

January 2016



IASCOE NEWSLETTER

2015/2016 IASCOE OFFICERS

President

Jennifer Comer
PT Page County



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

Vice-President

Dee Ann Lehn
CED Keokuk County



Dee.Lehn@ia.usda.gov
deeann103@gmail.com

Treasurer

Judy Dameron
PT Louisa County



judy.dameron@ia.usda.gov
jldameron@hotmail.com

Secretary

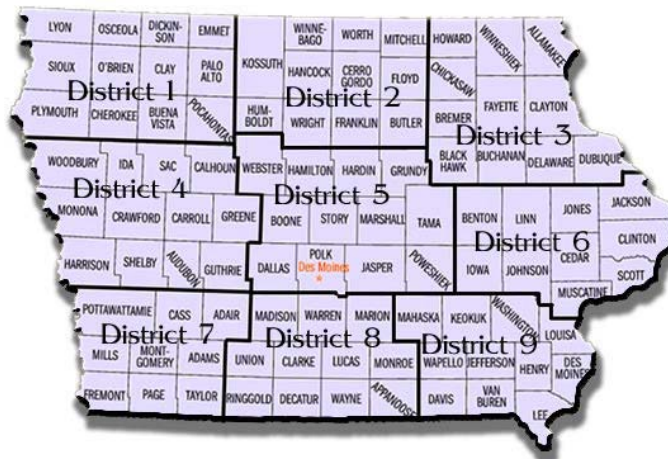
Cindy Pistek
PT Hancock County



cindy.pistek@ia.usda.gov
leonard.pistek@gmail.com

**2015-2016
IASCOE DIRECTORS & ALTERNATE DIRECTORS**

District	Program Assistant and County	County Executive Director and County
1 Director Alternate	Karen LaCour, Dickinson Samantha Erie, Pocahontas	Les Zobrist, Clay Larry Lago, Dickinson
2 Director Alternate	Cindy Pistek, Hancock Danielle Sidles, Kossuth	Angie Christian, Kossuth NA
3 Director Alternate		Heidi Nickol, Delaware NA
4 Director Alternate	Cathleen Simons, Carroll Donita Kenkel, Shelby	Steve Luke, Shelby Pat Warmbier, Harrison
5 Director Alternate	Travis Moore, Hamilton	
6 Director Alternate	Joni Birkhofer, Cedar Renee Schultz, Cedar	Kris Koth, Jones Randy Madsen, Muscatine/Scott
7 Director Alternate	Jennifer Comer, Page	Cindy Bebout, Fremont/Mills Chris Irvin, Page
8 Director Alternate	Keith Wheeler, Madison Ronda Harrison, Lucas	Kathy Henely, Wayne
9 Director Alternate	Judy Dameron, Louisa Deanna Rood, Mahaska	Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk Wendi Denham, Mahaska



COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2015-2016

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR – Steve Luke
BENEFITS CHAIR – Heidi Nickol

District	Member	County
1	Rex Wittrock	Buena Vista
2	David Stromer	Hancock
3	Adriana Foxen	Buchanan
4	Pat Warmbier	Harrison
5	Teresa Simonton	Poweshiek
6	Renee Schultz	Cedar
7	Chris Irvin	Page
8	Kelly Cain	Madison
9	Deb Rurup	Mahaska

AWARDS CHAIR – Karen LaCour
SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR – Cindy Bebout

1	Larry Lago	Dickinson
2	Tammy Pruin	Wright
3	Candace Fette	Clayton
4	Donita Kenkel	Shelby
5	Kathleen Baker	Marshall
6	Amy Castillo	Johnson
7		
8	Kathy Henely	Wayne
9	Lanie Benjamin	Davis

PUBLICITY CHAIR – Kris Koth

1	Paul Berte	Pocahontas
2	Megan Ruby-Friedow	Kossuth
3		
4	Heather Muenchrath	Shelby
5	Karla Novotny	Tama
6	Allison Vavroch	Benton
7		
8		
9	Patty Steffensmeier	Des Moines

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR – Joni Birkhofer

1	Lisa Forburger	Palo Alto
2	Rosalie Carlson	Worth
3	Sheri Rodman	Clayton
4	Cathleen “Skip” Simons	Carroll
5	Katie Kramer	Jasper
6	Randy Madsen	Muscatine/Scott
7	Susan Lange	Cass
8	Marla Morlan	Monroe
9	Deanna Rood	Mahaska

PROGRAM CHAIR – Keith Wheeler, Madison

EMBLEMS CHAIR – Kitty Benda, Marshall

NAFEC CHAIR – Karen LaCour, Dickinson



2015 IASCOE Directors

Other Roles

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

Convention DoorPrizes/Silent Auction

Karen LaCour – PT Dickinson County

cmego@evertek.net

Karen.lacour@ia.usda.gov

Newsletter Editor

Kris Koth, CED, Jones County

kris.koth@ia.usda.gov

k_koth@hotmail.com

Newsletter Copy Editor

Anna Boecker, CED Tama County

anna.boecker@ia.usda.gov

anna3003@hotmail.com



2015 Awards & Scholarship Committee



2015 Publicity Committee



2015 Legislative and Benefits Committee



2015 Membership 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
2011-13 Jeff Davis
2013-15 Curt Houk

A Message from our State Executive Director



Well, maybe we will have winter this year! I don't know what type of weather sign it is when the cherry trees bloom in Washington DC in December, but they did in December 2015!

