

IASCOE



The Iowa Association Of FSA County Office Employees



2013/2014 IASCOE OFFICERS

President

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Publicity

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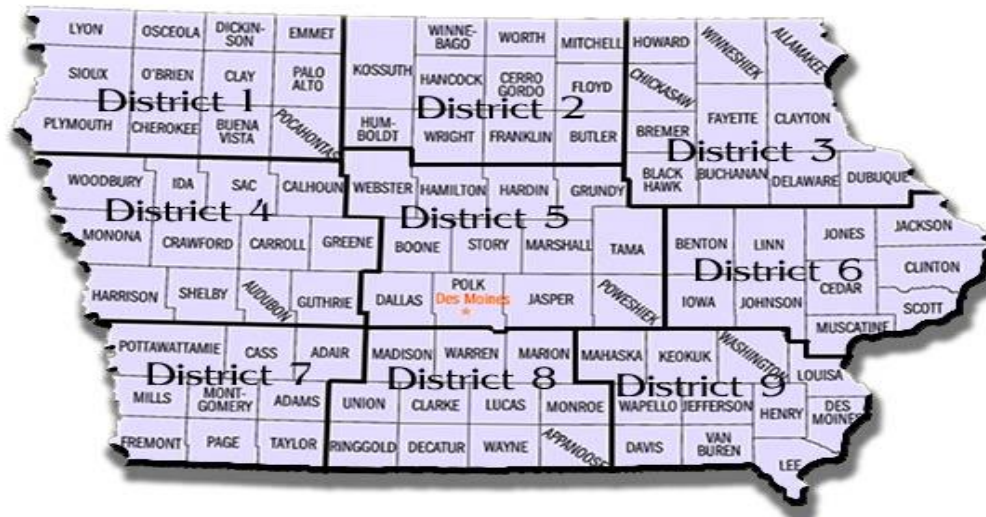
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IASCOE DISTRICTS



2013/2014 IASCOE DIRECTORS

<u>District</u>	<u>P.T. Director</u>	<u>C.E.D. Director</u>
1	Karen LaCour - Dickinson Alt - Nancy Heideman - Clay	Jeff Davis - Plymouth Alt - Dustin Miller - Cherokee
2	Cindy Pistek - Hancock Alt - Jeanine Diekhuis - Hancock	Tammy Pruin - Wright Alt - Barry Terhark - Cerro Gordo
3	Karen McNeil - Winneshiek Alt - Joseph Huber - Clayton	Curt Goettsch - Howard Alt - Kevin Keegan - Buchanan
4	Michelle Bruck - Shelby Alt - Cathleen Borst - Carroll	Steve Luke - Shelby Alt - Pat Warmbier - Harrison
5	Kitty Benda - Marshall Alt - Karla Novotny - Tama	Curt Houk - Powesheik Alt - Thomas Abbas - Hamilton
6	Joni Birkhofer - Muscatine Alt - Renee Schultz - Cedar	Kris Koth - Jones Alt - Randy Madsen - Muscatine/Scott
7	Jennifer Comer - Page Alt - Monica Robinson - Cass	Lynette Gruchow - East & West Pott. Alt - Justin Bahnsen - Montgomery
8	Keith Wheeler - Madison Alt - Ronda Harrison - Lucas	Daniel Curry - Ringgold Alt - David Lundquist - Lucas
9	Judy Dameron - Louisa Alt - Deanna Rood - Mahaska	Dee Ann Lehn - Keokuk Alt - Gretchen McLain - Jefferson

2013/2014 IASCOE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

District 1

Benefits/Legislative: Rex Wittrock - Buena Vista
Awards/Scholarship: Larry Lago - Dickinson
Publicity: Kelsey White - Emmet
Membership: Lisa Forburger - Palo Alto

District 3

Benefits/Legislative: Jesse Wegner - Fayette
Awards/Scholarship: Connie Straw - Chickasaw
Publicity: Rose Woerner - Black Hawk
Membership: Sheri Rodman - Clayton

District 5

Bene./Legislative: Teresa Simonton - Poweshiek
Awards/Scholarship: Kathy Baker - Marshall
Publicity: Karla Novotny - Tama
Membership: Tom Abbas - Hamilton

District 7

Benefits/Legislative: Chris Irvin - Page
Awards/Scholarship: Monica Robinson - Cass
Publicity: Mike Praska - Adams
Membership: Sue Beemer - Taylor

District 9

Benefits/Legislative: John Bartenhagen - Louisa
Awards/Scholarship: Lanie Benjamin-Wapello
Publicity: Gretchen McLain - Jefferson
Membership: Deanna Rood - Mahaska

District 2

Benefits/Legislative: David Stromer - Hancock
Awards/Scholarship: Jeanine Diekhuis - Hancock
Publicity: Barry Terhark - Cerro Gordo
Membership: Rosalie Carlson - Worth

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Benefits/Legislative: Pat Warmbier - Harrison
Awards/Scholarship: Donita Kenkel - Shelby
Publicity: Heather Muenchrath - Shelby
Membership: Cathleen "Skip" Borst - Carroll

District 6

Bene./Legis.: Joni Birkhofer - Muscatine
Awards/Scholarship: Amy Castillo - Johnson
Publicity: Betty Williams - Muscatine
Membership: Randy Madsen - Muscatine

District 8

Benefits/Legislative: Kelly Cain - Madison
Awards/Scholarship: Daniel Curry - Ringgold
Publicity: Rhonda Cooper - Union
Membership: Marla Morlan - Monroe

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A MESSAGE FROM JOHN

A New Year and new hope for many things. Will we have a new farm bill to administer or not? If we do, what will it look like? I believe we will and we will have plenty to do, which if it is more than we have now, that may not be a good thing. I heard now that crop prices have declined, some producers are saying that maybe crop insurance isn't enough. I have also heard FSA employees say, "Well no, crop insurance isn't enough, remember the past?"

My biggest hope for the New Year is for Iowa FSA to be adequately staffed! Our employees deserve a break once in a while! I see hopeful signs, but until I see new members, I will wait!

I would like to say a big thank you to all who participated in the shared management meeting we held. This includes a thank you to all of the PTs who sent in written responses to the District Directors. I do not know how much shared management there will be in the future, but I do know that it is time we discussed the issue. The meeting was a good first step forward and will be followed with conference calls to continue the discussion.



Message from Curt Houk:

It's that time of year again. The holidays! As another year has gone by I reflect on the accomplishments of the IASCOE leadership team. I am thankful for all of you who have made the Iowa Association of FSA County Office Employees – IASCOE – the impressive organization it is today. Over 90% of eligible employees in Iowa are paying their dues. Help us pass the word to those who are holding back.

Our FSA family will be decreasing in size after the first of the year. Some have made the decision to retire. These individuals have put in many years of dedicated service and have seen many different programs and projects come and go. They have earned 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 the many resources we have access to. The National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC) will once again be sending out requests to join their organization. Please take time to share with your county committee the importance of being a member. NAFEC could influence changes in FSA, so please consider joining as associate members. For more information please feel free to contact me.

