

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

Maryland Association for Family and Community Education, Inc. Newsletter

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## DECEMBER

- 1 State Dues and Membership Forms due to NAFCE
- 1 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM  
MC Extension Office
- 9 **Cookie Exchange and Crafts**, 9:45 AM  
Extension Office Garage  
Refreshments: Burtonsville  
*See page 4 for details.*
- 15 Send outreach and meeting reports to Jeanne Purich

## JANUARY

- All Month Complete and Mail Annual Reports
- 9 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 3 PM  
Extension Office garage
- 31 End of County 2025-2026 Essay and Artwork Contest

## FEBRUARY

- All Month **Birthday Month – Collect & send pennies to State FCE Treasurer (Pennies are for postage for the newsletter)**
- 1 “Look What’s Happening” deadline for items to Editor  
Start county judging of Essay and Artwork Contest
- 2 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM  
MC Extension Office
- 5 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 8 PM  
Extension Office garage
- 10 **The American Front Porch** by Sandy Heiler  
9:45 AM, Extension Office  
County Association Meeting  
Refreshments: Derwood
- 20 Send County winner of Essay and Artwork Contest to State President
- 24 MC Executive Board meeting, 10 AM  
MC Extension Office

## MARCH

- All Month Women’s History Month
- 1 Heart of FCE & Spirit of FCL Award entries due State President
- 2 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM  
MC Extension Office
- 6 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 3 PM  
MC Extension Office garage
- 8 International Women’s Day
- 10 **Whole Grains: Nutrient Dense Food for a Healthier Diet!** (FCE Hearth Fire #83)  
By Pat Fewell and Kathie Mack  
Refreshments: Burtonsville

## CHARACTER COUNTS!® Contest

Send all CHARACTER COUNTS!® contest entries to Jeanne Purich by January 31.

## MDAFCE Web Site is [www.mdafce.org](http://www.mdafce.org)

The website is a great way to find information and see what FCE is doing. It is also a good resource for new and potential members. Send any information for the website to Libby Wade at [dunade@aol.com](mailto:dunade@aol.com).

## Newsletter Deadline: February 1

ANYONE can send articles, announcements, Bulletin Board items, address changes and trivia for the newsletter to: Jean Purich, [jcpurich@cs.com](mailto:jcpurich@cs.com).



“Faith loves the journey. Gratitude loves the moment. Inner peace loves the pause.” **Maxime Lagacé**

“Once you choose hope, anything’s possible.”  
**Christopher Reeve**

“With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts”. **Eleanor Roosevelt**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Health - What is a way to stay well and healthy?

Sometimes you do like going to the Doctor as a way of keeping up with your health. And other times it is something that happens to you. For example, if you get in a car accident and you hit your head.



And, of course, there are things that your body does. I hadn't been feeling sick until one night I woke up with pain - bad enough to go to the ER. There they did an Xray, CT, and MRI all which showed nothing. After blood tests, the doctors decided that I have a full body yeast infection and kidney stones. They put me in the Hospital for a week and decided to work on the infection first. I even had the attention of the Infectious Disease Specialist. With everyone working, my fever finally came down. After 10 days, I was able to go home. As far as I know, there was nothing I could have done. It just happened to me.

What do you think you could do to stay healthy. A healthy diet is a great way to start. There are lots of articles telling you what to eat and when. Physical Activity is also necessary for good health. It really improves sleep endurance. Brisk walking and strength training are good ways of helping you stay healthy.

Reducing stress is another strategy that can help you stay healthy. There are many ways to bust stress. Try meditation, yoga, playing and taking vacations.

Finally, establish a good relationship with a primary care physician. If something happens to your health, a physician who you know --- and who knows you --- is in the best position to help. Stay Well!!

Libby Wade, MDAFCE President  
dunade@aol.com

301-831-8661

## NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PROGRAM

The Maryland Association for Family & Community Education held its annual conference over October 14-15, 2025, in the same wonderful Eastern Shore location as the last two years. Our hotel on the Kent Narrows had a view of the Chesapeake Bay, comfortable rooms, and delicious breakfasts.

