

IASCOE

The Iowa Association Of FSA County Office Employees

January 2013



2012/2013 IASCOE OFFICERS

President

Jeff Davis
CED Plymouth County



jeff.davis@ia.usda.gov
tigerhawk89@hotmail.com

Vice-President

Cindy Pistek
PT Hancock County



cindy.pistek@ia.usda.gov
Cindy.Pistek@gmail.com

Treasurer

Judy Dameron
PT Louisa County



Judy.dameron@ia.usda.gov
jldameron@iowatelecom.net

Secretary

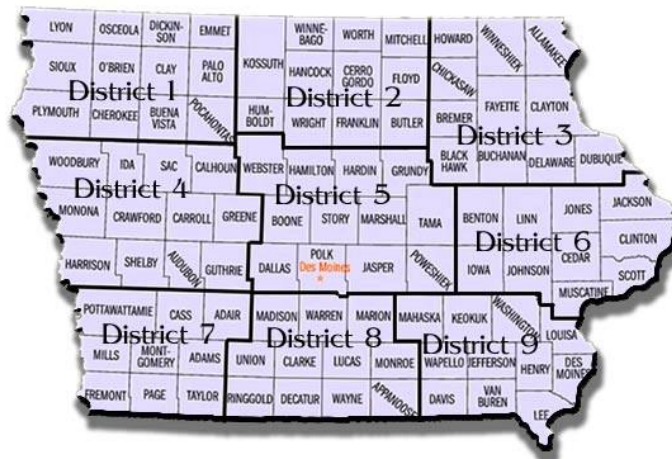
Jennifer Comer
PT Page County



Jennifer.comer@ia.usda.gov
jenniferburgoin@yahoo.com

2012-2013 IASCOE DIRECTORS & ALTERNATE DIRECTORS

DISTRICT NUMBER	PROGRAM ASSISTANT AND COUNTY	COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COUNTY
1 Director Alternate	Karen LaCour, Dickinson Nancy Heideman, Clay	Jeff Davis, Plymouth Dustin Miller, Cherokee
2 Director Alternate	Cindy Pistek, Hancock Jeanine Diekhuis, Hancock	Tammy Pruin, Wright Barry TerHark, Cerro Gordo
3 Director Alternate	Curt Goettsch, Howard Karen McNeil, Winneshiek	Joseph Huber, Clayton Kevin Keegan, Buchanan
4 Director Alternate	Brenda Albright, Audubon Mary Lageschulte, Ida	John Landgraf, Sac Heidi Nickol, Ida
5 Director Alternate	Kitty Benda, Marshall Karla Novotny, Tama	Curt Houk, Poweshiek Thomas Abbas, Hamilton
6 Director Alternate	Jessica Yuska, Scott Joni Birkhofer, Muscatine	Devalyn Wilson, Cedar Randy Madsen, Muscatine/Scott
7 Director Alternate	Jennifer Comer, Page Monica Robinson, Cass	Lynette Gruchow, W Pottawattamie Justin Bahnsen, Montgomery
8 Director Alternate	Julie Derby, Marion	Kelly Cain, Madison Joyce Frost, Wayne
9 Director Alternate	Judy Dameron, Louisa Dawn Stewart, Henry	Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk Gretchen McLain, Jefferson



COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2012-2013

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR – Dee Ann Lehn

BENEFITS CHAIR – Kelly Cain

District	Member	County
1	Rex Wittrock	Buena Vista
2	David Stromer	Hancock
3	Jesse Wegner	Fayette
4	Pat Warmbier	Harrison
5	Teresa Simonton	Poweshiek
6	Joni Birkhofer	Muscatine
7	Chris Irvin	Page
8	Kelly Cain	Madison
9	John Bartenhagen	Louisa

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3	Connie Straw	Chickasaw
4	Denise Dugan	Woodbury
5	Kathleen Baker	Marshall
6	Angie Reynolds	Muscatine
7	Phyllis Reineke	Taylor
8	David Wynn	Monroe
9	Carol Long	Mahaska