Not only is the year end a great time to pause and appreciate every blessing. It is also a time to reinvigorate for the New Year and get ready for a new set of challenges. It is amazing to me how quickly things can change in agriculture. The last couple of years have brought some very good economic times for our producers. As we approach 2014 we begin to see concerns about crop demand and pricing which could make Farm Service Agency programs a key component of the farm safety net once again.

NASCOE officers and area executives will be meeting in January to prepare for negotiations with management and do the business of your association. This meeting will occur January 17-20 in Dallas, Texas. You still have time to submit negotiation items for consideration so take a few moments and complete the form on the NASCOE website. NASCOE is continuously looking for ways to be effective in serving you in the most economical way possible.

Also new for 2014, most of you know that NASCOE has added a new benefits provider, Dillard Financial Solutions, to the NASCOE team. This organization brings more companies and products for your consideration and I hope you embrace the opportunity to sit down with their representatives when available. I know you will see them at our state convention this spring.

Speaking of the state convention, I 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.

Curt M. Houk
IASCOE President

Message from Curt Goetsch:

Happy New Year

Wow! Another year has come and gone. Yes in FSA it was another hard year, but seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel. Budgets have been passed for the first time in a long time and there is even talk of new hires. Time will tell if we are indeed on the upswing in FSA.

I would like to thank each and every one of our IASCOE members. We have a great membership here in Iowa. You might not know it but we (IASCOE Members) are very well thought of in NASCOE. In my mind that is because of the great people we have working in Iowa FSA. All of you are asked to do more with less, sure there may have been some grumbling but fact is we still succeed in everything we do! I'm proud to be part of this awesome workforce!

We are still looking for people to chair and serve on committees for the 2016 NASCOE National Convention. I have been told many times that we are way ahead in our planning for this event by the folks on our NASCOE Board. That's a great thing! Our goal is to put on one of the very best National Convention's ever. So far we had a great team that are 50+ strong and we still have lots of room for volunteers on all committees. If there is something you enjoy helping with please get in contact with me. You can find all my info below, also if you just have questions about 2016 NASCOE National Convention feel free to call me.

Another great way to find out lots of great information about 2016 NASCOE National Convention is by coming to the 2014 IASCOE State Convention, April 4th & 5th in Des Moines at the Ramada Tropics Resort & Conference Center! Again like last year rooms are only \$75 per night that includes four Indoor Waterpark passes. If you would like to make a reservation the number is (515) 278-0271 and we have a block of rooms set up under the name IASCOE. We have some great speakers lined up for this year. Our board talked at our last meet as to how we can change the event up a bit. Thus it's won't be the same old convention, your Board of Directors are working very hard to make it a new and exciting 2014 IASCOE Convention!

You are always welcome to voice a concern, comment, idea or question to your IASCOE directors, President or Vice-President. We can only gauge what the feeling is in Iowa on topics, based on what you tell us. We share these things often with the SED and the NASCOE leadership. Our organization is only as good as its members and we all have something to contribute. I look forward to hearing from you!!

Curtis Goettsch

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319-290-6339

Message from Jennifer Comer:

2014 – What will it bring?

As I sit down to write this article I am thinking of my 2014 New Year's Resolution(s), which ones will I keep and which ones will I break? I just read Jenae Prescott's article in the December 2013 NASCOE newsletter titled *The Future of FSA*. She writes about the changes that are inevitable in FSA, with a new Farm Bill hopefully in the final stages, we are certainly facing 'changes' in our lives. So, it got me thinking about the resolutions that I make each year, if I truly followed each resolution, I should be healthy, wealthy, organized and a size 2.....none of which has happened! Why? What is the problem? It hit me – I am afraid to change (gasp).... *I have become settled*. Settled? Me? How could this happen??? So my resolution for 2014 – be ready and accepting of change! Maybe the healthy, wealthy, and organized thing will follow suit!

Speaking of changes, we are working on some changes for the 2014 State Convention. The Convention will be held April 4-5, 2014 at the Ramada Tropics Resort in Des Moines. We will again have our NASCOE representatives available to visit with us; representatives from Dillard's Financial Solutions will be there to introduce themselves and the services they have to offer our membership. We are working on specific topics for our speakers to address in regards to all aspects of our benefits, not just retirement, and hopefully we will have new programs and Farm Bill changes to discuss. Of course we will offer great entertainment and hospitality. We would love to hear from you with any ideas and suggestions you may have for the convention, after all, it is *your* convention, so take the opportunity to make it what you want. Please contact your district IASCOE representative or myself if you have any suggestions for topics or activities you would like to see at the State Convention. Watch your email and SharePoint for more information on speakers, topics, and other details soon. But first off – call and make your reservations today, we have a great room rate and the hotel has an indoor water park that you and your family can take advantage of while you are there. If you have never been to the State IASCOE Convention or it has been a few years since you have been there – make a CHANGE for 2014 and make plans to attend!

Hope to see you soon!

Jennifer Comer
IASCOE Secretary

ANNUAL IASCOE CONVENTION – APRIL 4-5th - DES MOINES

Mark your calendars and make your room reservations for this year's annual IASCOE/IACS/IASSE Convention which will be held April 4-5th 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. If you attended last year you know it is 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.

Again this year, a portion of Friday can be taken as Administrative Leave. President Curt Houk 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.

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





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RETIREES!

7/27/2013	Denise Dugan	Woodbury
7/27/2013	Joyce Wiener	Tama
7/30/2013	Vanessa Spratt	Iowa
7/30/2013	Kimberly Patterson	Guthrie
7/31/2013	Karen Ann Thimmesch	Polk
7/31/2013	Jane Trauger	Humboldt
7/31/2013	Joyce Heaton	Guthrie
7/31/2013	Carol Long	Mahaska
7/31/2013	Rita Lorimor	Fremont
7/31/2013	Candy Hoyle	Greene
7/31/2013	Carrie McQueen	Fremont
7/31/2013	Jon Northrup	Jasper
7/31/2013	Sandra Fick	Osceola
7/31/2013	Sandra Ratcliff	Hamilton
7/31/2013	Beth Grabau	STO
8/1/2013	Marsha Kitchenmaster	Lyon
8/1/2013	Marcene Ahders	Lyon
8/2/2013	Naomi Sellers	Keokuk
8/3/2013	Donna Marriott	Page
8/12/2013	Debra Trowbridge	STO
8/31/2013	Marilyn Fox	Fremont
9/20/2013	Debra Kennedy	Des Moines
11/2/2013	Sandrilee Scott	Dubuque
12/27/2013	Charlotte Hart	Carroll

AN ITALIAN ADVENTURE

This fall I embarked on the trip of a life-time, a Pilgrimage to Italy! Our parish priest joined another group from a parish in the cities and 30 of us departed from Minneapolis on September 24th. It would be a very busy trip with stops in Venice, Florence, Padua, Siena, Assisi, Montefalco and Rome-8 days in Italy ON THE MOVE!



