County Agents still work with women and families in the home

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Officially, Florida family and consumer sciences extension agents began working with women in the areas of home economics in 1915. Their title was Florida home economic demonstration agent. They provided hands-on demonstrations to help low-income families stretch their resources. Home economic agents assisted families with education in gardening, canning, freezing, sewing, home furnishings including making mattresses out of cotton.

In 1963 the Extension Service in Florida experienced reorganization and the title home economic agent was changed to extension home economic agent. In the mid 90s Extension reorganized itself again, adjusting to societal needs and title was changed to family and consumer sciences agent (FCS). The University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), has faculty who are specialists in the areas of housing, nutrition, food safety, human development, financial management, and aging.

Similar to 100 years ago, the programs the family and consumer sciences agent provide evolve to meet the changing needs of the residents in Nassau County. The FCS agent trains and supervises volunteers to assist with programs focusing on school age children and adults. FCS programs supporting 4-H Youth development are provided during summer 4-H camps and at public and private schools throughout Nassau County. Teaching low-income individuals the art of family financial management and how to save money at the super market helps them learn how to manage their resources and rely less on public assistance.

Recently, healthcare for the elderly (Medicare) and the under-insured have been important issues. FCS education is provided to these individuals, helping them make informed decisions about their healthcare.

The family and consumer sciences agent’s mission is the same as 100 years ago; to help individuals and families manage their resources and improve their quality of life.

This the fourth in a series of columns celebrating the 100th anniversary of the County Extension Service program. Meg McAlpin is Nassau FCS Agent III.