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2	Barry Terhark	Cerro Gordo
3	Rose Woerner	Black Hawk
4	Heather Muenchrath	Shelby
5	Karla Novotny	Tama
6	Jessica Yuska	Scott
7	Lynette Gruchow	Pottawattamie
8		
9	Gretchen McLain	Jefferson

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1	Lisa Forburger	Palo Alto
2	Rosalie Carlson	Worth
3	Sheri Rodman	Clayton
4	Cathleen “Skip” Borst	Carroll
5	Tom Abbas	Hamilton
6	Renee Schultz	Cedar
7	Sue Beemer	Taylor
8	Marla Morlan	Monroe
9	Deanna Rood	Mahaska

PROGRAM CHAIR – Jessica Yuska

EMBLEMS CHAIR – Kitty Benda, Marshall



2012 IASCOE Directors

Other Roles

CAPWIZ Co-ordinator

Tammy Eibey - FLO Cedar County
tammy.eibey@ia.usda.gov
eibeyfarms@iowatelecom.net

IASCOE Web Manager

Brian Beach - PT Sac County
brian.beach@ia.usda.gov
bbeach@mchsi.com

Convention Registration

Devalyn Wilson - CED Cedar County
devalyn.wilson@ia.usda.gov
dawilly@iowatelecom.net

Newsletter Editor

Lynette Gruchow, CED, Pottawattamie County
lynette.gruchowt@ia.usda.gov
netterbaby75@aol.com

Newsletter Copy Editor

Anna Boecker, CED Tama County
anna.boecker@ia.usda.gov
anna3003@hotmail.com



2012 Awards & Scholarship Committee



2012 Publicity Committee



2012 Membership Committee



2012 Legislative and Benefits Committee

PAST IASCOE PRESIDENTS

1959-61 Kenneth Hatcher
1961-62 Raymond D Vanderhorst
1962-63 Luther Stock
1963-64 William H Holiday
1964-65 Charles Bacon
1965-66 Gaylor A Thayer
1966-67 V. Deane Thornton
1967-68 Marguerite Liddle
1969-70 Warner C Walrath
1970-71 Janet Hemm
1971-72 Carl Lantz
1972-74 James A Riekens
1974-76 Cecil F Zollars
1977-79 Garnita Ewart
1979-80 John Ace Parker/Gary Brewer
1980-82 Gary Brewer 1982-84 Larry Niles

1984-86 Joe McLaughlin
1986-87 Pat Drew / Ronald Parker
1987-88 Mike Houston
1988-90 Ronald Reuvers
1990-92 Steve Abbas
1992-94 Kevin Fitzpatrick
1994-95 Jerry Frank
1995-97 Kevin McClure
1997-99 Jolene Fechter
1999-01 Trice Smith
2001-03 John Landgraf
2003-05 Tom Lane/Alan Donaldson/
John Landgraf
2005-07 Dee Lehn
2007-09 Steve Kennedy
2009-11 Cindy Mensen

A Message from our State Executive Director



I write this as we end one year and begin another which is starting to have the same look of uncertainty. The latest I am hearing is a new farm bill probably won't pass until next August and no one is certain of an extension of the 2008 bill. This may all change before this is printed, but we will still be waiting for direction from Congress.

It has certainly been a tumultuous year. Between an uncertain budget, a late lingering farm bill and the 'soft' part of software this has been a year to remember----or forget might be more true. Yet through it all we, mostly you, have persevered with the patience, fortitude and dedication that is the hallmark of this agency. That we enter another year hardly unscathed, yet undeterred is not surprising. I try always to remind producers that this Agency's great strength is its great people. If the year past was uncertain what lies before remains a fog. Still, fogs lift. There will be a budget. There will be a farm bill and it will be implemented. And Midas will work. And this Agency's legacy of service will continue yet another year.