A nine hour flight brought us to Venice where we had to board a boat to get into the city. Venice is in the middle of a lagoon with water flowing between the streets so walking is the only method of travel in the city. Everyone is familiar with the



gondolas in Venice, but there is so much more. Our first celebration of the Mass was in a chapel at the San Marco Basilica with the tomb of St. Mark the Evangelist right behind the altar. A beautiful blue cross marked the Saint's resting place, such an awe-inspiring site. We also visited Doge's Palace, seat of the former rulers of the Republic of Venice. We toured the prisons and crossed the famous Bridge of Sighs. This bridge was where the

prisoners had their last view of Venice as they were lead to their cell below. In the evening we had our first Italian meal and of course WINE!! We dined outside the restaurant and enjoyed the evening sights.

On our way to Florence we stopped in Padua for Mass at the Basilica of St. Anthony. The construction of this Basilica began immediately after Saint Anthony's death in 1231. The tomb of St. Anthony is surrounded with photos and notes from those who have visited. I waited in line with many others to put my hand on his tomb so I could physically feel his presence; a true gesture of faith and trust. Arriving in Florence late in the afternoon our group traveled to an Italian restaurant for dinner. Eating in Italy is an experience in itself. Of course there is plenty of wine, but the courses are served individually. The meal begins with the bread, and then you would have pasta, next comes the vegetable dish which may be combined with a meat. Finally, there is dessert. Oh yeah, dessert is amazing; tiramisu is a specialty chocolate dessert which I found is made differently depending upon the location. You guessed it-I tried it everywhere!

Florence is considered the living museum of the Italian Renaissance. Everywhere are statuaries and beautiful churches. The Basilica of Santa Croce is the burial place of Michelangelo, Dante, Galileo and Machiavelli. We saw the statue of David in the museum, but when I tried to sneak a photo, I was met with the eyes of a rather daunting museum guard. Florence is also known for its SHOPPING! Our afternoon task was to shop



for leather coats, but first we needed lunch. Pizza was on our hit list for food and a small restaurant with outdoor seating was calling our name. Pizza in Italy consists of sauce, cheese and maybe one meat. The crust is thinner and the slices are big (one slice and a beer makes lunch). Lunch is done and off we go to the many shops on the Ponte Vecchio. We found a wonderful shop that makes their own leather goods and started searching for the perfect fit. I had no intention of going home with a new coat, but when the owner ran across the street and brought back one of their coats-I was hooked. Italian leather is so soft and pliable-it's hard to resist.

Now it is on to Siena and Assisi in the South Tuscany region. Siena is the birthplace of St. Catherine and amazingly enough, her head and index finger are on display in the Siena Cathedral! A relic displayed in this manner, the beautiful black marble floors and the architecture of the building were breathtaking. During our visit to Siena we were treated to a wind and rain storm-just like home. The only difference was that the Italians weren't so accustomed to such a wicked storm. Kristi and I sat under some umbrellas for lunch and while we waited we saw an entire outdoor restaurant of tables and chairs blow away! That was our cue to head inside for our lunch. Our walk back to the bus took us through 3 inches of water on the street and when I finally got there I literally had to wring my socks out! Our next stop is Assisi; it is called the "city of birds and silence" and was the home of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis is considered the patron saint of animals, he was said to be able to talk with the birds and he understood what they said. St. Francis was also the creator of the Nativity Scene. St. Francis is the chosen name of the newly elected Pope.



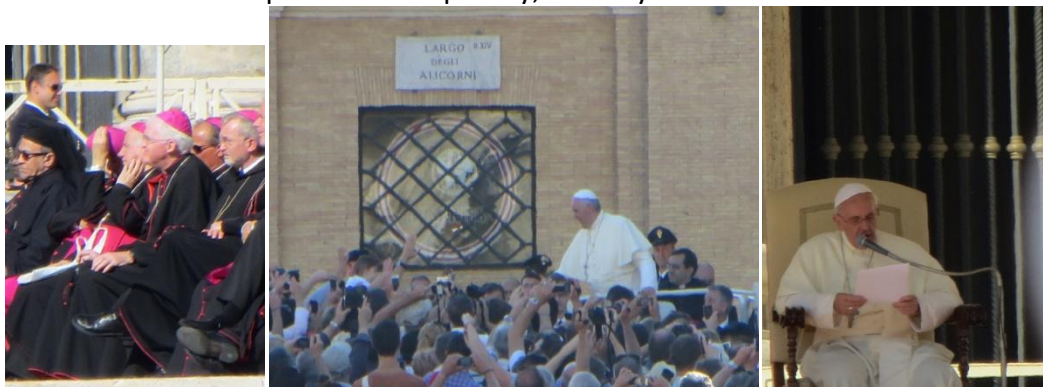
Onward to the territory of Montefalco and the Sagrantino wine! This would be our first area to see agriculture. We drove past fields of maze (corn), groves of olives and vineyards everywhere. It is really quite beautiful in the country looking at the villages along the way. The winery was a long-time producer of fine wines in the area and after our tour we were treated to a "wine-tasting". Oh my, not just some small cups while standing next to a bar! We were seated at a long table with 5 wine glasses (yes I said GLASS) and a plate of food to cleanse the palate. We were given samples of sparkling, white, red and dessert wines. I was going to have some wine sent home, but the \$80 shipping for 6 bottles plus the cost of each bottle @ \$30+ I opted to just have the memory☺.



Vatican City and Rome is a wonderful place full of ancient architecture. It's amazing to see the buildings and their intricate detail all the time wondering how they could possibly have done this without the equipment we have today. St. Peter's Basilica is absolutely breath-taking. St. Peter's statue, the papal altar and the altar of the cathedral are all at the center of the Church.

The dome, created by Michelangelo, is high above the center of the basilica at 448 feet from the Basilica floor to the cross on the top, the tallest dome in the world. The basilica holds the remains of St. Peter and the Popes throughout the ages. The Vatican Museum was filled with paintings of geographical maps, statues and one particular painting that was fascinating. It was a picture of Christ and as you passed it his eyes appeared to follow you, amazing. The Sistine Chapel is where the Papal conclaves are held when the Church must elect a new Pope; the Chapel's first Mass was held on August 15, 1483. The Sistine Chapel is the location of Michelangelo's "The Last Judgment" and was painted between 1535-1541. Such a Holy place did not allow photos or any conversation while in the Chapel.

