

## PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This issue of *Parent Perspectives* is a collection of testimonials from FPS-ers, Parents, and Alumni from various affiliates. These are just a few examples of the life-changing experiences that Future Problem Solving can provide!  
Please Enjoy!



My name is Ryan George. I am the CEO of a Tucson based software development firm called Simpleview, where we employ 200 people and represent destination marketing organizations in 550 cities all over the world. Eight years before I co-founded Simpleview, I was a graduate of Canyon del Oro High School's class of 1993, and before that a student at Cross Junior High, which is really where this letter should begin.

Having been in the REACH program since elementary school, I had the great privilege of being taught and mentored by Jennine Jackson when I arrived at Cross in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Ms. Jackson introduced us to Future Problem Solving (FPS), which might well have changed the trajectory of my life. As circumstances would have it, I came from a very close, very loving, but not wealthy family in the traditional sense. My father

was a UPS driver, Scout Master, soccer coach, and more – all while raising three boys along with my mom - who also worked at the school, volunteered throughout the community, and got us from activity to activity day in and day out. Although we traveled, I had never been on a plane or to any state that didn't border Arizona.

That changed in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when my team won the AZ State FPS Competition, earning us a chance to compete in Ann Arbor, MI. My parents did what they always had and put together the funds necessary for me to go and a whole new world opened up for me.

Not only did I experience my first of what are now over a million miles flown, but we stayed at the dorms at the awe inspiring University of Michigan. We ate at the now famous Zimmerman's Delicatessen. We met hundreds of kids from all over the country who were a lot like us, and most of all, we got to compete using the tools, techniques, and brainstorming processes that continue to serve me to this day.

While I can't even remember how we placed in the competition, I can remember many more specific sights, sounds, faces, and feelings from those early days than this page can hold. It is for all of these reasons and more that I not only write this letter, but also why I contribute financially to Ms. Jackson's FPS initiative every year. If it means that one more kid can go to state or international competition, that the teams have the resources they need, or she can continue to serve our youth in this way for as long as possible, she and the program have my undying gratitude and support. It is the least I can do.

Sincerely,

Ryan M. George, CEO Simpleview Inc.

Arizona Affiliate Alumnus



I began competing in Future Problem Solving in eighth grade. In five years I have gained countless skills I know will help me far into the future. I have learned how to work effectively and efficiently as part of a team, honed my public speaking skills, and developed the ability to look at a situation from multiple perspectives.

Over the years Future Problem Solving has given me plenty of fond memories, but my favorite would have to be participating in the international competition last year. My team and I really put ourselves out there and interacted with fellow FPSers from all over the world. It was incredibly humbling and empowering to see so many intelligent, talented people working towards the common goal of making the world a better place.

My all time favorite prop is definitely a newspaper. I have come to believe it is the most versatile prop available. I have used it to create costumes, objects, even animals. My first year in FPS we used a newspaper to build a three foot by three foot boat and I have never doubted its ability since.

It might just be the swimmer in me coming out, but I think flippers would make an interesting spontaneous prop. I would love to see what the inventive minds of FPSers could do with such a random item.

My advice to younger FPS teams would be to make sure you have fun. FPS can get stressful, especially on the day of competitions. I believe FPSers need to keep things in perspective and never be afraid to propose some of their more creative ideas. They often make the best solutions.

