Tennessee Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
An ALL-STAR AFFILIATE

The Source and Voice for Strong Families

October 2026

Visions Newsletter

TnAFCS Fall Edition



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2026-27 TnAFCS Committee Member Request - page 2

Student Highlights pages 4 &5

Public Policy Is Everyone's Business - page 6

AAFCS 2027-2030 Strategic Plan – page 7

Save the Dates

TnAFCS State Conference

June 4, 2027

Monterey High School (Monterey, TN)

AAFCS Annual Conference

June 10-13 2027

Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

tnafcs@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Tennessee Affiliate Members,

Fall is such a beautiful time of year, and I always look forward to the cooler weather and the fresh energy that comes with a new season! As we settle into fall, I am excited to share a few updates and reflections from the recent AAFCS Fall Leadership Meeting. I was fortunate to attend the meeting and learn so much from my peers and the AAFCS National Office.

1. One of the highlights was participating in a Presidents' meeting, where we reviewed important topics related to organizational leadership and sustainability.
2. We discussed the process of filing for 501(c)(3) status, appropriate accounting and financial reporting, the importance of bylaws and operating procedures, and ways to protect our affiliates through effective checks and balances. The good news is that Tennessee is already doing these things and more! It was encouraging to see how our current practices align with the recommendations shared and to gain additional ideas for continuing to strengthen our organization.
3. We were also introduced to the *fresh off the press* AAFCS Strategic Plan for 2027–2030. The plan focuses on three major goals:
   - **Recognizing FCS as an industry, discipline, and career opportunity.**
   - **Becoming the foundational resource for FCS knowledge.**
   - **Building from our legacy of leadership to guide the future of FCS.**

   These goals reflect the important work happening across AAFCS to advocate for our profession, strengthen our visibility, and demonstrate the value of Family and Consumer Sciences. I encourage everyone to take time to preview the plan (See page 7 of this Newsletter) and consider how we, as Tennessee FCS professionals, can support these goals in our own communities, schools, universities, and workplaces. AAFCS is working incredibly hard to move our profession forward, and our continued involvement and support are essential to that mission.
4. Another important topic of discussion was the fragmentation of FCS programs at the higher education level. Across the country, programs and concentrations are being divided and moved into different departments, creating challenges for maintaining connections among FCS professionals. Several of us participated in small-group discussions about how these changes are affecting our respective states and brainstormed ways to remain connected, even when we are no longer housed within the same department.
5. One idea shared by another state was hosting regional virtual gatherings through Zoom to bring together FCS professionals in their area. What a great idea! This could be a wonderful way for us to share resources, exchange ideas, celebrate successes, and strengthen relationships across Tennessee. Perhaps this is something we should consider as we look for new ways to keep our FCS family connected.

Looking ahead, the AAFCS Annual Conference will be here before we know it! Please visit the AAFCS website to review upcoming deadlines for scholarships and presentation proposals. It is hard to believe that we are already beginning to think about summer in Pittsburgh! I sincerely hope Tennessee will have a strong showing at the Conference.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED:
We are doing great things throughout our state, and we need to be there to share our accomplishments, learn from others, and show everyone the incredible impact of Tennessee FCS professionals.

As we move through this beautiful fall season, I encourage you to stay engaged, continue building connections, and look for opportunities to advocate for our profession. Every one of us has a role to play in ensuring that FCS remains visible, valued, and relevant for future generations. Your first step can be by first volunteering on one of our committees!

Thank you for all you do for Family and Consumer Sciences and for the difference you make every day. I am proud of the work happening across Tennessee and look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together!

Melissa M. Wood, Ph.D., CFCS
President, TnAFCS

WE NEED YOU - 2026-2027 Committee Requests

During the coming year TnAFCS will be working on new initiatives as well as continuing some of our work from last year. We need your help. If you would be interested in being a part of the following committees, please contact President Melissa Wood (tnafcs@gmail.com) or complete the following short survey indicating your interest. **https://forms.gle/CCT9uUzH8NTEUyfLA** We plan to get the committees organized as soon as possible and begin doing important work.