Our final stop was the highlight of our trip a Papal audience. The Papal audience is held outside of St. Peter's Basilica in the square. Chairs are set up for visitors to sit with a path between where the Pope travels from the back of the square to the front where the cardinals sit at the left of the Pope's chair. When you get to the square with your admission ticket 1000's of people are all trying to get to the same place you are-a good place to see the Pope. Our tour guide told us to stay together, but keep your elbows out and keep pushing through the crowd. She also told us not to let the nuns get ahead of you; they will be fighting for the spots the same as you-just elbow your way past them! We finally were able to secure some pretty good seats and sat down to await the Pope's arrival. I was totally surprised when they began announcing the groups who were there for the audience that day. Evidently, when attending you send in the name of your Church, its city and country where it is located. When the Archangels Catholic Cluster from Garner, Iowa was announced we cheered with the expected IOWA enthusiasm. Another thing of interest was the young couples attending in their wedding gowns and suits. If you were married in the past year, you may attend in your wedding attire for a special blessing- a testament to the Church's commitment to marriage and family. Finally, the Pope was approaching from the back of the square in his Pope Mobile. Of course there are all kinds of security surrounding him, but evidently Pope Francis prefers to choose his own path to the front of the square. Consequently, security has a



hard time knowing which way he is going next. Along the way he shakes hands, kisses babies and allows us to take photos of him.

The Pope reads his address for the day to the audience in the Piazza S. Pietro. Since much of it was in Italian, it was hard to know what was being said. You are able to go on-line and read his message at a later date on this site: <http://www.vatican.va>. Once at the web-site select the

Holy See and then you can select “audiences”. Here you can read many of his addresses to the people.

I can’t possibly share with you all of the wonders of this trip. It truly was the trip of a life-time, if you get a chance to visit Italy I would recommend

- Don’t plan too many stops, enjoy where you are at your leisure
- Try every variety of wine you can
- Don’t worry about calories-you only live once and the pasta is amazing
- Wear comfortable shoes, even though the Italian women wear their heels almost everywhere never fear. You will look like a tourist no matter how you dress.

God Bless,
Cindy Pistek



BRAGGING RIGHTS! 😊

Submitted by Karla Novotny aka Mom

I am going to use this newsletter for bragging rights! I am so touched by my daughters love for each other!!

Laura’s Language class read the book “OF MICE AND MEN” by John Steinbeck. For an assignment, they had to write about who their “George” is.

See what she wrote about her older sister ---- I LOVE IT!!!

Amy is my George

My George is my sister Amy. She has medium length dark brown hair with angled bangs that is parted off to the side. Amy is one of those people who always seem to have a goofy smile on her face. She has brown eyes and a dark complexion. She is a true country girl. Amy is my George because she is always there for me and, with me being the younger sister; she also looks out for me. She has gotten me involved in activities that I never thought I would, like County Council. She knows everything about me and supports me with my Colorguard, 4-H, FFA and County Council activities. I love her to death, and would take a bullet for her as I know she also would for me. With everything she has been through, like getting her head cracked open twice, enduring shots that were supposed to help her ruptured disc, getting in a ranger accident and being trapped under it, and the worst of all back surgery. She is a strong individual and I hope I could be half as strong as she had to be.

Growing up, fighting happened a lot between us, but when she got into high school that all seemed to change. We got along fairly well and still do. Although we may have our moments, I know she will always be there to rub my tummy when it hurts. She is the best sister and friend anyone could ask for. She is my inspiration.

No offense to my mom because I love her as well and I appreciate everything she does for me, but a lot of the time I almost feel as if Amy is a second mom to me for the way she looks after me. She always woke me up every day for school even when she didn't need to wake up that early. She keeps me on track and on schedule. With her at college it is tough being apart for such long periods. However, when I need her she is just a phone call or a text away. Although she gets mad at me, she will always have my back. I have loved seeing her qualities progress throughout the years. She is one of the best things that has happened to me, and I am very grateful for her.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS from District 6!

By: Allison Vavroch

There are many traditions surrounding the holiday season. In a time of budget woes, program uncertainty, and problematic software, it's a good time to reflect on all the good in our lives. An idea was proposed to get as many in our district to share their holiday traditions with us all. We were able to compile a great list! We hope you enjoy reading them and reflect on the importance and fun of your own traditions. Thanks to all who participated!

My family has always had oyster stew on Christmas Eve and my husband's family has always done the same too, although one of us makes a different kind of soup now too. Only us old timers will eat the oyster stew – [Deb Kinney, Johnson County PT](#)

It has always been our family tradition to go to Christmas mass on Christmas Eve and afterwards tour the town for lights and head home for chili soup and ham/cheese soups. Afterwards, we open gifts, play games/cards, have a few totties/wine, laugh and enjoy each other's company. It's extra special now that we have grandchildren.....adds a new spark and special blessings for the holiday. – [Mary Agne, Cedar County PT](#)

My mother's family always sings "*The 12 Days of Christmas*" before they open presents so everyone HAS to participate. They break into groups of 4-6 people and each group gets 3-4 days to sing. – [Michelle Hagen, Benton County PT](#)

The Reimer family usually meets in Des Moines to open presents and share a big family meal of turkey and potatoes. Afterwards we play games, watch football or share some polish vodka with our polish brother-in-law and his friends. **Polish people are famous for weeklong celebrations and their drinking vodka into the night.** – [Brian Reimer, Linn County CED](#)

I would always sleep on the floor in my brother's room on Christmas Eve when we were kids. We would wake up usually around 2 or 3am and sneak through the house to see if Santa had arrived. My brother and I both played instruments from a very young age so we would get out the trumpet and the snare drum and sit outside my parent's bedroom door blasting whatever Christmas tune we wanted to wake them to announce the arrival of Santa! (They didn't think that was quite as funny as we did). I decided it was my duty to pass that tradition on to my brother's kids so I equipped them with the instruments

and planned the attack a few years ago. This is no longer a tradition as I did receive a death threat from my brother that year!!! – [Angie Reynolds, Muscatine County PT](#)

In my husband's family on Christmas Eve we have a birthday cake for Baby Jesus complete with candles. All of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren gather around the cake and everyone sings "Happy Birthday." It's a great reminder for everyone what the true meaning of Christmas is. They have been doing this for 60+ years. – [Diane Burke, Clinton County PT](#)

A tradition we've had in our family is a kids Christmas program. Some years it was the birth of Jesus; other years have been a talent show. The one I remember the most was the year the Hawkeyes went to the Rose Bowl and after our traditional Christmas program we crowned my mom and dad as King and Queen of the Rose Bowl. Mom was presented a sash and crown and Dad an Iowa shirt and "Herky" nose. No matter what the program was we always end with Christmas caroling. We are thinking about doing a Christmas CD (NOT!!) – [Ginny DeWulf, Cedar County PT](#)

Robyn and I and whomever of our kids is home on Christmas eve (2 of the 3 are out of the house now) will have homemade pizza. A little strange maybe, but we like pizza! – [Tom Lane, Jackson County CED](#)

Christmas Eve was always when we would open our gifts, but only after we had gone to church and participated in the children's program. We all got in the car to head to church and my Mom would always seem to forget something in the house. It was later that I discovered that she went back in to put the gifts under the tree that "Santa" brought. We returned home after church, opened our gifts, and always had oyster stew for our supper. – [Deb Lange, Jones County PT](#)

