

AAFCS Community of Lifelong Professionals
Spring 2026 Newsletter

Happy New Year Lifelong Professionals!

I hope all of you are doing well. I know that a great number of you have been experiencing extreme winter weather; I think of all of you who live east of the Rockies when I see national weather reports. Unfortunately, winter passed by us in Washington State. I'm not a snow-bunny but no snow in the winter means drought conditions in the summer.

Thanks to those of you who voted on our 2026 Community Action Plan (CAP) in November and December, the Council of Communities has accepted our proposal for the year. Included in the Strategic Plan for 2026: (1) continue offering the Betsy Norum Student Subsidy, (2) increase communications both online and through the Community portal, (3) submit at least two proposals for educational sessions at the Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and (4) participate in the community activities in Louisville. The complete action plan is attached.

Here's a list of Lifelong Professionals activities in Louisville, June 18 to 21.

Thursday, June 18

- 6:00 to 7:30 Opening Ceremonies
- 8:00 to 10:00 Mary M Miller Boat Tour

Friday, June 19

- 9:00 to 10:00 2026 Annual Conference Keynote with Susan Weinstock
- 6:00 to 8:00 Fun Night at the Expo. We will be participating in two ways - a community table and the silent auction. Detailed information is below.

Saturday, June 20

- 8:00 to 8:45 Joint Meeting of the Communities of Non-Traditional Careers, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Lifelong Professionals (see detailed information below)
- 3:00 to 3:45 Libraries: Supporting and Empowering FCS Professionals, presented by CLP member Gregg McCullough

Sunday, June 21

- 9:00 to 9:45 Morning General Session
- 1:30 to 2:30 Afternoon General Session
- 5:30 to 6:30 Closing Reception
- 7:00 to 9:00 Closing Celebration

Detailed Information about CLP events:

Community Table at Fun Night (Friday)

Lifelong Professionals will have a table at Fun Night. I'll have information I created last year and information about the 2026 Betsy Norum recipient. I'll also have the binder I created last year featuring members of Lifelong Professionals and will also have a QR code for visitors to the table to donate to the Betsy Norum fund.

The Silent Auction (Friday)

The AAFCS sponsored silent auction. The format will be like last year, when you donate an item, you can designate which fund you want the proceeds from the sale to go to. This is an extra way for us to raise money for the Betsy Norum Fund! I hope that if you are attending the conference you will consider donating an auction item. If you need ideas, feel free to contact me. AAFCS will provide a donation form for items.

Drop off items at the conference registration table on Thursday and Friday. The auction will be from on Friday evening from 6:00 to 8:00.

Joint Meeting of the Communities of Non-Traditional Careers, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Lifelong Professionals. (Saturday)

- These three communities have been sponsoring joint events for several years. We decided that this year we will reserve one room for our general business meetings. The advantage of this is that some of us are members of two or more of the communities. Each group will have 15 minutes to report their activities.

Detailed Information about CLP Events *(continued from page 1)*

Libraries: Supporting and Empowering FCS Professionals.

This session will educate attendees on the resources that public libraries provide to FCS professionals in pursuit of their work. It will explore how professionals can use library resources to support the individuals, families, and communities they serve. Career opportunities in librarianship will be explored. presented by CLP member, Gregg McCullough, CFCS is the Adult Services Specialist at the Washington-Centerville Public Library in Kettering Ohio.



A message from the 2025 Betsy Norum Student Stipend Recipient, Riley Benzoni.

I am very grateful to have received the 2025 Betsy Norum Student Subsidy, which allowed me to attend the AAFCS Annual Conference this past summer. Since this was my first time attending the conference, the subsidy played a major role in making the experience possible. It reduced the financial burden of travel and registration, which allowed me to focus on learning and getting the most out of every session.

During the conference, I gained a stronger understanding of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) and the benefits of being involved in a professional organization. I was able to network with FCS professionals and organizations from across the country, many who shared helpful advice and insight about the field. I also learned about potential graduate and professional development opportunities that I may pursue in the future to continue growing as an educator.

Several conference sessions directly influenced how I think about teaching. One of my favorite sessions was about incorporating gamification in the classroom, which inspired me to purchase a book, *Make Learning Magical*, by Tisha Richmond. I have already started applying some of the ideas I learned to make lessons more engaging for students. Another session I really enjoyed was presented by Dr. Carol Erwin from Wayne State College on using sensory experiences in the classroom. I used this idea during the first half of my student teaching experience with middle school students. When they completed their grilling unit, I had them do a sensory evaluation of their food products instead of simply saying “good” or “gross.” They described their food using sensory words (from their 5 senses) like mushy, sticky, bitter, or smooth, which helped them think more critically and communicate more clearly.

Overall, attending the 2025 AAFCS Annual Conference was an amazing learning experience that helped me grow both personally and professionally. I left feeling more connected to the FCS community, more confident in my future as an educator, and full of new ideas to bring into my future classroom when I graduate in December. I am very thankful to the Lifelong Professionals and to the Betsy Norum Stipend for making this opportunity possible and for supporting students like me as we prepare to enter the FCS profession.

Interconnections between AAFCS Communities

I am privileged to be active in two AAFCS Communities in addition to Lifelong Professionals: Community of Business and Entrepreneurship and Public Policy. It helps me stay connected with other active FCS groups and increases my knowledge base of the profession. I'd like to share what these two communities are doing in 2026.

The Business Community

The Community of Business and Entrepreneurship provides opportunities for Family and Consumer Science professionals to collaborate to promote FCS careers outside of education. The primary purpose is to provide family and consumer science professionals, who apply their skills in the business world, the opportunity to gain networking opportunities, professional development and entrepreneurial skills. We support FCS professionals in networking, and development of their leadership skills.

For 2026, they will: (1) continue to define and work on grant to support the work in underdeveloped countries to strengthen women businesses and careers, and (2) Continue development of a scholarship for college students who majoring in FCS with an emphasis on business to attend AAFCS annual conference allowing them to learn and network with other AAFCS professionals.

Public Policy Community

Provides leadership and support for professionals whose work assists individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their wellbeing, relationships and resources to achieve optimal quality of life.

1. Promote FCS Public Policy issues and advocacy strategies.
2. Recognize and promote excellence in Public Policy Outreach.
3. Educate National, State and Local decision-makers about FCS Impacts

Public Policy strives to offer the following:

- Public Policy Skills Training - Offer webinars and sessions to educate and empower FCS professionals to effectively communicate on issues important to the FCS community.
- Public Policy Resources - Promote and develop public policy issue resources, toolkits, and personal stories.
- Empowering Subject Matter Experts - Identify and support subject matter experts to advocate on national FCS issues

The 2026 Community Action Plan includes the strategic goals of:

1. The development of webinars
2. Develop a session of effectively communicating with decision-makers for the 2026 AAFCS Annual Conference in Louisville
3. Drive members and the public to the AAFCS Advocacy page
4. Identify a list of strong advocates of subject matter to address national level
5. Increase visibility of FCS Public Policy on the Affiliate level

The Public Policy Community is currently creating a list of members who are advocates of specific subject matters to address at the local, state, and national levels. Many of the members of Lifelong Professionals have been recognized as advocates for subject matters in education, extension, and local, state, and national issues.

Would you be interested in participating in the developing advocacy programs supported by the Public Policy Community? If so, please contact me at dcgrahamsews@gmail.com and I will forward your contact name to the members of Public Policy who are creating the lists.

If you want to learn more about these and other active communities, here's the link to them:

<https://www.aafcs.org/myaafcs/aafcscommunities>



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