Speaking of MIDAS, yes it will start sometime, and as we discuss this each week on the DAFO call, the timeline keeps extending. Our Administrator, Juan Garcia, continues to tell everyone that dates for training and even release will be pushed back until the program works properly. I truly appreciate this, as you all deserve to have a work product that works the first time. The recent history of our software has not always been this way.

I believe very strongly in the work this agency does and that work is only accomplished by the good people who work here. You are truly a part of the food security of our nation and as Secretary Vilsack often says, 'we are a secure nation in part because we are a food secure nation'. We do not serve our nation in what most consider the traditional sense and I would never take away from those honorable individuals who wear the uniform and serve our nation, but we do serve our nation as true public servants.

John Whitaker, SED

2012-2013 IASCOE President



Hello All,

It is kind of a trying time in FSA without a Farm Bill to guide us. Just know that your NASCOE leadership is doing everything possible to make sure that we (the FSA employees) are treated equitably.

As we close in on the new year with little that is certain, just know that we have a need to stick together. We need to have our people ready to once again be the “get it done” agency with whatever the future may hold for us. I know in times of uncertainty it is hard to believe that everything will turn out right but the past if nothing else should show us that what comes around goes around. Everything in the farming industry is at record levels such as land prices, rent, input costs and also cash prices for the crops that are being grown. I have read articles and heard people talk about how prices could plummet and what it could do to the farm economy. Let me say I really hope that we do not see that happen. But if something like that does happen, that is why we are here. We are here to implement the programs that are handed down. We have proved over the years that we are very good at our jobs. Let me say keep up the good job and also keep the faith.

Our numbers are dropping because we have part of our FSA family deciding to relax and see what the individuals who have gone before them are really talking about when they come back and say it is great. These individuals have put in many years of dedicated service and seen many different programs and projects come and go. They deserve a break and I wish them nothing but the best as it is a well-deserved life after FSA.

Since our numbers are depleting it is imperative that we all get on the same page and use all of the resources that we have access to. NASCOE is teaming up with NAFEC (National Association of Farmer Elected Committees) and would like as many COC members to become members and any county office employee to become an associate member. For more information please feel free to contact me.

Hope to see everyone at the IASCOE convention the first weekend in April. There will be more information coming out on that so please be watching Iowa SharePoint for more information.

I hope that everyone had a great holidays and I will see you in the new year.

Jeff Davis
IASCOE President

2012-2013 IASCOE Vice-President



Happy New Year to all of my friends from FSA. Thanksgiving has just come and gone; Christmas and the New Year are coming fast as I write this letter. I can only imagine that when you read this I have over-eaten a dozen times, gained a few pounds, resolved to lose them again, said hello and good-bye again to our visiting children and now find myself sitting on the couch wondering how it went so fast!

January brings with it a promise of a new beginning and the uncertainty of the next 12 months. As always we will thrive and survive whatever may be in store. The same is true for each of us as a part of the FSA family. The Farm Bill that we will administer, maybe a one year extension of the 2008 Bill or a 2013 Farm Bill, will provide many challenges. We each have the ability to either watch as events unfold or be an active part of the process. We all have access to our legislators, PAC, CAPWIZ and IASCOE/NASCOE. These organizations and tools will aid us in our ability to serve our customers and preserve our benefits as employees.

Many of you should have read the e-mail from John Berge, DAFO which gives all states the guidance, without endorsement, to include information and a membership application in the COC orientation materials. This is a very positive step towards making sure that the COC system continues to be the back-bone of our agency. I encourage all employees, COC members and any other individuals interested in the preservation of the COC system to join NAFEC. Any individual can be an associate member and that includes YOU.

The IASCOE Convention will be held the first weekend in April at the Ramada Tropics Resort just down the road from Merle Hay Plaza. This annual event brings the FSA family together outside of the "office". We will be hearing from many good sources of information regarding both the future of the agency and that of each employee. In addition, we will be able to relax and enjoy the company of fellow employees from all over the state. This facility is family-friendly with an indoor water park attached to the facility. Please take advantage of this opportunity and register for the convention soon.

