

**The Iowa Association Of FSA
County Office Employees**

IASCOE

NEWS

October 2002

Newsletter



Visit our web site at www.iascoe.org

The following letter was drafted by NASCOE/IASCOE and sent to Senator Tom Harkin and Senator Charles Grassley.

Dear Senator,

October 4, 2002

With the passage of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the employees of the Farm Service Agency will be called on to deliver programs resulting from this legislation. In order to prepare the FSA workforce for the knowledge and skill necessary to effectively deliver this Farm Bill, the USDA must transform their field operations in response to shifts in the Federal Government's role in production agriculture and the industry's unpredictable nature across the 50 states. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, in its current form, will increase customer volume and demand for services, which in turn will require additional FSA staff.

In a June 7 press release, Secretary Veneman stated that FSA will need an additional 2500 employees to implement this Farm Bill, of which 1000 have been hired. The National Association of FSA County Office Employees (NASCOE) representing over 9250 employees has requested the workload analysis USDA used to determine the 2500 employees needed to implement this Farm Bill. The NASCOE membership is concerned that they will fall through the funding allocation cracks and be required to operate in a severely understaffed capacity as many FSA field offices have the past four years. As you can imagine, operating in an understaffed FSA field office for that length of time caused a delay in service to the public and created an immense amount of workload stress among those employees. Another side effect from that understaffed period of time is that the incidence of error increased as the field office employees barely had the time to "just cover the basics" when conducting farm program business with the public. The general consensus among the membership at this time would be to avoid a reoccurrence of that understaffed situation.

Currently, FSA is funded and staffed at 576 permanent employees below the approved ceiling established by OMB. This does not include the employees needed to administer the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Senate will soon be considering 2003 Agriculture Appropriations Bill S2801. The USDA forwarded a request to the Senate Appropriations Committee last July requesting \$60 million to hire additional staff to aide in the implementation of the farm bill. This request was too late for Senate Appropriations Committee consideration when it acted upon S2801. This request for funding will now have to be considered on the floor of the Senate or in conference if it is to be included.

Due to these circumstances, I am asking for your support of the Secretary's request for the \$60 million when it is presented on the Senate floor for debate. I would also ask you to consider that this be included in the FSA baseline to hire employees, permanent as well as temporary to administer and implement the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. It's important that this allocation, if approved, be reserved for employment and not spread over other expenses associated with the 2002 Farm Bill.

Thank you for your attention.

John Landgraf
President - Iowa Association of FSA County Office Employees

Vice Presidents Report

Thoughts From Down the "Lane"

By Tom Lane - IASCOE Vice President

September 2002

I have a story I wish to share, about a mother and her young daughter.

The mother went to the grocery store with her young daughter, Susie. In the store, the storeowner asked Susie if she would like a handful of candy. Susie acted very shy and didn't move toward the candy. The storeowner asked, "What's the matter Susie, don't you like candy?" Susie replied, "Yes, I like candy." So, the storeowner dug his hand down in the bin and dumped a generous portion in her arms. Susie thanked the storeowner and her mother finished her shopping.

After they had gotten home, the mother asked Susie why she had not taken the candy when first invited. Susie quickly replied, "Cause his hand was bigger than mine."

Susie displayed resourcefulness in achieving her goal. With harvest (and Loan/LDP season) is nearly upon us; farm bill work lurking just over the horizon; Congress debating a Disaster Aid bill and all the family functions (holiday gatherings, school activities, etc) that this time of year brings, we will have to be resourceful to meet the challenges ahead.

I wish all of you a safe, happy, holiday season.

Tom

The preacher came to call the other day. He said at my age I should be thinking of the hereafter. I told him, "Oh I do it all the time. No matter where I am, in the parlor, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement, I ask myself, "Now, what am I here after?"

IASCOE DIRECTORS MINUTES

Adventureland Inn
Des Moines, IA
September 25, 2002

Officers Present: John Landgraf, President;
Tom Lane, Vice President; Sue Beemer,
Secretary/ Treasurer

Directors Present: Rosie Kahl, John Bahnsen,
Tammy Eibey, Ron Mauser, Denise Dugan,
Connie Safley, Steve Kennedy, Joni
Birkhofer, Rich Kleppe, Connie Bence, Terry
Pauling and Sandra Johnson.

Alternate Directors Present: Larry Lago

Guests Present: Jeff Davis and Bob Wegand.

President John Landgraf called the meeting
to order at 8:00 P.M.

