

New Directions

Fall 2026

Connecting NJ One Chapter at a Time

President's Address



Dear New Jersey FCCLA Members, Advisers, and Alumni:

For over 80 years, the New Jersey Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America has empowered members in grades 6-12 to become better leaders in their families, their communities, and even the workplace. As we celebrate 80 years of Legacy & Leadership, we honor thousands of members, advisers, and alumni who helped shape the future of our organization, demonstrating the true definition of leadership.

Over the summer, 200 student leaders, advisers, and alumni from our NJ State Association filled the streets of our nation's capital. Over 10,000 student leaders from across the nation "rocked the red" as far as the eyes could see, for the 2026 National Leadership Conference.

The New Jersey members did an awesome job in the competitive events. The hard work and dedication of our competitors truly paid off. New Jersey walked away with 81 gold medals, 57 silver medals, and 5 bronze medals with 27 teams placing in the "Top 10" and 6 teams placed in the Top 3. In addition, 41 students participated in the Challenge Tests with 30 members in the "Top 10" and 13 of those members were in the Top 3. Of the 22 students in the Skill Demonstration Events, 9 landed in the "Top 10" and 2 of those members were in the Top 3. All I can say is WOW! New Jersey Rocked the Red in Competitive Events. Congratulations!

Students and advisers were also able to attend several workshops about leadership roles, fundraising, community service, and more. Two New Jersey FCCLA members even had the opportunity to present their own workshops. Chrissy Costa from the Southern Regional High School Chapter presented a Red Talk on Balancing Stress. Kaya Bromiley from the Southern Regional High School chapter presented a workshop on Sustainable Fashion. I would also like to congratulate Rajganes Srinivasan from JP Stevens High School on his amazing accomplishment of being elected as the National Vice President of Membership! We wish you much success in your leadership role.

As one chapter closes and another begins, we look forward to the opportunities this school year will bring. New Jersey FCCLA has something for everyone, and we look forward to seeing how you get involved, from competitive event projects to community service projects to statewide conferences; we've got you covered.

As we celebrate 80 Years of Legacy and Leadership, we are excited to introduce opportunities that will help write the next chapter of New Jersey FCCLA. This year, we are thrilled to welcome back the beloved "Pin-spirations" FLC event while also launching our new Fall Competitive Event, Membership Matters: Recruitment Rocks. This event challenges members to develop and implement creative recruitment strategies that strengthen their chapters and ensure our legacy continues for generations to come.

Remember, our legacy isn't just the things we have done in the past; it can start with the actions we take today. Whether it's your first year as a member or you have been a member for 4 or more years, continue to leave your mark on New Jersey FCCLA through participation in service initiatives, competing in competitive events, or mentoring a new member. On behalf of the New Jersey State Executive Council, we wish you success in your school year ahead and hope it's filled with personal growth and knowledge.

With appreciation,

Brian Muirhead

State President

MEET YOUR STATE OFFICERS

By: Janiece Boykins, VP of Leadership Development

As we begin to kick off this new school year, your state officers are excited and preparing for an amazing, FCCLA, fun-filled time with you all. With that being said, it is only fitting that you get to know each officer a little more! In this section, your officers have provided answers to one of the following three questions: What is your favorite leadership quote? What is your favorite fall activity? What is your favorite Fall Competitive Event?



Brian Muirhead, President

Favorite Fall Competition: "Community Counts dives into the service element of our organization while allowing you to get connected to community members."



Jenna Trotman, First Vice President

Favorite Fall Activity: "My favorite fall activity is taking my dog on walks at the park because I enjoy watching the trees change colors and the leaves fall."



Sheridan Donnellan, VP of Communications

Favorite Fall Activity: "My favorite fall activity is baking! I love making pumpkin spice lattes or cookies to celebrate the season!"



Kaya Bromiley, VP of Membership

Favorite Fall Activity: "My favorite fall activity is watching Halloween movies and enjoying the fall weather!"



Christina Costa, VP of National Programs

Favorite FLC Competition: "My favorite Fall Competitive Event is Illustrated Talk. I enjoy how you get so much creative freedom and love how every project is so unique!"



Rajganes Srinivasan, National VP of Membership

Favorite Leadership Quote: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" - Mahatma Gandhi



Nia McCann, VP of Competitive Events

Favorite FLC Competition: "My favorite Fall Competitive Event is the Cupcake Challenge. The secret ingredient challenged me to use flavors I would not have tried before. The event was fun and helped raise money for a service initiative."



Virenda Rautela, VP of Community Service

Favorite Fall Activity: "My favorite fall activity is going on walks with my dog or bike rides!"



Janiece Boykins, VP of Leadership Development

Favorite FLC Competition: "My favorite Fall Competitive Event is Cultural Food Fusion. Through this event I was able to research another culture, prepare a new dish, and have fun piecing everything together in a beautiful presentation."



By: Nia McCann
VP of Competitive Events

As many people head back to school and work, the roads become crowded with people trying to get everywhere in the morning and afternoon. You will see buses, cars, cyclists, motorcycles, and even runners all along the roads. Whether you're driving to school or work or simply just traveling to a random destination, taking a few extra precautions can help keep you and others safe. A little patience and attention behind the wheel can make a big difference in preventing accidents and ensuring everyone's safety. Let's make this school year a safe one by practicing these driving habits and looking out for one another each day.

Back-to-School Driving Safety Tips

- Wear your seat belt every time you get in the car.
- Put your phone away and avoid all distractions while driving.
- Leave early to avoid rushing and aggressive behavior.
- Slow Down in school zones and obey posted speed limits.
- Stop for school buses whenever required by law.
- Watch for pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections.
- Stay alert for young drivers, bicyclists, and students walking to school.
- Be patient during busy morning and afternoon traffic.

Have a healthy and safe school year!

2026 NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IN REVIEW!



**BY: JENNA TROTMAN,
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT**

What an incredible week! The 2026 FCCLA National Leadership Conference took place July 5-10 in Washington, D.C. was a massive success and was filled with truly unforgettable experiences. Members from across the country really showed what it means to lead with passion, whether it was through inspirational workshops, intense competitive events, or making lifelong connections. New Jersey members took the lead with a newly elected National Officer, two National Content Creators, twenty-seven Top 10 Finalists, six Top 3 Winners, a nationally recognized adviser, and so much more!