### **Solveig Stensland**

**2017 Graduate, Minnesota Affiliate**



Our son, James Jordan, is a sixth grader at Prestonwood Christian Academy in Plano, Texas. James had the opportunity to participate in Future Problem Solvers at PCA for the first time this year. The FPS program immediately captivated him by encouraging him to think beyond the clear “right and wrong” answers expected in other classes. He was, for the first time, forced to reason his way through a problem. His teacher, Lisa Quintana, approached James, and us, with the idea of participating in Community Problem Solving. After some debate and discussion, James decided to participate in CmPS. He chose a problem which pulled on his heart a couple of years prior, heating for the elderly and impoverished during winter. The specific problem he decided to tackle was fire prevention due to misuse of space heaters. James initially thought it would be easy, that he would put together some safety flyers and that there would many avenues to pass out his flyers. Reality hit him, however, when he had tremendous difficulty getting adults to respond to his requests. While discouraging at first, this first bit of adversity has served as a great lesson in perseverance for our son. He is a gifted child and has not often faced adversity. Through this process, he learned to respond with grit and determination rather than giving in to feelings of despondency. After much effort, heartache, and many closed doors, James found a few outlets that needed his services. He presented to an impoverished neighborhood in south Dallas and had those in attendance at his presentation sign contracts agreeing to use their space heaters safely. He also developed a relationship with Meals on Wheels. The flyer and an article he authored ended up being distributed to over 5,000 people. Meals on Wheels was so appreciative that they awarded him an award for Outstanding Community Service in a ceremony at their local

DFW offices. He’s also set up to film a video for Meals on Wheels to use next winter. Although James faced adversity during the CmPS process, he was amazed that he was able to take his message of fire prevention to over 5,000 people. He did more and reached more people than he ever imagined possible. James is blown away that his efforts could literally save lives—that is something he never thought possible. He’s learned so much from this process; how to respond to adversity, how to continue moving forward when it would be easier to stop, and that he is capable of achieving anything he puts his mind to. CmPS has helped James learn that if he applies himself, he can change the world around him.



James sharing his project at the 2017 Texas State Bowl.

**Aimee and Philip Jordan—CmPS/FPS Parents, Texas Affiliate**

I have been involved in FPS for 7 years! Some of the skills that I will take away from being in FPS are professional writing and dressing in a professional manner and public speaking at the drop of a hat! My favorite FPS memory is see the lasting impact that our first CmPS project - "Stomp Out Bullying" - has had in St. Cloud District 742 (11 schools!), and seeing other states and countries inspired to utilize some of our project solutions in their schools. My favorite item to use from the prop box is the tin foil, and the spontaneous prop that I would like to see used again is the Staples easy button. One word of advice I would give to younger FPS teams is to never give up, even if the obstacle seems hard to overcome.

**Parker Kayser, Minnesota Affiliate**

*Parker is a 2017 graduating senior from Apollo High School in St. Cloud MN. Parker has grown to be a true leader and is found encouraging the younger CmPS students at every turn. You heard him, "Never give up!"*



Future Problem Solvers was a learning experience unlike any other I had in high school. For one, I enjoyed going to class—more than I can say about most courses—because I appreciated that FPS made me think for myself rather than regurgitate information. In FPS, questions with a “right” or “wrong” response do not exist. The answers are too complex for a scantron machine and originate solely from the imaginations of you and your team. This kind of creative yet critical thinking has been invaluable in every step of my professional path. Being a Future Problem Solver also showed me how to conduct independent research. I have leaned heavily on this skill, first in college and now as a journalist. Without the research training I received from FPS, I would have struggled to adjust to the demanding rigor of college-level coursework. Another arrow that FPS placed in my quiver was the ability to collaborate with a group. As a member of a large editorial staff who works under the constant pressure of deadlines, I am grateful

for the strong foundation of teamwork and communication skills that FPS helped forge. (I’m sure my colleagues are, too.) In fact, there are frequent instances which cause me to appreciate my background in FPS, both as a professional adult and as an individual trying to respond to the world’s challenges. It is in this latter role that I often recall the most important lesson that FPS taught me: that for every problem tomorrow brings, there is a solution inside each of us waiting to be discovered.

**Christian Wallace, Assistant Editor at Texas Monthly  
Texas Affiliate Alumnus**



The **TexasMonthly** chronicles life in contemporary Texas with writing on politics, the environment, industry, and education. The magazine also covers leisure topics such as music, art, dining, and travel. The magazine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has a monthly readership of 2.5 million people.