SECRETARY and TREASURER'S REPORT

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Tom moved the minutes be approved and Ron seconded. Motion carried. The Treasurer's report was reviewed. We currently have a balance of \$33183.28. The first installment of NASCOE dues are due and payable the 1st of October. The approximate amount will be between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

OLD BUSINESS

Web Site

Some very nice comments have been heard around the state on the format of the web site. We sincerely appreciate all the work Brian Beach has done to make this a success. The next edition of the newsletter will be posted on the web site in the very near future. Some concern was discussed regarding employee access of the web site. We certainly hope all members are taking advantage of this site. It was discussed having someone in every office print the newsletter and pass it around

to all employees. We are saving quite a bit of money by posting it on the web site compared to printing a hard copy and mailing to all offices.

Retiring Member Recognition

We are really trying to get a certificate to all retiring members. It was suggested State Office could perhaps print out a list of retirees on a monthly or quarterly basis. The directors in each district would then present the certificate to the retiree.

Out of State Conventions

At this time it was not known if anyone was going to attend the Michigan Convention. John and Tom gave some updates from the National Convention in July. They thought Minnesota did a nice job and the convention was very productive.

NEW BUSINESS

NAFEC and RASCOE Updates

Any retiree can contact Tammy Eibey in Delaware County and she will get you in touch with the contact person for RASCOE. We discussed how important NAFEC is and how much influence they have in Washington, D.C. It would be great if we could get most of COC to join.

Election

Nomination papers were given to the directors in districts 4 – 6 – 8 –9. They will get a nominating committee who in turn will get members to run for director and alternate director in their respective district. The nomination papers need to be returned to the secretary by November 1st so she will have time to get ballots out to the districts. The election results will be tabulated during our January meeting.

2003 Convention Site

The IASCOE Convention for 2002-2003 will be held at the Adventureland Inn in Des Moines the 4th and 5th of April. The following committees were appointed:

Agenda – John

Registration – Denise, Jeff, and Rosie

Speakers – try and see whom we can get to come from Washington, D.C. Doug Frago was one suggestion. Connie will check on Mark Pierson who is a radio commentary.

Hospitality – Jeff and Tom

Door Prizes – Joni and Rich

Hospitality bags – Connie and Sandy

Entertainment – try to get a skit from each district. Check with Kevin Keegan and see if he will MC again.

It was decided to again have a brunch instead of a noon meal. Everyone thought it went over very good last year. All the directors are to bring snacks for the hospitality room. It was moved to keep the registration the same as last year. Tammy moved and John seconded. Motion approved. Pre-registration will be \$20.00 and \$25.00 at the door.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits and Legislative

Terry and Bob went over the benefits and legislative information. In the future we will be able to take advantage of a flexible savings account. That plan will allow us to use pre tax dollars to pay for things that our insurance does not. Our health insurance will take an 11% increase the first of the year.

Awards and Scholarships

Bob Wegand received the Midwest Area Award and was presented a plaque. Rosie said it was time to think about distinguished service awards. She will be contacting the district awards committee members in the near future.

Vicki wasn't present to present any updates on scholarships. A thank you was passed around from Heather Reiss.

Membership

Denise gave an update on membership. Our percentage is about the same as it was last year. Currently we are at approximately 84%. Hopefully when we get our final numbers tabulated we will get to 85%. Membership is a very important part of our organization. When we go to the hill they are very interested in knowing our percentage of membership and it is very impressive when we can say we have over 90% membership. Denise had a printout prepared on district percentages to give to the directors.

Publicity

Tammy gave the publicity report. Anyone having an article or pictures they would like to have in the newsletter would need to contact Tammy. Our newsletter will be posted on the web site in the next two weeks.

Emblems

Sandy still has some items on hand. It was decided to cut these items to cost so we could get our inventory to zero. Maybe some could be used as door prizes at the convention in April.

OTHER ITEMS

Conventions that will be coming up are Michigan in October and Ohio in November. We held our early bird drawing in regards to membership. The following names were the lucky winners:

Connie Johnson – Fayette County – District 3
Mary Kay Schmidt – Keokuk – District 9
Merlette Cassmann – Butler – District 2
Becky Kunze – Crawford – District 4
Elizabeth Kellen – Sioux – District 1

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted
Sue Beemer
IASCOE Secretary

Midwest Area News - September 2002

Trice Smith - Midwest Area Exec

2187 71st St - Van Horne, IA 52346

Email: toldberg@netins.net

319-472-5274 Ext. 105 (work)

2002 NATIONAL CONVENTION A HUGE SUCCESS!!

Thanks to all the Minnesota people, Convention Chairs Dan Root and Tammy Pruin, State President Doug Leet, and Minnesota SED John Monson. I have to say this was one of the best organized and less stressful conventions that I have attended. Everyone in charge did a wonderful job in making everyone feel welcome, the hotel staff was superb and the hotel itself was above standard. The Exec committee did not hear one complaint and that is in tribute to all the hard work and good planning that went into the convention.