At the start of the Christmas season our family would make a short drive to a neighboring farmer who grew Christmas trees. We would have great fun by running through the stand of trees, picking one, cutting it and hauling it home. The aroma of that fresh tree would fill the house and get everyone in the holiday mood. In the early sixties we continued that tradition by planting our own stand of trees on a hillside. After four or five years we started to sell our own Christmas trees. A typical chilly Saturday morning in December might start with someone pulling into our farmstead asking about cutting a fresh Christmas tree. My dad would get his coat and boots, grab a saw and lead them to the trees at the far end of the farm. Some days we wouldn't see him for most the day because we'd keep sending people to get trees that he couldn't return to the house. One year he sold enough trees that we purchased our first color television set! Life was good. – [Steve Carson, Johnson County CED](#)

For as long as I can remember my Grandma would come out Christmas morning and we would always open gifts from Santa followed by a big breakfast with homemade cinnamon rolls. And as I have gotten married with kids of my own we still meet at my parents house early on Christmas morning and Santa Claus has left gifts for everyone there and the homemade cinnamon rolls are ready to eat. – [Kris Koth, Jones County CED](#)

Every Christmas Eve I read the story 'Twas the Night Before Christmas' to my grandchildren! Also, for Christmas Eve supper – we always have several different soups! – [Susan Birker, Benton County PT](#)

When I was small, my Grandparents came to our house on Christmas Day, we would rush down the stairs to see that Santa had visited the night before. When my kids were little, we would visit one set of Grandparents on Christmas Eve and then the other set of Grandparents would come to our house on Christmas Morning. Now that we are the Grandparents, we have to get out in the freezing cold and visit our Grandkids on Christmas Day. It is a joy to see their excitement, brings back memories of when

my children were tiny and I can still remember how excited I was to see what Santa brought. – [Joni Birkhofer, Muscatine County PT](#)

We have ThanksMas on Thanksgiving with my folks, brother & family from Nashville, 2 brothers and family from around here. Turkey and Ham and whatever everyone else brings. Have a “good or gag” grab bag for adults. My daughter-in-law and niece always leave by 9 or 10 to do the shopping excursion! Family Christmas with my kids and grandkids varies from year to year, depending on our 2 nurses schedules. Main course can range from prime rib to ham and cheese soup. Always have little smokies, ham roll-ups, custard & blueberry pies, and brownies. Always a houseful of family, with lots of stories and fun, add in a little beer and wine! – [Robin Braddock, Cedar County PT](#)

When my parents and grandparents were still alive we spent Christmas Eve with my aunts, uncles, and cousins. The adults would make homemade eggnog and we sang songs with my grandpa on his banjo! Before the night was over Grandma turned on the polka music and we all danced around the dining room table before heading home in anticipation of Santa! – [Devalyn Wilson, Cedar County CED](#)

Christmas Eve was always when we would open our gifts, but only after we had gone to church and participated in the children’s program. We all got in the car to head to church and my Mom would always seem to forget something in the house. It was later that I discovered that she went back in to put the gifts under the tree that “Santa” brought. We returned home after church, opened our gifts, and always had oyster stew for our supper. – [Deb Lange, Jones County PT](#)

We always have our family Christmas on Christmas night so everyone can do their Christmas Eve & immediate family (with the kids & Santa) on Christmas morning. The big problem was what to eat. It seems everyone is always “turkey & hammed” out between Thanksgiving, leftovers & other Christmases. Besides, we have some picky eaters...this one doesn’t like pork, three don’t like turkey, one doesn’t like beef. What to do? Finally figured that the only thing everyone seems to like is lasagna, so that is always our Christmas meal. We have a good mix of ethnicities in the family...German, English, Scandinavian, Irish, and Lebanese. No Italians. Go figure! Merry Christmas to all of the FSA Family! – [Renee Schultz, Cedar County PT](#)

Each one of my kids and grandkids have a special treat that they like me to make them each year and it is then included in their own personal stash sack of goodies. They never have to share it with anyone else and my grandkids even hide their own from each other and the parents. They look forward to seeing their own bag at Christmas. – [Debra Kruse, Benton County PT](#)

Growing up my brother and I would wake up at the crack of dawn and sneak downstairs with our flashlight to the Christmas tree to see what Santa had left us. And if we were up before 6 and got caught we were always told to go back to bed. So the night before we always made sure to have hiding places figured out so when we heard Mom or Dad coming we would hide so we wouldn’t get caught. And then when 6 o’clock did come around I would always have to put in the cartoon The Grinch. And still to this day my parents make sure we put that movie in before we open presents. – [Kristin Schminke, Johnson County PT](#)

A tradition we have in my family is for the adults in the family to have a white elephant type gift exchange with a different theme each year. For example, a few years ago the gift had to start with the letter ‘W’, and this year the gifts must be purchased from a truck stop. – [Amanda Willimack, Clinton County PT](#)

My tradition is not having a clue of what is going on. I am left in the dark until told what to do or where to be. – [Shawn LaCarte, Clinton County CED](#)

Christmas is a quiet, family affair in the Derdzinski family. Gifts are opened on Christmas Eve followed by Sunday morning church services and a holiday dinner with an assortment of cookies, breads, desserts and egg nog! – [Patrick Derdzinski, Benton County CED](#)

The second weekend in December we gather and do Christmas baking in bulk for holiday plates to friends and neighbors. We also open one present Christmas Eve. – [Jenny Ness, Iowa County CED](#)

Growing up it was a family tradition to bring in the New Year by having specken dicken on New Year's Eve. Specken dicken is a German pancake made with rye flour, wheat flour, white flour, anise flavoring, and syrup. The heavy pancake also has different types of meat added to it- we made it with sausage and bacon. This is a tradition that originated in northwest Germany and came to America with German immigrants from that region. It is speculated that the tradition indicated a good year to come. If not- at least you started the first day of the year with a full stomach. – [Henry Nolte, Muscatine County PT](#)

Growing up, we would have Christmas Eve at my aunt and uncle's house. The cousins would then drive over to my grandparents to see if Santa had filled our stockings (always a yes) and then miraculously by the time we got back, we had JUST missed him there too! Today, the generation of "kids" my age play bingo at my dad's for rolls of gold dollars so it gets quite competitive and entertaining! – [Allison Vavroch, Benton County PT](#)

For Christmas my Grandmother always made Chocolate Texas Sheet Cake with walnuts on top. She was diagnosed with cancer and passed way in 2001. She gave me her cookbook with the recipe in it, and made me promise to always make it at Christmas. I feel a real connection with her when I bake it each year. She must have known the comfort and loving memories of her it would give me for years to come. – [Amy Castillo, Johnson County PT](#)

My Mom always prepares prime rib for our family Christmas celebration. It's a tradition that even the younger grand kids look forward too. – [Elaine Franck, Clinton County PT](#)