Those who came a day early enjoyed a seafood dinner at the nearby Dock Restaurant and an evening of games and crafts.

During the actual conference, attendees appreciated informative presentations on the Student Conservation Association, Bees and More — Pollinators, the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, and a visit by Frances Perkins. The government shutdown caused cancellation of A Visual Tour of NASA Science; we hope the speaker will be able to reschedule another time. Ginny Hagberg led us in gentle exercise between sessions.

The conference also included an awards ceremony and a business meeting as well as short videos about our 2024-2025 CHARACTER Counts!® winner and the 2025 ACWW/National FCE conference. Our final activity was to draw raffle tickets for over 30 silent auction items. A good time was had by all! Please join us next year.

Some photos from the conference may be seen at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/6rsfqfVSsWXnsSdi9>

Kathie Mack, MDAFCE Vice President for Programs

kpmack2@gmail.com

301-270-5367

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always.”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

## NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC POLICY

### Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?

Much has occurred since the last newsletter, much of it is not good for our country or its citizens. Too much rhetoric, both thoughtful, angry, or very biased from both sides of the political spectrum, has been broadcast daily and nightly to any and all who choose or not choose to listen to it. In a free society we are constitutionally guaranteed this right to the free exchange of differing ideas. When ideas or values are turned into arguments to hurt or maim those who think differently than we ourselves do, the very underpinnings of what our democracy is based on are threatened.

The whole focus of many of the policies that were put out as executive orders starting in January of this year (seems like forever now) seek to harm and weaken not only the opposition party (Democrats), but those republican citizens who voted for them. Targeting citizens using any of the social net programs (SNAP, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid), educational programs (Aid for Special Education programs, Head-start, closing the Department of Education), and so much more, not only hurts democratic states, but hits hardest on mainly the republican citizens (and voters) of many of the so-called “red states”. It seems to either a subjective or objective onlooker that the current administration doesn’t care for the effect these policies have on men, women, children, veterans, the poor or the elderly.

In January of this year, the big reason for the elimination of federal jobs, agencies, programs and processes was stopping “fraud, waste, and abuse”. The so-called savings would reduce government and help the American people. Eleven months later, where are the savings and when will the help be felt by the everyday person? Health care is threatened by the loss of insurance due to premium prices people in need can’t afford, social security is being squeezed by cutting out the employees who know how to do the job of serving their clients, cuts to Medicare and Medicaid are threatening to force people into lesser care options and could affect patient outcomes, and what about the effects to hospitals and doctors’ networks that depend on the programs supporting all of these patients? The ripples of these policies fan outwards and downwards due to orders from the top.

Yes, we saw democratic victories in the several national elections held on November 5. Yes, there is hope for opposition to what started in January. But, there are harder questions to ask and get answers to: how much damage has been done to us, the American people by the specter of racism, profiling of peoples of color or different culture, using violence instead of discourse in politics, and the ugliness of those conversations by the young republicans that were disclosed recently?

When the Trump era ends, what will be left of the American dream: owning a home, raising a family in a safe environment, working a productive job, and living to be able to retire knowing your children and grandchildren have a future of choice and growth you never imagined in such a technological world. Instead, student debt stifles such dreams, jobs are being lost and those available face much competition, AI advances threaten blue collar workers with robotics replacing large numbers, educational opportunities are fewer and far between due to cost and employers not investing in upgraded training of their workers, and what the American dream is for each generation of Americans living now has been influenced by the extremely changing economy of this past decade.

With such uncertainties in our economy, the social upset of a divided nation, the specters of the authoritarian failures of WWII being seen in recent politics, the proliferation of extreme elements making up lies to pass as truth in the public forum, the dumbing down of our educational systems by forcing certain policies to be taught over critical thinking, and the tearing down or making large cracks in our constitutional system, the erosion of what it means to be American continues. As time goes by, younger generations will not experience how we older ones were educated and lived. Where will they find the right leadership if no one knows the rules (rule of law) or the correct template (constitution) to follow?

