



# Visions Newsletter

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## Save the Dates

### TnAFCS State Conference

June 5, 2026,  
Carson Newman University  
(Jefferson City, TN)

### AAFCFS Annual Conference

June 18-21, 2026,  
Louisville, Kentucky

[tnafcs@gmail.com](mailto:tnafcs@gmail.com)

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear TnAFCS members

I hope that each of you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

**Membership:** Good News! We now have 60 TnAFCS members!! Fifteen new members are thanks to the AAFCS *Miles in the Making* program which offers Freshman college students majoring in FCS programs of study, an opportunity to apply for a one year free membership in AAFCS and TnAFCS. Thank you U.T. Martin for making this available to your freshman! Among our new members, we also want to welcome Tennille Short and Sherifa Iddrisu to TnAFCS!!



Remember, the *Bridge Grant* is another opportunity for help with the cost of membership. Currently we have one new applicant. Taking advantage of these membership opportunities, provides FCS professionals and pre-professionals with opportunities for networking with FCS professionals, opportunities for leadership development, discounts on conference registration, and access to academic resources. TnAFCS’ strength lies in its members. Our growth as a profession is dependent upon others understanding who we are and what we do. So please encourage others to join.

**Professional Development and Awards:** The TnAFCS conference *Back to Basics* will be held June 5<sup>th</sup> at Carson Newman University in Jefferson City, TN. Make plans to attend the this conference. The call for proposals, as well as the opportunity to submit nominations for TnAFCS awards, is in this newsletter and will be distributed by email. The TnAFCS winners in each category will be eligible apply for the national award with national winners recognized at the AAFCS conference in 2027. As a reminder, the AAFCS national conference will be in Louisville, Kentucky, on June 18-21. You can register by going to <https://www.aafcs.org/news-and-events/conferences/ac-26>. Both conferences will address challenges faced by our profession as well as the latest trends, with innovative speakers and industry experts who will inspire and equip us with essential tools for success.

**Reminder:** If you have research or a specific teaching strategy that you use, please consider submitting either for the newsletter or completing a call for proposal for the state conference.

Please reach out to me with your ideas for strengthening TnAFCS, questions, or concerns at [melindaswafford5@gmail.com](mailto:melindaswafford5@gmail.com) I am looking forward to meeting you at the TnAFCS state conference.

Best regards,

Melinda Swafford, Ph.D., Professor Emerita  
Tennessee Technological University

TnAFCS President 2025-2026

**NOTE: More details will come soon via e-mail and in our next newsletter pertaining to the TnAFCS Annual Conference, including Registration.**

CALL for NOMINATIONS FOR the TnAFCS Awards

We are calling for nominations for the 2026 TnAFCS awards. The winners of the awards will be announced at the state conference at Carson Newman on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, TnAFCS award winners will become our state nominees for the National AAFCS awards for 2027.

To nominate a TnAFCS member for an award, please submit the following to Dr. Samantha Hutson [shutson@tntech.edu](mailto:shutson@tntech.edu) by March 31, 2026:

- (1). Your Name and Email,
- (2). Full Name of nominee and award for which you are applying or nominating someone for,
- (3). Credentials of nominee, including place of employment, a brief list the roles, responsibilities, and achievements that qualify the nominee for this award.

The awards are as follows:

**NEW ACHIEVER AWARD:** The purpose of the **New Achiever Award** is to identify and honor emerging family and consumer sciences professionals who have exhibited the potential to make significant contributions to the field through their involvement with AAFCS and TnAFCS.

**LEADER AWARD:** The purpose of the **Leader Award** is to identify and honor family and consumer sciences professionals who have made significant contributions to the field through their involvement with AAFCS and TnAFCS.

**TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD:** The **Teacher of the Year Award** is to recognize exemplary teachers who utilize cutting-edge methods, techniques and activities to provide stimulus and visibility to family and consumer sciences in elementary and secondary education.

**STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD:** The **Student of the Year Award** is to recognize exemplary students who demonstrate leadership and professional potential in the field of family and consumer sciences in elementary, secondary, or post-secondary education.

2025-2026 TnAFCS Officers



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## **2026 TnAFCS State Conference *Back to Basics* Call for Proposals**

TnAFCS State Conference Friday, June 5, 2026, 9:00-4:00

Carson Newman University: Jefferson City, Tennessee

TnAFCS announces the call for proposals for the following:

- Design Showcase or Poster Presentation
- Make and Take Workshop
- Oral Research Presentation
- Student Projects

For each submission, an abstract and completion of the application form must be submitted. The abstract is to be submitted as part of the application AND sent to Lesley Williams at [lesley.williams@pcsstn.com](mailto:lesley.williams@pcsstn.com) no later than March 25, 2026. **The application form can be found at:**

**<https://forms.gle/izuBTbfFzmmXzMf19>**

**Be sure to follow the information for the specific submission and the abstract guidelines on the next page.**

### **DESIGN SHOWCASE or POSTER PRESENTATIONS of PROGRAMS**

TnAFCS members or teams with at least one person a TnAFCS member, are encouraged to submit a proposal for showcasing programs that exemplify their work. Applicants will be responsible for the materials for their display.

