

A Brief History of the Family and Consumer Sciences profession and the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences

Family and Consumer Science is an applied field bringing together knowledge from many disciplines. It generates knowledge as well as uses concepts from other fields and applies this information for the betterment of all aspects of family life. Family and consumer science professionals are not content to observe life; they are dedicated to helping families better their situations.

Historical Background

The historical beginning of family and consumer science dates back to 1899 when 11 people gathered in New York for a conference at Lake Placid. At this conference, the name "home economics" was adopted for this new field. Ten annual Lake Placid Conferences were held before the national organization, the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) emerged in 1909. The new organization was chartered on January 1, 1910.

Our Founder

In 1909, Ellen H. Richards founded the American Home Economics Association (later renamed the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences). Ms. Richards was the first female graduate and professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an activist for consumer education, nutrition, child protection, industrial safety, public health, career education, women's rights, purity of air, food and water, and the application of scientific management principles to the family. Her professional experience and foresight led to the formalization of the family and consumer sciences profession.

Our Symbol

In 1926, the American Home Economics Association adopted the Betty Lamp as a symbol for the association. The lamp derived its name from the German word "besser" or "bête", meaning "to make better". The Betty Lamp produced comparatively good light for its time and was used widely by early American colonists. Mildred Chamberlain, of Chicago, submitted the design stating, "The lamp in colonial days provided light for all household industries". Similarly, the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) provides enlightenment through leadership in thought and action for family and consumer sciences professionals.



In 2010, AAFCS updated the Betty Lamp. It retains the flavor of the original lamp but with a more modern look.