TnAFCS Committees:
Communications – Purpose to enhance the communications with members, and other FCS professionals (including enhancing our social media presence).
Finance Committee - To provide support and financial growth to the financial aspect of our organization (including performing an audit of our finances yearly).
Public Policy Committee—To provide materials and support for reaching out to stakeholders locally and statewide, and to be involved in advocacy with state legislators.
Membership Committee– To develop and implement a plan to increase membership including encouraging FCS students and professionals to become members and be involved in programs available.
Grant and funding Committee—To explore grants opportunities inside and outside AAFCS for greater involvement.

2026-2027 TnAFCS Officers


Melissa Wood
President


Katherine Whatley Vincent
President-Elect


Lauren Freeman
Secretary


Amber Roth
Treasurer


Lesley Williams
VP, Program of Work


Sue Byrd
VP, Relations


Amber Watts
Member-at-Large


Hannah Upole
Member-at-Large


Melinda Swafford
Counselor



Help More New Students Get Connected with AAFCS!

AAFCS is pleased to continue Miles in the Making, a program providing free student memberships to freshmen majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences and related content areas. Miles in the Making is a collaborative program between AAFCS and participating institutions in the AAFCS Assembly of Higher Education (AHE).

Student membership provides valuable opportunities for young people to connect with peers and professionals nationwide, explore career pathways, access educational resources, and build a professional identity in the FCS community.

Reminder: Spread the word about the TnAFCS Membership Bridge Grant

Share with your Friends and Colleagues who are not members of AAFCS/TnAFCS and AAFCS Student Groups at local Universities/Colleges!!!

The TnAFCS Membership Bridge Grant program is a partnership between Tennessee Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and first-time prospective members. In this partnership TnAFCS pays half of the first-year membership fee. If selected for the grant, individuals will receive a refund of half of their membership fee when proof of membership is verified. (Note: New Professional Membership is $100 and Student Membership is $50.)
For the 2026-27 year TnAFCS is offering 20 Membership Bridge Grants:
10 for professionals who have never been a member of TnAFCS/AAFCS and
10 for current University students (Sophomore, Junior or Senior) who have never been a member of TnAFCS/AAFCS with a limit of 3 applications from any one university.

Note: This does not include Freshmen FCS Students since those from an Assembly of Higher Education school (MTSU, Tennessee Tech, Tennessee State, UT Martin, Carson Newman) can receive free membership through the *Miles in the Making* initiative. (check on the AAFCS web site at https://aafcs.org/membership/membership-categories for more information).
To apply for a Bridge Grant, complete the application form at the following web site:
https://forms.gle/fL5DxxtBE68uKa9i7

Student Highlights and Activities – Carson Newman University



Luncheon 1 Recent Graduates



Hosting Team



Luncheon 1





Luncheon 2

The Cooperative Management class at Carson-Newman University is tasked with planning and hosting four networking luncheons each semester. This is an opportunity to put skills like budgeting, food preparation, design, leadership, teamwork, and hospitality into action while meeting local industry professionals and hearing their career stories. This fall, we have already held two of these networking events. The first invited back some of our recent graduates as they shared about the transition from college to career. The second hosted the location leader for the Jefferson County Isaiah117 House. We learned all about the incredible work of this organization that supports foster children and foster families. Our students did an outstanding job preparing delicious flavors, setting a beautiful table, and hosting with confidence and grace.

Student Involvement – UT Martin



What a great weekend at the Kentucky & Tennessee FCS Huddle! 💙
UT Martin FCS Education majors (along with MTSU and Carson Newman students) spent the weekend building leadership skills, networking with other current and future FCS educators, and growing as FCS professionals. Students participated in interactive sessions, team-building activities, and professional development while learning how to "Find Their Voice."
Dr. Melissa Wood also led a session, "The Art of Standing Out," where students learned the importance of embracing what makes them unique and standing out from the crowd!
We are so proud of our students for continuing to learn, lead, and represent FCS!

