LOOK

December - February 2027

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
7 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM MC Extension Office
8 **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
8 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 3 PM Extension Office garage
31 End of County 2026-2027 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
1 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM MC Extension Office
4 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 8 PM Extension Office garage
9 Valentine Making
9:45 AM, Extension Office
County Association Meeting
Refreshments: Derwood
20 Send County winner of Essay and Artwork Contest to State President
23 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
1 Maryland FCE Board Meeting, 10 AM MC Extension Office
4 FCE Blanket making, 10 AM – 3 PM MC Extension Office garage
8 International Women's Day
9 **"The DC Diaper Bank"** Ashley Jones, Program Manager, speaker
Refreshments: Lunch Bunch

CHARACTER COUNTS!® Contest

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

MDAFCE Web Site is 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.

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.



"We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joys in the world."

Helen Keller

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Here it is November 2026. We are having the midterm elections for the State of Maryland. I hope everyone takes their responsibility seriously and votes. I know that a lot of countries do not use these elections to put their representatives in place to govern them. Maryland and the United States are very lucky to rule themselves and not have any royality to control or rule them.

I know I had a very good time at our Annual Conference in October. I was disappointed with the low number of attendees. Let's see if we can double that number next year. The speakers on Becoming Americans, Outreach, Whole Grains, NASA, and Wildlife each gave a wonderful presentation. I hope you will plan on coming to next year's conference.

Libby Wade, MDAFCE President
dunade@aol.com 301-831-8661

NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PROGRAM

The Maryland Association for Family and Community Education held its annual conference over October 12-13, 2026, 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. Many thanks to those who came to this conference to appreciate the informative sessions and the fellowship of friends.

Those who came a day early enjoyed a seafood dinner at the nearby Fisherman's Inn and an evening of games and crafts.

During the actual conference, attendees attended presentations on "Becoming Americans — 1774", "Whole Grains: Nutrient Dense Food for a Healthier Diet!", "Hummingbirds", and "A Visual Tour of NASA Science" (the talk that had been scheduled for last year but was unable to take place because of the government shutdown). Unfortunately, a talk by a representative of Maryland Public Television was cancelled by a scheduling snafu — fingers crossed for next year!

Ginny Hagberg led us in gentle exercise between sessions. Helen De Roo got us going embroidering happy and sad faces for the therapy dolls made by her group at Leisure World. We were wonderfully entertained Monday evening by Janie Meneely and Rob Van Sante, musicians and storytellers with lot of material about the Chesapeake Bay.

The conference also included an awards ceremony and a business meeting as well as short videos about our 2025-2026 CHARACTER Counts!® winner and the 2026 ACWW Triennial last spring in Ottawa. Our final activity was to draw raffle tickets for many 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/EkbXtomHf7gHqPb76

Later in October, on the 29th, Montgomery College held a luncheon for all scholarship donors and recipients. Ginny Hagberg and I attended to represent MCAFCE and the two Mary Irene Waters scholarships we fund at the College every year. This year both of our scholarship recipients were present! They are Nelly Kra and Toluwalope "Tolu" Opadayo, both Nursing students. Tolu and I were both early and spoke for quite a while before other diners took their seats at our table.

Another Maryland FCE conference in October is not the only thing we have planned for 2027. Besides the ten usual blanket-making days, please mark your calendars for these special events:

- February 9 — Make Valentines for Arbor Place and Casey House
- March 9 — Ashley Jones from DC Diaper Bank will speak
- April 13 — Carol Ossi will speak about bees and beekeeping
- May 15 — Spring Luncheon. Chris Williams will speak about the MOOseum
- July 12-15? — National FCE conference in Lincoln, Nebraska
- September 9 — Helen De Roo and Louise Williams will take us to Mongolia and Poland for International Day
- October 11-12? — Maryland FCE conference in the Kent Narrows, Maryland

- November 9 — Dr. Stonestreet (Clarence Hickey) will introduce us to the life of a 19th-century Rockville doctor
- December 14 — Cookie Exchange