Include the following in a one-page abstract:

- (a) Purpose or objectives,
- (b) Target audience,
- (c) Description of program showcased,
- (d) Implications for further programming,
- (e) Importance to profession,
- (f) Relationship to conference theme (Back to Basics).

### **MAKE and TAKE WORKSHOP**

TnAFCS members or teams with at least one person a TnAFCS member, are encouraged to submit a proposal for a 50-minute Make and Take Workshop. If accepted, presenters will be responsible for the materials used.

Include the following in a one-page abstract:

- Central focus and identification of discipline,
- Target audience,
- Description of workshop,
- Outline of content of workshop,
- Importance to profession,
- Explain the currency, progressiveness, and/or visionary nature of the workshop.

(Continued next page)

**(CALL FOR PROPOSAL CONTINUED)**

**RESEARCH ABSTRACTS for POSTER or ORAL PRESENTATION**

TnAFCS members or teams with at least one person a TnAFCS member, are encouraged to submit a proposal for a poster or 50-minute oral presentation of research.

Include the following in a one-page abstract:

- Rationale,
- Purpose, Importance of problem,
- Research design,
- Hypotheses,
- Statistical methods,
- Procedures,
- Results of statistical analyses or other empirical findings,
- Conclusions, and implications for research-based application to programming, theory building, or policy recommendations;
- Relationship to conference theme (Back to Basics).

**STUDENT PROJECTS**

An invitation is also extended to university students who are members of TnAFCS to submit individual or group exhibits, displays, design presentations, research projects, promotional designs, or teaching ideas. For student projects, follow abstract guidelines pertaining to the type of proposal submitted.

**ABSTRACT GUIDELINES:** The following guidelines must be met for all abstracts to undergo review:

1. Abstract must be original, and current (no more than 3 years old). Submit and send one original and one copy for blind peer review, i.e., omitting the author's name and affiliation. It is also acceptable to resubmit and/or revise research presented at AAFCS, NEAFCS or elsewhere if the author determines that the material will be new and valuable to Tennessee Family and Consumer Science professionals/students.
2. Abstract must conform to the following format restrictions:
  - a) It must be prepared in black with 1-inch margins. Do not draw a box to enclose the abstract. The abstract must not exceed one page in length. The author is encouraged to use the entire space provided. When preparing the abstract, use a 12-point Times Roman font.
  - b) The title of the research, showcase, or session, in capital letters and centered, should appear on the first line. Center the name of the author on the second line, followed by abbreviation for highest degree held; use an asterisk (\*) to designate the presenter. The name(s) of the affiliation or institution(s) should be centered on the third line. No extra lines should appear between the title, author(s), or institution(s).
  - c) Leave the line below the name(s) of institution(s) blank. Begin each paragraph of the text by indenting five spaces. Single-space text, double spacing between paragraphs.
  - d) Special symbols, tables, and graphs may be included; please prepare them neatly in black and ensure that they fit within the margins.
  - e) The abstract must be free of errors and misspellings.
3. Proposal must be submitted via online form and abstracts e-mailed not later than March 25, 2026.
4. Abstracts will be peer-reviewed. (A team of three professionals will evaluate the submissions to determine each meets TnAFCS guidelines and is deserving of inclusion in the Conference.)
5. For proposals accepted, presenter(s) will be required to register for and present at the TnAFCS Conference on June 5, 2026. Note: if team project/research, all team members are encouraged but not required to be present.

For questions, please email Lesley Williams at [lesley.williams@pcsstn.com](mailto:lesley.williams@pcsstn.com) or Melinda Swafford at [melindaswafford5@gmail.com](mailto:melindaswafford5@gmail.com)

## FCS AWARENESS—TAKE ACTION

**FCS Awareness:** A reminder, Perkins V legislation (2006) did not include FCS as one of the 16 career cluster. This resulted in the FCS name not connected to public school courses; increased confusion by the general public if we exist; and resulted in loss of funding for FCS secondary and post-secondary programs. \

To advocate for FCS and bring awareness, please send op eds to your local newspapers and reach out to your state senators and representatives on the benefits of supporting FCS content courses in your local public school setting.

### Suggested Op Ed for Newspaper (provide picture of students in action):

(Insert one FCS Fact here as an opening; choose from list below)

Family and Consumer Sciences is making great strides in (insert the name of your school). Students have been involved in [or have been learning about] – (provide information here).

Family and consumer sciences (defined as: **the people-centered science, focused on supporting individuals, families, and communities live healthy successful lives through the provision of education, research, and technology**) is important to many aspects of our society and is taught in high schools and colleges across the state and the U.S. and is found in 95 counties in Tennessee through 4-H and FCS Agent activities through the Extension Service.

