

# Award and Grant Recipients



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## **National Teacher of the Year Mia Battistone, CFCS, MN**

Mia Battistone has been a dedicated Family and Consumer Science educator since 1995, starting at Dakota Hills Middle School and moving to Eastview High School in 1997. She founded the Eastview FCCLA Chapter in 2006, with a long and successful tenure. Mia has received numerous honors, including MN FCCLA Teacher of the Year, FCCLA Master and Mentor Adviser, and National Adviser of the Year Finalist. Her leadership extends beyond the classroom, as evidenced by her roles within AAFCS, holding numerous MAFCS Officer positions and being President in 2024-25. Her leadership as a Career and Technical Teacher Induction Program Mentor further exemplifies her commitment to supporting other educators. Mia's student-nominated recognition as a National Adviser of the Year finalist highlights her lasting impact on students and the deep connection she has with them in their lives. Her influence transcends beyond teaching, shaping generations of students into leaders who will continue to carry her impact forward.



## **TOY Merit Finalist, Ashley Beth Phipps, KY**

A leader in her career and volunteer activities, Ashley Phipps possesses qualities allowing her to usher in a new era for Family and Consumer Sciences education at Wolfe County High School. After 15 years in the field, she maintains her passion for improving the lives of students through various methods and partnership types. Her strong education, along with practical experience in the field, equipped her to have a significant impact on FCS. After graduating from the University of Kentucky with a degree in Merchandising, Apparel, and Textiles, she worked as a U.K. Cooperative Extension Agent for F.C.S./4-H; then as a development officer, before feeling called to F.C.S. education. Past President, Vice-President, Financial Growth Chair, and Awards Chair for the Kentucky Association of Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences and region president/treasurer, she led state-wide training sessions, maintained records, and developed new partnerships.



## **TOY Merit Finalist, Bethany Pepe, CFCS, PA**

Bethany has taught Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) for 20 years in Pennsylvania across middle school, high school, and early childhood education. She has advised various student organizations, including the Child Development Club, FCCLA, and Sewing Club. Bethany has served on the PA Academic Standards for FCS Revision Committee, is the current Secretary of PAFCS, and has held PAFCS leadership roles such as Standards of Excellence Chair, Mid-East District Chair, serving on the Advisory Board and Board of Directors. Bethany presented at national and state conferences and workshops, including the AAFCS Fall Leadership Conference and Temple/PDE FCS Educator Summer Workshops. As a consultant, Bethany contributed to developing and revising the FCS Teacher Licensure Exam and serves on the AAFCS Council for Certification. An active mentor in the IUP Mentoring Program, Bethany also writes curriculum, studies financial literacy, and shares resources. She enjoys traveling, gardening, and volunteering in her community.

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### **Affiliate TOY, Cassidy Parsons, MT**

Cassidy Parsons has been a dedicated Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teacher at Jefferson High School in Boulder, Montana, since 2017. She is passionate about equipping students with essential life skills and fostering leadership opportunities through her role as the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) advisor. Cassidy's excellence in teaching and advising has been widely recognized. She was named Montana's FCCLA New Advisor of the Year 2020-21, FCCLA Advisor of the Year 2023-24, and the Montana Association of Family and Consumer Science (MAFCS) Teacher of the Year 2024-25. In addition to her teaching role, she serves as the JHS Union Secretary and is a valued board member of the MAFCS. She earned her undergraduate degree in K-8 Elementary Education from the University of Montana Western, obtained her FCS endorsement from Montana State University, and completed a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Montana.



### **Affiliate TOY, Cassy Dalbom, KS**

Cassy Dalbom holds a Bachelor's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences Education and a Master's degree in Career and Technical Education from Pittsburg State University. With 13 years of experience as a dynamic and hands-on educator, Cassy has built a thriving early childhood program and leads an active FCCLA chapter, taking students to nationals for the past two years. In 2023, she was honored as Teacher of the Year by the Kansas Association of Career and Technical Education, and in 2019, she received the New Achiever Award from AAFCS. Cassy is deeply passionate about helping her students succeed, fostering their personal growth, and preparing them to be the best they can be in the future.



### **Affiliate TOY, Sarah Chooljian, NH**

Sarah received her BS in Culinary Management from Southern New Hampshire University. She utilized her background to pursue an alternative certification route in Family and Consumer Sciences. During the certification process, Sarah received her MS in Child, Youth and Family Studies with a concentration in FCS through the Great Plains IDEA program. During her eight years of teaching at Timberlane Regional Middle School, she runs a weekly after-school cooking club, organizes a teacher's cooking club that makes freezer meals for colleagues in need, and has started organizing the first ever Middle School Iron Chef competition that will be hosted at her school in March 2025. Outside of school, Sarah teaches teen and adult cooking classes at the local library. She served as a Member at Large for the New Hampshire Family and Consumer Sciences Association from 2020 to 2023, and is now the Membership Director on the Executive Board.