To every student, adviser, and chapter who attended: congratulations! Whether you competed in a STAR Event, took home an award, or stepped out of your comfort zone to learn a new thing, your hard work and dedication were on full display and you represented New Jersey FCCLA with distinction and pride. You should be immensely proud of everything you accomplished with 81 gold medals, 57 silver medals, and 5 bronze medals.

A huge event like this National Conference only works when everyone comes together. A huge thank you must go out to all members, advisers, alumni, and chaperones for your cooperation and positivity throughout the conference. Due to your energy and support, we created a fun-filled environment where every member had the chance to learn and shine.

As we start the new year, take the skills, ideas, and inspiration you gained at NLC and use this to make a difference within your chapters and communities. We can't wait to see what this year brings!

Congratulations again, and we hope to see you at the 2027 National Leadership Conference being held in San Antonio, Texas June 21-26, 2027!

INTRODUCING: NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF MEMBERSHIP FROM NJ!



Congratulations to Rajganesh "Raj" Srinivasan, who was elected to the 2026-2027 National Executive Council at the 2026 National Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. Raj has been an active FCCLA member for the past five years, formerly serving as the NJ FCCLA Vice President of Parliamentary Law and Chapter Vice President of Conferences at John P. Stevens High School. Previously, he and Virendra Rautela earned third place nationally in the Safe Rides - Save Lives public service announcement competition, promoting healthy emotions while driving. Last year, he also placed as a top-three finalist for the Entrepreneurship STAR Event. Raj looks forward to supporting over a quarter million FCCLA members as the National Vice President of Membership this coming year. Our New Jersey state association proudly supports Raj in his leadership journey as he represents New Jersey at the national level.



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Coming Soon:

The 2026 Fall Leadership Connection!

**By: Jenna Trotman, First Vice President &
Nia McCann, Vice President of Competitive Events**

This autumn, New Jersey FCCLA members and advisers from across the Garden State will gather for one of the most anticipated events of the school year: the 2026 Fall Leadership Connection, taking place on Monday, November 23, 2026, at the Pines Manor in Edison, NJ.

Whether you are a new member discovering FCCLA for the first time or a seasoned chapter leader getting ready to graduate, Fall Leadership Connection is full of opportunities to grow:

1. Workshops & Keynote Speakers

Get inspired! Attendees can participate in interactive leadership workshops designed to sharpen leadership skills and build teamwork. Hear from engaging guest speakers and learn how to make an impact in your school and community.

2. Fall Competitive Events

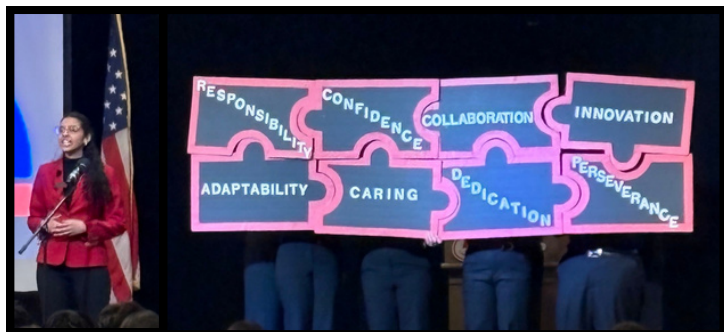
FLC gives members a chance to showcase their talents across various Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) areas. Competing at FLC is also a great way to prepare for the State Leadership Conference while having an exciting start to the school year.

3. Statewide Community Service Initiatives

Service is at the heart of FCCLA. As a state association, we come together at FLC to support impactful community causes. Bring your chapter's donations, contribute to statewide service projects, and see NJ FCCLA in action.

The Fall Leadership Connection is more than just a conference. It's where lasting experiences are made, and inspiring leadership stories start. We look forward to seeing you there!

Advisers: Check the official NJ FCCLA Website (njfccla.org) for registration deadlines, competitive event guidelines, and permission forms.



Lead With Service: Become a Service Ambassador!



By Virendra Rautela, VP of Community Service

Some of the best Service projects begin with one simple question: What does our community need? The New Jersey FCCLA Service Ambassador Program helps chapters answer that question and turn their ideas into action.

Each participating chapter adviser chooses a member to represent it as a Service Ambassador. Throughout the year, Ambassadors can connect with others across New Jersey. In their monthly meetings, Service Ambassadors share what their chapters are doing and learn about different service initiative opportunities by communicating with each other.

For chapters, joining this program can make community service easier to plan, as well as more meaningful. Your ambassador can help members brainstorm projects, organize events, and stay informed about statewide opportunities. Projects could include collecting food for a local pantry, making cards for senior citizens, organizing a clothing drive, or supporting a cause that matters to your school.

This position allows selected members a chance to grow as a leader. A Service Ambassador must communicate with their members, keep their chapter and adviser updated, and encourage their chapters to participate in service initiatives. Along the way, Service Ambassadors strengthen NJ FCCLA by building teamwork, increasing communication, and developing time-management skills.

If your chapter has not joined the program yet, discuss this with your adviser and discuss the Service Ambassador Program at your next meeting! Think about members who are dependable, passionate about helping others, and ready to take on a new leadership role. The application will be available through your adviser in early September; speak with your adviser on how your chapter can participate.

Every chapter has the ability to make a difference. By joining the Service Ambassador Program, your chapter can connect with others, discover new ideas, and help build a more caring New Jersey FCCLA.



Behind the Scenes of a Successful Chapter

By: Sheridan Donnellan, VP of Communication

Every meeting, event, or fundraiser that you attend takes weeks, maybe even months to prepare. There is so much planning that goes into running a successful chapter that people often do not see on the surface.

Every chapter relies on good planning, teamwork, and deadlines to succeed. Advisers and their chapters work together to brainstorm ideas, set goals, create calendars, budget efficiently, order supplies, and assign responsibilities. These tasks do not get done without significant forethought and adviser support.