The Liberty Bell has a crack in it due to an imperfect casting. The formation of our republic and constitution is a living system that grows with our society as it strives for the perfection, we must work at of serving and protecting “We the People”. May our present generations be worthy of our founder’s dream for America: “E Pluribus Unum”, out of the many, one. The question is, will they continue the work, or must we start over again, with history seemingly ready to repeat past mistakes?

Debra Rausch  
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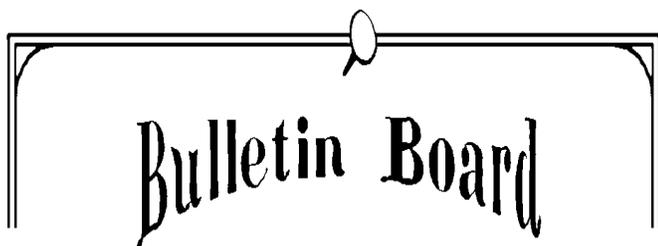
301-498-8806

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS



As of November 1, 2025, we have 77 members for our 2026 membership drive! A huge thank you to all who renewed their membership. I'm now finalizing the Batch 1 package to be forwarded to National FCE, **BUT**, it's not too late to renew or recruit a new member. I plan to forward any updates in the Spring. Remember that for every new member you sponsor in 2026, you receive a Star Pin **PLUS** a chance for you and your new member to attend the 2026 Maryland FCE conference for free. What a great deal! The next few months are a great time to introduce potential new members to our organization, especially if you're struggling with holiday gift giving.

Jeanne Gillis, Membership Chairman  
101 Rolling Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2043  
jeannegillis2326@gmail.com



Condolence to Elli Kirk (Lunch Bunch) and Dotti Jenney (Burtonsville) on the loss of their husbands. Both men suffered from long term illness.

Speedy recovery to Pat Panzer (Lunch Bunch), who took a fall and broke her leg. She has been in rehab.



Happy 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday to Marcie Burroughs from the Burtonsville Club!

## WINTER ENERGY-SAVING TIPS

### Take Advantage of Heat from the Sun

- Open curtains on the south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat the home and close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

### Cover Drafty Windows

- Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of window frames during the cold winter months. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

- Install tight-fitting, insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.

### Adjust the Temperature

- When you are home and awake, set the thermostat as low as it is comfortable.
- When you are asleep or out of the house, turn the thermostat back to save as much as 10% a year on your heating and cooling bills. A smart or programmable thermostat can make it easy to set back your temperature.

### Find and Seal Leaks

- Seal air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes ("plumbing penetrations"), gaps around chimneys and recessed lights in insulated ceilings, and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.
- Add caulk or weatherstripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows.

### Maintain Your Heating Systems

- Schedule routine service for home heating systems. Replace furnace and heat pump filters once a month or as needed.
- Regularly clean the flue vent of wood and pellet burning heaters and clean the inside of the appliance with a wire brush periodically to ensure that it is heating efficiently.

### Reduce Heat Loss from the Fireplace

- Keep the fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. Install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room.

### Lower Holiday Lighting Costs

- Use light-emitting diode (LED) holiday light strings to reduce the cost of decorating the home for the winter holidays.

# Montgomery County President's Paragraphs

## Planning for 2026

We are planning all of the 2026 programs and activities. We will start with our blanket day in January and add informational programs starting in February. Please use your new handbook (see below) to mark your calendars **now** (so you don't double book with that dentist appointment!) as we have some very interesting programs planned.

The **Handbook** will be distributed in December. The Handbook is a very useful guide and contains all the programs and dates of activities for FCE in 2026. It is also a quick reference to enable you to contact your local and state officers. The handbook explains FCE continuing programs, the role of National FCE and most importantly keeps you informed of county and state events.

## Cookie Exchange

**December 9, 2025 at 9:45 AM**

**MC Extension Garage**

Come and share some Holiday cheer. We will have some fun, eat a few cookies and then go to lunch. That is, after we exchange cookies. Bring 4 dozen cookies, the recipe and an extra empty container.