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### **Affiliate TOY, Kimberley Myers, SC**

After high school, Kimberley Myers enrolled in South Carolina State University and majored in Speech Pathology and Audiology. After four years in the program she knew that this was not the career path she wanted to pursue and changed her major to Family Consumer Sciences. After the first semester, she knew that Family Consumer Science would be her life's work! Changing her major was a move that would prove to change the trajectory of her life and her destiny. This is her passion. Kimberley's work ethic and dedication to the students, faculty, school and community

holds as a standard for all educators. She is an avid lifelong learning and teacher leader in her school, district, community and within her state.



### **DSA - Lizabeth (Liz) Self-Mullens, Ph.D., CFCS-Retired, TN**

Liz Self-Mullens holds degrees in Home Economics Education, Textiles & Apparel, and Human Ecology. Her career includes service as a faculty member, extension educator, program director, unit director, assistant dean, dean, assistant vice president for academic affairs, and provost. Liz retired in 2018 as Dean, College of Agriculture & Human Ecology at Tennessee Technological University. She served as the 2020-2021 AAFCS Board President, Counselor on the 2021-2022 AAFCS Board of Directors, and Chairperson of the AFCS Past Presidents' Unit for two years. She

participated on the AAFCS Council for Certification and Task Force for Program Advancement. She currently serves on the Leadership Council, Past Presidents' Unit, A TD Showcase Committee, several communities, and as a mentor in the AAFCS Leadership Academy. Locally, Liz teaches quilting classes to adults and children, participates with the Friends of White Plains to restore an 1840s historic home, and chairs the Upper Cumberland Quilt Festival Board.



### **Leader, Catherine Lader, WI**

Catherine Lader leads by example and has been an FCS advocate throughout her career. While teaching, she increased FCS enrollments and advised a nationally recognized FCCLA chapter. As the Wisconsin FCS State Supervisor she published resources, supported teachers, and initiated FCCLA Leadership Labs. As a National FCCLA Consultant member, Cathy presented programming across the country. She managed the Wisconsin FCCLA competitions during retirement. Cathy was President

of the Wisconsin FCS Educators organization where she established the annual summit and earned the Distinguished Service Award. She financially supports the FCS program at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point through scholarships and sponsoring FCS Legacy Lab instructional space. Cathy has hosted sixteen fundraisers for non-profit organizations. Governor Tommy Thompson awarded her the Wisconsin Annual Leadership Award. Supporting the pork industry, she developed FCS resources, earning her the WI Agri-Communicator Award. Currently she is President-Elect of the Wisconsin Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

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### **Leader, Karleah Harris, AR**

Dr. Karleah Harris is associate professor of human development and family studies at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). With degrees in educational psychology, curriculum and instruction, and agricultural education, she has worked in several college settings as well as with PreK-12 students, teachers, principals, stakeholders, and grandparents raising grandchildren in the community. While at UAPB, she has worked with colleagues to secure over two million dollars in grants.

Her research interests include using inquiry-based science learning to study kindergarten students' explanations, the types of discourse strategies teachers use during classroom science discourse, early childhood development, culturally responsive teaching, horticulture therapy, grandparenting, food deserts, food insecurity, and gardening. Dr. Harris received the Chancellor's 2023 University Outreach and Engagement Award for her work, and her outreach projects with the PreK-12 school community were featured on the THV Channel 11 and ABC Channel 7 KATV Little Rock television news.



### **Leader, Mia Russell, MD**

Mia Russell, Ph.D. has 25+ years of experience in the public and private sectors.

Currently, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses designed to help students succeed and lead in a wide range of professional settings. She also leads the Clark Scholars program designed to holistically support underrepresented

engineering students. Prior to joining Johns Hopkins University, Russell was the Program Lead and Vice President for Financial Education and Youth Financial Health Philanthropy at the Wells Fargo Foundation. She also served as an Extension Educator at the University of Maryland, leading financial education programming and community outreach in Central Maryland. Russell prioritizes service and currently serves on the WSSC Federal Credit Union Foundation Board and formerly on the AAFCS Board of Directors. Russell contributes to the field of financial well-being and work-related well-being and has developed programs for diverse audiences, published numerous articles, and conducted countless domestic and international presentations.



### **Undergraduate, Marissa Cheslock, IN**

Marissa Cheslock is a fourth-year student at the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP), majoring in Fashion Design with a minor in Marketing. She is actively involved both on and off campus, serving as President of TEDxUCincinnati and participating in the University Honors Program, Cincinnati Scholar Program, National Co-op Ambassadors, DAAP Ambassadors, and the Sustainable Fashion Initiative. Her academic program alternates semesters

of classroom study with hands-on work in the design industry, providing her with experience from Wisconsin to Texas with brands such as Lands' End, Abercrombie & Fitch, Champion, and more. In March 2024, she embarked on a fashion-based study abroad program to northern India, further expanding her global perspective on design. Marissa is passionate about utility and longevity in design solutions, and her career goal is to make a meaningful impact through human-centered design.