Communication keeps everything running smoothly, without it even great plans can crumble. Because of this, group chats, frequent emails, meetings, updates, reminders, and listening skills are necessities for any successful chapter. This will ensure plans are executed correctly and everyone in a chapter is on the same page.

Teamwork truly makes the dream work! In a chapter, everyone has a role. Officers support the chapter with FCCLA knowledge and experience, and members volunteer, making sure things run smoothly. However, leadership is not about one person or group; chapters work together and share workloads, trust and help fellow members, and most importantly celebrate contributions and achievements.

Good chapters set and meet deadlines. For example, setting time restraints for competition registration, project due dates, permission slips, fundraiser and supply orders, scholarship applications, social media schedules, and event planning timelines. Without these deadlines, a chapter cannot be on schedule, leading to stress and disorganization.

The most important part of any chapter is its adviser, without an adviser, a chapter falls apart. They are a mentor, facilitator, and friend to the chapter. Advisers provide guidance and encouragement, review plans and paperwork, connect students with opportunities, and keep the chapter on track. Advisers and members need to work together and support each other to develop a successful chapter.

What I hope you take away from this article is that there is immense work that goes into creating an effective chapter and as a chapter member, it is your responsibility to contribute. A chapter is like a puzzle, every member, officer, and adviser is a different piece, only when they all work together in harmony does the full picture reveal itself, and the end result is truly amazing.

“Leaf” your Mark with FCCLA

By: Brian Muirhead, State President

As the leaves begin to change color from the bright vibrancy of the natural green shade to a tree full of warmth with burnt orange and crisp apple-red leaves, it means we are transitioning into the beginning of a new school year where new possibilities are limitless. Whether you're returning to a chapter or becoming an FCCLA member for the first time, there is no better time to get involved and kick off the school year on the right foot. Check off these fall-inspired FCCLA activities and make this season one to remember.

- ✓Attend Be a Teacher Day Event
- ✓Talk to someone you haven't met before about FCCLA
- ✓Participate in a community service project
- ✓Attend your chapter's first meeting
- ✓Coordinate an FCCLA spirit day with your chapter members
- ✓Advocate for FCCLA and FCS at your local school board meeting
- ✓Set 3 goals for things you want to achieve
- ✓Attend the Fall Leadership Connection Conference in November
- ✓Thank your adviser for everything they do
- ✓Host a fall-themed bake sale
- ✓Compete in a Fall Competitive Event

Every item you check off is another step contributing to your “Ultimate Leadership Experience,” while continuing New Jersey FCCLA's commitment to building tomorrow's leaders for the past 80 years.



Start Strong with the Red Rose Chapter Award & Ultimate Chapter Award



By: Jenna Trotman, First Vice President

As the new school year kicks off, September is the perfect time for FCCLA chapters to set goals and hit the ground running. If your chapter is eager to earn top-tier recognition this year, now is the time to start mapping your road to success for the NJ FCCLA Red Rose Chapter Award and the National FCCLA Ultimate Chapter Award. These awards take early planning, consistency, teamwork, and a detailed Program of Work!

In order for chapters to earn these awards, it requires:

- **Community Service & Engagement:** Plan meaningful service projects that address local needs
- **Competitive Events:** Encourage members to shine in Fall Competitive Events
- **Chapter Growth & Communication:** Recruit new members and keep your school and community updated on your accomplishments

If you need more assistance and some inspiration, use the New Jersey FCCLA 2026-2027 Program of Work and the Red Rose Award application found on the New Jersey FCCLA website (njfccla.org).

Key Awards to Aim For:

The Red Rose Chapter Award recognizes New Jersey chapters that show outstanding dedication to FCCLA's core mission. Earning this state-level honor highlights your chapter's leadership, involvement in state initiatives, and commitment to local community impact.

Considered the highest honor an FCCLA chapter can achieve nationally, the Ultimate Chapter Award celebrates groups that go above and beyond. Chapters earn points across six key focus areas (Join, Engage, Compete, Attend, Lead, and Communications) by tracking their engagement in the FCCLA Portal throughout the year.

Start planning now, inspire your members, and make this year your chapter's most rewarding one yet!



By: Janiece Boykins, VP of Leadership Development

Have you ever wished that you were a part of something bigger than yourself; that you could make a difference or be a light in the world around you? Well, when you are a part of FCCLA, that is exactly what you are! Your leadership journey does not have to stop at simply attending conferences or chapter meetings. FCCLA wants to hear your voice! If you have questions, concerns, or ideas you would like to share, do not hesitate to reach out to your chapter officers, advisers, fellow members, or your state officers.

If you have a vision to improve FCCLA, then run for a position on your chapter's council. After working through local leadership roles seek to become part of the state executive council, where you can not only work to improve FCCLA, but to be a voice for other members too.

Maybe you are nervous about speaking in front of others or afraid that your ideas do not matter. NJ FCCLA encourages you to share all your ideas. If everyone were to let fear silence their voice or keep them from stepping out of their comfort zone, then FCCLA would never have gotten to where it is now. At the end of the day, nobody is perfect, but we all have something that we can bring to the table! So, this year, get involved with FCCLA on a deeper level. Let your voice and energy, inspire change, empower others, and impact our organization!

Continuing the Legacy, One Chapter at a Time

By: Brian Muirhead, State President

The New Jersey State Executive Council is looking forward to an opportunity to connect with you and your members through chapter visits! Whether you are a brand-new chapter just getting started or an experienced chapter looking to grow, our State Officer team is here to support you every step of the way. Chapter visits are designed to provide comprehensive support for anything FCCLA-related you may need. At these chapter visits, the State Officer team can demonstrate how to set up an effective meeting, share state updates, and answer any questions you may have related to FCCLA.

Looking to increase membership? Need guidance on STAR Events or Competitive Events? Interested in expanding your community service efforts or getting more involved at the state level? We've got you covered; you can request that your chapter visit be catered to a specific topic.

If you would like to schedule a chapter visit, contact njfccla@gmail.com with a date and time you would like to host your chapter visit.

Chapter visits are a powerful tool that can benefit every chapter! We can't wait to visit your chapter and help make this your best FCCLA year yet.

New School Year, New Opportunities



By: Christina Costa
VP of Programs

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Lao Tzu.