Public Policy is Everyone's Business

In an effort to make family and consumer sciences more visible, we need everyone to do their part. One aspect of increasing our visibility is to let our legislators know who we are and why we are important.

Here are some easy things you can do before reaching out to legislators:

Effective advocacy begins long before you have an issue or piece of legislation to discuss. Building relationships with policymakers helps Family and Consumer Sciences professionals become trusted sources of information about issues affecting individuals, families, and communities.

Getting to know your policymakers: Here are three simple ways to begin:

TIPS:

1. Learn about them. Visit the websites and social media pages of policymakers who represent your community. What is important to them? What committees do they serve on? What priorities have they identified?*
2. Begin the relationship. Don't wait until you need something to make contact. Look for opportunities to introduce yourself and FCS. Invite a policymaker to visit an FCS classroom or program, attend an affiliate event, participate in a panel, or see an FCS program in action.*
3. Help them understand FCS. When you communicate with policymakers, keep your message simple:
    a. Tell – Share a brief story demonstrating the impact of FCS. Check at https://www.aafcs.org/advocacy/resources-tools/advocacytools and click on "Story telling Tips" to learn how to tell your story.
    b. Show – Provide one credible fact or statistic. - use the fact sheets from recent AAFCS research https://www.aafcs.org/resources/fcs-wow/wow-graphics
    c. Connect – Explain how FCS relates to an issue affecting individuals, families, or communities they serve. - use key message cards at https://www.aafcs.org/about/what-is-fcs

*From *Tips for working with legislators*, an NCFR Report (www.ncfr.org/ncfr-report/past-issues/winter-2015/family-science-report-tips-working-legislators)

Your Fall Challenge

VOTE VOTE VOTE!!!!!!

Individual Action: Identify one policymaker or community leader you want to know better. Learn about one of their priorities and make one positive, non-issue-specific contact before the end of 2026.

AAFCS STRATEGIC PLAN 2027–2030

Elevate. Innovate. Thrive.

Our Mission

AAFCS elevates the profession by inspiring research, leadership, and service to empower individuals, families and communities.

Our Vision

Individuals, families, and communities are achieving optimal quality of life assisted by competent, caring professionals whose expertise is continually updated through AAFCS.



Goal Overview

1 Recognize FCS as an Industry, Discipline, and Career Opportunity

To ensure Family and Consumer Sciences is recognized as an essential industry, discipline, and career pathway throughout the United States, we will:

- Activate FCS students, professionals, and affiliates to advocate for Family and Consumer Sciences at the local, state, and national level.
- Increase the visibility of our profession through strategic multimedia outreach that influences key audiences.
- Unify and position FCS industry as the umbrella that connects all who support individual, family, and community well-being.

2 Become the Foundational Resource for FCS Knowledge

In order to position AAFCS as the trusted source and voice for Family and Consumer Sciences research, expertise, and evidence-based resources, we will:

- Develop resources to promote awareness, understanding, and application of the updated Family and Consumer Sciences Body of Knowledge.
- Expand professional development and credentialling opportunities and ensure all practice settings and content areas are addressed.
- Enhance opportunities to collaborate on and showcase FCS-focused research.

3 Build From Our Legacy of Leadership to Guide the Future of FCS

Recognizing that leadership has always been at the heart of AAFCS, and building from our legacy to guide the future of Family and Consumer Sciences while fostering personal, professional, and organizational growth, we will:

- *Establish initiatives to recruit, train, cultivate and sustain leaders at the local, state, and national level.*
- *Document and preserve the impact and history of Family and Consumer Sciences to guide the decision making of FCS leaders.*
- *Expand recognition programs to celebrate outstanding contributions.*