## FCE Blanket Making (MC Extension Garage)

**January 9, 2026 Friday 10 AM – 3 PM**

**February 5, 2026 Thursday 10 AM – 8 PM**

**March 6, 2026 Friday 10 AM – 3 PM**

We made over 1,189 blankets and 608 newborn hats this year (waiting for the November numbers). We continue to work with MCPS to provide Student Service Learning (SSL) hours for students for blanket, hat and scarf making. We have worked



with many students this year and awarded 5,319 SSL hours to 186 students as of November. We are always looking for more yarn and fleece; if you know of anyone who is cleaning their closet, keep us in mind.

## February is Birthday Month

Happy Birthday to us! Remember that February is FCE's birthday month. Clubs/individuals should collect a penny for each year of a member's life (or \$1.00 so no one will know your age) and send them to Jeanne Gillis. The funds are going to help defray mailing costs for the newsletter.



## The American Front Porch by Sandy Heiler

**February 10, 2026 at 9:45 AM**

**MC Extension Office**

**County Association Meeting**

There is probably no other architectural feature that evokes such feelings of comfort, welcome, and nostalgia as the front porch. It's an outdoor living room for relaxing, visiting, entertaining, and people-watching. For 150 years, from about 1790 to 1940, everybody wanted a front porch. And then nobody did. This is a talk about why? and why then?

## "Whole Grains: Nutrient Dense Food for a Healthier Diet!" (FCE Hearth Fire #83)

**By Pat Fewell and Kathie Mack**

**MC Extension Office**

**County Association Meeting**

What are whole grains? How much should we eat daily? How do whole grains help our bodies? These are some areas we will explore in this program.



## SAVE THE DATE

Thursday April 9, come and have Tea with the Queen at our International Day festivities. More information in the next newsletter.

Enjoy the Holidays!

*Jeanne Purich*

Jeanne Purich, President      jcpurich@cs.com  
15500 Gallaudet Ave  
Silver Spring MD 20905

## Views of the Conference from a First-Timer

### 2025 Maryland FCE Conference

By Louise Lewis

A little over a year ago I decided to join the Montgomery County Blanket Makers division of FCE. After participating in a business meeting as a guest and subsequently assisting with a blanket-making session a month later, the decision was simple. I loved the aspect of community service and working for a common cause with a wonderful group of friendly and thoughtful participants.

After registering for the annual FCE Statewide conference, I was pleasantly surprised to be randomly chosen, as a new member, to attend for free with my sponsor. It was an excellent and productive few days.

The rain and windy weather at Kent Narrows' location did not deter from the beautiful water and marsh views, or sightings of waterfowl and deer. The conference stood out thanks to a captivating selection of presentations and discussions led by knowledgeable speakers. Topics covered included the vital role of bees, current environmental initiatives in the Chesapeake Bay region, and the work of dedicated volunteers who are keeping our national and state parks clean, safe, and well-maintained. We also enjoyed entertaining games and hearty meals.

The session I found most engaging featured Frances Perkins, as portrayed by Kathie Mack who dressed appropriately for the role and provided an informative account of Perkins' life, highlighting the significant events that led to her appointment by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the first woman Secretary of Labor and her subsequent development of Social Security policies. A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE!

Thanks, FCE members, for a vibrant and informative event. And I hope more of you will consider attending next year's conference!

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well”.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## Stamps for the Wounded

On my return home from the September FCE blanket making session, I made a detour to the BWI Airport Marriott Hotel. Was I catching a flight the following morning for some exotic destination? I wish! Was I meeting a renowned dignitary to share ideas for world peace? Maybe next year. No, my goal was to deliver hundreds of postage stamps and many stamp supplies (donated by FCE members and friends) to *Stamps for the Wounded* organization which was set up at the Baltimore Philatelic Society's annual stamp expo.

I was welcomed by several retired veterans who thanked me profusely for the large donation and told me that the stamps and supplies will make a positive change in the lives of many. The gentleman in the photo below piled the boxes on a hand cart and hustled them out to his van, eager, he said, to start sorting, sending, and filling requests.

