samantha Roth	OH	Central Region
Annual Conf. Tri-Liasion	Melissa J. Rupp	OH	Central Region
Annual Conf. Tri-Liasion	Courtney Aldrich	MI	Central Region

Membership Dues

Membership Category	Annual Dues
Active	\$110
Partner	\$110
Associate	\$55
Student	\$55
Life Member	\$330 (one-time payment; three times the Active member dues)

Membership Information

Membership Category	Count
Active	1,877
Life	1,075
Partner	1
Student	1
Total	2,997

Friend of Extension Recognition

2024–2025 Friend of Extension Winner: Newell Brands.

The Ball Canning Company began as a sponsor 56 years ago and has been a staple in the exhibit hall, as well as presenting forums during Annual Sessions to provide up-to-date research and information about home food preservation. While the company name has changed several times, the company has continued to support the professional development of NEAFCS members through exhibits and educational programs at each Annual Session.

Special Recognition

Hall of Fame Inductees

- Christine Kniep
- Kathy Dothage
- Margaret Viebrock

Closing Comments

Serving as President for NEAFCS has been an honor and one of the highlights of my career. This year was challenging as I met and communicated with members who were at risk of losing their job based on funding cuts. As a board, we worked together to address concerns and provide information members could use to communicate the impact their programs made everyday.

I had the opportunity to serve on the FCS Alliance committee to represent extension FCS and provided input for AAFCS's marketing campaign on the impact Family and Consumer Sciences on our nation and everyday life. I also brought greetings on behalf of NEAFCS during the AAFCS Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

As one of your three representatives on the Joint Council of Extension Professionals, I served as co-chair of the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference and will chair the conference in 2026.

As we continue to evolve as an association, we must be willing to adapt to meet the needs of our members in our fast paced, ever changing society. At the heart of our work is the support we give each other to make our families and communities viable. I can't think of a stronger family than the NEAFCS Board, our national office and the members we serve.

Jennifer Bridge