THANKS TO ALL WHO HELPED MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!

The day that we have been talking about for a long time finally came on Thursday. The joint session with NACS/NASE/RD/NADD and NASCOE came and the room was filled. It was nice to see us all in a room together and I enjoyed talking with our fellow FSA employees and listening to all the Association Presidents say a few words to the group. It was a small step and it worked so we need to push forward to something better.

The MWA held their elections on Saturday electing E. Todd Warner (Ohio) as your new Exec and Dan Root (Minnesota) as your new alternate for the upcoming year. You will see great things out of these two guys. I know they will be available whenever you need their help. Please keep them informed of happenings in your state.

Steve Morrison (Missouri) was elected NASCOE President, David Vidrine (Louisiana) Vice President and Charolette Saunders (West Virginia) Secretary /Treasurer. Most of you know Steve and Charolette and their capabilities and you can be assured that David also has all the qualities needed to succeed.

Steve Morrison appointed Denise Dugan from Iowa to the position of Emblems/Program chairperson to represent the MWA. Denise's duties will be a little different from the normal emblems chair. She will work at phasing out the emblems as we now know them. She will be looking for a "store front" type of ordering for emblems that will enable members to order directly from the store front and NASCOE will not have to keep all the inventory. The second part of her duties will be Program related. This will be collecting program efficiencies from members to take to program heads in DC. As things come up during the year contact Denise with your concerns. Congratulations Denise on your new position.

We are now gearing up for a new program year. Many offices are hiring new permanent employees and temps. I am very glad to see that states are filling their FTE's. It is very difficult to go back to DC and say we need staffing when we do not see the need to fill our permanent positions. We must suggest to our SED's to staff to ceiling. NASCOE has been saying this for years and now everyone understands why. We must continue to ask for additional permanent staffing. It is important to our agency and the employees cannot be asked to do anymore without a breakdown of some sort.

As you look into a new NASCOE year remember that you do have someone to turn to when you need help or need an ear to bend. Just ask and your NASCOE friends will be there for you. As this is my last article as your Exec, I would like to Thank ALL of You for being so hospitable, caring, and helpful to me for the past 2 years. I have a great many experiences and memories to save.

Take Care...later
Trice

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

NASCOE National Convention July 18-10, 2002 Raddison Riverfront Hotel St. Paul, Minnesota

The NASCOE Legislative Committee met at the Raddisson Inn in St. Paul, Minnesota at 1:45 p.m. on July 18 and 1:15 p.m. July 19, 2002, to review the 2002 legislative program, and to make further recommendations concerning NASCOE's legislative efforts for the 2002-2003 legislative year. Approximately 75 – 80 members were in attendance each day.

Nicole Bell, California was session Secretary. Minutes recorded will be submitted to the Executive Committee as requested.

The following items were discussed and action taken:

The group discussed the removal of the COC from the approval process of EQIP. A talking point paper was developed to present to the department for review at their request. Some of the points included the loss of local oversight and duplication of the administrative process.

Staffing and Budget issues were discussed. It is imperative that NASCOE explore all options as they strive to help secure adequate staffing for the County Offices to implement and administer the farm bill. The discussion included what NASCOE could do that would influence OMB to realize the drastic need for staffing.

The issue of E-LDP's was discussed and the group encouraged NASCOE to continue to press the issues, which were enumerated in the E-LDP position paper both legislatively and in discussion with the department.

The group believes it is imperative that NASCOE actively pursue relationships with Coalition Groups. The committee feels that every effort should be made for a representative of NASCOE to attend the various coalition groups conventions and the they be invited to NASCOE's National Convention and Legislative Conferences.

The group believes NASCOE members should continue to keep the Legislative Committee

informed of all key contacts, which are developed as members make contacts with their Congressman and Senators.