**\*\*Dear Readers,**

My experience when I went to San Marcos Texas to compete for my school, Aikin Elementary School for Socrates FPS, Friday April 7, 2017. I was nervous that morning that morning we all met up with my team which they felt excited as well as me. We started leaving about 8:30 AM. When it was time to solve on Saturday morning, I had butterflies in my stomach, but when we were done I felt relieved. On the awards, my stomach exploded but then felt sad when we didn't get a award, but at least we made history!

Sincerely,

**Christopher Perea Gonzalez  
Paris I.S.D.  
Aikin Elementary, 4th Grade  
Texas Affiliate Participant**

**Have you considered  
volunteering your time to  
your local affiliate or  
donating to the FPSP  
Scholarship Fund? All  
donations are tax  
deductible.**



I have been involved in FPS for nine years, from 4th grade to 12th grade. Some skills I will take with me from FPS include being able to research a wide variety of topics well, working and communicating with a team, expressing my creativity through solutions, thinking on the spot under a time limit, and learning how to relax and let loose for orals. My favorite items to use in the prop boxes is tin foil. As the creator of many costumes over the years, I find tin foil to be very versatile and the addition of a little bit can transport any person into the future. One piece of advice I would give to younger FPS teams is to stick with it. Even if your team has not placed, it is the process, (cheesy as it sounds) the journey, and adventure that FPS takes you on that is truly worth every practice, every packet, and every orals. (MN students often refer to Presentation of Action Plan as orals.)

**Nina Vang**

**2017 Graduate, Minnesota Affiliate**



**Christopher Gonzalez (3rd from left) and his 2017 State Bowl team.**

**\*\*Christopher is a "NOVICE" FPS-er. In Texas and several other affiliates, (Alaska, Arizona, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Portugal, Utah, West Virginia) special programming, activities, and competitions are developed for young or beginning problem solvers, English as a Second Language Learners, and those with other special learning needs. The goal is to involve as many students as possible in the Future Problem Solving Program! Several other affiliates offer unique programming such as art competitions and special individual competitions. Contact your Affiliate Director to find out if your affiliate offers a Novice Division or other special programming!**

## An FPS Memoir



A Chinese proverb states, “A single step begins the journey of a thousand miles.” My name is Sergeant (K-9) Chris Clifton, Florida Department of Corrections, Youth Pastor of First Baptist Church of Alturas, Florida and Junior Warden, Lake Wales Masonic Lodge #242, Lake Wales, FL. I didn’t know when I first began my endeavors with Future Problem Solving in my adolescent years, that of every skill I would learn, this skill would be of prominent use in every aspect of my adult, personal, family, spiritual, and professional lives.

Being an Army Veteran, I was highly trained in Physical Fitness, my MOS (Military Occupation Specialty), and how to survive in combat. When I was honorably medically discharged from the Army, I went to Work for the Florida Department of Corrections, where I moved up through the ranks to Sergeant and now work as a K-9 handler.

The Department of Corrections has taught me how to stay safe when the number of inmates greatly outweighs the number of officers. In addition, the Department has also taught me how to use a Bloodhound to find a missing person, whether it be an escaped inmate, a fleeing felon, missing elderly person, or lost or endangered child.

In my college endeavors I was able to obtain an associate’s degree in Liberal Arts and a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. I am currently working to become a Social Studies Teacher in the secondary education level.

In addition, I also have a beautiful wife and two beautiful children. Parenting and being a husband has definitely had its trying times, but through it all my wife and kids are happy, smart, and healthy.

Of the several skills that every Drill Sergeant, Non-Commissioned Officer, Corrections Professional, Academy Instructor, College Professor, and Pastor have helped me develop, not a single one has been paramount to the problem solving skills I developed in Future Problem Solving.

Like everyone else, I, as well as my parents, were skeptical. We did not see the future benefit that Future Problem Solving would provide. My parents, both retired from the Army were very “old school” and felt that I would be fully equipped to handle and problem I faced with a solid foundation of reading, writing, and arithmetic. As I grew up, I found that that concept could not be further from the truth as I was always confronted with a problem that needed solving.