It seems as though the end of the year always brings more retirements than throughout the year but anytime we have a retirement from our agency we lose the vast historical knowledge they have learned. Many years ago, I had the opportunity to attend legislative leadership classes at Darden School of Business.

The group was made up of legislators from all 50 states, and I particularly remember what legislators from 'term limit' states said, 'we spend a lot of time debating bills that are resurrected every seven years because no one has institutional knowledge older than that.' What they meant was that with everyone limited to serving only six years, they didn't know an idea had been tried before. When I see anyone from this agency retire with 10, 20, 30, or even 40 or more years of experience, I worry about what they have seen be tried and maybe not been a successful program. Yes, I am happy for them, but experience is a great teacher!

As I listened to training on the 2014 Farm Bill, I remember the trainers saying, 'remember the old _____ program, this works the same way.' This illustrates the value of institutional knowledge. The concept of the program may be new in that it is revenue based, but we as an agency are consistent and fair in our administration of the program.

I would like to wish everyone a very safe and prosperous New Year and remember to plan to attend the NASCOE convention in Cedar Rapids in August!

John Whitaker
SED





IASCOE President Jennifer Comer

Greetings to you all!

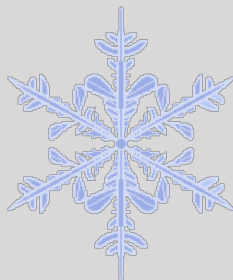
As I sit down to write this, I am in “panic mode”. I have not really started my Christmas shopping, we have basketball practice, dance practice, Christmas programs, work is crazy (as always) and I am trying to find time to *enjoy* the Holidays! BUT I am not alone! We all have crazy schedules; we all work for FSA and have the same set of deadlines etc. I guess you could say ‘we are in this together’. And one thing FSA has always offered me is, we are family, we help each other when needed and together we get the work done. Sometimes we look back and think, how did that happen? However, it did and it does because family sticks together. My hope for you all is that you had time over the Holidays to share memories with your family and friends. As the New Year begins, please keep sharing memories and making new ones with family and friends, and do not forget your FSA family.

The New Year is going to be an exciting one! You may have heard – IASCOE is hosting the 2016 National NASCOE Convention in Cedar Rapids. We have been talking about this for a while now (two years for some of us) and it is finally 2016, which brings on a completely new stress in my life but I know my FSA family is helping and we will get it done. There are still plenty of opportunities to get involved with the National Convention. You can help on a planning committee, volunteer for the week of Convention, you can help sell raffle tickets, or if you know of a business that would maybe like to donate to our convention, PLEASE feel free to visit with them or get me their information and I will get with them. Of course, we encourage everyone to attend the Convention, you will be so glad you did!

The National Convention is not the only opportunity for you to get involved with IASCOE. We are looking for members to serve on our State Committees, each district has a representative on a committee. Committees consist of Legislative/Benefits, Scholarship/Awards, Publicity, Membership, Programs, and Emblems. Being a committee member is a great opportunity to get involved with IASCOE, especially if you are new to FSA. This is a great opportunity to meet people from all over the State that are also a part of the FSA family. If you are interested in a committee or getting, more involved with IASCOE, please contact me or your District IASCOE Director, or check out our ‘award winning’ website at www.iascoe.org.

Thank you to the districts that participated in the election of directors this year, we are excited to have new faces on our Board. If you have new employees in your office that are not members or some veteran employees that are not members, please visit with them about the benefits of being a member. Or have them contact myself or a board member, we are always happy to talk IASCOE/NASCOE. Have a great rest of winter. Spring is just around the corner!!

Jennifer Comer





IASCOE Vice-President Dee Ann Lehn

Thoughts from the Vice President

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn

Another year will have passed by when this newsletter is published. 2015 has been a year plagued by several tragic events and it does make one wonder what the future has to hold for us. In light of all the threats worldwide, I am thankful Iowa doesn't rank high on the list of sites of possible terrorist attacks.

Sometimes, these world issues make our local issues seem small in comparison and on a worldwide scale, I suppose they are. However, when we are considering our own families, our jobs and our well-being and security, those local issues become extremely important to us. NASCOE is one avenue that can help protect you and your family when tough issues that hit home. NASCOE members have opportunities to secure even more health benefits than offered by our employer. NASCOE can assist you through difficult times on the job and NASCOE is there when our jobs are threatened.

We as Iowans have a grand opportunity bestowed upon us this year to promote the NASCOE cause and our state since we are hosting the 2016 NASCOE convention this coming August. August may seem far away but we all know how quickly the months can pass. We need to step up our organizing efforts and our fund raising efforts now. Please, if you have not volunteered to help with the convention, contact a director and offer your assistance. There are many ways you can help. If you haven't sold your raffle tickets, get them sold. We need some operating money now. There are great prizes associated with this raffle and the tickets should be fairly easy to sell. Together, we can make this a convention to be remembered!



As Uncle Sam would Say "We Want You!"