One of my childhood memories of Christmas was on Christmas Eve; my dad would load us four kids in the car and take us to our aunt and uncles house to see their Christmas tree. When we arrived back home, Santa Claus had been there and there were unwrapped toys under the tree. Every year no matter how long we stayed visiting, we always just missed Santa. Then when I got older and wiser, I would have to take my younger sister who was not so wise for a walk around the block the see the houses that had outside lights. Even though we had seen the lights several times throughout the season, we walked around the block anyway. And every time we returned, we just missed Santa Claus. – [Joanne Hawkins, Jones County PT](#)

The Yuska family annually travels 'across the river' to a friend's tree farm. We are able to get out, walk around inspect and select our Christmas tree. Our children, Grant - now age 7, and Lauren - age 4, LOVE being a part of the selection process and helping Dad saw the chosen tree down. Getting hot chocolate and popcorn at the snack shack is a bonus as well. This year they rescued a bird nest from our tree and carefully placed in it in a nearby tree for next year. – [Jessica Yuska, Scott County PT](#)

We always have Christmas with the kids and grandkids on Christmas Eve. After dinner and presents, we all go to 11:00 church and when we come out it is Christmas! – [Sandy Peters, Clinton County PT](#)

I can remember taking the children out for a drive on Christmas Eve to see Christmas lights and we were watching the sky most of the time and sure enough we would see a red light in the sky for Rudolph. Hurry home and Santa was there and left presents and marks in the yard or spilled oats from the reindeer. Then grandma and grandpa would pull in right behind us. Soon after the rest of the family members would come over. – [Diane Hill, Clinton County PT](#)

For at least 15 years we have a deer hunting group of Dads and Lads (my son and his friends and their dads) who take a break and eat lunch at our house. It started with us making candies/cookies and other Christmas treats and giving them a plate of goodies when they left. It's grown into doing this for neighbors and now we have expanded it to others that have had a loss or illness this past year and we try to make their holidays a little brighter with a plate of treats. – [Sandra Gerlach, Jackson County PT](#)

The Quint Xmas consists of about 20-30 people. We start out Xmas Eve with snacks and munchies. Then certain families are in charge of making soup, which turns into a contest of who has the best soup. After supper the grandkids open gifts from Grandma. Then the adults have a white elephant exchange which can get quite interesting. – [Mary Kay Kelchen, Jones County PT](#)

I started a Christmas tradition when my first child was born. Each year I made an ornament with their name and year. Soon we had a tree full of ornaments and then all of a sudden they were gone. They grew up and took the ornaments with them. Now I continue the tradition with my 5 grandchildren. I have never made the same ornament twice that's an accomplishment for 40 years. – [Linda Garlock, Scott County PT](#)

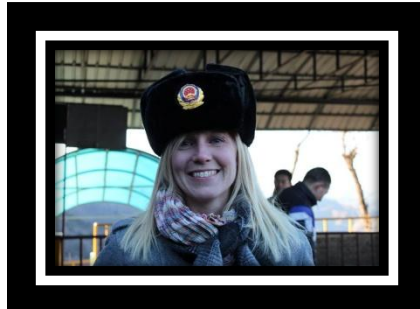
Grandma's house with the aunts, uncles and cousins was always a favorite place to go on Christmas; the aroma of Grandma's homemade rolls and pies, as well as the turkey, ham and trimmings was the best. All of the feast was prepared by Grandma not out of a box or can!!! Grandma passed away in May at 104 3/4, I guess all that cooking kept her going!!! – [Bonnie Cook, Jones County PT](#)

My family gets together at Christmas and Mom makes the big dinner. Over the years I have become the official goodie maker for the family and make cookies and candy that everyone takes home with them. Whenever I mention that I might cut back, it's always someone's 'favorite' so, I can't cut that one out. I also decorate the office tree and decorate and donate two trees for a local Festival of Trees that benefits the Ohnward Fine Arts Center here in Maquoketa. One is a full side tree that I donate from our community theater group and one is a table top tree that I donate from myself. This project of course is a good excuse for some after Christmas shopping. – [Sharon Goettler, Jackson County PT](#)

We always cut a real Christmas tree and go to Christmas Eve mass. – [Leah Sweely, Jackson County PT](#)

Each year my two daughters and I pick a day to get together to cut-out sugar cookies. We cut them out, baked them, decorated them and enjoyed eating them. – [Kathryn Shanahan, Jackson County PT](#)

Gretchen Goes To China!



Gretchen McLain, Jefferson County CED recently went on a 10 day trade mission to China as a member of the Iowa Corn Leadership Enhancement and Development (I-LEAD) program thru the Iowa Corn Growers. The group of 24 spent 10 days meeting with government officials, customers, industry experts, and farmers to discuss export market development for four of Iowa's main agriculture commodities; corn, soybeans, pork and beef. We worked closely with international offices of the US Grains Council and the US Meat Export Federation. Iowa Corn has a well-established development relationship with both organizations.

The aggressive agenda was focused around our main objective, those objectives were:

- Reviewing competitor markets or developing markets
- Meetings with major consumers (including those with existing relationships in Iowa)
- Learn more about market access with current restrictions or barriers.

The I-LEAD team rendezvoused at Des Moines early Sunday morning and after a quick hop to Chicago's O'Hare international, we were ready to begin our ten day trade mission to China. A light snow was beginning to fall as we embarked on the 13hour flight, which delayed our takeoff only slightly. Most of us had pictured flying west. But the flight plan took us due North over Canada and over the polar Ice cap before dropping down over Russia.

We touched down in a relatively warm Beijing (40F) and were met by Bryan Lomar, Country Director for China with the US Grains Council. The air quality was quite different compared to the US. That evening we attended an informal reception with a few representatives from the US Meat Export Federation.

The next day we started out by visiting the US Embassy where we received a briefing from Foreign Agriculture Service. They explained to us the role they play in facilitating trade between the US and China, with a specific emphasis on eliminating middlemen and thereby streamlining the process for importing raw ingredients and finished products. There is a segment of the Chinese market that will pay a premium for US food, but ingredients are more complicated. There is a widely-held perception that US

consumers don't eat GMO's and that we only sell them to second-tier markets such as China. Helping clear up myths like this is a major focus of the FAS, and they partner with the US Grains Council in this regard. FAS also enlighten us on the complex and convoluted nature of Chinese Ag Statistics reporting and interpretation. The government massages the numbers to tell the story they want, which is all about continued production increases and self-sufficiency. The governing party's goal is that 95% of all food consumed in China be produced there- but given the arable land and water resources available for astronomical population, it simply isn't attainable. The US Grains Council and FAS team indicated that China will have to start embracing GMO's and also back off the hard line of 95% domestic production.