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### **Graduate, Kimberly Mitchell, AL**

Kimberly Mitchell is a small-town girl whose parents were foundry worker and a stay-at-home mom. Honest hardworking people who raised four children who were given a strong work ethic and a heart for others. The first in her family to attend college, Kim worked hard to complete her bachelor's degree at Jacksonville State University and master's at the University of Alabama. She returned to JSU to gain her certification in Education Administration. Kim has 28 years of experience in Education. After many years as a FCS teacher on the secondary level she made the jump into higher education. She is currently the CTE Specialist and Program Chair for Family & Consumer Sciences and Business Marketing Education (undergraduate and graduate levels) at Jacksonville State University. She also serves as the FCS Student Unit Sponsor, coordinates FCS Days on campus, Co-Leader of STEAM Camp, and developed the first Post-Secondary FCCLA Chapter in Alabama.



### **Betsy Norum, Rylee Bezoni, IA**

Rylee Bezoni's passion for Family and Consumer Sciences began with a love for teaching and an appreciation for the essential life skills FCS offers. She has always aspired to be a teacher from a young age but struggled to decide between math and FCS. It was not until her work-based learning experience in high school that she gained confidence in her decision. Assisting her school's Family Consumer Sciences teacher with the Culinary 1 class allowed her to see firsthand how much students genuinely enjoy learning in the FCS classroom. Unlike math, which involves repeating the same lessons, FCS offers a dynamic teaching environment where she could engage with various content areas and skills. This experience solidified her passion for FCS and reaffirmed her decision to pursue this career.



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## AAFCS 50 YEAR Honorees



### **Carla Robinson, NE Affiliate**

Carla Robinson's professional career includes teaching Family and Consumer Sciences at the high school level for 31 years, working for a non-profit for 6 years, serving as adjunct university faculty for 7 years and operating a small business for 20 years. Her education includes a B.A. in Home Economics with minors in Science and Vocational Education, an M.S.Ed. with emphasis in Vocational Education and an Administration Certificate.

She has received Certification in F.C.S. from AAFCS, has been recognized as the Nebraska Vocational Home Economics Teacher of the Year, Nebraska Vocational Association Achievement Award recipient, Nebraska AAFCS affiliate Teacher of the Year and AAFCS Faces to Watch award recipient.

Carla has been published in Illinois Teacher and the Journal of Nutrition Education and has presented both locally and nationally. She has served the FCS profession, holding many offices in NVHETA/ACTEN

and the Nebraska Affiliate of AAFCS, serving as Executive Secretary for 10 years. As a volunteer, Carla served the Omaha Ronald McDonald House for over ten years.



### **Kim Kamin, Ph.D., CFCS-Ret. TX Affiliate**

I was fortunate to attend college at the University of North Texas, where there was an active student group, and I became a member during my sophomore year. I continued in school at UNT and Texas Woman's University, getting a master's and a Ph.D. degree. I worked in the Hurst Euless Bedford school district in Texas for 28 years, first in Family and Consumer Sciences, then became the International Baccalaureate Coordinator in 2006 until I retired in 2018. Through my activities with AAFCS, I have met various outstanding professionals. Currently, my time is filled with being a community volunteer. I am an excellent example of taking the girl out of FCS but not taking FCS out of the girl. No matter what my job was, I always had an FCS perspective. This perspective was a benefit to students.

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## Chalkley-Fenn Public Policy Scholar Grant

**Project:** “Empowering Students in Legislative Advocacy for Family and Consumer Sciences”

**Project Director:** Glenda Lindsey, Morgan State University



Dr. Lindsey’s proposed project is designed to engage students and alumni in the public policy process to: develop and implement a curriculum covering how bills are written and progress through the legislative process at local, state and national levels; address key Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) issues through policy advocacy; engage in direct legislative interactions and community outreach; and foster leadership and ambassadorship for Morgan State University.

## Ruth O’Brien Project Grant

**Project:** “Utilizing AI-Generated Recipes in a College Food Pantry in Central Arkansas”

**Project Director:** Kathryn Carroll, CFCS, CPFPE, & Rebekah Luong, CFCS, University of Central Arkansas



The proposed project is designed to investigate the potential benefits of AI-generated healthy recipes in client-choice food pantries, specifically focusing on helping clients better utilize available items. Using a framed field experiment, the proposed study will examine whether providing health-oriented AI-generated recipes for in-stock items results in a larger volume of food being selected; increased client satisfaction; and differences in the types of food selected.