IASCOE Secretary
Cindy Pistek

Happy New Year! As I write this I am listening to the music of the season knowing that when you read this, all of the lights and tinsel will be tucked away. I am hoping that you all had a very Blessed Christmas with your family and friends.

The coming months will be filled with a new project; 2016 NASCOE CONVENTION! As we gear up for the preparations that are necessary for a project of this size many of you have contacted the board of directors ready to get involved. This enthusiasm is what will make our convention a success. Our friends in other states are so excited to come to Iowa. Fund raising is our biggest project at this time. We have asked each district to contact individuals and/or companies in their area who might be interested in contributing in return for advertising at the convention. Large or small, contributions from each district could easily add up to \$2000/district and that is our goal. On Friday night of convention week, we will be hosting a picnic/entertainment night at Bloomsbury Farms. This is a fun, family event that includes a meal, entertainment for the kids and a concert with Jason Brown. A good portion of our fund-raising efforts are used to make this "Iowa Night" happen. As always, IASCOE members will get the job done☺. Contact a director or a convention committee member and volunteer!!

Many of you have received ballots for director elections. Districts 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 should have received ballots and should be returning them to me by January 25th. I want to thank-you so much for returning them timely.

I believe that 2015 will go in my book as one of the most challenging of my 29 year career with ASCS/CFSA/FSA (I think I got them all correctly) and am looking forward to 2016 and what it has to bring. We are all well aware of how our service to the producers in our counties is of great importance. In these times of depressed grain prices and soaring costs we are one consistent factor; a point of service and assistance. God bless you all as we respond to each of our producer's needs throughout 2016.

Cindy Pistek

IASCOE Secretary

Merry Christmas IASCOE! As we approach the holiday season it is time to slow down for just a little bit and enjoy our families and reflect on the past year. We have a lot to be excited about and at the same time I think you would agree we have been extremely busy implementing the new farm bill programs. Our members Nationwide, have performed unbelievably under tough conditions. In many places we are understaffed, our IT and software still aren't up to an acceptable standard, and these are just a couple of the things we have to work around every day. On the bright side we have a job and plenty to do and will get a much deserved cost of living increase this year. The producers of this country are farming under extremely difficult economic conditions and are counting on us to provide services to help them through these tough times. Our programs have changed somewhat from the past but with the Livestock Disaster, ARCPLC, and other programs we have delivered a tremendous amount of financial assistance across the country. We remain important to our customers.

NASCOE has been busy working on your behalf, please check the NASCOE Website at WWW.NASCOE.ORG and then search for "WDC" to read all the topics that NASCOE worked on during our last visit to Washington, DC. We are continuing to try and find satisfactory resolutions for your concerns. Please help keep "Your Voice" NASCOE strong and effective. Please keep us informed of your concerns and issues. Your IASCOE President and NASCOE Area Exec are working hard every day on your behalf as well as the rest of their teams. Jennifer and Curt, as well as the rest of us count on your involvement to keep us informed and to hold us accountable. NASCOE is the largest employee association within FSA, and representing a large membership has its advantages and strengths. We need you to help us continue to grow our membership. Our "Labor Management Agreement" states; "Under this agreement NASCOE has exclusive rights to represent all county employees in consultations and negotiations with management of FSA and USDA. As a condition of this exclusive right, NASCOE accepts responsibility for and agrees to represent in good faith the interests of all county employees without discrimination and without regard to membership in NASCOE." With that said NASCOE pays for all of its activities, the NASCOE Lawyer and our Consultant, with your dues money. In order to represent you and to continue to make a difference we need to work toward having 100% membership of County Office Employees. Also to clarify the National Convention and Area Rallies are funded with donations and sponsorships and not with dues. It takes all of us to have a great association, thank-you for your contributions, and your help to get all of your co-workers to join NASCOE.

All of NASCOE are looking forward to the 2016 National Convention, in your great state, this coming August. We are excited about all of the plans and activities that you have put together. We visited the site back in September and were very impressed. I know we will all have a great time, but more importantly we will conduct the business of NASCOE, I hope you plan to attend and come see firsthand how we work to represent you. I personally think that one of the greatest assets of NASCOE is its people. I cherish the friendships I have made on this journey and look forward to meeting you.

Again, Merry Christmas,

Wes Daniels

NASCOE President

A Little Bit about Me

By Megan Friedow

I would just like to start by telling people a little about myself since most of you don't know who I am. My name is Megan Friedow and I have worked in the agriculture business for 5 years and have loved every minute of it.

I started my career at the Kossuth County Farm Service Agency in June and before coming to FSA, I was not aware of all the programs that we offer and what it takes a producer to sign up a field. The programs that I work primarily with are CRP, GRP, MPP-DP and do the banking in our office.

I have been married to my husband Caelen for 10 years and have two wonderful and energetic children who are 9 and 7, we currently reside in Kanawha.

While growing up on the family farm in Winnebago County my grandparents were both grain farmers, and my parents were involved with livestock operations. We did everything from farrow to finish to Aling cattle, which ended up being a bit too much, so as I grew older we weeded out the cattle and just became hog farmers.

