



PARENT

PERSPECTIVES

April 2023

This edition of our FPSP parent newsletter comes to us from Brenda Darnell, the soon-to-be-retired Affiliate Director from Kentucky after 16 years as the state's Program Director. Brenda's affiliate began its association with FPSP in 1988. Once Brenda's oldest child was a participant in the FPS program in the 4th grade in 1990-1991, Brenda was asked to coach the school's team as a parent volunteer the following year. Following is the unique story of this family's FPS journey.

We are pleased to highlight our Colorado affiliate in this issue's *Cultural Corner*. Please enjoy!

A Family Affair

Jenna Boone:

I started Future Problem Solving as a 4th grader as a member of the Academic Team for my elementary school. I like to teasingly point out to my mom, Brenda Darnell, that technically I have more experience with FPS because she did not join the team as coach until the following year. When I think back on those years, I remember Sunday afternoons spent with my teammates as we digested both pizza and what seemed like endless amounts of information on the topics for competition. I remember a wide variety of subjects and our attempts to achieve a commanding level of expertise. Like many teams, sometimes our ideas were inspired and sometimes they were downright silly.

I used to think that some of the most important skills from FPS involved learning how to research, how to think analytically, and how to write at the speed of light. (Seriously, these were



Pictured are: Ainsley Boone, KY FPSer, and her mother, Jenna Boone, FPSer, parent and coach

the days of 20 challenges and 20 solutions). But now as a business owner, I see FPS's contribution a little differently.

All those Sunday afternoons taught me a deep appreciation for the perspective and talents of others. We each brought something different to the process. During the competition, as we took that initial silly idea and passed it back and forth among our team—that spark of an idea would eventually evolve into something substantial. It's true that only one person would write the idea, but we each added our touch to it as we refined the initial concept. What we accomplished together was greater than the sum of the individual parts. The culture that slowly became a part of my worldview over the course of nine years of Sunday afternoons influenced the culture I now create in my workplace. Our differences are celebrated and valued as we, too, work together to build something greater than we could each do alone. Of all the things I learned from FPS, I think learning to be a good teammate is the one for which I am the most grateful.

Ainsley Boone:

Ever since I was little, I've known that my Mimi ran the Future Problem Solving program for the state of Kentucky. She was dedicated to making sure it ran smoothly and everyone learned important information when the year was over. She had gotten involved with Future Problem Solving thanks to my mother joining the academic team when she was in elementary school. As the years went by and I got older, I got increasingly more interested in what Future Problem Solving actually was. I wanted to know more about this program that my grandmother has dedicated so many years of her life to and my mom remembers with such nostalgia. The more I learned about it, the more I wanted to be involved. Once I got to high school, I joined my school's academic team. Unfortunately, I soon learned that we didn't have a Future Problem Solving Team and if there was going to be one, we would have to find a volunteer to coach us. Thankfully, my mom stepped forward and coached a bunch of sophomores who had no idea what they were doing to get 2nd in the region and qualify for state. Once it was over, I was so happy to be able to have conversations about it with my mother and grandmother and I am so grateful that I am able to continue a legacy that is over 30 years in the making.



Ainsley Boone, Kentucky FPSer

Brenda Darnell:

Through the Years, Nobody Does It Better to help students ***Reach*** their dreams of academic potential for success as problem solvers.

Songs titles by Kenny Rogers, Carly Simon and Gloria Estefan have been inspirational as I look back ***Through the Years*** to my first involvement with FPS. It all began with my daughter, Jenna. Thirty-three years ago she was selected to be on the Future Problem Solving Team to write a booklet with her teammates on *Ozone Depletion*. Although her team did not do well, her disappointment and my willingness to accept the role of volunteer-coach the next year, set us on a journey of life-long problem solving that has now expanded into the third generation with her daughter, Ainsley. As my roles changed from a parent-volunteer to a paid coach, state FPS (GIPS) trainer, which lead to being hired as the FPS Program Director for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, ***Through the Years***, I realized the first role was most critical...being an FPS parent. This set everything in motion for what was to come for the next three decades. I also coached one of Jenna's younger brothers in the junior division. Once Josh completed elementary school and middle school, I stayed as the coach of these FPS teams, and eventually became the FPS coach in the high school division, also.