A new school year means the first page of a brand-new book where you get 180 amazing pages to write your story! Last year does not define you. This year is a fresh start. Do not wait for change to come to you. Stop waiting for the right time and make this moment the right time to tackle new opportunities. You owe it to yourself to take this time to become the best version of yourself. The best time to start is now.

A new school year is the perfect occasion to change for the better. Spoiler alert, whether you are a freshman, sophomore, junior, or even senior, you do not have this scary thing called life figured out. What matters is not how many times you fall, because that happens to everyone, what really matters is the fact that you get back up even stronger.

Words mean nothing if they are not supported by your actions. Do not say you are going to become a better leader, and then, you don't go out and actually take any initiative. Going outside of your comfort zone is one of the most intimidating thoughts but has some of the biggest rewards. If you stay in your comfort zone, you won't learn and grow. Take the risk, show up to that meeting and be who you want to be.

With that, I challenge you to set a goal for yourself to get more involved in FCCLA in any capacity. Some things to consider are competing in a Fall Competitive Event, participating in one of the National Programs such as Power of One, or simply showing up to a meeting. FCCLA truly has so much to offer. The question is, will you answer when leadership calls?



Ask Edna



By: Pragya Bhatia, Alumni

Dear Edna,

I've been going through a little bit of a rough time in my life- I live in New Jersey but I just switched to a new school district. I'm nervous about starting 9th grade in a new school with so many new people.

On my new school's website, I saw something called FCCLA. I learned about this organization after reading about it on the district's website. Is this something that can make my transition to a new school easier?

Best,
MaybeAMember15

Dear MaybeAMember15,

Thank you for reaching out. Moving schools is never easy, and I'm happy that you are trying to find ways to ease this transition.

FCCLA is national organization and the fact that your new school has an established chapter is a wonderful opportunity for you. Joining an organization is a great way to meet new people and find some friends. Every so often, your chapter will hold meetings and provide ways for you to get involved in your community. FCCLA offers many different activities, from community service initiatives to state-wide competitive events projects. I encourage you to attend at least one meeting, speak to the adviser about how to start getting involved. FCCLA is an organization with many layers and diverse activities. I am sure you can find activities that appeal to you and can help you develop new interests and new friendships.

Joining an organization will definitely help you adjust to your new school. FCCLA is about leadership and taking action, which you have already shown through your email. I wish you the best of luck with your new school!

Best,
Edna P. Amidon



PUTTING THE "FUN" IN FUNDRAISING!

By: Virendra Rautela, VP of Community Service

Fundraising makes many FCCLA experiences possible. It can help members attend conferences, compete in STAR Events, complete service projects, and plan fun chapter activities. However, successful fundraising does not have to mean selling the same products year after year. The best fundraisers are the ones that members will actually enjoy organizing and the community will look forward to supporting.

Here are a few ideas your chapter could try:

Student VS. Teacher Competition

Invite students and teachers to compete in a game or sport such as volleyball, trivia, a talent show, or another friendly competition. Chapters can sell admission tickets and refreshments. A little competition can attract a large crowd as well as create a memorable school tradition.

Mystery Gift Bags

Fill small bags with candy, gift cards, or other donated prizes, but keep the contents a surprise. Students can purchase a bag without knowing exactly what they will receive. Make a few extra special bags by including larger prizes.

Restaurant Fundraiser

Partner with a local restaurant that will donate part of the money earned from your chapter's orders. Choose a location that is popular with students and families and promote the date through announcements, flyers, and social media.

Before getting started, set a clear fundraising goal and a simple budget. Choose an idea that works for your chapter as each school has different likes, interests, and ideas which will work for them. Divide the responsibilities among members and begin promoting it early and often. With creativity and teamwork, your next fundraiser can help raise money while also bringing your chapter and school community together!

Check out the NJ FCCLA Website for more fundraising ideas!



Leadership Lessons



By Rajganesh Srinivasan, National VP of Membership

No one wants to make a mistake. We usually hope that the meeting will go perfectly, the event will go exactly as expected, and every task will be completed on time. Unfortunately, leadership does not always happen that way. Sometimes you miss a deadline, a plan falls through, or you say the wrong thing at the worst possible time. While these situations can be embarrassing, they can actually become some of the best leadership lessons.

A good leader is not someone who never makes mistakes. What matters most is how they respond afterward. A strong leader can admit when they are wrong, take responsibility, and figure out how to do better next time.

If you forget a task, you can learn to use reminders or create a checklist. A poorly attended event can be a sign that your chapter needs stronger promotion. Even a few mistakes in a presentation can help you become better prepared and more confident in the future!

Mistakes can also improve teamwork. When something suddenly goes wrong, members need to communicate, stay calm, and work together to find a solution. These unexpected moments can bring out new ideas and talents that might not have appeared if everything had gone according to plan.

FCCLA gives members so many chances to try something new. Whether you are speaking in front of a crowd, planning a service project, competing at a conference, or leading a chapter meeting, not every experience will be perfect. That is part of the process. Leadership is developed through practice, and practice usually includes a few wrong turns along the way.

So, the next time a plan goes wrong, do not focus only on the mistake. Step back, think about what it taught you, and decide what you are going to change. You might even laugh about it later. Today's awkward moment could become the story that gives you more confidence to lead tomorrow!



NJ FCCLA Middle Level Chapter Spotlight

By: Rajganesh Srinivasan, National VP of Membership

Middle school may be the beginning of a student's FCCLA experience, but it can also become the beginning of an incredible leadership journey. Southern Regional Middle School, John Adams Middle School, and Woodrow Wilson Middle School are wonderful examples of how dedicated middle school chapters can help students discover their confidence, interests, and potential at an early age.

Through FCCLA, members from all three chapters have opportunities to attend meetings, serve their communities, participate in conferences, make new friends, and challenge themselves to try something new. These experiences allow students to begin developing communication, teamwork, responsibility, and leadership skills before they even enter high school.

Starting FCCLA in middle school also gives members more time to grow within the organization. By the time they reach high school, many already understand FCCLA's programs, competitive events, and leadership opportunities. They can enter their next chapter ready to become active members, chapter officers, state officers, and even national leaders.