My family was very active in 4-H and FFA. We showed cattle, pigs and even a horse. We were also very involved with home improvement projects, photography, and clothing selection and clothing review. While in FFA I was able to attend conventions and seminars which throughout my years have taught me how to be a leader and be comfortable in public speaking rolls. I now get the opportunity to work with 4-H again since my kids are just starting to be involved with the clover kid programs thru Hancock County.

I have many reasons why I enjoy working with farmers, but most of all farmers have a different personality. They enjoy long conversations and thoroughly enjoy telling jokes (some clean, and some not so clean), but what most people who don't work in this industry don't know is that a lot of these guys are the most tenderhearted people you will ever meet. They can also be the first people to donate their time when someone is in need.

I am blessed to work with such great people at the Kossuth County Farm Service Agency and look forward to many more years to come.

BEE-TASTIC

I went to a luncheon with my dad featuring a speaker on Colony Collapse in Honey Bees. Turned out it was a Creative Retirement luncheon! (yikes!) I am happy to say, I was the youngest one there!

I went with Dad because, well, for one, he asked me. And two, because we each had gotten some honey bees last spring. I thought maybe I should try to learn more about my cool critters!

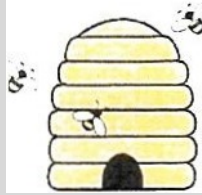
The speaker was interesting enough. He talked about some mites and maybe having to feed them in the winter if they don't have enough honey to last them through the winter.

They also provided some interesting bee facts I'd like to share.

I found myself being kind of envious of #4! I took heart of #6, I am glad my bees will get to know me! And I definitely agree with #7I'm pretty sure my bees love me! (Or at least their new home & surroundings!)

#13 shows how important honey bees are to agriculture. I have two daughters attending ISU, both majoring in agricultural fields. One of their professors told them if there were no bees in the world the human race wouldn't survive for four years. I thought that was VERY interesting.





1. THEIR STING HAS SOME BENEFITS

A toxin in bee venom called melittin may prevent HIV. Melittin can kill HIV by poking holes into the virus's protective envelope. (Meanwhile, when melittin hitches a ride on certain nanoparticles, it will just bounce off normal cells and leave them unharmed.) Scientists at Washington University in St. Louis hope the toxin can be used in preventative gels.

Bee stings may also ease pain caused by rheumatoid arthritis. Researchers at the University of Sao Paulo found that molecules in bee venom increase your body's level of glucocorticoid, an anti-inflammatory hormone.

2. THEY WORK HARDER THAN YOU

During chillier seasons, worker bees can live for nine months. But in the summer, they rarely last longer than six weeks-they literally work themselves to death.

3. WHEN THEY CHANGE JOBS, THEY CHANGE THEIR BRAIN CHEMISTRY

Bees are hardwired to do certain jobs. Scout bees, which search for new sources of food, are wired for adventure. Soldier bees, discovered in 2012, work as security guards their whole life. One percent of all middle-aged bees become undertakers-a genetic brain pattern compels them to remove dead bees from the hive. But most amazingly, regular honeybees-which perform multiple jobs in their lifetime-will change their brain chemistry before taking up a new gig.

4. THEIR BRAINS DEFY TIME

When aging bees do jobs usually reserved for younger members, their brain stops aging. In fact, their brain ages in reverse. (Imagine if riding a tricycle didn't just make you feel young-it actually made your brain tick like a younger person's.) Scientists at Arizona State University believe the discovery can help us slow the onset of dementia.

5. THEY'RE CHANGING MEDICINE

To reinforce their hives, bees use a resin from poplar and evergreen trees called propolis. It's basically beehive glue. Although bees use it as caulk, humans use it to fight off bacteria, viruses and fungi. Research shows that propolis taken from a beehive may relieve cold sores, canker sores, herpes, sore throat, cavities and even eczema.

6. THEY CAN RECOGNIZE HUMAN FACES

Honeybees make out faces the same way we do. They take parts-like eyebrow, lips and ears-and cobble them together to make out the whole face. It's called "configural processing" and it might help computer scientists improve face recognition technology the New York Times reports.

7. THEY HAVE PERSONALITIES

Even in beehives there are workers and shirkers. Researchers at the University of Illinois found that not all bees are interchangeable drones. Some bees are thrill-seekers. Others are a bit more timid. A 2011 study even found that agitated honeybees can be pessimistic, showing that, to some extent, bees might have feelings.

8. THEY GET BUZZED FROM CAFFEINE AND COCAINE

Nature didn't intend caffeine to be trapped inside an orange Mocha Frappuccino. It's actually a plant defense chemical that shoos harmful insects away and lures pollinators in. Scientists at Newcastle University found that nectar laced with caffeine helps bees remember where the flower is increasing the chances of a return visit.

While caffeine makes bees work better, cocaine turns them into big fat liars. Bees "dance" to communicate-a way of giving fellow bees directions to good food. But high honeybees exaggerate their moves and overemphasize the food's quality. They even exhibit withdrawal symptoms. Helping scientists understand the nuances of addiction.

9. THEY HAVE VIKING-LIKE SUPERVISION

Bees use the sun as a compass. But when it's cloudy, there's a backup-they navigate by polarized light, using special photoreceptors to find the sun's place in the sky. The Vikings may have used a similar system: On sunny days, they navigated with sundials, but on cloudy days, sunstones-chunks of calcite that act like a Polaroid filter-helped them stay on course.

