

***Iowa Convention Report
Johnston, IA
April 3-4, 2009***

Friday, April 3, 2009

Friday's agenda included the IA director's meeting in the morning with officer elections. Committee meetings were held at 10:30am to 12:00 pm. There was Past President's and Retireess Luncheon held in a nearby restaurant.

The afternoon started out with Benefits and Legislative items discussed as follows.

Jeff Davis, *Legislative Chair*, welcomed everyone and introduced Jim Mace.

- **Jim Mace-JM Marketing:** This is the 21st year offering benefits to NASCOE members. This is his 31st year in the insurance business. There are many changes and there are some new policies available. There is a new cancer plan that will be approved soon. The wellness benefit is up to \$125. Many items in the cancer policy is improved at a lower cost in some cases. When the plan is approved in the states, JM Marketing representatives will be contacting the offices. Jim gave a donation to IASCOE. They have donated over \$620,000 to NASCOE over the years. They also donate auction items for the conventions. He is a CPA out of Missouri. Many people are looking for additional life insurance to make up for what the Federal policies lack. There is a new life insurance that is available that is called "life-time term".

Discussion was held on the power of group purchasing and how this is a great benefit to NASCOE members. Members can pay for JM Marketing insurance through payroll deductions. There are many different types of policies available: Life, Dental, Vision, Cancer, Heart-Stroke, and Long Term. There are other types of protection like identity theft, etc that are coming for members. Fidelity Life has a Lifetime Term policy to the age of 120. The rate cannot go up and it is guaranteed issue to NASCOE members for up to \$75,000 coverage. Any level beyond that has some basic questions that must be answered. It is portable at retirement and there is future insurability feature. This type of insurance is available today. It will be available at each state convention and internet applications will be set up soon.

JM Marketing is willing to send a policy packet for new members and non-members. This has been very successful for improving membership. COC members can also have access to JM Marketing products through associate membership. He also touched on the Long Term Care policy.

Joshua Katcher, *EJ Brown & Associates*: Discussed retirement planning. This company is happy to discuss Civil Service and FERS retirement training. They have a presentation for interested employees. He discussed how people plan to use their money and how much has been lost in the past few months. How much money are you going to need in the first 5 years of retirement? How about 5-8 years, etc. He can help with decisions on what you should keep in the market, and other issues that you may have considering retirement. There are many principals in financial planning that must be discussed and decided upon. How much life insurance will you need? This is another item that needs to be decided. There are many things about the federal pension program that employees need to know in order to make good decisions for their retirement.

Jeff Davis, *IA Legislative Chairperson*: There were two new people who attended the legislative conference for the first time. Aaron Moore and Devalyn Wilson gave their point of view of the legislative conference. Aaron felt that it was a very rewarding and positive experience. It was amazing to see Washington DC and how hard NASCOE members work for us. Devalyn also gave her point of view. She now realizes that we have our benefits come from the hard work of NASCOE members. The FERS Sick leave bill that we discussed at the visits on the hill has now passed the House. They also discussed modernization, FSA administering animal ID and other issues. The legislative members were very receptive of the NASCOE message.

Jeff Davis discussed on how things went at the Conference. They were able to speak with one of the senators for over 10 minutes. He was impressed with all of the events and people in Washington DC and he felt that the timing for the conference was good.

Dee Ann Lehn, *Midwest Area Benefits Chairperson:*

- **Coupons:** There are discount coupons on the registration table.
- **Vacations:** There are many deals for family vacations on the NASCOE website.
- **NASCOE Travel** is a good source for plane tickets and many other items and NASCOE gets a commission.
- **NASCOE Attorney:** Members are allowed one hour free with the NASCOE attorney on agency issues.
- **Cell Phone discounts**-Alltel, Cingular, Sprint, Nextel, and many others offer discounts. The smaller companies do not offer this discount. This has been a very popular benefit with members.
- **Retirement Page:** lists many sources to help with retirement planning.
- **JM Marketing-** is also listed on the benefits page on the website.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm. The general assembly will meet at 2:30 pm.