In fact, New Jersey's past five National Officers all began their FCCLA journeys in middle school. Their accomplishments show how the foundation created by middle school chapters can continue shaping members for years. The student who is nervous during their first meeting today could become the confident leader representing New Jersey FCCLA on the national stage tomorrow.

John Adams MS, Woodrow Wilson MS, and Southern Regional MS have created welcoming environments where members support one another, become involved, and begin discovering what they are capable of achieving. Woodrow Wilson and Southern Regional both attended the 2026 National Leadership Conference, where they represented New Jersey FCCLA with distinction and pride.

Middle school chapters do much more than introduce students to FCCLA. They create strong foundations, develop future leaders, and prepare members for continued success. Woodrow Wilson, Southern Regional, and John Adams remind us that it is never too early to begin leading, and that some of FCCLA's greatest leaders get their start in middle school.



"For every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned." - Benjamin Franklin.

Have you ever lost an important paper, forgot to buy materials for a project, or felt overwhelmed because everything seems disorganized? I bet you have. Organization is a crucial part of being successful, although it is not just about staying neat; it's a mindset!

Organization means different things to everyone! It can mean physical organization, like dividers or folders for papers, supplies, or competitive event materials. It can also be digital, like the use of Google Drive or Google Calendar. Or even time organization, like planning ahead, mentally prioritizing tasks, and using deadlines.

Organization is extremely important in any work setting. Staying neat and organized when working on projects, classwork, and employment saves time, prevents simple mistakes, improves productivity and focus, and helps you feel more in control of your life. Simple things like having a planner or to-do list can reduce stress and anxiety about upcoming tasks.

Organization improves everyday life! Staying organized relieves the pressure of schoolwork by keeping assignments and projects manageable. More importantly, it creates a better mindset while working in FCCLA. It keeps members on the same page, makes planning events seem less daunting, helps meet competition deadlines, allows for more creativity, builds confidence, and creates a calm environment where growth is encouraged and possible.

You may be thinking, well how do I stay organized, or where do I start? Here are some ideas for staying neat.

- Break down large tasks into smaller, more manageable ones!
- Keeping a planner or checklist.
- Utilizing folders and files, color-coding is a great tool!
- Organize documents into categories
- Set reminders for important dates and tasks.
- Clean workspaces!

Organization isn't about perfection, there isn't one right way to organize, it's adaptable and an ever-changing strategy. Try things out, do what works for you! Over time, you will form good organization habits and see make a difference in your school and FCCLA life!



Shoot For The Stars With Friends of New Jersey FCCLA

By: Lucais Romo, Alumni

When a rocket breaks through the atmosphere to orbit around the planet, it is natural to cheer for the astronauts. We are quick to celebrate the hours of preparation and unique skillsets necessary for that specific flight. Let's not forget that it is the engineers, scientists, and designers who made it possible for the rocket to even leave the ground. As such, the success of New Jersey FCCLA is largely thanks to dedicated alumni members and advocates of our organization. This year, we want YOU to take part in the process and bring your unique talents to the table.

NASA is an international web of many technically skilled and experienced leaders in their respective fields. Likewise, becoming an alumni member connects you with hundreds of past members, industry professionals committed to youth leadership development, and Family and Consumer Science advocates working to strengthen our discipline through FCCLA. If you are early in your journey, there are others who can answer questions and connect you with resources to support your goals. Those with many years of experience under their belt can find a great outlet for mentoring others and sharing what you have learned in your career with fellow Friends of New Jersey FCCLA.

In FCCLA, we may not be sending rockets into the stratosphere, but each element of our program of work calls for a similar coordinated strategy for a successful touch-down. To promote personal growth and leadership development for thousands of members across the state, it takes committed leaders to light the way. If you have served as an officer in FCCLA, your experience is an incredible support to the development of our newest State Executive Council.

In addition, we hold three state conferences throughout the school year with limitless moving parts. From the annual Fashion Show to compiling competitive event results and distributing awards, many hands make light work. Volunteerism as a Friend of New Jersey FCCLA is a key pillar and we invite you to add at least one of these conferences to your calendar to see to it that all elements of the event run smoothly.

Finally, there is always a need for competitive event judges. Our competition opportunities are numerous and span six career clusters. Providing each event with judges in relevant career paths to give our members constructive and focused feedback is our bread and butter here in New Jersey. Consider judging a competitive event virtually or in-person this year!

As we look back at our rich 80-year history, we see expansive constellations made up of talented and devoted alumni members and friends. You are the reason FCCLA makes an impact in the lives of so many. If you, a relative or a friend want to make a difference, visit the NJ Friends of FCCLA page on the website to register and get connected to endless opportunities to give back and find a family in our state association.

Celebrate National Be a Teacher Day

October 8, 2026

By: Sheridan Donnellan
NJ FCCLA 26-27 VP of Communication

Have you ever thought about working with kids, inspiring students or making an impact on the world? If so, being a teacher might be a career path you should consider. Join us for the 2nd annual FCCLA National Be a Teacher Day! Be a Teacher Day is a nationwide initiative to promote the career of education. In NJ our event is held virtually on the second Thursday of October, this year it is on October 8th at 2:30 PM on Zoom! This event is extremely important because it exposes members to careers in education, helping tackle the nationwide teacher shortage. Teachers play such a pivotal role in students' lives even beyond academics, teachers help foster academic and personal growth, helping students become the best versions of themselves and truly making a difference.

So, what does a teacher do? What does it mean to be a teacher? Teaching involves so much more than just giving lessons or assigning homework. Teachers are in charge of planning engaging lessons, managing the classroom, and most importantly, supporting students academic and emotional growth. Teachers give their free time before and after school to ensure their students make the most of their education. Teachers must be able to clearly communicate ideas and encourage their students while maintaining a productive and inspiring environment. Teachers are often the trusted adult where students turn for advice. Teachers are always helping students not only be themselves but also find themselves.