10. THEY CAN SOLVE HAIRY MATHEMATICAL PROBLEMS

Pretend it's the weekend, and it's time to do errands. You have to visit six stores and they're all at six separate locations. What's the shortest distance you can travel while visiting all six? Mathematicians call this "traveling salesman problem," and it can even stump some computers. But for bumblebees, it's a snap. Researchers at Royal Holloway University in London found that bumblebees fly the shortest route possible between flowers. So far, they're the only animals known to solve the problem.

11. THEY'RE NATURE'S MOST ECONOMICAL BUILDERS

In 36 BC, Marcus Terentius Varro argued that honeycombs were the most practical structures around. Centuries later, Greek mathematician Pappus solidified the "honeycomb conjecture" by making the same claim. Almost 2000 years later, Thomas Hales wrote a 19-page mathematical proof showing that, of all the possible structures, honeycombs use the least amount of wax. And not only are honeycombs the most efficient structures in nature-the walls meet at a precise 120-degree angle, a perfect hexagon.

12. THEY CAN HELP US CATCH SERIAL KILLERS

Serial killers behave like bees. They commit their crimes close to home, but far away enough that the neighbors don't get suspicious. Similarly, bees collect pollen near their hive but far enough that predators can't find the hive. To understand how this "buffer zone" works. Scientist studied bee behavior and wrote up a few algorithms. Their findings improved computer models police use to find felons.

13. THEY'RE JOB CREATORS

Americans consume about 285 million pounds of honey each year. On top of that, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that honeybees pollinate 80 percent of the country's insect crops-meaning bees pollinate over \$20 billion worth of crops each year.

Award accomplishment with acknowledgement! Below are just a few ways in which you can recognize those that have made a difference, whether they be a co-worker or family or friends.

IASCOE AWARDS

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, not only IASCOE members that have 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 three 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 1st. NASCOE also provides a plaque for NASCOE Members whom have achieved 3,000 hours of unused sick leave and is awarded at the National Convention. Simply send the name, county, and # of hours reached to your State Awards Chairperson no later than February 1st.

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



L-R: William Roach, Judy Feiema, Brittney Mitchell, Lesley Duis, Jean Jansma, Samantha Sherwood

Kay Twedt – COC Vice Chairperson – 4 years

Thadd Knoblock – COC Member – 3 years

Judy Feikema – Farm Loan Manager – 29 years

Samantha Sherwood – County Executive Director – 5 years

Lesley Duis – Program Technician – 5 years

Brittney Mitchell – Program Technician – 2 years

Jean Jansma – Program Technician – 1st year of service

William Roach – Temporary Program Technician - 1st year of service

Write-Up from Judy our FLM:

I began my career with ASCS in 1986 as a program assistant in Lyon County. In 1997, I became a farm loan officer and transferred to Kossuth County. In 2005, I transferred to Sioux County. In 2015, I became the farm loan manager in Osceola County, covering Lyon, Osceola and Dickinson counties. I have come full circle in my career with FSA and now find myself working with 2nd and 3rd generations of farm families in the county where I began my career. One of my first questions when I meet a beginning farmer is “who is your dad or grandpa?”, because I probably worked with them in the 80’s and 90’s. It’s rewarding to see the baton being passed to the next generation of farmers.

What makes our office unique?

There has been a complete turn over in our office in the last few years because of retirements of staff who had been with FSA 25+ years. We have a very young staff and County Committee. In the fall of 2013 there were 4 program technicians here, two which retired in August leaving 2 program technicians with only a few years of service and our CED. The CED then retired in January of 2014 and we have been without a CED until very recently. For quite a few months there were just two of us in the office, until temporary help was hired. The temporary program technicians were from outside the agency and started fresh, but learned very quickly having more responsibility than a temporary technician would usually have. As of Monday we will be officially fully staffed again. In addition to the staff, the COC had also completely turned over with new members being elected. Our COC chairperson has been with us the longest and is only in his 5th year of service. Moral of the story...WE SURVIVED and were still able to provide our producers with quality service! We are all very outgoing, have can do attitudes and are excited that it is now our turn to put in 25+ years serving our producers!

OPPORTUNITY FOR IASCOE/NASCOE SCHOLARSHIPS

Deadline for applying for IASCOE/NASCOE scholarships is February 1, 2016.

IASCOE will award “Traditional” and “Open Continuing Education” scholarships at the state level (number awarded and amount have not been determined at this time). All IASCOE “Traditional” and “Open Continuing Education” scholarship applications will be automatically forwarded to NASCOE for additional scholarship opportunities. One NASCOE area winner will be selected and that recipient will be considered for a national scholarship. So basically, one application gives you two or more chances of obtaining a scholarship!!!

In addition to the “Traditional” and “Open Continuing Education” scholarships, there are three other NASCOE scholarship opportunities as outlined below. These scholarships will be submitted to NASCOE for consideration for an area scholarship and possibly a national scholarship.