Kathie Mack, MDAFCE Vice President for Programs
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NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Going Forward

This newsletter item is short and sweet (a departure from past items in this column!). Instead of commentary about parties, elections, voting, and civics education for the electorate, I have a simple statement about where the past two years have led us to, after the November 3rd election results. The voters have definitively spoken - they want changes that help the broad electorate, not just those poised at the pinnacle of our society. The past process of each party working against each other must make a return to working together and reaching a consensus that works for the greater good of all. In the words of our parents, teachers, and grandparents - "play nice with each other". We voted. Hopefully, our political leaders and newly elected representatives listen and produce results. We the people will be watching and grading the results in 2028.

Debra Rausch, MDAFCE Vice President for Public Policy
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Happy 96th Birthday to Marcie Burroughs from the Burtonsville Club!

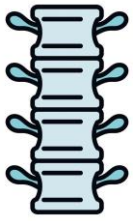
MEMBERSHIP NEWS



As of November 1, 2026, we have approximately 70 members for our 2027 membership drive, including 3 new members, Hue Tran, Jane Gorbaty and youth member, Cleo MacGill! 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 2027, you receive a Star Pin **PLUS** a chance for you and your new member to attend the 2027 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

Anatomy of an Organization



The body of every organization is structured from four kinds of bones. There are the Wishbones who spend all their time wishing someone else would do all the work. Then there are the Jawbones, who do all the talking but little else. The Knucklebones knock everything anyone else tries to do. Fortunately, in every organization, there are also the Backbones who get under the load and do all the work. **YOU are that backbone of FCE!**

Montgomery County President's Paragraphs

Planning for 2027

We have planned all the 2027 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 2027. 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 8, 2026 at 9:45 AM
MC Extension Garage
Refreshments: Burtonsville

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
January 8, 2027 Friday 10 AM – 3 PM
February 4, 2027 Thursday 10 AM – 8 PM
March 4, 2027 Thursday 10AM – 3 PM
MC Extension Garage

We made over 1,011 blankets and 517 newborn hats this year (we will add November numbers after the last blanket day for 2026). 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 3,255.5 SSL hours to 101 students as of October. 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 go to help defray mailing costs for the newsletter.



Making Valentines for Arbor Place and Casey House
February 9, 2027 at 9:45 AM
MC Extension Garage
Refreshments: Derwood

We will make Valentines for the patients and staff at these facilities. Kathie Mack will deliver them that day.



The DC Diaper Bank
March 9, 2027 at 9:45 AM
MC Extension Office
Refreshments: Lunch Bunch

Ashley Jones, Program Manager, will explain the purpose of the DC Diaper Bank and who it serves. Many of our blankets, hats, gloves and socks go to the DC Diaper Bank.

Enjoy the Holidays!

Jeanne Purich

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

"As individual fingers we can easily be broken, but all together we make a mighty fist." Sitting Bull

Views of the Conference from a First-Timer

2026 Maryland FCE Conference

By Hue Tran

I am surprisingly thrilled with the packed and diverse informative program. From daily living with a healthy diet, to the history of our country, our planet, and the universe, I learned so much. Pat and Kathie gave us a fun introduction to whole grains, pinpointing the facts, benefits, and how to recognize them in our regular grocery stores. Sandy summarized the history of our country, highlighting major turning points of early colonies and the Declaration of Independence. Mark presented the work of NASA, which visualizes the universe for the public eye, how everyday weather reports are transcribed, and the universe and its mysteries. To wrap up, Judy presented on one of the tiniest and lightest creatures among us, the hummingbird. She highlighted their survival instincts and incredible resilience. The unity in a hummingbird community makes us wonder about ourselves and the world we live in. Most of all, I enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere of the location and the friendliness of the attendees while embroidering faces for the Sew for Kids club. We chit-chatted, helped each other and exchanged ideas and tips, and we laughed, joked, and shared a very joyful time. I surely cannot wait for our next annual conference

SEW FOR KIDS WORKSHOP



The Sew for Kids Workshop at Leisure World of Maryland wants to express its gratitude to all who participated in the embroidery project at the Maryland State FCE Conference. Our fellow members were thrilled when they saw all the wonderful new faces for the critters that we make. And we know that the lives of the children who receive them will be equally delighted. We were especially touched by the dedication and enthusiasm that everyone expressed as we worked on the embroidery. From Cindy Coleman, Wendy Ketcham, Hue Tran and Helen De Roo, please accept our deepest appreciation.

