



Katie Cullum

National Board Certified Teacher

Education

B.S. in Vocational Family & Consumer Science
Harding University

M.S.E. with an Emphasis in FCS
Harding University

Lagniappe: A Little Something Extra

I had no idea what I was going to do with my degree but my advisor kept suggesting "Extension." Then Extension was hiring interns so I applied. I interviewed with so many administrators and learned that I had been a special interest 4-H member because I had taken a sewing class and learned how to make "jams" (shorts) from the Home Ec. Agent. I was an intern for a year but really wasn't sure I wanted to stay. But I have because I liked the flexibility, the annual leave, the people, and the work. I've had a lot of training in 25 years but my favorites were the Mediterranean Diet Cooking School, a cooking class with a chef, and the many national meetings through AAFCS and NEAFCS.

County Extension Agent

Katie Cullum, CFCS, has been a County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Science with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture for 25 years.

Uniqueness of Career Journey

Extension is very flexible and no day is ever the same. I've had to learn about things in order to answer questions from people – quinoa, canning, scams, and just last week how to fold a fitted sheet.

I learned so much about myself through some real challenges. Working with people can be very rewarding but also extremely challenging. I've learned many "what not to dos" by doing them. But my FCS world has also expanded into more health (which wasn't really a part of my training in college) and wellness.

Inspiration for Career Choice

I'm not sure I chose my career in the beginning but I chose to keep doing this work because it was interesting and I enjoyed helping people.

Skills Vital to Success in Career

Soft skills are vital – working with people, being flexible, using technology (which has changed a lot since I've worked! I had to beg for my own email), and just being nice, timely, and encouraging.

Best Advice to Someone Considering This Career

You don't have to be the best at the FCS topics but you do need to learn how to work with all kinds of people. You can learn the FCS topics but you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Recommended Educational Preparation

Extension encourages a Master's degree. I enjoyed working on mine – I felt like I had worked long enough to really appreciate the skills I was learning and using.

How the Field Has Changed Over Time

I wore a dress and heels on my first day of work but I don't even remember the last time I wore a dress or heels now. My first office had one computer (at the secretary's desk) for 4 people and one email address. Now, I wear sneakers to work when I teach exercise classes and I use my computer ALL the time. Volunteer groups have changed – Extension Homemakers are a lot smaller group (from 21 clubs to 6). We still do a lot of the same things but in different ways.

Projected Changes in the Future

I'd like to see FCS become more popular because we can really make a difference in people's lives! I just wish more people realized that.