In addition, many people do not realize that this takes a process in order to effectively generate the greatest solution. Problems are not effectively solved by merely throwing a solution at the problem, and hoping it works. The entire situation must be evaluated. All challenges must be addressed, the heaviest problem must be identified, relevant solutions must be generated, criteria for evaluating the solutions must be identified, the solutions must be evaluated, and the top ranking solution must be set into action.

If one begins to think that I didn’t have this process memorized, they are sadly mistaken. My problem solving skills, because they were developed at such a young age through Future Problem Solving, are far superior and reached faster than my colleagues.

In 2015, I was assaulted by an inmate while working as an Internal Security Officer. Luckily, I was not injured. Of every skill set that I had, no training could have ever prepared me for the situation. Granted, Army skill sets, and Corrections Academy skill sets came to me very quickly, I still to this day feel that my ability to solve the problem at hand quickly and safely lead me to be able to overcome that inmate, stay safe, and utilize the necessary force to restrain him and call for additional assistance is due to my Future Problem Solving training.

Of course all of this could not be said without also giving credit to my FPS coach, Mrs. Darlene Cook. I was a part of her “prototype.” She had never before been an FPS coach and although my fellow students and I were the guinea pigs of not only Mrs. Cook’s first year of FPS but also the 5<sup>th</sup> grade FPS program, the evidence is paramount that she has done a stellar job. Not all the credit goes to the program. In addition, Mrs. Cook was able to coach her students to become the Texas Grand Champions for Creative Drama. After many more years of wisdom and experience, I can only imagine the caliber of FPS coach she is now.

**Chris Clifton, Florida Resident, Texas Affiliate Alumnus**

I have been involved with FPS for the entirety of my high school career, and I can easily say it has been the silliest, quirkiest, strangest activity I have ever participated in. As someone who always participated in academic extra-curriculars that primarily emphasized scientific knowledge or mathematical aptitude, I found FPS refreshing in the creativity it encourages. Throughout high school, FPS continued to be unique in its encouragement of abstract thinking and child-like curiosity. The high school experience can feel restrictive and narrow at times; the stress of tests and college applications can definitely lead students to burn out and trap themselves in rigid mindsets focused solely on grades. For me, FPS has been a way to remind myself to take things in context and to clutch on to the curiosity and joy that children so innately possess but adults almost always seem to lose with age. PAP taught me to never take things too seriously or fall victim to functional fixedness, and the six-step FPS process always makes me think twice, or thrice, or six times, about thinking. I'm definitely going to miss FPS practices next year when I'm at college!



**Mina Yuan, 2017 Graduate  
Wayzata Area High School  
Minnesota Affiliate**

#### A Note from the Editors:

We hope you enjoyed this issue! We always find the testimonials so powerful that we share as many as we get. We typically do NOT change them at all and share them with you just as they were shared with us.

We are always looking for more testimonials! We especially love hearing how our FPS-ers apply their problem solving skills in their college, adult, and professional lives.

You may submit a testimonial any time during the year to [dwoyth@gmail.com](mailto:dwoyth@gmail.com) or [april@fspspi.org](mailto:april@fspspi.org).

We look forward to many more stories of FPS journeys! Please consider sharing an FPS story.

The next edition of ***Parent Perspectives*** will be a June/July edition about the events and experiences of IC 2017.

#### Did You Know?

- **The Future Problem Solving Program was established in 1974 by Dr. E. Paul Torrance**
- **It is estimated that over 250,000 students across the globe participate in Future Problem Solving in some way**
- **There are currently 41 affiliates in the FPSPI global network**
- **There are currently 15+ regions being mentored to have Future Problem Solving in their country, state, or region**
- **FPSPI offers activities and events for participants in Kindergarten to Adults**
- **YOU can vote on competition topics by going to the website [fspspi.org](http://fspspi.org)**

"The genius of the future will be the creative mind adapting itself to the shape of things to come." ~ E. Paul Torrance~