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# FPSP PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This edition of our FPSP Parent Newsletter comes to us from Frances Mendez, Parent Outreach Liaison, Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Support for the International Office. She shares her experiences as an FPS parent, volunteer, evaluator and staff member.

We are happy to highlight our California Affiliate in this issue's *Cultural Corner*, and some of their amazing Alumni. Thank you Ariella Leeder, Co-Affiliate Director, for your contribution!

## How I got involved in FPS

I never would have thought that supporting my children in Future Problem Solving would prepare me for a career change.



*My daughter Isabel and I heading to IC at Michigan State University in 2016.*

Over 10 years ago, I became an FPS parent. When my oldest daughter Isabel was in fifth grade, her gifted teacher introduced “us” to Future Problem Solving. I had no idea what that entailed. It sounded very complicated, and I felt that I needed to learn the process myself in order to fully be able to support my daughter.

I started as a chaperone. There is always a need for evaluators, so I pursued that opportunity next. As an evaluator, you get a “behind the scenes” view, and a better understanding of how the process works, which led me to later become her Scenario coach. By the time my daughter was in high school, she was an evaluator herself as well as a peer coach, and volunteer. As the years went by, my other two children became participants in FPS, so my involvement continued.

After COVID hit, I needed a break and a change. I was lucky enough to reconnect with my daughters’ teacher, and I became a proud member of the International Office staff. Having first-hand experience with FPS in different aspects at the local (district), affiliate, and international levels, prepared me for the position I have now. As a staff member I get a unique perspective, and I’m excited to be able to share my knowledge and experiences with others. Being a part of this team brought back many wonderful memories, especially of the International Conference. Who would have thought that I would run into participants from my daughter’s own time at IC, and are now coaches, volunteers, and staff members as well!

I saw how much knowledge myself and my own children gained from this program, and how that would give them confidence in their future endeavors. They participated in Global Issues (as Team and Individual competitors), MAGIC and in Scenario Writing. Presentation of Action Plan was a plus for my shy one...

Future Problem Solving teaches invaluable lessons. This program is so much more than the 6-step process. It helps our children be creative, promotes research, helps develop writing and communication skills, and creates community and social awareness. It allows them to learn about themselves, find out what their strengths and weaknesses are, working with a team or individually.

My advice to you all is to get involved! Our kids are the happiest when they have their parents' support. Whether you are a chaperone, a volunteer, an evaluator, a coach, a director or a staff member, your children will be better for it and, who knows, you might learn something about yourself as well.



*Isabel and I working side by side at UMass Amherst in 2022.*

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## *Cultural Corner—California*

### **Did you know...**

**California is where blue jeans were born?** Levi Strauss and business partner Jacob Davis introduced jeans to the world in 1873. Initially worn by factory workers, miners, and farmers, jeans eventually became a staple and made their way into closets around the nation and beyond.

**California defies gravity?** There are several mysterious places in California where gravity doesn't seem to play the role it should. The gravity hills in certain spots of California are known to push your car uphill, without using any power and while the car is in neutral.

**California is home to the world's largest tree?** In Sequoia National Park, you'll find the world's largest tree by volume. Named General Sherman, this giant sequoia is about 52,500 cubic feet by volume.

**California is home to the fortune cookie?** This post-dinner delight was created in California, with both Los Angeles and San Francisco taking credit for the invention.

### **California FPS:**

California FPS started with the 1983-1984 school year in northern California! The first participants were from Ceres, Livermore, Paso Robles, and Sacramento. Eventually, schools from Poway in San Diego County to as far north as Eureka in Humboldt County began participating. At the 2023 International Conference California students "made it on stage" earning awards in all four components of the Future Problem Solving Program: Global Issues

Problem Solving, Community Problem Solving, Scenario Writing and Scenario Performance. But if you spoke to any participant from California, they would unanimously report the best part of IC being the connections and friendships made with like-minded individuals from all over the world!

### Meet a few of our many amazing alumni:

Participating in the Future Problem Solvers (FPS) program in 2010 as a fifth grader cultivated critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills that I carry with me today as an attorney and an advocate. FPS equips and empowers students to tackle real-world challenges, from nanotechnology to climate change, fostering a sense of social responsibility and global citizenship. The program believes in the creativity and power of young minds to analyze complex problems and develop innovative solutions. It also prepares youth for the future by fostering collaboration through group work to brainstorm, research, and present ideas. For me, it has also instilled a passion for lifelong learning and a commitment to making a positive difference in society through public service and active civic engagement. All these years later, I am grateful to FPS for building my confidence and a toolbox of skills that I use every day.



*Nadia Farjood, Harvard College '13,  
Harvard Law School '18*



*Keshav Tadimeti, UCLA 2019  
Microsoft-Computer Engineer*

I can confidently say FPS has had one of the biggest impacts on my life, of all my extracurricular activities. I participated in the program from 4<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the Global Issues Problem Solving, Scenario Writing, and Community Issues Problem Solving competitions. I use the FPS skill-set everyday as a cybersecurity software engineer to ascertain key issues in complex, uncertain scenarios, focus solutions on underlying problems, and produce effective action plans. Moreover, FPS nurtured my love of writing and teaching: I became a published author and an award-winning college student journalist due to the Scenario Writing competition. I am a volunteer high school teacher in part because FPS exposed me to teaching and evaluating at a young age. And as an

evaluator now, it is so gratifying to see students explore their creativity through the program that has given me so much.

Hi! My name is Jeffrey Lee, I'm 21 years old, and I was a Future Problem Solver from 6th grade to 11th grade. I participated in nearly every component FPS offers, including Global Issues Problem Solving, Scenario Writing, Scenario Performance, MAGIC, and Presentation of Action Plan! I was coached the entire time by my mom and dad (thank you Mom and Dad!) but met many mentors and friends along the way. I even ended up placing first at the International Conference a couple of times, although I never ended up winning that coveted 1st place trophy with my Scenario Writing Team (darn it!). Also, I think I hold a special place in CAFPS history for being the first-ever GIPS competitor to write a UP without a Purpose...but that's another story for another time. Since then, I've been an occasional judge for some skits and a GIPS evaluator.

After high school, I attended the University of Southern California and graduated earlier this year with a degree in Communications. I am currently a Producer-In-Residence at a local TV news station in San Diego, and I am also a part-time professional magician (if such a thing exists).

To this day, I still don't think I fully realize the incredible impact FPS has had on my life. The need to write under pressure, collaborate with teammates effectively, and understand new and challenging concepts quickly at my job? These are skills I learned and honed through GIPS, Scenario Team Writing, and just studying the new topics every year. The willingness to be vulnerable and silly in front of an audience, and having the ability to find a balance between a jargon-heavy script and dramatic storytelling as a magician? These skills were a must for Scenario Performance and Presentation of Action Plan skits. Participating in the Memento Exchange, witnessing a Haka performed live at a Community Problem Solving showcase, and tasting authentic Turkish delight for the first time at the International Conference--FPS has left me with a lifetime of experiences and good memories. It has proven instrumental to my growth as a journalist, magician, and overall human being. Thank you, FPS!



*Jeffrey Lee, USC 2021*