That afternoon we visited a wet market, which can best be described as a giant open air farmers' market crossed with a butcher shop. The vendors aren't themselves farmers but purchase from wholesalers. The meat stands have every manner of chicken, pork and seafood on hand, and will chop you off a chunk of whichever cut you're in the mood for (including pig heart, trotters and ears). There are live-wells for the seafood, and we saw shoppers buying fish heads, fish tail, octopus, squid, shrimp or even live fish wrapped in a bag and strapped to the back of their bicycles. It was apparent that food safety was not a high priority as there was no refrigeration, or ice for the freshly butchered meat. The vendors would butcher right where they were selling the products and even eating prior to washing their hands.

The Great Wall was our next stop. It was built in the 7th Century BC with the purpose of protecting the Chinese Empire from Mongol tribes outside of China. It spans an incredible 5,000 miles from east to west with more than 7,000 lookout towers. We visited the Beijing Mutanyu portion of the wall. Everyone enjoyed a brisk ride up to the wall via a cable car. We walked among the different lookout towers. For most of the team, the decent back to the bus was via a Tabagon ride.

Traveling by bus to our next destination we had plenty of time to observe and speculate about agricultural practices in China. Many differences were noticed and discussed among the group. Corn production in China is very labor intensive with little yield to show for their work. Families own around 1-5 acres of land. Modern agriculture is not a term used to describe their farms at this current time. Corn is dried and stored in open wire "grain bins" on the top of their houses. Many sheep herds were still tended to by a Shepard because of their free-range operations. Life styles of farmers and the folk who live in the country appeared to be much different than that of the people living in the large cities. Their houses are often times run down and look to be unlivable in our eyes. As we drove along, we all noticed peculiar mounds of dirt disrupting their farm ground. We finally came to the conclusion, after seeing those decorated with balloons and tombstones, that they bury their loved ones on their own ground.

In the evening we attended a formal dinner with Vice Governor, Ms Qin Boyong and other Hebei Government officials. Kind words and gifts were exchanged along with an 18 course meal. I became very good at eating with chopsticks as in most cases there was not any silverware.

The next day we visited a small feed mill and also a village, and then hopped on a high speed train for 9 hours to Guangzhou. Here we visited the port, and was lucky enough to see a vessel of US corn being unloaded. We went to Gold Coin Feed-mill, learning that there is no bulk feed in China everything is

bagged and delivered. The next stop with Sinograin facilities. This is essentially government run grain storage. These facilities are very impressive. They are able to hold roughly 20 million bushels of grain. The only three crops they handle are corn, soybeans, and wheat. When they need to distribute grain from these facilities they are able to do so from barge, rail or truck. Something we all found very interesting is that once their grain bins are full they put nitrogen gas inside and seal it up. This removes the air inside the grain which carries moisture. So in turn they are able to store grains for a longer period of time.

The next day we toured Bester Foods with Mr. Steve Mo. Bester Foods brings in imported meat from around the world and sells it frozen to locals. He sells US pork, but not only that but mainly Iowa pork in particular. What is very cool about his business is he does some work thru e-commerce with at home delivery. That evening we had a meat tasting with local buyers of US pork and were able to connect with them.

Our trip ended in Hong Kong, where the more western environment was welcomed. No more squatty potty's, more public transportation of taxis and trollies, and an Outback steak house! The night sky line was absolutely beautiful.

Happy Holidays from BREMER COUNTY FSA



From L-R: **Dana Tiedt, Mary Lou Epley, Christy Leyh & Cody Wedeking**

Dana Tiedt - I have worked for FSA for 3½ years. My current programs are GIS, Compliance, Sod/Swamp, Recons, FSFL and Price Support. My husband and I live north of Waverly. We have two children, Macy who is 6 and in kindergarten this year and Jake who is 4. We have been busy marking off the days until Santa Claus arrives. Our list of morning chores has multiplied since the 1st of December...there are chocolate filled advent calendars with doors that must be opened, chains with links that must be removed, and a set of blocks that must be turned to the correct number of days remaining until the "big day". We spend the days just before Christmas hurrying from one family party

to the next only stopping at home long enough to unload one set of gifts and load up the next. For the past several years we have set aside Christmas Day for ourselves so the kids can open their gifts from Santa and have the entire day at home to play. With all of the hurrying and stress of the season behind us we all really enjoy that day of snacking and relaxing in our pajamas!

Mary Lou Epley – Payment Limitation and DCP PT. I have been with the Bremer County FSA for a total of 18 years. I started in 1986 and then took a break from 1990-1999 to be home with my children. My husband, Jonathan, and I have been married for 26 years and farm north of Waverly. We have 3 boys – Jared, Levi, and Andrew. Jared graduated from ISU in May and got married in June. It sure is nice having another girl in the family! Levi is a junior at UW-Platteville and plays football. Andrew is a sophomore at Waverly-Shell Rock and plays football, basketball, and baseball. Christmas and the winter months are my favorite. I enjoy watching as many Christmas movies as I can between Thanksgiving and Christmas – my boys even tolerate the movies and watch a few of them with me. Let's just say that Hallmark Christmas movies are not their favorite! I am looking forward to spending time with family over Christmas and anticipate many late nights playing games. Needless to say the noise level increases when we are all together!

Christy Leyh - Conservation Program Technician- I've worked for Bremer County FSA for 23 years, working with many programs over the years but have settled into conservation programs. I'm married to my husband, Terry and we will be celebrating 25 years of wedded bliss this coming year, so I'm anticipating a relaxing cruise to the Caribbean very soon to celebrate. We have 2 children, both in currently in college, so we are in the empty nest stage of life. Josh is a senior at ISU majoring in Civil Engineering and has just accepted his 1st real job, so will be moving to Wyoming after graduation. Josie is a freshman at NIACC majoring in Elementary Education, she also sings with the NIACC Singers and is the reason for us to go on a cruise, as the group will be performing on the ship. We are looking forward to semester break to have them home over the holidays and celebrate with us and our extended family. There is sure to be lots of food, fun, and feisty game playing.

Cody Wedeking, County Executive Director- I have been employed with FSA for 5 years (6 years in March) and have spent the last 4 as the CED in Bremer County. My start was in Winneshiek County as a PT. My wife Amber and I have been married for 6 years and have 2 boys, Gavin 3 and Briggs 4 months. My family and I also raise about 80 head of bison on our family farm in Clarksville. I took over the operation a couple of years ago. In my spare time, I enjoy hunting, fishing, and cheering on the Hawkeyes and anyone who is playing the Cyclones! The holidays seem to be a crazy time of year for us trying to make family gatherings in Elkader, Clarksville, and Waverly. We don't want anyone missing out on seeing and holding the new addition to our family. Of course I don't want to miss out on any of the great food and would hate to see any of it go to waste. The clothes never seem to fit the same by the end of December!

We celebrate the holidays by having a building wide (RD, NRCS, Soils & FSA) potluck meal. No one ever leaves hungry that day! Our office also draws names and exchanges gifts. Mary & Christy can never wait to open their gifts, so our normally scheduled time to open gifts usually gets moved up an hour or two to satisfy them.

