

Forging Our Future
NEAFCS 2005 Annual Conference and Exhibits
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Kathy Metzenbauer
Family Living Agent
Juneau County UW-Extension

I had the pleasure of attending the NEAFCS National Conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This conference provided an excellent professional development opportunity for me. Goals of this conference were to:

- Provide resources and tools to improve programs and enhance my career.
- Learn how to implement new technologies to improve program delivery and reach new audiences.
- Understand about the emerging issues facing a changing population.
- Explore effective and innovative strategies for educational program delivery.
- See the latest resources, equipment and materials available.
- Keep up to date on the state of Extension and learn how to have an impact on its future.

The keynote speaker for the General session was Hedda Sharapan, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives and Associate Producer with Family Communications, Inc., which is the company that produces “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.” Her message was about how Fred Rogers made child development theory understandable for children, families and professionals. Fred Rogers wanted to make the world a better place since he graduated from college as a Presbyterian minister. One way was by educating children about differences. Hedda showed a film clip of a 5 year old in a wheel chair. He had a tumor, which was removed but caused him to become a paraplegic. He happened to be from Wisconsin. When his peers honored Fred Rogers for his television show years later, the surprise guest was this young man. He had gone through college and with the help of others has been able to be a contributing member of society. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the audience.

On Monday I attended the Regional Awards Breakfast and meeting. Three Family Living Agents, including myself received awards. From there I attended an in-depth session entitled, “The Housing Connection: Top 10 Lessons and Resources” by Dr. Michael Vogel, Housing and Environmental Specialist from the Montana State University Extension. This was an incredible session and I came back with many resources that I have shared with the Wisconsin UW-Extension Housing team. Dr. Vogel

presented many innovative ways of educating the public on housing issues – presentations on keeping Alzheimer’s patients safe at home to working with day cares. These presentations show we can reach a more diverse audience of non-traditional Extension users.

Tuesday I spent the morning gathering resources from the Exhibit Hall. These included some interesting materials from the Bean Council that will make an interesting HCE Leadership Training. Other exhibits included Center for Divorce Education, Penn State Better Kid Care Program, USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service, to name a few.

In the afternoon I had the opportunity to visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art where there was an exhibition by Edvard Munch, who is well known for his painting, “The Scream.” This was a very interesting art museum in that not all the exhibits were paintings; there were also furnishings, clothing and china. There was a silver teapot made by Paul Revere’s company.

On Wednesday I attended two excellent break out sessions. One was on a court ordered parent education program in Ohio where I was able to get a different perspective on how to present this program. The other was on a parent education project from Arkansas that uses a parent self-assessment tool. In the afternoon, I was a voting delegate from Wisconsin so participated in the Annual Business Meeting.

The closing session’s speaker was Dr. Gina Barreca, Professor of English Literature and Feminist Theory at the University of Connecticut. Her message was on the importance of laughter even during crisis.

The Awards Banquet took place on Wednesday evening where I was presented with the Distinguished Service Award, which was truly an honor.

In conclusion, I want to thank Sue Buck, Central District Director for allowing me to use district resources for the opportunity to attend this excellent professional development opportunity, as I receive no funds from Juneau County to attend any out of state conference. I was able to bring back many resources that I plan on sharing with my colleagues across the state.