So, what can you expect from this year's Be a Teacher Day? Our program will begin at 2:30 PM on Zoom. The State Officers will kick off our event with lively ice breakers. Next, we will hear from STEM Teacher and Magician, Eric Yuhasz who will show how you can make an impact by being a teacher! We will close by hearing from a panel of passionate teachers from a variety of content areas. We hope this will be an exciting and motivating day for everyone! We encourage all chapters to celebrate in their own ways to prepare for Be a Teacher Day. Some suggestions include: Dress like a teacher day, connect with colleges and teacher preparation programs and students being the teacher for the day! Learn more about Be a Teacher Day at [beateacherday.org!](https://beateacherday.org/)

Teaching is all about helping others succeed, and days like Be a Teacher Day reminds us of this. Teaching is not a backup choice, it is a path for the noble, the inspired, the compassionate, the patient, and the resilient. Teachers do more than teach subjects, they are mentors. By stepping into this role and attending this event, you will understand what it means to be a teacher, allowing students to recognize the difference teachers truly make in our lives.





ADVICE FROM ALUMNI!

By: Sheridan Donnellan, VP of Communication



We value our alumni for their dedication and willingness to give back to the organization to make I interviewed former officers: Malav Shah 2024-25 NJ State President, Amanda Chen, 2023-24 FCCLA National President and Samhitha Mupharaphu, 2020-21 NJ First Vice President, about college, careers, what they wish they knew in high school and how they were impacted by FCCLA! Here's what they said!

How has FCCLA impacted your college experiences?

Amanda: The experiences and growth opportunities I had through FCCLA made the transition to college easier. From having roommates at conferences to learning how to present to a class, I was able to meet the demands of a college experience. Presenting competitive events and all of the skills I had gained from that opportunity made me a stronger and a more effective communicator. Through FCCLA, I practiced life skills early in life making the skills I learned transferable into new settings.

Malav: Studying hospitality, I've seen many parallels between FCCLA and my college experience. Since hospitality is such a service and people oriented industry, many of the skills I gained through FCCLA connect directly to what I'm learning today. "Durable skills" like leadership, communication, and proactiveness have helped me differentiate myself in the classroom. Most importantly, FCCLA taught me to take initiative, take that first step, and push myself outside my comfort zone. That mindset has helped me embrace new opportunities, build meaningful connections, and approach challenges with confidence.

How has FCCLA impacted your career experiences?

Samhitha: FCCLA helped me build a strong foundation for my career long before I graduated. Through competitive events and leadership roles, I gained interview skills, experience presenting in front of others, and practice communicating professionally. I also learned how to build a resume that highlights both technical skills and leadership experiences. Those skills made internships and job interviews far less intimidating, and they still help me in my day-to-day work when I'm collaborating with colleagues or talking with vendors.

Amanda: FCCLA gave me the foundation I needed to grow my confidence and knowledge for my future career. Public speaking, event planning, organization, and leadership are just a few of the many skills I used every day in FCCLA. These skills have been transferred to the college classroom and the workplace.

What do you wish you knew in high school?

Malav: In high school, I wish I knew that taking the hardest AP class, acing the SAT, or constantly comparing yourself to others wasn't the key to success. High school can feel extremely competitive, and it's easy to get caught up in everyone else's accomplishments. Looking back, what mattered most was creating meaningful experiences around what I genuinely cared about. FCCLA helped me discover interests that eventually led me to study hospitality, simply because I embraced what I valued and enjoyed. Prioritize what you truly value and create an experience that is meaningful to you, and the rest will follow.

Samhitha: I wish I had truly understood that college isn't the end goal—it's just one step! For a long time, I believed that academic success was everything, and once I got into and graduated from college, I'd "have it all figured out." After graduating, I realized I had to redefine my purpose beyond grades and school. I wish I had known earlier that it's just as important to explore your interests, build meaningful relationships, and learn about yourself as it is to get good grades. Life keeps evolving after high school and college, and that's a good thing.

Overall, how has FCCLA impacted your life?

Amanda: This organization has given me my closest friends and shaped me into who I am today. It taught me the value of using my voice, overcoming challenges, and using my skills to positively impact others.

Malav: FCCLA has shaped so much of who I am today, from the way I interact with people to the skills and values I carry with me. One of my biggest takeaways has been learning to approach situations with empathy and understand other people's perspectives. That mindset is especially important in hospitality, but I also carry it into my friendships, school, work, and everyday relationships. FCCLA has been a cornerstone in helping me recognize my potential and a stepping stone toward the person and professional I hope to become.

Samhitha: FCCLA has given me countless life skills such as: communication, leadership, time management, and confidence, that I carry with me every day. Just as importantly, it's given me mentors and a support system that have lasted well beyond high school. My state and chapter advisers are still people I reach out to for advice, even five years after graduating. The organization shaped not only my academic and career path, but also the kind of person and professional I strive to be!!

READY SET

Ready, Set, Lead: Start the Year Strong with FCCLA!

By: Ms. Danielle Ardolina

Adviser for the Middletown South HS Chapter

A new school year means new opportunities to learn, lead, and grow with FCCLA! The opening weeks of school is the perfect time to bring chapter officers back together, recruit new members, and show the school community everything FCCLA has to offer.

Start by helping chapter officers step into their roles. Bring the officer team together to review responsibilities, explore the New Jersey FCCLA calendar, and identify the chapter's first goals. Each officer should leave with a clear first task, whether that is planning the opening meeting, organizing a membership campaign, creating chapter announcements, or preparing the first service activity. Giving officers meaningful responsibilities right away builds their confidence and sets the expectation that FCCLA is a student-led organization.

Membership should be one of the chapter's first priorities. A chapter cannot grow if students do not know it exists, so make FCCLA visible throughout the FCS department, and everywhere else possible! Display conference pictures, awards, competitive-event projects, and membership information in classrooms and hallways. Ask chapter officers to visit FCS classes, make school announcements, create social media content, and personally invite students to attend a meeting.

Look for opportunities to introduce FCCLA beyond the classroom. Volunteer to assist with freshman orientation, back-to-school night, activity fairs, open houses, parent events, and other schoolwide programs. Set up an interactive table, display student projects, hand out membership information, or invite visitors to participate in a quick FCS-related activity. These events allow officers to practice their leadership skills while introducing students, families, staff, and administrators to FCCLA.