FCS Fact to choose from for opening:

- Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals contribute \$753 billion annually to the U.S. economy.
- Each year, more than 1 million post-secondary students enroll in FCS Career and Technical Education programs, forming one of the nation’s largest workforce preparation pipelines.
- More than 47,000 graduates complete FCS programs annually, producing over 52,000 degrees from 1,192 colleges and universities.
- Active Family and Consumer Sciences programs are found in all 50 states
- FCS spans more than 350 occupations and 215 industries, making it one of the most wide-reaching career fields.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Over **1 million** high school students are currently enrolled in FCS courses.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

FCS contributes more than **\$753 billion** annually to the U.S. economy.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

FCS spans more than **350 occupations and 215 industries**, making it one of the most wide-reaching career fields.



## Highlighting TnAFCS Student Activities

### MTSU Students Celebrate FCS Week

The MTSU-AAFCS Student Organization was eager to celebrate FCS Week on the MTSU campus. Two days were focused on nutrition, and the nutrition members in the club wanted to emphasize the importance of healthy eating habits and exercise. The focus was on Meal Master Monday and Wellness.



For Meal Master Monday, homemade hummus was served with a variety of raw vegetables in the lobby of our Human Sciences Building. A display was also created on how Family & Consumer Sciences is a people-centered science focused on supporting individuals, families, and communities to live healthy, successful lives through education, research, and technology. This display in the Human Sciences Building highlighted FCS Week with many of the resources available from the AAFCS website.

For Wellness Wednesday, a 5-mile run recruited MTSU students to travel around campus. Over 30 students registered to participate, and all completed the 5-mile run. Pictured, some of the students who ran.



MTSU-AAFCS Student Organization Officers. President, Connor Crispens (left) distributed badges to those who participated at the end of the 5-mile run.



## Reminder: Spread the word about the TnAFCS Membership Bridge Grant Still Available

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

The TnAFCS Board of Directors has approved the reimplementaion of the TnAFCS Membership Bridge Grant as a way to increase membership in TnAFCS/AAFCS.

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: Professional Membership is \$150 and Student Membership is \$50.)

For the 2025-26 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>**

**Bridge Grants will be awarded on a first-come-first-served basis.** The deadline to apply has been extended to **March 1, 2026**. Contact Sue Byrd (sbyrd6@utm.edu) if you have questions. Note: If you are accepted for the grant, instructions will be given pertaining to how to join AAFCS/TnAFCS.

## The Importance of Textiles in Family and Consumer Sciences Education

By: Amy Willbanks, Owner/President  
Textile Fabric Consultants, Inc., [www.textilefabric.com](http://www.textilefabric.com)



Textiles play a vital role in Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) at both the secondary and higher education levels. However, as a supplier of textile education materials, I have seen a decline in the emphasis of FCS textile courses. Teaching textiles within FCS equips students with practical life skills, critical thinking abilities, and an understanding of sustainability that are essential in today's world.

Recently, I conducted a small survey among fashion and textile graduate students regarding the importance of teaching textiles. The consensus was that textile education is vital to the development of essential life skills. From choosing what clothes to wear to deciding how to properly care for them, individuals make textile-related decisions every day. Through hands-on learning such as sewing, fabric care, and garment construction, students gain abilities that promote self-sufficiency. These skills empower students to repair clothing, alter garments for proper fit, and understand how clothing is made. In an era of fast fashion, these competencies help students save money and reduce waste by extending the life of their clothing.

Textiles education helps strengthen consumer awareness and decision-making. Students learn to evaluate fabric quality, understand textile labels, compare costs, and recognize ethical and environmental considerations in clothing production. This knowledge prepares students to be responsible consumers who can make informed choices rather than impulsive purchases. Understanding textiles also helps students navigate advertising and trends critically, fostering financial literacy and smart spending habits.

In addition, textiles provide a meaningful connection to sustainability and environmental responsibility. The clothing and textile industry has a significant impact on the environment, from water use to pollution and labor practices. By studying textiles in FCS, students explore sustainable fibers, recycling, upcycling, and responsible production methods. This awareness encourages students to adopt environmentally conscious habits and recognize their role in reducing the global impact of textile consumption.

Textile education also supports creativity and personal expression. Clothing is a powerful form of communication, reflecting culture, identity, and individuality. Through design projects and fabric selection, students develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and confidence in their personal style. These experiences help students appreciate cultural diversity and the historical significance of textiles across societies.

Basic textiles instruction aligns with career exploration and workforce readiness. Many careers—from fashion design and merchandising to interior design, textile science, and retail management—are rooted in textile knowledge. Exposure to these fields in high school allows students to discover and explore interests and talents that may influence future education and career paths.

*Textile education is a crucial component of Family and Consumer Sciences education. It provides students with essential life skills, promotes responsible consumer behavior, encourages sustainability, and fosters creativity and career awareness. By including textiles in FCS programs, schools help prepare students for independent living and responsible participation in a global society.*