The formal steps of creative problem solving is one that most parents are lacking in the skills-set to help their children to be successful. Newly identified parents of "FPSers," do not understand the specific jargon and steps of Global Issues Problem Solving process, but they also are lacking in the specific topic information used for practice and competitions. No organization provides more opportunities to grow in both areas than FPSPI.

Nobody Does It Better to provide students with the opportunity to learn about the world and how it will change as they advance toward adulthood. As a parent and a coach, this was the area that I felt most inadequate. For example, what did I know about Antarctica, Neurotechnology, or Space Law? The answer to that question is, “very little.” What I learned was that there are experts living in our community, or a community friend has a relative or close contact who is an expert on the topic. We used these experts as our “topic speakers” to help the teams develop a better understanding about the environment or new technologies that would be used in their jobs or the workplace in the future. As a parent, you may be able to help arrange for a practice to share information with the team. Keep in mind that teams need to research the topic before the session so they can ask questions. It helps if the speaker can give a very brief history of what happened in the past, what is currently occurring and what the speaker predicts for the future of the topic. In the earliest days of topic speakers, we would do a conference call with a speaker-phone placed in the middle of the table. All the participants surrounded the table and leaned in to be able to hear the



Pictured from left to right: Dr. John Darnell, former FPS evaluator, Brenda Darnell, FPS parent, coach, evaluator, trainer, and KY Program Director, and Jenna Boone, FPSer, FPS Parent and coach

discussion. Or, we would schedule the speaker to attend a meeting with all teams studying the topic to join the presentation at the local pizza restaurant that had a room where everyone could gather at one time.

Can you imagine the excitement and anticipation that students may have as they listen to someone who was stationed in Antarctica for a year while serving in the military as a climate-specialist documenting climate changes on the continent? We arranged an in-person session who was an active-duty Navy specialist serving in the US military who was home on leave (vacation) in January. This speaker’s discussion about the need to have controlled refrigeration and storage facilities to keep foods from perishing was very thought-provoking for the students. Why was that important? Without the ability to control the temperature for food products, freezer-burn and exploding cans and bottles of food and drinks occurred very quickly. Since ships did not arrive on the continent every day throughout the year, lost food products were not easily replaced.

Nobody Does It Better to provide students, parents, and coaches the opportunity to see the world through different perspectives. Although we are only one, or a few, in the world population, the most important thing I learned and used as a foundation for practice was the acceptance of others and the importance of their ideas. Students come into the FPS program with various cultural experiences and family dynamics. Their family structure and living environments are not the same. Whether the students’ parents owned their own businesses, were blue-collar or white-collar workers, or worked in the fields of service such as nurse, physician, government, or teacher, all brought a unique outlook and perspective to the team. Differences were embraced and often challenged the team to review how the world saw those differences as obstacles to be overcome or as a solution. We did not avoid topics of politics or religion because these could be an important challenge or cause the creation of a solution to be written by the team in a booklet.

Nobody Does It Better to prepare the students for a workplace of the future. Business leaders often seek employees and management personnel who are versed in the skill of problem solving. Several former students have shared about job or scholarship interviews and how they used problem solving to come up with a quick solution to a scenario given by the interviewer. When prompted by the interviewer to share how the solution came so quickly, the answer usually referenced “FPS” which sparked a brief discussion about the process.

And, ***Nobody Does It Better*** to provide the student with a life-long skill that enhances life outcomes for better living. It has led to leadership opportunities at various times in their lives. Problem solving has been used to help them make life choices so that they can be more successful. If a financial, emotional, employment, or familial challenge arises, a problem solver can use the 6-step process and use this skill-set to develop the best plan of action. Some students used the FPS process to help select the best college or university to attend after leaving grades kindergarten to 12th grade.

The FPS program is an association that I have cherished, valued, and appreciated for nearly half of my life. My association with FPS has allowed me to provide a service to students and my community that was not fully developed. It has allowed me to set various goals and to ***Reach*** for things that I never thought possible.

After the first few years as a coach, I knew that FPS was something I wanted to continue to offer to students in my local school district and in order to do this and be successful, I needed more training. I wanted my students to dream and ***Reach*** for stars (and sometimes they did this when they studied topics about Space). We hear that the most important aspect to goal-setting is the journey one takes to achieve the goal. Some teams have set the goal to apply the creative process to writing better challenges. A simple goal, but one the team could ***Reach***. Another team may have the goal to qualify for the State Bowl held at the affiliate level. A more difficult goal, but one that many teams have been able to ***Reach***. And the list goes on and on.