General Assembly Convened at 2:30 pm

Welcome-Steve Kennedy, Past President IASCOE: He thanked everyone for coming and introduced first timers to the convention. He also introduced the out-of-state guests. He also introduced STO personnel and DD's present. The Silent Auction will finish before the Mid West Rally begins.

Dennis Olson, IA Acting State Executive Director: He grew up on his family farm and became a COT in 1978. He has been the Chief Administrative Officer for many years in the STO. He has been involved in many community organizations and received many awards in the past years. He introduced some of the STO personnel that were in attendance. He discussed the following:

- **SED appointments:** No appointments have been made at this time in the nation. In USDA there are a large number of appointments to be filled. Some positions in Washington DC have been filled, but there are many to be named as yet. After that the state positions will be filled. Washington DC has been working at a minimum staff for a while and this slows down everything.
- **Budget:** We have been working with a Continuing Resolution until March. After the budget was actually passed, no money was released right away to the states. FSA asked for an additional \$90 million to cover costs. It was pushed back to \$52 million, but \$22 million has to go to IT. This will significantly cut into the budget. The agency will be \$84 million short to do business but the money has not been released because upper management is trying to consider how to deal with the money available. He expects funding to cover personnel on board at this time. There was to be a conference call this past week to discuss allotments to the states, which would cover 2 months. There was no call, but hopefully next week. The budget for 2010 will be tighter. There will be no buyouts for 2009. Any buy outs would have to take place at the beginning of a fiscal year. It takes a long time to get authorized, so it is not sure that it will even take place in 2010.
- **ITChanges:** It is important to get information out timely to the county offices. As part of a way to help you get information more timely, there will be an email from the Acting SED stating that there will be a new intranet site for Iowa employees. The GIS person in the Iowa STO has developed the new site. All employees are encouraged to utilize the site. There will be a place to send in suggestions on the website.
- **WEBTA:** T&A's will be done online. Many other agencies have used this program for years. There were some problems with CO and GS employment systems and software. It should be coming out soon.
- **LinkPass:** This process is in the works. The cards have gone to Fort Collins and then they were sent to the STO. The DD's will distribute the cards in the near future. The mobile sites will be used as light activation sites because there is only one permanent site in IA.
- **Vacancies:** there are 10 COTS and 5 CED openings at this time. There are 6 FLOT and they were in the STO for testing. Some DD's also tested and all passed. There is a career interim program and hopefully this will help with good candidates. There is only one summer intern position at this time. The ceiling for GS is two under and 12 under on the CO side, but once the CED positions are filled, the state will be one over.

- **Temporary Help:** There are 31 FTE's in IA right now, but you have to subtract COC, COC advisors, and temp field help from that number. The STO and DD's met and requested 19.2 full time equivalents and received 6. The numbers have not been released out in the state because the STO has to calculate needs for the state. If a COF needs temp help due to emergency situations, contact the STO regarding the needs. There is no hiring freeze at this time, but no jobs can be offered until Washington DC clears new employee requests. This delays the process a little, but it has moved along very well.
- **COT Training Program:** He was on the panel for the COT Training program. It was determined that a national COT Training Program should be developed. Notice AO-1437 announced the new program and the DAFO website has the modules posted there. There is a training branch in Washington, but employee groups that identify a need can work with Washington and actually get a program together. If an employee has a suggestion on a program, it is better to have a solution to a problem rather than just identify a problem.
- **Awards:** FSA does have an award program despite tight budgets. There are rating and achievement awards. The IA state office worked with the employee associations to determine how awards should be distributed. Achievement awards are a separate fund and that particular fund is being examined as a possibility for pulling funds in the future.

Jon Williams-Midwest Area Exec- Steve introduced Jon, who is from Juneau Co, WI. He has been a COT trainer and was the WASCOE President for 5 ½ years. He has two children. Jon discussed the following:

- **Involvement:** Need to encourage new members to get involved in all the different conferences, etc.
- **Legislative Conference:** Robert Redding, the NASCOE liaison in Washington, is a vital part of working with legislators. Unfortunately, legislative activities are expensive and the NASCOE Dues had to be raised. There has not been a raise in dues for 9 years. It is important to contact legislators at the local level. CAPWIZ is an excellent tool and so is the PAC. No one likes the idea of a PAC, but this is another important tool because the legislators need funding and the PAC can help with that. The PAC support enables NASCOE to have influence with legislators. The position papers have been posted to the NASCOE website. The main issues were: modernization, administration of animal ID and conservation programs, duplication of services with RMA and employee issues such as FERS Sick Leave, Windfall Elimination and Federal Health benefits.
- **PT Classification:** The field review has been done and the report has been submitted to the Acting DAFO.