Women's Organization for Rural Development (WORD) - Funded in June 2024 with a grant of £7,444

A core area of focus for Women's Organization for Rural Development (WORD) is the promotion of sustainable agriculture among farming communities to create sustainable livelihoods, improve soil health and the environment and contribute to the overall wellbeing of all living things.

The project, which is planned to last for 12 months, will reach 50 Dalit women living across five villages in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu. Participants will attend training in sustainable horticulture methods utilizing indigenous crops. They will attend intensive training sessions, field demonstrations and farmer field schools. Indigenous seeds will be distributed include okra, aubergine, chilies, gourds and greens. They will also be provided with organic farm inputs including herbal pesticides, crop tonics and fertilizer. There will also be seed collection sessions so that farmers can create their own seed banks for future use and to share with other farmers.

The participants of this project already own small plots of land, around a quarter of an acre, which will enable them to implement the training in sustainable agriculture they have received effectively. For many participants, this land is being underutilized to raise cattle or other grazers rather than grow profitable crops. This project will empower the women to invest in the health of the soil to cultivate a sustainable income from their land.

WORD strives to enable grassroots women, adolescents, and youth to create micro level business entrepreneurs, ending all age-old practices, customs against women, children. https://acww.org.uk

GAS LEAK and HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENT

A gas leak or hazardous materials incident may include a spill or release of chemical, radioactive, or biological materials inside or outside of a facility. While these incidents are rare, it is important that occupants move to a safe location and allow qualified public safety personnel to evaluate the threat.

If you suspect a gas leak or smell a suspicious odor:

Know the signs of a potential gas leak:

- See dirt or water blown from the ground.
- Hear a hissing, blowing, or roaring sound.
- Smell an odor like rotten eggs.
- Do not light a match, candle, or other flame.
- Do not turn electrical appliances or lights on or off, operate motorized equipment or vehicles, or use any device (e.g., cell phones) that could cause a spark of source of ignition.
- Move to a safe location:
- If the leak or odor is outside of the building, stay inside and shelter-in-place.
- If the leak or odor is inside of the building, evacuate immediately to your designated assembly area. Leave doors and windows open to ventilate if possible.
- Call 9-1-1.
- Do not leave your safe location until directed by first responders.

If you have been exposed to a dangerous substance:

- Call 9-1-1.
- Notify your supervisor (whoever is in charge) to prevent anyone else from coming into contact with the chemical.
- Remove contaminated clothing and call the Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate advice.

If you witness a hazardous material spill or attack:

- Leave the immediate area as quickly as possible and protect yourself by finding something to place over your nose and mouth.
- If you have open cuts or wounds, cover exposed skin with additional clothing to help prevent bacteria from entering the cuts.
- Call 9-1-1 to report the spill/attack and notify your supervisor (whoever is in charge).
- If the suspected attack takes place outdoors, remain indoors unless directed otherwise by first responders.

FLU SYMPTOMS

The flu isn't a mild cold. The symptoms are intense and start suddenly — what many experts describe as feeling like "being hit by a truck".

The most common signs of flu infection include:

- Severe fatigue
- Fever
- Chills
- Body aches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Cough

Less commonly, the flu may cause diarrhea and vomiting, which is more common among children than adults, per the CDC.

Most healthy people will recover from flu on their own, but it can cause you to feel miserable for up to two weeks.