When promoting membership, focus on the experiences students can have through the organization. Some students will be excited by competitive events, while others may be interested in service, travel, career exploration, leadership, or meeting new people. Showing the different sides of FCCLA helps more students find their reason to join.

FCCLA can also become a natural part of classroom instruction. Begin by reviewing the official guidelines and evaluation rubric for a competitive event that connects to an upcoming unit. Most of the NJ FCCLA Fall Competitive Events have been designed to integrate into the classroom. Identify the required skills, project components, and presentation expectations that align with the course's learning objectives. Then, use those requirements to develop the classroom assignment and divide it into manageable checkpoints.

For example, a fashion project could include researching a target consumer, creating an inspiration board, developing sketches, selecting materials, and explaining design decisions. A culinary project might include recipe development, food safety, nutrition, cost analysis, and product evaluation. Interior design students could analyze a client's needs, create a design concept, prepare a floor plan, and justify their selections.

Not every student who completes the classroom project has to compete. Interested FCCLA members can return to the event guidelines and build upon their classroom work by adding required research, documenting the FCCLA Planning Process, revising their project, preparing a portfolio or display, and practicing their presentation. Instead of beginning a completely separate project, students are strengthening and expanding learning that has already taken place.

A successful FCCLA year starts with active officers, strong membership, schoolwide visibility, and meaningful classroom connections. Gather the officer team, look for every opportunity to share FCCLA, and help students discover where the organization can take them. The chapter's first steps can open the door to an unforgettable year!



YOU'VE
TOTALLY GOT
THIS!

Which National Program is right for you?

By Christina Costa VP of Programs

Positive
Vibes
Only

Trying to get more involved? FCCLA has eight national programs and this short quiz will help you find the perfect one. Keep track of your answers and check your results on the last page of the newsletter.

1. What motivates you the most?

- A. Preparing for my future career.
- B. Giving back to others.
- C. Learning skills I'll use every day.
- D. Building stronger connections.
- E. Making smart financial decisions.
- F. Becoming the best version of myself.
- G. Creating positive change in school.
- H. Helping others live healthier lives.

2. What does your ideal Saturday look like?

- A. Learning about different careers.
- B. Volunteering at a local charity.
- C. Trying a new recipe.
- D. Spending quality time with family.
- E. Creating a budget.
- F. Setting a personal goal.
- G. Standing up for a cause you care about.
- H. Playing sports.

3. What accomplishment would make you proudest?

- A. Landing your dream job.
- B. Organizing a successful service project.
- C. Teaching others important life skills.
- D. Strengthening family relationships.
- E. Becoming financially independent.
- F. Reaching a goal you thought was impossible.
- G. Making your school safer.
- H. Inspiring others to make healthy choices.

4. Which skill would you most like to improve?

- A. Professionalism.
- B. Leadership.
- C. Practical life skills.
- D. Communication.
- E. Money management.
- F. Self-confidence.
- G. Advocacy.
- H. Health

5. What TV Show or Movie do you enjoy watching?

- A. Chopped
- B. Mighty Ducks
- C. Back to the Future
- D. Full House
- E. Shark Tank
- F. The Pursuit of Happiness
- G. He Named Me Malala
- H. Inside Out



Tally your answers and see your results on the last page of this newsletter!

The Power Of ONE starts with you

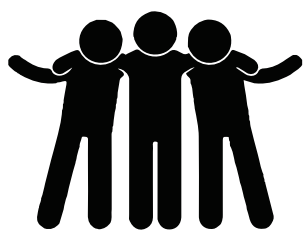
By: Christina Costa, VP of Programs

People always say "Get involved", but what does that even mean? In New Jersey FCCLA, getting involved can mean a number of different things. One of the best ways to get involved is by participating in Power of One.

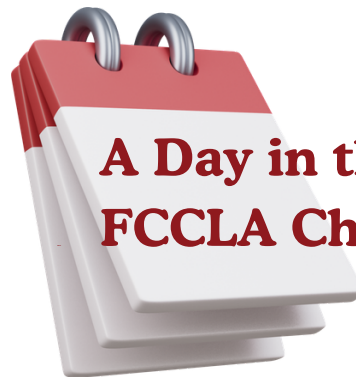
Power of One is one of eight national programs promoted in FCCLA, giving members the opportunity to earn national recognition while focusing on personal growth. Power of One encourages members to set goals that will actually benefit them. Think of it as a new year, new you; You set meaningful goals in each of the five units and take action to achieve them. With the new school year coming up, what could be a better time to build confidence?

The five units focus on different aspects of a person's life. The first one is A Better You, where members are encouraged to set personal goals. Family Ties focuses on strengthening relationships at home, whereas Working on Working prepares members for the workplace. Take the Lead helps members develop leadership skills and Speak Out for FCCLA advocates for FCCLA.

Power of One is not only a great way to get involved, but also an opportunity to develop your potential. Along the way, you will build confidence, leadership and communication skills, and make a positive impact. Use this venture as a chance to make a difference in your community, one step at a time. Power of One showcases the fact that change does not happen overnight. Your journey begins with a single decision. This school year, challenge yourself to take that first step. Your growth, goals, and future will all begin with The Power of One.



*You've
Got the
Power*



A Day in the Life of an FCCLA Chapter Officer

By: Jenna Trotman, First Vice President

Ever wondered what it actually takes to be an FCCLA Chapter Officer? Leading a chapter isn't about having a completely different life. It's about learning how to balance your everyday school routine with meaningful leadership. Here is a look at how one officer balances their responsibilities all in a single day!

6:45 AM: Rise & Shine!

Start the morning right with time to get ready, grab a healthy breakfast, and set positive goals for the busy day ahead.

7:30 AM – 2:30 PM: School

Being a strong leader starts with being a dedicated student!

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM: Chapter Officer Meeting

Brainstorm ideas, plan upcoming chapter events, and coordinate with fellow officer team members to keep the chapter running smoothly.

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM: Volleyball Practice

Head to sports practice to stay active and build teamwork skills outside of the classroom.

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM: Unwind & Dinner

Fuel up with a good meal and reconnect with family to recharge your battery.