Bremer County is home to a great tree farm called Wapsie Pines Christmas Tree Farm that we recently visited. Wapsie Pines is located near Fairbank and is a cut-your-own Christmas tree farm, with more than 25 acres of Christmas trees. They open every season the first Friday after Thanksgiving and have a great selection of trees to choose from, including scotch pine, white pine, balsam fir, fraser fir, concolor fir and red pine. They also have wreaths and roping made on the farm with fresh greens from their own trees. Since our office's old thrift store pre-lit tree would not light or stand up this year, we decided to all chip in and support our local tree farm with a fresh cut tree for our office.



Here is a picture of Bob Moulds, the owner of Wapsie Pines Christmas Tree Farm. We think it's the best place in Iowa to get your tree for the holidays.



The Light at the End of the Tunnel—Retirement!

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn
State Benefits Chairperson

Retirement—for some of us it's just around the corner, for others, several years in the future. Yet, all of us need to be planning for this life changing event.

As FSA employees and IASCOE members, you have numerous researches available to assist you in making the decisions you will be required to make when retirement rolls around—and it will roll around sooner than you ever dreamed. I still find it difficult to believe I've been with the agency for 28 years.

We can never start planning for retirement too soon. The choices you make while you are working will have a profound effect on how well you live when retired. Here are just a few things to think about when preparing for retirement that I picked up from a seminar hosted by Innovate Financial, Inc. I recently attended:

1. Consider contributing at least 15% to TSP. This may not be possible until after the children are grown and out of college but keep that figure in the back of your mind.
2. Check your beneficiary designation forms to make sure they reflect your current wishes.
3. Sick Leave balance is counted as creditable service when you retire but your Annual Leave balance will be paid to you in lump sum at the time of retirement. Try to retire with a large balance of annual leave to help offset the reduction in pension during that interim period of 6 to 12 months when you first retire.
4. Drawing 3% to 4% out of TSP annually is reasonable after you retire. You want those funds to last throughout your retirement.
5. Remember when planning to retire, several items that are deducted from your paycheck while you are working will not be deducted from your retirement check such as pension, Medicare A, TSP, and Social Security, therefore, you need to compare NET working income to NET retirement income when planning to retire. (Makes that retirement income look better)!
6. You'll also have to make other decisions about TSP funds, Long Term Care, Life Insurance and Health Insurance.

Many IASCOE members have also worked with Josh Katcher, a financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial as well as with the State Office HR staff. NASCOE members can also turn to J M Marketing or Dillard Financial Solutions Inc. for a free financial analysis. Thinking about retirement can be confusing but with proper planning, you should be able to live a long and comfortable retirement.

IASCOE AWARDS

Awards are an excellent way to show your thoughtfulness and appreciation for those around you! IASCOE provides some of those opportunities that you can take advantage of. Please be sure to request, submit, or nominate those that are deserving of recognition for the categories below:

Extra Mile Award



This is one of the nicest certificates NASCOE offers to its members! The beauty of this particular certificate program is that you can request an Extra Mile Award certificate for virtually anyone that has gone the “Extra Mile”! Do you know a young person that donated hair for the Locks for Love program? Or how about a USDA Service Center that went all out for Breast Cancer Awareness day? Or how about an elderly neighbor that raked your leaves while you were at work? Bottom line is that with this certificate, you can show your appreciation to anyone, NASCOE Member or not to say “Thank you!” for what you have done. The certificate does not come wrapped with ribbons or bows, nor is it framed, it is a professionally prepared certificate to honor the deserving recipient. Guaranteed to put a smile on the giver and the receiver every time! Just fill out the online form under the Awards tab on the NASCOE web- site (www.nascoe.org) and the certificate will be mailed to you within days!

Distinguished Service Awards



The Distinguished Service Awards honor fellow NASCOE Members that have gone over and above in their:

Communities

Service to NASCOE

Service to FSA- Agriculture.

To nominate a fellow NASCOE Member please complete the online form that can be found under the Awards link on the NASCOE website at www.nascoe.org and send it to your State Awards Chairperson no later than February 1st. The nominations do not have to be lengthy, just point the facts/highlights for the Judges. For help in preparing the nomination, please see the nominations for the winners last year under the Awards link on the NASCOE website.

Sick Leave Certificates



The NASCOE Awards program offers sick leave certificates to persons that have reached a new sick leave milestone during their career with FSA. Sick leave certificates are a great way for a state to recognize dedicated NASCOE Members whom have reached 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, or 2,500 hours of unused sick leave as of February 1, 2014. NASCOE also provides a plaque for NASCOE Members whom have achieved 3,000 hours of unused sick leave. Simply send the name, county, and # of hours reached to your State Awards Chairperson no later than February 1, 2014.

If you have any questions on any of these awards, please do not hesitate to contact your IASCOE District Committee person as listed on the IASCOE.org website or myself.

IASCOE State Awards Chairperson
Karen LaCour
2320 110th Ave.
Lake Park, IA 51347
Phone: 712-330-1347
Email: cmego@evertek.net

IASCOE/NASCOE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

It's that time of year again. Students interested in earning scholarships for higher education need to be aware of the following benefits of IASCOE/NASCOE membership.

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 is planning on doing 3 scholarships of \$400 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 (www.nascoe.org) 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:

Daniel Curry
20078 County Hwy J55
Mount Ayr, IA 50854

OR

daniel.curry@ia.usda.gov

Also NASCOE offers 2 different Scholarship opportunities.

The traditional NASCOE Scholarship Program is provided to the children, legal dependents, and spouse 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, member's spouse, 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 since becoming a permanent FSA County Office Employee. The evaluation criteria are based on ability, incentive assistance, and other personal characteristics. Nominations for Scholarships are competitive. Area winners are selected from State entries (Note: Some States have their own Scholarship program and use their own application; Thus the NASCOE scholarship application must be submitted along with your State application for consideration for the NASCOE Scholarship Program), and each Area awards \$1,500.00. The National winner is selected from Area winners, and the National winner receives \$2,500.00. The time schedule contained in the NASCOE Awards/Scholarships booklet must be followed.

*For you the Members of NASCOE and/or Members or students of eligible Members in their 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th years of college, we are offering the **NASCOE Continuing Education/Collegiate Education Program**. The applicants must be either Members based on ASCS/FSA experience, courses attending or currently enrolled to attend, and a short essay explaining how this continuing education will further their career within FSA and/or Members or students of eligible Members in their 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th years of college working to earn their bachelors degree. There will only be one national winner of \$1,000 per year. The scholarship applicant cannot apply for both NASCOE Scholarship programs. The winner of this scholarship program may only win this award once*

The applications are available on the NASCOE website (www.nascoe.org) and are in a fillable format for your use. Also included are all of the eligibility requirements and filing deadlines on the applications so you do not have to flip between multiple web pages. If you need additional information the current edition of the NASCOE Awards/Scholarships Handbook is also posted on this site, and/or you may ask your Area Scholarship Committee Chairperson or myself for assistance.