- Traditional (graduating H.S. senior or college freshman/full time student minimum 12 hours);
- Open Continuing Education (2nd, 3rd, or 4th year student continuing education/6 or more credit hours semester);
- NASCOE Member Continuing Education (for the NASCOE member);
- Continuing Education for Adult Children (member’s adult child/5 or less credit hours semester);
- Grandchildren (member’s grandchildren/12 or more credit hours semester).

Applications can be downloaded from the NASCOE website at <http://nascoe.org/forms-downloads/awards-scholarship-applications/>. Applications are fillable. The basic requirement that applies to all applications is that the NASCOE member has been a paid member for the past 5 consecutive years or if less than 5 years, continuous membership has been maintained since becoming a NASCOE member within the first 12 months of becoming a permanent employee. The NASCOE member is a permanent County Office employee, not an associate member, with dues paid.

Please review all eligibility requirements and instructions to ensure that required documents/signatures are properly completed.

Applications must be returned by February 1, 2016 (preferably mid-January) to: Cindy Bebout, PO Box 386, Sidney, Iowa 51652 or emailed to ckbebout@iowatelecom.net

GOOD LUCK!

JOIN, SERVE AND SHARE

How were you informed about IASCOE? How was it described to you? We were all faced with the time in our lives that we made a choice about joining IASCOE.

The sales pitch I heard was the convention and how many people you could meet. I was also informed of the great benefits. At the time it was a discount at Sea World (which I have never gone to). Today the popular benefit is the cell phone discounts. I have heard some employees say they were told to join because IASCOE is the reason that "Program Technician's are 7s" in regard to the pay scale. Others were told "that is what we do at this office - you join".

As I've aged in the agency I've come to realize what IASCOE means. IASCOE does provide great benefits for our employees, ensures that we receive the same treatment as our Federal Employees, discusses program situations with our leadership, and ensures we have workload in the future to support our agency.

IASCOE is part of a bigger picture, NASCOE. NASCOE is the National Association of Farm Agency County Office Employees. It represents us, the county level employees. It represents the interests of ALL county office employees of the FSA, regardless of membership. It was originally chartered to render better service to American agriculture by having a national medium for the exchange of ideas and information, and to facilitate closer cooperation in working toward the solution of mutual problems.

The objectives are 1) to assist in every way possible to assure the successful operation of the FSA and the attainment of the agency's objectives, 2) to cooperate with common interest groups and organizations to conserve and improve our natural resources, 3) to secure equitable salaries, working conditions, and retirement provisions for ALL county employees, and 4) to provide professionalism of our workers (found at the link 'about NASCOE') at www.nascoe.org.

Joining IASCOE and being involved does make a difference. When employees' voices unite, and we chant the same song, we can make a difference in our agency. NASCOE provides a battle cry to members of Congress and to leadership at Washington to ensure that the rights of the County Office Employee are met so we can provide outstanding customer service to the public that we serve - our agricultural communities.

IASCOE has nine different districts. Each district has a PT director and a CED director with an alternate for each. Awards, benefits, emblems, legislative, membership, programs, publicity and scholarship are committees within IASCOE. Each district has a representative for the benefits/legislative, awards/scholarship, publicity, and membership committee. Add in a person as the Convention registrar, NAFEC Chair and the IASCOE web manager, and we find it takes a large number of volunteers to support this organization.

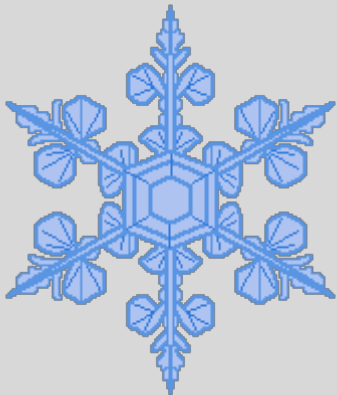
Over the past several years we have watched as many of older employees have retired. These employees have provided service and volunteered for these committee positions for years. These employees sacrificed time and resources ensuring that the County Office Employee would have a voice and be represented. By becoming involved in IASCOE they have learned what IASCOE does for them.

Take some time and go to the IASCOE and NASCOE website. If you don't know already find out what district you are in. Some may not even know it isn't based on your District Director districts anymore. Find out who your director is.

Visit with that person and see if there are any places that you could serve. Maybe a committee has someone volunteering just because no one else wants to. We need volunteers to serve in these positions.

I first challenge you, if you have not already, to JOIN IASCOE. The cost is small and the benefit is great. The second thing I challenge you to do is volunteer your time to a committee or become a director or alternate director. Find your place to SERVE in IASCOE. You will meet some great people, understand the organization and the agency better, and do a great service for not only the producer that you serve, but also the employee that you work with. Finally, I challenge you to talk about IASCOE with a friend that works within the agency. See if they have joined IASCOE. See if they have volunteered time for IASCOE. SHARE what you know about IASCOE with others.

Remember to JOIN, SERVE, and SHARE IASCOE with your fellow employees. Our voice united is strong and together we can accomplish much.



The logo for the NASCOE Political Action Committee is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a red and white design, possibly representing a state flag or a similar symbol. The shield is surrounded by a blue border containing the text "POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE" at the top and "LOYALTY SERVICE COURTESY EFFORT" at the bottom. The acronym "NASCOE" is prominently displayed in the center of the shield.