6:00 PM – 8:30 PM: Homework Time

Complete school assignments, study for upcoming tests, and keep grades strong before diving into extra projects.

8:30 PM – 9:30 PM: Chapter Meeting Slides + Fall Competitive Event Prep

Dedicate a focused time to FCCLA. Put the finishing touches on presentation slides, refine project plans for your fall competitive event, etc.

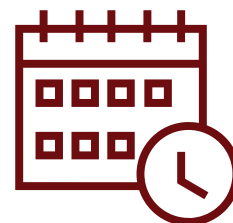
9:30 PM – 10:30 PM: Wind Down

Put the screens away and relax to clear your mind!

10:30 PM: Bedtime!

Getting a good night's sleep is key to staying energized and ready to lead again tomorrow.

Leadership isn't about being perfect. It's about making time for what matters and making a difference in your school and community. If you have a passion for FCCLA and want to step up, consider running for a chapter officer role! You have what it takes to lead the way!





Make FCCLA Feel Like Home

By: Kaya Bromiley
Vice President of Membership



Walking into your first FCCLA meeting can feel intimidating; we have all been there. The question is, how do we make new and returning members feel welcomed and excited to participate?

The first step is getting people to come to your chapter's meetings and keep coming back. Ways to make people feel like they belong are greeting them at the door, coming up with icebreakers in which members can participate, and walking around introducing yourself so you can know members on a personal level.

Something that is very important is encouraging younger students to join FCCLA. At some point we will all graduate; the key is keeping FCCLA alive and exciting. When working on projects, try to pair up older members who have experience with things like competitive events and fundraising. Having knowledge of FCCLA experiences along with supporting younger members who are participating for the first time can create a valuable experience for everyone. This will provide a comfortable space for younger members to gain more confidence in their projects and hopefully find their place in their FCCLA Chapter.

A crucial step that ensures members find a "home" in their FCCLA chapter is celebrating every accomplishment. Whether it is something small such as attending five meetings in a row or a huge accomplishment like getting a gold medal at a state conference, it is important to make members feel valued. Encouraging members to get involved means making sure they have a support system.

When competing or doing a service project, you cannot do it alone. Everyone needs a support system inside and outside of FCCLA. In this organization, you can build an extended family and championing each other is a huge part of the FCCLA community. The "Three R's" of membership are Recruit, Retain, and Recognize. Once you complete the recruit step, retaining members by making sure they get recognized is an important key for a strong chapter.

When students feel like they belong and they are surrounded by supportive members who make them feel valued, that is what will make members want to stay involved. FCCLA isn't just an organization; it is an opportunity to build a community. By creating a welcoming environment, every New Jersey chapter can make FCCLA feel like home.



LEADERSHIP BOOTCAMP - OPPORTUNITIES AWAIT YOU



By: Virendra Rautela, VP of Community Service

A conference does not necessarily mean packing a bag, waking up early and spending hours traveling! Leadership Boot Camp is an FCCLA event held online on Zoom at your own school. This conference brings together members and advisers from different chapters in New Jersey who can acquire new skills, establish contacts and have fun without having to travel away from home!

Are you a chapter leader already? Do you think about running for a leadership position or just want to be more active? If so, Leadership Bootcamp is exactly what you need! You will take part in various interactive games, challenges, and other activities during the day that will help you to improve your communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills. It is leadership development but in a fun atmosphere.

Why don't you make it a watch party? Your chapter can gather at the school and invite nearby chapters, bring favorite snacks and food, and participate in Boot Camp collectively. While the sessions are going on, you can talk, laugh, and spend time together instead of sitting and listening at a normal conference the whole day. Your class can become a small FCCLA conference for your chapter!

This conference that does not require travel at all, no bus rides, no hotels, no need to get to the other side of the state making it more affordable. All you need to do is log into Zoom and you'll be right there. You will learn about other chapters, exchange ideas and make new contacts and all of this while staying close to home. The registration fee provides a t-shirt and leadership book.

Throughout the whole day you will receive a number of skills that you can use when you return to your chapter. For instance, you may want to increase the attendance at your meetings, improve the service project, organize an event in a better way, or build a more efficient team. This bootcamp gives you a chance to learn something, experiment with different techniques, and come up with some ideas to implement later.

So gather your chapter mates, get the food, find a nice place to sit together, and get ready for a day filled with FCCLA, friendship and fun! The Leadership Bootcamp proves there is no place like home.



A Taste of Fall: Pumpkin Bread With Chocolate Chips



Cooler weather, colorful leaves, and pumpkin-flavored treats can only mean one thing: fall has arrived! Pumpkin chocolate chip bread is a simple seasonal recipe that can be shared with family, brought to an FCCLA meeting, or sold at a chapter bake sale. The pumpkin keeps the bread soft, while the chocolate chips add just the right amount of sweetness.

Ingredients

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 2 large eggs
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup pumpkin purée
- ¾ cup chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a loaf pan or line it with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, mix the flour, baking soda, salt, and pumpkin pie spice. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar. Add the vegetable oil and pumpkin purée, then mix until everything is smooth.
3. Slowly pour the dry ingredients into the pumpkin mixture. Stir until the ingredients are combined but be careful not to overmix the batter. Gently fold in the chocolate chips, saving a few to sprinkle on top.
4. Pour the batter into the loaf pan and spread it evenly. Bake for about 50-60 minutes. To see if the bread is finished, insert a toothpick into the center. If it comes out clean or with only a few crumbs, the bread is ready.
5. Allow the loaf to cool before removing it from the pan. Then, slice it and enjoy! You can also turn this recipe into muffins by dividing the batter into a muffin pan and baking them for about 18-22 minutes.
6. If you plan to share or sell the bread, remember to label any common allergens. Whether it is served at home or at an FCCLA event, this pumpkin chocolate chip bread is a delicious way to welcome the fall season!



Check Your National Program Quiz Results!:

Mostly A's - Career Connection.
Mostly B's - Community Service.
Mostly C's - FACTS.
Mostly D's - Families First.
Mostly E's - Financial Fitness.
Mostly F's - Power of One.
Mostly G's - Stand Up.
Mostly H's - Student Body.