Finally, I want you to remember that your elected directors are there for EACH of you. If you have a concern, comment, idea or question; contact your director, President or Vice-President. The organization is only as good as its members and we all have something to contribute.

God Bless you all as we begin 2013!

Cindy Pistek – Vice President

ANNUAL IASCOE CONVENTION – APRIL 5-6th in DES MOINES

Mark your calendars and make your room reservations for this year's annual IASCOE/IACS/IASSE Convention which will be held April 5-6th 2013 in Des Moines at the Ramada Tropics Resort Conference Center on Merle Hay Road.

To make sure we get our block of rooms we need reservations made before the end of February. Please make your room reservations by calling the hotel directly at 515.278.0271

The Ramada Tropics Hotel boasts Buccaneer Bay Indoor Water Park. It will be a great way to involve the family for the weekend if it fits everyone's schedule.

IASCOE has a block of rooms set aside for only \$75 a night (plus tax) and it includes 4 passes to the water park. The convention only involves a Friday night stay however the motel has graciously agreed to the same low rate (\$75) Saturday night for those wanting to stay a little longer and enjoy the facilities. We encourage you to call now to make your reservations by contacting the hotel directly at 515.278.0271.

Something new this year, a portion of Friday can be taken as Administrative Leave. President Jeff Davis is currently working out the details. To use Admin leave there are certain requirements the Convention has to meet as well as those in attendance. More details will follow with registration and speakers being announced in the near future.

More information on the hotel can be found at www.ramadatropicsresort.com and on Facebook.



WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

FEB 6th – IASCOE Registration will be posted to the IASCOE site

Since the Convention will be held in the Hotel with the Buccaneer Bay Water Park, we have decided on a Pirate Theme for the Convention. Oh Matey... we have some fun things in the works!!

Watch for updates on Sharepoint and we hope to see you at the Convention!

Following is a list of retirees from October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012:

10/31/2012 Phyllis F. Reinek - Taylor
10/31/2012 Sharon K. Lovstad - Kossuth
11/02/2012 Cheryl K. Lauer - Black Hawk
11/30/2012 Diane F. Ostrander - Greene
12/29/2012 Jacqueline Hughes - O'Brien
12/31/2012 Carole Dawson - Taylor
12/31/2012 Debra Bigger - Bremer



Saying Good-Bye

By Rose Woerner, Black Hawk County

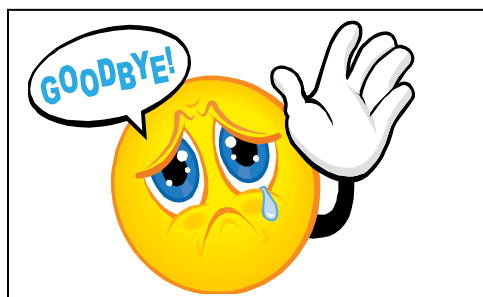
The other day, I was cogitating on the art of saying good-bye. I've had to do it several times this past year, and I hate to admit that the happiness I feel for folks who accomplish their retirement goals does little to offset the loss of a friend.

From the start, I bought in to the claim that ASCS/FSA employees were like family, sometimes happy with each other, sometimes disgruntled with each other, but secure in the knowledge that we were all part of something special because we cared about each other. My life became an open book for my peers to view – I brought in pictures, shared stories about the kids and the spouse (the wilder the better) and grew to know my counterparts, sometimes better than I knew myself.

I spent twenty-two years in Wapello County. The transition to Black Hawk was emotional, albeit seamless because the staff in this office was especially welcoming. It was easy to like them as well as respect them. Then, just as we hit our stride, they started leaving. I knew it would happen eventually, given the age and years of service of the staff, but I didn't expect it to happen as soon as it did.