NASCOE PAC Promotion

For a limited time only, the NASCOE Legislative Committee will be giving every new PAC contributor of at least \$3.00 per pay period, or existing contributor who increases their contribution by at least \$3.00 per pay period, a pre-paid \$25.00 gift card while supplies last.

*Ask your area legislative committee chair
for details*



A SPECIAL INVITATION TO YOU

NASCOE.ORG



What is NASCOE?

In 1958 county office employees organized state associations to work for employee benefits. In early 1959, the State Associations formed the National Association of County Office Employees. NASCOE is the national affiliate of the various state associations. It is governed by a Board of Directors composed of two members from each state. An executive committee is the executive arm of the Board of Directors. Dues are nominal and are paid through an individual's state association.

Our objectives are to assist in every way possible to assure successful operation of FSA and the attainment of FSA's objectives, to cooperate with other groups and organizations, to conserve and improve our soil resources, to secure equitable salaries, working conditions, and retirement provisions for all county office employees and to promote the professionalism of our employees.

Since 1962, NASCOE has been granted exclusive recognition to represent full-time county office employees in negotiation with management on terms of employment and working conditions.

Associate Membership

Many state office employees, county committee persons, District Directors, temporary employees and retired employees choose to participate in and support NASCOE as an Associate Member. Associate Members share in many of the same benefits available to regular members and reap the rewards of NASCOE's active legislative work on federal employee issues.



Recent Legislative Accomplishments

Secured Significant Funding Above the Budget Request for FSA Salaries & Expenses

Funding to operate and fill agency positions remains our top priority. Our team has avoided recent budget proposals that would have decreased salaries funding by up to \$60M. In addition, these funds have allowed the Department to lift the hiring freeze and add new employees.

Blocked Implementation of CBS Office Restructure/Closing Plan

Our organization's legislative efforts lead to bill language prohibiting the implementation of the Central, Branch and Satellite office restructuring plan. While we are willing to discuss restructuring options, the Department's leadership was unable to justify the consolidation through any workload or cost benefit analysis.

Secured Funding for Monthly COC Meetings

Our legislative team secured funding to ensure the continuation of regularly scheduled COC meetings.

Stopped the Transfer of Salaries & Expenses Toward IT Initiatives

Secured legislative language to ensure S&E funding is not transferred from personnel/staff accounts.

Worked to Maintain Employee Benefits

Worked with members of Congress to ensure the FERS annuity continues to be based on the employees average high three rather than the proposed high five calculation. In addition, our team has blocked two straight years of proposed employee contribution increases related to retirement programs.

Prohibited Direct Reassignments of Staff

Our team included legislative language ensuring that FSA staff are not reassigned to various office locations for the purpose of meeting the two and twenty rule for closing offices without Congressional notification.

Future Goals of NASCOE

- Strive to protect and improve benefits that employees currently have.
 - Continue to work toward PT and CED upgrades and other benefits with a priority on those who have waited the longest on these improvements.
 - Emphasize the need for training to improve the image and ability of FSA & NASCOE people to serve the national agriculture community.
 - Work for and actively pursue good working relationships among employees of all USDA agencies.
 - Seek benefits and privileges that are equal to those enjoyed by other federal employees.
 - Continue to work with and support the County Committee System and the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC).
 - Continue to work and support Commodity Groups in promoting agriculture throughout the nation.
 - Keep NASCOE members and potential members informed about NASCOE activities.
 - Strive to attain proper staffing levels for the county offices.
 - Strive for 100% Membership of FSA employees in NASCOE
-

NASCOE Accomplishments

During the 1960's

- Government Life Insurance
- Civil Service Retirement
- Severance Pay
- Increased Leave Earnings
- Transfer Employment into USDA without loss of grade, leave or tenure
- Pay Increases - Timed with Civil Service's

During the 1970's

- Reclassification of CED's and PAs
- Secured "Saved Grades" where grades were reduced due to reduction in workload/reclassification.
- Credit for past County Office experience in lieu of education for CED training positions.
- Vacancies in jobs above the County Office level now released to the County Office.
- Secured a Washington consultant to represent interest of County Committee employees.

During the 1980's

- NASCOE Scholarship Program
- Legislative Fund
- Advertising Program Assistant vacancies to County Offices within the state
- Passage of Transfer Bill
- Supplemental Insurance on payroll withholding
- Upgrading of PA job description
- Negotiated for a significant increase in number of Grade 12 offices.