For me, the first time I heard Katherine Hume, Kentucky Executive Director for Kentucky Academic Association, speak about problem solving, I wanted to be the program director to help lead the next generations of problem solving in the state of

Kentucky. When the opportunity arose and with the support of my husband and family, I applied for and accepted for the position of Program Director and moved to Lawrenceburg, Kentucky sixteen years ago.

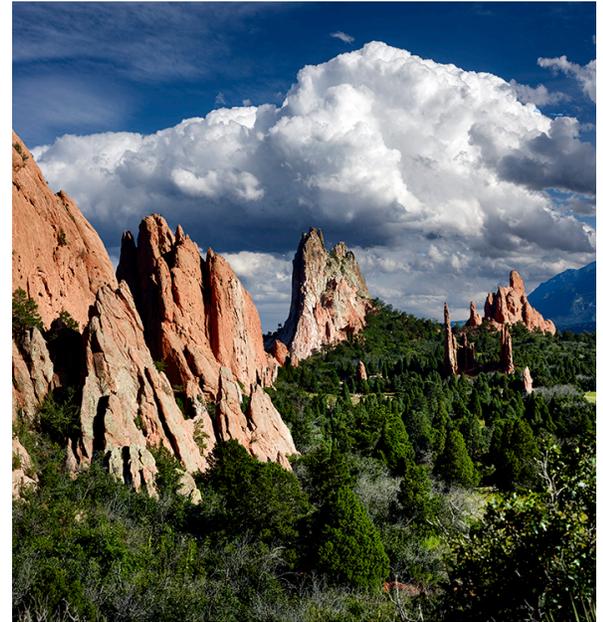
While my tenure has been the most incredible years of service that anyone could have, it is time to let the next person ***Reach*** for their goal and help lead KYFPS into the future and grow the problem following the Covid years. As I say, “Adieu as the Affiliate Director from Kentucky,” I am not saying goodbye to FPS. It is time to shift my primary focus to my husband, children, and grandchildren. I plan to continue training local FPS coaches under the direction of the next program director so that others can ***Reach*** for the goals they set for themselves and their teams.



From left to right: Outgoing KY Program Director, Brenda Darnell, Governor of KY, the Honorable Andy Beshear, and Executive Director of KY Association of Academic Competitions, Brad Persinger at the 2023 Kentucky Academic Competition State Finals

Cultural Corner—Colorado

- Colorado is one of the smallest FPS affiliates, with participants in GIPS and Scenario Writing.
- Colorado writers have done well at IC, placing in the top ten more than once.
- Colorado Future Problem Solvers have gone places - to Massachusetts, to Birmingham, England, to Timor-Leste, to Hawaii - all to make the world better.
- Colorado is home to the original Quiznos and Chipotle restaurants.
- The snows have been so good in 2023 that you can ski until at least mid-June at Arapahoe Basin, less than 2 hours from Denver!
- There was a gold rush in Colorado, then a silver boom, uranium mining, and now, a tourism rush.
- The *Garden of the Gods* is a city park in Colorado Springs. The Garden is made up of orange sandstone formations, and you can see other rocks in the formation all the way up to Denver.
- The Beatles, Louis Armstrong, and Stevie Nicks are just a few of the artists who have performed at the Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre, which is owned by the City of Denver.
- 43.3% of Colorado is public land, containing national parks, monuments, forests, state parks, and city parks. Some of the Lottery funds go to support the state parks system
- The Continental Divide runs through Colorado, with water west of the divide flowing to the Pacific Ocean and water falling east of the the divide to the Atlantic.
- There are 58 fourteeners in Colorado - mountains with an elevation of at least 14,000 ft, the most of any state.
- If you visit Colorado, bring sunscreen - that elevation means you will need greater UV protection, a water bottle - it is dry here, and lots of layers. In 2020, it was 100°F+ on Labor Day weekend, and there was 3" snow 48 hours later in both Ordway and LaJunta, CO. In the summer, a 40 degree F change between noon and midnight is pretty common.
- Coloradans love the outdoors; we have places to hike, bike, cross-country and downhill ski, motocross, do parkour, walk, run, eat on the patio... You get the idea, come join us!



Garden of the Gods under the clouds



Pictured is Pikes Peak, Colorado