



AAFCS Brand Story

The story of the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) begins with the story of Ellen Richards, one of the leading figures in the emergence of home economics as a profession. After growing up in modest circumstances in the small town of Dunstable, Massachusetts, Ellen defied the conventions of her times by leaving home to attend the newly founded Vassar College, from which she graduated in 1870. She then went on to be the first—and for many years the only—woman to earn a degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Richards and her followers believed that the application of science to domestic issues could help save society from the social disintegration that was taking place at the turn of the century. Beginning in 1899, Ellen Richards helped organize a series of ten annual conferences that became known as the Lake Placid Conferences. At the first conference, participants agreed on the term *home economics* to define the broad range of disciplines and scientific studies being discussed. The die was cast and a movement took shape.

In 1909, Richards founded the American Home Economics Association (AHEA), which became the most influential professional association for home economists. AHEA believed that students who chose home economics as a field of study would not only be better prepared homemakers, but would also be better prepared for careers focused on people and their environments. What Ellen Richards started as the American Home Economics Association has evolved into the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences.

A lot has changed since 1909. Our workforce is more diverse than ever, the definition and makeup of today's families are more varied than previous generations, and our neighborhoods, communities, and cities have changed dramatically. As times have changed and become more complex, so have the issues that impact our quality of life. Widespread concerns such as obesity, the recession, widespread unemployment, and the credit crisis have affected everyone. Now more than ever, people are looking for tools and resources to help them make more informed decisions that will enhance their overall health and well-being.

The family and consumer sciences (FCS) profession draws from a broad range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. This interdisciplinary approach is essential because the challenges of everyday life are not one dimensional. The ability to connect professionals across multiple practice settings and content areas to share knowledge, research, and experience is one of the strengths of AAFCS, and helps create more integrated solutions to today's critical social and economic challenges.

Based in the Washington, D.C., area, AAFCS is the only professional association that provides leadership and support to FCS students and professionals from both multiple practice settings and content areas. More than 6,000 AAFCS members assist individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their well-being, relationships, and resources to achieve optimal quality of life.

For more than 100 years, AAFCS members have been working to improve the quality and standards of individual and family life by delivering educational programs, influencing public policy, and conducting research. They provide research-based knowledge about the topics of everyday life, including human development, personal and family finance, housing and interior design, food science, nutrition and wellness, textiles and apparel, and consumer issues. The knowledge, research, and experience of our members help people achieve a healthy and sustainable world.

You will see AAFCS members in all walks of life—they are early childhood, elementary, secondary, university/college, and Extension educators, administrators and managers, human service professionals, researchers, community volunteers, business people, and consultants who address the issues most important to our quality of life.

AAFCS is beginning its second century with a new tagline: Connecting Professionals. Touching Lives. This tagline speaks to the core essence of what AAFCS does:

- Connecting Professionals—Whether through our affiliates, conferences, publications, webinars, or online communities, AAFCS helps connect FCS professionals across multiple practice settings and content areas.
- Touching Lives—Whether it is a sustainability-based conference, a financial security focused issue of the *Journal*, or an in-school H1N1 education program, AAFCS helps its members create better outcomes for people.

AAFCS continues to be recognized as the driving force in bringing people together to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. It truly is the perfect applied science for helping people thrive in our complicated world.