During the 1990's

- PT reclassification approved
- CED reclassification approved
- CPT reclassification eligible for upgrades
- Lead PT grade increase in shared management offices
- Compressed work schedule made available
- ASCS/PSA Awards Program increased 500%
- Donor Leave Program Implemented
- Grievance procedure reintroduced in handbook procedure
- Appeals procedure information made available
- NASCOE Scholarship program increased
- Legislative program improved
- Maxi-flex Implemented

During the 2000's

- Established NASCOE Program Committee
- NASCOE Website established as an effective communication tool with membership
- NASCOE Emblems Online Storefront concept
- NASCOE Now publication developed
- NASCOE PAC established
- Moved to electronic communication and distribution of information to membership

In more recent years

- Return of Time off Awards and Cash Awards
- Expansion of Key PT's to one per district for those states willing to embrace the opportunity.
- Returning GovDelivery back into the hands of the County Offices to be able to make decisions when key outreach should take place.
- NASCOE chosen members are on more task forces than ever before and more PT's than ever!
- Building strong relationships with management quickly to address the needs of our members.
- Building relationships with the ACRSI team to input & monitor the future of acreage reporting.
- A legislative agenda that was effective in procuring and protecting CO staffing dollars above all other concerns.
- Having an effective NAFEC committee in place to support the only thing that makes PSA different than any other government agency, the County Committee system.
- Planning and implementing a NASCOE budget that has our organization in the black with restored monetary reserves to battle what might come our way.
- Reduction in PAC banking fees from a high of \$4855 per year in 2013 to a low of \$1661 projected for 2015 which leaves more funds to help candidates in the PAC.



Exclusive Benefits for NASCOE Members

Exclusive access to Working Advantage discount network.

This allows you to save up to 60% on items such as:

- Theme Parks (Six Flags, Disney, etc.)
- Movie Tickets (Cinemark, Regal, etc.)
- Ski Tickets
- Hotels, Travel and Car Rentals
- Broadway Theatre Tickets
- Sporting Events
- Health and Fitness
- Museums and City Passes
- Merchant Gift Certificates
- Online Shopping

Check it out at WorkingAdvantage.com!

You must have your NASCOE member ID.

Other Benefits Include:

- Legal Services for NASCOE Members
- Cell Phone Discounts
- Various scholarships and awards are available, and more!

Visit the [NASCOE website](http://NASCOE.com) for specific details.

As NASCOE's Benefits Provider, Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. offers the following exclusive benefits to all NASCOE members:

- Complimentary Federal Benefits Analysis
- Social Security Maximization
- Group Workshops
- One-on-One Appointments
- Spousal Survivor Benefit Options
- IRA and 401k Rollover Options
- TSP Rollover Options
- Insure Your Retirement Income
- FEGLI Life Insurance Alternatives
- ROTH IRAs for as little as \$50/PP
- Tax-Free Retirement Options
- LifeLock Identity Theft Protection



MyNASCOEBenefits.com

Accomplishments of NASCOE Through Negotiation & Consultation with FSA Management

In the 1990's

- FSA agreed to establish a Classification Task Force to continue to work on a new method of classification where grades are based on knowledge, skills, ability and complexity instead of workload. To bring CED grades more in line with other similar management positions in USDA, the grade CO-10 was eliminated and all CO-10 CED's were upgraded to CO-11.
- FSA agreed to have a classification task force develop a new method of grade determination based on knowledge, skills, and ability.
- Requested that the CED job description be expanded to include Ag Credit responsibilities.
- With the Agency downsizing and budget constraints, NASCOE expressed the need for an employee buyout and/or early retirement options. The buyout was offered in 1996 and 1997.
- CED Classification system implemented removing management grades from being determined totally by the workload report. Most CO-9 CED's upgraded.
- With the changing environment of the agency, NASCOE requested that FSA rescind the rule requiring that a CED remain in their first county for 18 months.
- Requested and management agreed for cross-training of all FSA programs including FLP.
- Before 1998, GS and CO were treated differently when it came to awards and performance ratings. NASCOE fought to achieve parallel benefits between CO and GS with regards to awards and performance.
- NASCOE requested that Maxi-flex be implemented. FSA agreed to offer this alternative work schedule to CO employees.
- NASCOE requested and management agreed to allow two CPT's in large shared management counties.
- CED's in shared management offices received laptops per NASCOE's request.

In the 2000's

- Accomplished a significant increase in CED upgrades including all remaining CO-9 CED's.
- Accomplished reconsideration of all county office closures.
- Negotiated that CO and GS employees be on a level playing field when competing for federal jobs.
- Negotiated for loan approval authority for CO employees who complete training.
- Negotiated with FSA to ensure that suspensions pending investigation will occur only when credible evidence is produced.
- Successful in NAP being added under the Program Variety element and Soybean/Oilseeds added under the Crop Production element in the CED Classification and Pay Plan.
- Negotiated that FSA employees, COC Members and their families would be eligible to apply for direct and guaranteed loans through FSA.
- Negotiated a new Adverse Action procedure giving CO employees more protection.
- Negotiated changes in Travel Overtime and Travel Camp Time.
- Scored 2 meetings per year with management, the Spring Negotiation Session and a Fall follow-up session.
- Successfully requested the split of CRP General and Continuous Program for classification of PT grades.

In more recent years

- Planning has started for an Aspiring Leader Program for PT's. It will identify PT's with leadership potential and provide a training program to hone leadership skills.
- Pushing for equality and consistency in performance management determinations for all CO employees.

Each Year

- Yearly cost of living and locality pay – Each year NASCOE must request that CO employees receive the COLA that other federal employees receive.

NASCOE Represents

"Loyalty, Service, Courtesy, & Effort"

Why: NASCOE is our only voice to FSA Management and to congressional leaders on issues that affect our employment.

When: NOW

Where & How: By sending your annual dues to your State Association

**Please consider your option
to become a member!**