Thanks everyone for your time and generosity. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Louise Lewis

[louiselewis@comcast.net](mailto:louiselewis@comcast.net)



## What Turns Pillows Yellow



### Is a Yellow Pillow Unhealthy?

Dr. Liu cautioned that the oils and perspiration trapped in your pillow can “clog pores and lead to breakouts,” not to mention wreak further havoc on your skin. “Damp pillows can exacerbate skin conditions like rosacea and eczema,” she said.

Those dust mites *can* pose a health hazard, too. “These microscopic pests commonly trigger allergies and asthma,” according to Dr. Amy Zack of the Cleveland Clinic. “They’re probably the most common type of insect-like bug (a type of arthropod) that you would find on an upholstered surface, such as a couch, pillow, or bed. If somebody has allergy symptoms, particularly during the night, then we might recommend they get pillowcases that prevent dust mites.”

While it might not be a toxic 911 situation, the truth isn’t great. “Yellow pillows are the accumulation of dirt, oil, dead skin cells, drool, and perspiration,” Dr. Jenny Liu, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist and assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Minnesota Medical School, explained in a TikTok video.

And if that doesn’t make you more afraid to lay your head down tonight, Dr. Liu pointed out something else lurking in that yellow pillow. “Dust mites love to eat our dead skin cells and our pillows are infested with them,” she said. While you probably aren’t going to feel them (so don’t freak out!), these mites can lead to other problems.

### How Often Should You Wash Your Pillow?

According to Consumer Reports, you should wash your pillow around twice a year, or four times a year if you sweat a lot, have pets that sleep with you, or have a habit of bringing food to bed. Experts also suggest some monthly maintenance; hang your pillow outside on a sunny, breezy day to air it out, or give it a spin in the dryer on a no-heat cycle.

Most importantly, read the washing instructions on your specific pillow to avoid damaging it, as methods for washing down or feather pillows, memory foam or latex pillows, or polyester pillows will vary, as well as the methods for drying them.

### The Best Way to Clean Dirty Sheets

“From a cleaning perspective, hot water is your friend,” says Jason Tetro, aka “The Germ Guy,” a microbiologist in Canada. Research from the American Society for Microbiology found that washing bed linens in 140°F for 10 to 13 minutes is ideal for destroying bacteria.

“If you’re using cool water and you’re not using a detergent that is known to kill these bugs, they have a nice bit of a rollercoaster ride, and then they end up somewhere else,” Tetro points out. “And if you don’t put your sheets in the dryer, then you’re not getting the heat that’s necessary to kill them.”

Although hot water will effectively kill any microscopic creepy crawlers on your sheets, most bed linens will come with instructions to launder them in cold water to preserve the fabric and extend their life. So, if you prefer to use cold water, make sure to toss your sheets in the dryer after. Just be sure not to ruin all your hard work by putting clean sheets onto your bed with dirty hands. “For the love of goodness, wash your hands before you handle clean laundry,” Tetro says.



## Unstuffed Cabbage Roll



### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 small head cabbage, chopped
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
- ½ cup water
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Rice (optional)

### Directions

1. Gather all ingredients.
2. Heat a Dutch oven or large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir beef and onion in the hot Dutch oven until browned and crumbly, 5 to 7 minutes; drain and discard grease.
3. Add cabbage, tomatoes, tomato sauce, water, garlic, salt, and pepper and bring to a boil. Cover Dutch oven, reduce heat, and simmer until cabbage is tender, about 30 minutes.
4. Serve hot over rice (optional) and enjoy!

## Takoma Park Crafters' 43rd Holiday Sale

December 5-6, 2025  
Friday, noon-8pm  
Saturday, 10am-5pm

Handcrafted gifts by local artists  
Near Takoma Metro

SEEKERS CHURCH • 276 Carroll Street, NW  
<https://sites.google.com/view/tkpkcraftsale/tkpkcrafters-home-page>  
tpholidaycrafts@gmail.com



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