2002-2003 Legislative Program Recommendations

The Legislative Committee reviewed the past year's program and is respectfully recommending to the Executive Committee the following proposals for the 2002-2003 program year:

1. That the legislative training continue to be a priority anytime NASCOE members gather at a National Convention, Area Meeting, State Convention or Outlook Conference. Training is to be developed by the Legislative Committee and approved by the Executive Committee.
2. That Outlook Conferences shall continue to be held each year in Washington D.C. The conferences shall alternate between a Legislative Committee meeting sponsored in full by NASCOE, and a Legislative Conference, co-sponsored by NASCOE and the State affiliates. The Committee recommends that for 2003, a full conference be held. In addition, the Committee recommends that a training session be held on Sunday, a full day meeting with collation partners on Monday, with congressional visits on Tuesday and Wednesday.
3. The continuation of the Legislative Activist Program should continue. Since a few "key" Congressional Committees deal with a majority of the legislation that directly impacts FSA jobs and benefits, we recommend that NASCOE continue to develop a NASCOE legislative network, that will impact these "key" congressmen in their decision making process concerning employee benefits, agricultural issues and programs, and the infrastructure and delivery system for federal USDA programs.

4. That NASCOE continue to maintain the services of David Senter and Associates through the 2002-2003 legislative year. The Legislative Committee recommends NASCOE continue to participate in FAIR (Coalition for a Fair And Independent Retirement). It is the recommendation of the Legislative Committee that David Senter and Associates shall represent NASCOE at FAIR meetings, and the Legislative and Benefits Chairperson and/or President shall attend regular or special meeting when possible. The FAIR report shall be included on a monthly basis.
5. The position of a National Legislative Co-Chairperson be continued assuring an institutional and longer-term working knowledge is preserved on the Legislative Committee. The Committee recommends that this position be continued.
6. That in the event USDA reorganization or agency restructuring is initiated by members of Congress, or as directed by the President's initiative as announced by OMB, or per the Secretary's discretionary authority permitted by the 1994 Reorganization Act, the Legislative Committee shall follow and develop its strategies consistent with prior resolutions passed by members in Rochester, New York in 1997 and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1999 as adopted by NASCOE, as well as those outlined in the approved NASCOE position papers.
7. That NASCOE shall support the legislative efforts of our sister FSA organizations by exchanging position papers and legislative news, and executing joint legislative efforts. NASCOE members should be encouraged to support NAFEC and RASCOE.
8. That NASCOE shall continue its efforts to communicate with national and state farm organizations and commodity groups.

Recognizing the abilities of our coalition partners to immediately lobby on behalf of our common interest, it is recommended that NASCOE immediately find a means to produce an electronic newsletter for the purpose of emailing communication, attachments and legislative updates to our coalition partners.

9. An organizational meeting of the Legislative Committee will be held on an annual basis early in the NASCOE year after the NASCOE organizational meeting for the purpose of educating newly appointed committee members, and to plan and strategize the coming year's legislative activities. Quarterly teleconferencing should continue to be authorized.
10. The continuation of the policy requiring the Area Legislative Committee Chairs write and distribute a regular report to each of their respective State Legislative Chairpersons and/or State Presidents.
11. That a NASCOE member attend the Coalition Partners National Conventions and that Coalition Partners be invited to National Conventions and National Legislative Conferences.

In Conclusion

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for each member of the Legislative Committee. Their devotion of time and effort was tremendous and had positive impact for our members. I also wish to thank the entire Executive Committee for their leadership, cooperation and support over the past year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Whiteneck
NASCOE Legislative Co-Chairperson

NASCOE Emblem Merchandise

For information on how to order NASCOE Emblem shirts, pants, caps, cups, tote bags, and pins, contact Sandy Johnson of Washington County.



National Benefits Committee Report

David A. Unruh, Chairperson
NASCOE National Convention
July 18-10, 2002
Raddison Riverfront Hotel
St. Paul, Minnesota

Benefits Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chairperson David A Unruh, presiding, on both July 18 and 19, 2002. Jake Bourget, MW Area Benefit Chairperson was selected as recording secretary for the meetings. This meeting was attended by 19 persons both days including Area Chairpersons representatives Kerry Smith NW, Billy Wayne Denison SW, Jake Bourget MW, Brent Orr SE, and Paul Russell NE.

Chairperson reported that recently links were made available on the NASCOE Benefit web page to J M Marketing and the USDA Employee Services & Recreation Association web pages. These links will provide NASCOE members with easier access and additional benefits. Additionally, it was explained that this group would be asked to provide guidance to NASCOE on several issues including Pre-Paid Legal, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, and dental.

Jim Mace, from J M Marketing reviewed policies currently being offered to NASCOE by J M Marketing and newly purposed benefits mentions above. Purposed items were:

1. Pre-Paid Legal - This Company trades on the New York Stock Exchange and is available in 48 states. In the two states that this benefit is not offered, Alaska and New Hampshire, it is because it is not legal to market this benefit in those states. This Company provides legal services for preventive legal, motor vehicle services, trial defense, IRS for a fixed month fee of either \$14.95 or \$24.95 per month, depending on the level of service desired. Members may also receive a 25% discount for services not provided by the pre-legal contract through contacting attorneys. NASCOE will bare the responsibility for marketing

this benefit through its newsletter and other sources. The number of employees using this service and level of service will vary by individual needs. This company has been in business for over 27 years.

