



# LifeSmarts

*Learn it. Live it.*

## Notes from the LifeSmarts Team

### LifeSmarts Monthly Alumni Update, August 8, 2024

Dear LifeSmarts Alum,

It was so wonderful to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> National LifeSmarts Championship in San Diego, CA with so many of you this past April. The competition was fierce as the final match came down to one question between the Pennsylvania and Washington State Champion Teams. We'd like to congratulate Dallas High School from Pennsylvania as our 2025 National LifeSmarts Champions.

The new LifeSmarts program year officially begins September 1, and quizzing is already open for students to start learning and testing their knowledge.

#### Program Updates

1. **New Leadership:** In July, Lisa Hertzberg, who served as the Director of LifeSmarts for 24 years, decided to retire. The program will now be led by a new three-member leadership team, with Elena Robertson, Cheryl Varnadoe, and Cristina Counts taking on roles as Associate Program Directors of LifeSmarts.
2. **Introducing Cristina Counts**, the LifeSmarts Associate Program Director – Curriculum. Some of you may remember Cristina from her help at the 2023 and 2024 National LifeSmarts Championship, and she may have even worked with your team. For others, you can learn more about her below.
3. This May, LifeSmarts held our first ever Junior Varsity (Middle School) National LifeSmarts Championship. Eight teams competed virtually, and the following teams achieved the top rankings:
  - a. Winner: Georgia, Gordon County 4-H
  - b. Runner Up: Kansas, Trailridge Middle School
  - c. Third Place: Florida, Northview JV Team and Nebraska, Kearney Catholic JV Team



*LifeSmarts Team at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for the 2024 National LifeSmarts Championship*

Have a great final month of summer! As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

Best regards,

Elena Robertson  
Associate Program Director, LifeSmarts Operations  
[elenar@nclnet.org](mailto:elenar@nclnet.org) | 703-400-9407



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## **Introducing Cristina Counts, Associate Program Director, LifeSmarts Curriculum**

Cristina was born and raised in San Diego and graduated from San Diego State University with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and a minor in Spanish. She followed her passion for current events into a career in TV News, working as a TV News Producer in San Diego, Albuquerque, and Dallas/Fort Worth for over 11 years.

Cristina then decided to follow in the footsteps of her mother and siblings, by becoming a teacher. She has taught many different subjects in a variety of schools from Bilingual Fifth Grade to High School Alternative Education. Most recently, Cristina taught at a private school where she was responsible for teaching all subjects to a small class that included 9th – 12th Grade. During this time, she became familiar with LifeSmarts.

Cristina was the coach of a three-time Texas State Champion team, and even led her team to advancing to the Sweet Sixteen knockout rounds. After leaving the classroom, Cristina was hired to write curriculum for LifeSmarts, including units on health care, post-secondary education, and social media.

Cristina is excited to officially join the National Consumers League and the LifeSmarts team. She looks forward to creating lots of fun new lessons for students across the country. Please join us in welcoming Cristina to the team.