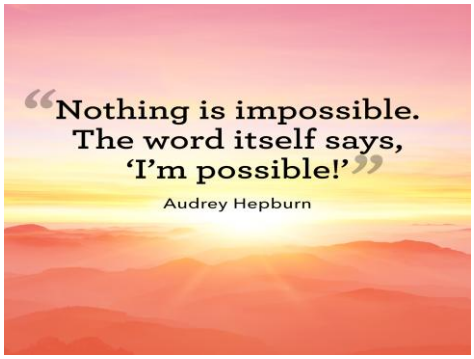
Adults over the age of 65, children under 5, pregnant women and immunocompromised people are at higher risk for severe disease or complications from the flu, says Schaffner.

However, the flu can become deadly for anyone.

If you develop severe flu symptoms or you're in a high-risk group, contact your healthcare provider, says Schaffner.

Flu Tests and Treatments

The only way to know if you have the flu is to get tested. The experts recommend stocking up on 3-in-1 rapid home tests for influenza A, influenza B and COVID-19 ahead of the fall.



USEFUL HOUSEHOLD HINTS



Easy Deviled Eggs

Put cooked egg yolks in a zip lock bag. Seal, mash till they are all broken up. Add remainder of ingredients, reseal, keep mashing it up mixing thoroughly, cut the tip of the baggy, squeeze mixture into egg. Just throw bag away when done easy clean up.

Expanding Frosting

When you buy a container of cake frosting from the store, whip it with your mixer for a few minutes. You can double it in size. You get to frost more cake/cupcakes with the same amount. You also eat less sugar/calories per serving.

Reheating refrigerated bread

To warm biscuits, pancakes, or muffins that were refrigerated, place them in a microwave with a cup of water. The increased moisture will keep the food moist and help it reheat faster.

Newspaper weeds away

Start putting in your plants, work the nutrients in your soil. Wet the newspapers, put layers around the plants overlapping as you go, cover with mulch, and forget about weeds. Weeds will get through some gardening plastic; they will not get through wet newspapers.

No More Mosquitoes

Place a dryer sheet in your pocket. It will keep the mosquitoes away.

Squirrel Away!

To keep squirrels from eating your plants, sprinkle your plants with cayenne pepper. The cayenne pepper doesn't hurt the plant and the squirrels won't come near it.

Protect bikes

If you purchase a new bike for your child, place their address inside the handlebar before placing the grips on. If the bike is stolen and later recovered, remove the grip and there is proof of who owns the bike.

Flexible vacuum

To get something out of a heat register or under the fridge, add an empty paper towel roll or empty gift wrap roll to your vacuum. It can be bent or flattened to get in narrow openings.

Reducing Static Cling

Pin a small safety pin to the seam of your slip and you will not have a clingy skirt or dress. Same thing works with slacks that cling when wearing panty hose. Place pin in seam of slacks and - voila - static is gone.

Foggy Windshield?

Hate foggy windshields? Buy a chalkboard eraser and keep it in the glove box of your car. When the windows fog, rub with the eraser! Works better than a cloth!

Reopening envelope

If you seal an envelope and then realize you forgot to include something inside, just place your sealed envelope in the freezer for an hour or two. Voila! It unseals easily.

Conditioner

Use your hair conditioner to shave your legs. It's a lot cheaper than shaving cream and leaves your legs smooth. It's also a great way to use up the conditioner you bought but didn't like when you tried it on your hair...

Goodbye Fruit Flies

To get rid of pesky fruit flies, take a small glass fill it 1/2" with Apple Cider Vinegar and 2 drops of dishwashing liquid; mix well. You will find those flies drawn to the cup and gone forever!

Getting Rid of Ants

Put small piles of cornmeal where you see ants. They eat it, take it "home," & can't digest it so it kills them. It may take a week or so, especially if it rains, but it works & you don't have the worry about pets or small children being harmed!

Cindy Coleman's Sweet Potato Casserole

Ingredients

Nut Crust (Pecans or Walnuts)

- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup chopped nuts
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

Sweet Potato Casserole Filling

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 2 cups mashed sweet potatoes (You might want to prepare these the night before.)
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

Place casserole filling in greased 1 quart baking dish.
Spoon nut crust on top.
Bake at 350F for 30-35 minutes.
Serve at any temperature.



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