Susan Kerr, Consumer Protection Investigator: She discussed how to protect yourself from Identity Theft. She authored two Identity Theft pamphlets that have been utilized extensively. She has worked for the IA Attorney General's Office for 14 years in the Consumer Protection Division. They have recovered over \$1 million each for each year for consumers. The CPD office can be contacted in many ways if you have a problem. She had a power point presentation and highlighted the following items:

- **Consumer Advisories:** These are published monthly on different topics.
- **Identity Theft:** is the fast growing crime in the US. 25% of the population had their personal information stolen last year. Your social security number is the key and the most important personal information you have. One of the best ways to protect your identity is to monitor your credit report. She reviewed how to opt out of being on customer lists and how important it is to protect your own identity.

Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm

Evening festivities included a dance and hospitality room that started at 6:00 pm.

Saturday, April 4, 2009

The Awards presentations started at 8:00 am.

Tom Lane presented the following awards

Sick leave awards: 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, 2,500 hours and Larry Niles received an award for 3,500 hrs.
Distinguished Service Awards: Community Service and Agriculture Awards were awarded.

Scholarship Awards: Tammy Pruin presented four scholarship awards.

Membership Awards: The following awards were presented: Honorary Life, County 100% membership, two counties received a plaque for 50 years of continuous 100% membership.

Trivia Game Winners were announced

Iowa General Assembly Reconvenes

Welcome-Steve Kennedy, IASCOE Past President: He welcomed everyone and announced the new committee chairpersons and directors. He thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve as president.

Introduction of new officers: Cindy Mensen, President, Jeff Davis, Vice President, Sue Beemer, Sec/Treas. Cindy welcomed everyone and thanked them for their support.

She discussed the legislative conference. NAFEC has a new website; www.fsacountycommittees.org.

Committee Reports

Scholarships: Tom Lane gave the committee report. There were four \$350 scholarships awarded this year. The Distinguished Service awards winners were again announced.

Publicity: Tammy Eibey gave the committee report. There were 7 districts were represented at the meeting yesterday. They discussed the website. Iowa won two of the Midwest Area awards for Publicity. It is difficult to get items submitted for the newsletter and different ways were discussed to improve that situation.

Awards: Tammy Pruin gave the report. Tom Lane is the co-chair. There were 13 scholarship applications awarded. There was a panel of 3 judges and they were very impressed with the level of ability of the applicants. Four \$350 scholarships will continue to be awarded. Two distinguished service awards were submitted. A question was raised regarding sick leave award to associate members and this will be brought up at the regular session.

Benefits/Legislative: Dee Ann Lehn gave the report. Jeff Davis is the Legislative Chairperson. Dee Ann gave the report. JM Marketing gave a \$100 donation to IASCOE. See Friday's notes. Dee Ann Lehn is also the Midwest Area Benefits Chairperson.

Membership: The membership committee report was presented. It was discussed that it is important to contact COTs and new members and inform them of the benefits of membership. The sick leave and years of service awards were reviewed. All dues received by June 15 will be eligible to receive a \$50 refund, and 5 names are drawn. Dues increase was accepted because the NASCOE dues were increased \$15. The committee feels the increase is necessary and recommends the increase effective July 1.

Programs: Cindy read a message from the Programs Chair because she could not be present. If you have a solution or problem with software or forms, submit your suggestion via the form on the NASCOE website to the state Program Chair and then it will be forwarded to the national office.

Proposals: A motion was made to increase the dues for 2009-2010 as recommended by the membership committee. The motion was approved and carried.

Old Business: none

New Business: none

All committee reports were approved.

Raffle and Auction winners announced

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 am.

*Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Esselman*