We lost three people in Wapello County in the mid-90's, but I don't remember this feeling of loss. Maybe, it was because I was younger and believed that I'd see everyone from time to time. That's not necessarily true, even in a small town. People changed, their lives grew busy in different directions and all of a sudden, the folks I called friend and confided in became little more than strangers.

The last member of my original staff left this past November, and while I'm looking forward to a new staff and the training process, I will miss those special people who made my job such a pleasure every single day – Barb Williams, Kathy Diehl, Dan Brack, Cheryl Lauer, and Sheri Steffen.



The IASCOE awards program recognizes members that have made outstanding contributions this past year that has benefited the Farm Service Agency, the producers we serve or the communities we live in.

This Distinguished Service Awards (DSA's) program is your opportunity to recognize and show a formal appreciation to the person that you believe has had a positive impact on our Agency or the community you live in.

The DSA's are given annually in three categories:

- 1) Service to FSA-Agriculture;
- 2) Service to Community
- 3) Service to IASCOE/NASCOE.

The process starts with a nomination. You will find a user friendly fillable nomination form on the NASCOE website at www.nascoe.org. In addition, IASCOE also recognizes members who achieve milestones of unused sick leave, Extra Effort Awards, Professional Improvements Awards and First Time National Convention attendance recognition.

The eligibility requirements are posted on the NASCOE web site to expedite the process. Give me a call if you have any questions.

Please send your nominations by February 1, 2013 to:

John Landgraf
6261 150th Avenue
Storm Lake, Iowa 50588

DID YOU KNOW?!!

NASCOE offers **TWO** kinds of scholarships? One for you and one for your student!



The **NASCOE Member Scholarship Program** is a special NASCOE Scholarship that is awarded to NASCOE Members that are taking additional college credits to further enhance their careers within the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Each Area will be allowed to award one scholarship winner \$200.00 to broaden their portfolio for adult education courses to enhance and advance their careers within FSA. The applicant must be a permanent County office employee and a NASCOE member. Membership dues must be paid and kept current for the past 5 years or since becoming a permanent FSA County Office employee.

Jim and Teresa Mace (JM Marketing) believe so highly in the opportunities that higher education can bring to each and every one of us that they have generously donated \$800.00 towards the NASCOE Members Scholarship award program! Please consider taking a few minutes from your work and studies and complete the nomination form to compete for the award! Deadline to submit the scholarship application to your Area Scholarship Chairperson is **March 1st**.

You can apply for this scholarship by accessing the NASCOE webpage and clicking on the Scholarship tab on the left side of the page. The application form is there and is in fillable format. You will find the deadlines and the address of our Midwest Area Scholarship chair, Stacy Helbert, on the application. All applications for the NASCOE Member Scholarship are sent directly to our Midwest Area Chairperson Stacy and the applicants are responsible for timely submission.

Stacy Helbert
14252 Shooting Star Drive
Noblesville, IN 46060 or stacy_985@yahoo.com

IASCOE/NASCOE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The traditional **IASCOE/NASCOE Scholarship Program** is provided to the children and legal dependents of eligible NASCOE Members. This award may only be used to defray expenses for a student at an accredited school.

Applicants must be a NASCOE member's child or member's legal dependent. The NASCOE member's dues must be paid and membership kept current for the past 5 years, or if less than 5 years, continuous membership has been maintained since becoming a NASCOE member within the first 12 months of employment. The evaluation criteria are based on academics, extracurricular involvement, and work and community contributions. A state committee reviews the applications that are submitted and scores them.

IASCOE currently awards four scholarships of \$300 each. An applicant may only win one time.

Each and every application submitted to the State Scholarship committee is forwarded onto the Area competition – regardless of whether they won at the state level or not. Area winners are selected from State entries. Each Area awards \$1,500.00. The National winner is selected from Area winners, and the National winner receives \$2,500.00.

IASCOE deadline to submit applications is **January 31st** which is earlier than some states so please be aware of the date! The application can be found on the NASCOE home page and is in a fillable format. Be sure to print the entire application as there is a good checklist of items that need to be submitted along with the application.

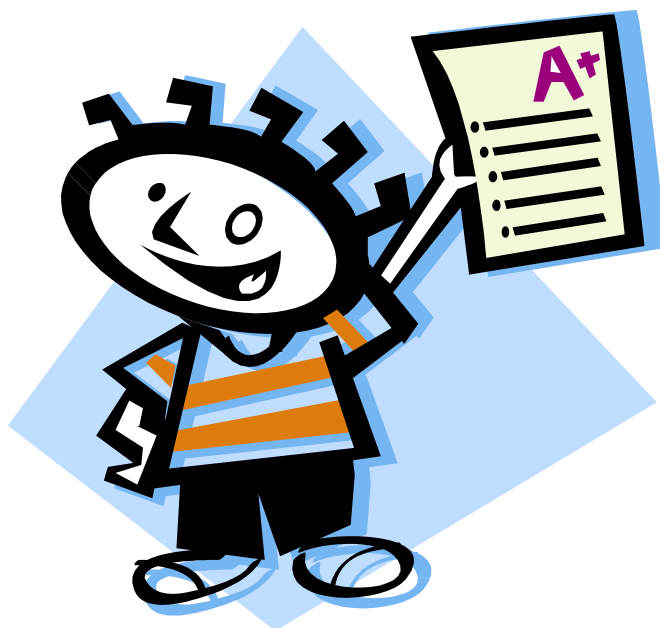
All applications may be hard copies or electronically submitted with appropriate signatures, copies of letter of recommendation and copy of the official transcript(s).

Entries should be submitted by the Jan. 31 deadline to:

Tammy Pruin

16316 190th

Mason City, IA 50401 or tammy.pruin@ia.usda.gov



Tipton Service Center Employees Recognized for Participation in 4th Annual Feds Feeds Families Food Drive



Tipton Service Center Employees along with front row: John Whitaker, FSA State Executive Director, Bill Menner, RD State Director, and Jay T. Mar, NRCS State Conservationist

The Tipton Service Center was recognized as the office donating the most food per person during the 4th Annual Feds Feed Families food drive for Iowa. John Whitaker, FSA State Executive Director, Bill Menner, RD State Director, and Jay Mar, NRCS State Conservationist kept their promise and held a pizza party for the Service Center on December 10, 2012.

- The Tipton Service Center collected a total of 8,244 pounds or 412.2 pounds per person.
- The Algona Service Center was also recognized for donating the most food with a total of 8,656 pounds.

These two offices collected more than 40% of the state's grand total!

The Tipton Service Center is very proud and fortunate to have USDA Rural Development employee Mike Boyle. The produce gathered for the Feds Feeds Families food drive is collected from the Hardacre Community Garden, which was established in 2009. Mike continues to direct the coordination of the very successful garden.



The Hardacre Community Garden has been recognized as an official [USDA People's Garden](#). This means that the garden adheres to three criteria —it's a collaborative effort, benefits the community, and incorporates sustainable practices and small legion of volunteers donate their free time to grow fresh produce for neighbors in need.

For more on the Hardacre Community Garden you can go to the [USDA Blog Website](#) to read 2 posts from this summer. Even better, you can "like" them on their Facebook page [HardacreGarden!](#)

Mike Boyle, USDA Rural Development
Master Gardener of the Hardacre Community Garden

AGENCY MEMORIES

I sit down in my cubicle, slide the LincPass card into the side of my keyboard, and type the magic six digit number that makes my computer come alive. The hard drive begins whirling as my mind begins stirring about the days long gone.

It seems like only yesterday when I sat at my steel desk for my first day at work. I was fresh out of high school and was looking for a job when I came across a job at the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service otherwise known as the ASCS. The County Director asked me, "Do you know how to type?"

I immediately replied, "Why, yes I do." I did take a typing class in high school because my, hopefully, future spouse was going to be there. That never did happen, and I never did learn how to type that well. That was the question that landed me this job six Presidents, seven Farm Bills and eleven Secretaries of Agriculture ago, but who's counting.

A typewriter sat on the pull out drawer of my steel desk. My boss handed me a piece of paper on that first day and said he needed me to type a letter. He waited behind me jingling change in his pocket as he expected immediate results. "Chik...chik...cha-chik...chik...chika-chik-cha-chik-Ding...-ziiiiiiiiiiiiiiip-Chik...chik...chik..." the typewriter replied to the slow tapping on the keys when I found my first error. One sheet of paper, one error, and a new boss that thought I could type a lot better than I could. I was mortified as I explained the error. "No problem", was his reply as he returned with one more sheet of paper...and that was the beginning to my new career.

My mind was suddenly brought back to the present as my computer dinged at me. I had an Instant Message or IM from Becky. "The password is iowaiowa" was written in the window. I wonder what that is regarding. I clicked on Outlook to find that there was an encrypted zip file from Sue. I opened it with the password to see it was a page two of a SURE application. Remember the days when we didn't need everything password protected?

I printed the page two and walked to the BizHub copier. As I walked to the copier I thought about the copier of yesteryear – we would take a receipt from the producer and place it between two pieces of plastic and run it through the machine. My, how times have changed!

My mind quickly raced back to mass mailing printing such as newsletters. We used things such as the mimeograph that used stencils we made in the typewriter. We also would use the duplicating machine.

Thinking of typewriters, I remember the scanner ball we would use. We would replace the type-ball in the typewriter with a "scanner-ball" to make "scannable" documents that were sent to Kansas City to issue payments. If we would make an error with that scanner ball...oh the work it would be to fix that error.

Karen was sitting at her cubicle trying to understand why a CRP payment didn't get paid in the last payment cycle. I asked her, "Remember the day when we would get paper checks back in the mail from Kansas City to review. We needed to look them all over to ensure the payment amount was correct before mailing them to producers."

"I remember it well. It would take days to go through them, but again it seems to take days now. With the old 36 we could make payments locally. I guess history does relive itself as Kansas City is making the payments again. Centralized banking then, centralized banking now.

"Thinking of the System 36, I will never forget the cleaning lady's comments when we first converted to that computer system, 'What happened here. You have more waste paper than what you ever had before. Wasn't there a paper reduction act or something?'"

I started searching for a producer in the SURE application when the SCIMS page appeared. "Remember the 'Addressegraph' and all the plates we had for each producer's name, address and farm?" I asked Karen.

"I remember how many times that machine would jam when I would use it. For some reason I always had a problem flipping the trays of plates. I would miss and dump them all over. That took talent! Remember the hours we would spend ensuring they were in zip code order for our newsletters."

“I remember the time that you put them all in upside down before you started printing. Thinking of that thing, remember the old green 156 cards. The Bible of the farm.”

I started typing in data for a SURE workbook when I began thinking about the old programmable calculator we used when figuring bushels for grain bins and storage payments for the grain reserve. I could remember needing some complex formula to get it to work correctly.

Karen brought me back to our current conversation. “Remember when we used the old digitizer rather than GIS. I never could come up with the same number of acres for a field no matter how hard I tried.”

“Try it three times and average the figures. We would write in pencil on the large maps the calculated acres. Now we have GIS.” I quickly commented.

“At least we could pretend to use the digitizer. We didn’t get an error message with a pencil.”

“Do you remember Mabel?” I asked.

“How could I forget Mabel! I think she made an issue of the Farm Industry News Midwest in 1983.”

My thanks go out to the people who helped me understand the office equipment that was used prior to starting with the agency which includes my staff, my peers, and my mentors. I, unlike the character, began working 2 Presidents, 4 Secretaries, and approximately 7 Administrators ago, but who is counting.

For those of you trying to remember Mabel, I think you need to go back to page 15 of the March 2005 IASCOE newsletter, a newsletter from the National Association of ASCS County Office Employees from 1983, or the original Farm Industry News article posted in 1983.

Barry TerHark



The Pickle Jar

The pickle jar as far back as I can remember sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom.

When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar. As a small boy, I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar. They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled.

I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar to admire the copper and silver circles that glinted like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank.

Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck. Each and every time, as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. 'Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back.' Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly. 'These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me.'

We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show me the few coins nestled in his palm. 'When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again.' He always let me drop the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, we grinned at each other. 'You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters,' he said. 'But you'll get there; I'll see to that.'

No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill, and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar. To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring catsup over my beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. 'When you finish college, Son,' he told me, his eyes glistening, 'You'll never have to eat beans again - unless you want to.'

The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting my parents, I used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed. A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad was a man of few words: he never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have done. When I married, I told my wife Susan about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me.

The first Christmas after our daughter Jessica was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. 'She probably needs to be changed,' she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her. When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes.

She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room. 'Look,' she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar. I looked up and saw

that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt. Neither one of us could speak.

This truly touched my heart. Sometimes we are so busy adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or for worse.

The best and most beautiful things cannot be seen or touched - they must be felt with the heart ~ Helen Keller



A Tribute to Turk

By Karla Novotny

Lynette had sent out an email asking for articles for the IASCOE newsletter. I wondered, "What in the world am I going to write about?" Kitty had said it could be about anything when I agreed to be on the Publicity Committee. I could even simply submit a recipe....funny how all the recipes slip my mind when I am forever telling a fellow co-worker that my way of cooking (scratch) is way better than his way of cooking (box)! Maybe I should use the word "baking" instead of "cooking", there is a little bit of difference there.

Anyway, Lynette's email came soon after Thanksgiving. By this time I realized that my beloved Turk was not going to be leaving home for the holiday. This was really starting to bug me, as I had hoped to send him off with a cheerful farewell and a little pep talk (mostly for my benefit) about going to a better place. It may have proved to be a tearful good-bye, but far better than what lay ahead for us now!

Turk was one of four turkeys that my girls had for their 4-H project this past year. One met an untimely death one weekend while we were camping. We assume a raccoon had come and gone before they had gotten shut in for the night. Two others, fondly called George and Georgina actually got to go to our County Fair, taking Champion and Reserve Champion in the turkey class! It turned out that the heat and the stress of fair was too much for George and his poor heart couldn't take it. But Georgina...she's a classy one! A beautiful bronze turkey who is going to live out her life with the other turkeys at our place.

If you remember, we had a few days after Thanksgiving that the weather was really kind of chilly, almost cold. Cool enough anyway that I was able to console myself that Turk was going to be okay for a while longer. I wasn't about to do anything in the cold! But alas, this is Iowa, and the weather changed again. NOT good!

If I was actually going to do something about Turk, it had to be done before the weather changed again!

So I planned my weekend around Turk, telling myself it was for the best. Telling Turk it was for the best and how terribly sorry I was! Wondering where my brothers were in this time of need! They knew how I felt about Turk!!

Finally, the time had come. I had my work area set up and the water was scalding hot. I walked out to get Turk...he doesn't really "strut his stuff" anymore when he walks I noticed, he more like waddles. And he seemed to breathe heavier too with the effort of his walk. I told him to go slower.....pleaded with him to please go slower!! There was no need to rush the inevitable.

When we reached our destination, I told him he'd have to weigh in first...I'm a stickler about weight, for those of you who don't know me!

Turk tipped the scales at 45 pounds! What a guy!

Turk WAS a Giant White Turkey. I think he lived up to his name quite well!

Now, here is some advice..... NEVER, NEVER, NEVER name anything you may end up feasting on later!

If you've ever raised turkeys, you will know that they each have a different personality (seriously) and they are quite curious creatures! They are actually pretty cool birds!

He was a handsome guy, don't ya think?!