The fact that 2 states are not legally eligible to receive this benefit does not violate any current NASCOE Executive Policy or contractual agreement with J M Marketing. The goal of NASCOE is to provide a similar benefit to all states. The Executive Board should continue to make decisions of eligibility on case-by-case bases when all states can not receive a similar benefit. Current contractual policy only requires "similar benefits in state that a similar product is sold".

2. Principal Financial Group has submitted a bid to provide dental insurance to NASCOE members with a first year requirement of 350 participants and 1000 the second year. Over 22 companies were contacted and only one submitted a plan that the Benefits Committee has submitted for review at this convention. Individual states have approached NASCOE about the possibility of contracting through J M Marketing to provide dental benefits to them through an individual state or regional plan. J M Marketing would be the contracting agent and handle all administrative work. The Benefits Committee has held much discussion on providing a viable, feasible, and sustaining dental plan over the last two years. Discussion was held on whether membership participation would reach

the required levels of 1000 policyholders in the second year? In general, all in attendance did not believe that NASCOE would not reach this level of enrollment. Secondly, having individual states or regions work through J M Marketing to provide a dental program is a new concept but within contractual agreement with J M Marketing. Some states/areas will be able to acquire a better benefit compared to other state/areas. However, it will allow individual states the ability to offer a benefit NASCOE may not be able to provide on a national basis due to price and availability of dental providers/options. In this concept, individual states must make the asserted effort to develop a viable plan. All plans would have to be approved by the Executive Committee.

3. Accidental Death and Dismemberment Policy – This policy will be for \$2000 in Accidental Death and various amounts for dismemberment based on a schedule up to \$2000 maximum benefit. Members are notified directly about their “free” insurance as a result of their membership with an organization. The project cost is \$1.00 per member paid in advance each year. NASCOE must provide a current list of every member and home address in order for this product to be marketed. All names and addresses will remain under J M Marketing control unless an individual purchases buy up insurance. Jim Mace states those addresses will not be sold as other addresses are not sold by his company. It is estimated that 20 percent will buy up. NASCOE will receive from J M Marketing a 3 percent donation for all buy up purchases. These policies must be renewed annually. Buy up policies may help offset NASCOE’s annual expense for ADD&D. It was discussed that if this product is to be successfully implemented that a name and address database of NASCOE

membership must be developed and maintained.

The following items were reported and commented on:

1. Jim Mace has reported that he expects to donate at least \$6953 for new sales and another \$2000 to the scholarship funds. Total cash donations this year may exceed \$8,953. In addition, J M Marketing has invested in excess of \$15,340 attending stated meetings and Area rallies. J M Marketing has also obtained the donation of \$2000 from American Heritage Life and Central States of Omaha for our scholarship auction.
2. States were reminded that NASCOE has purchased an Umbrella Liability Policy for the National Convention and other activities throughout the year by Area and State Associations. Currently NASCOE is insured through J M Marketing with United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company with an annual policy premium of \$1629.00. This policy has allowed NASCOE and its associate states greater access to facilities for conventions because of the liability coverage it provides NASCOE for such events. States were reminded that in order to be covered by this insurance they must inform J M Marketing of their event at least two weeks ahead of time.
3. The contract with J M Marketing is the only written requirement by NASCOE to “ensure that similar products are approved in each state sold”.

THE COMMITTEE MADE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD:

1. Pre-Paid Legal should be offered to NASCOE membership with the Executive Board negotiating a reasonable return to NASCOE for its marketing of the product.
2. The offer by Principal Financial Group for dental insurance should be

- denied because it is questionable that NASCOE can achieve the 1000 policy level of required participation in the second year of the program
3. NASCOE should continue to research the possibility of providing a viable and feasible dental program to its membership. NASCOE should study the concept of allowing individual states/areas to work with J M Marketing to acquire individual dental benefits. J M Marketing should be required to offer a similar benefit to all states or areas as requested by that state or area.
 4. Accidental Death and Dismemberment Policy would provide an immediate benefit to membership and should be approved. NASCOE should only submit names of eligible members to which a database has been established that tracks name and address of eligible members.
 5. Executive Committee should designate a national committee to establish and track name and address of all NASCOE members. For this purpose, NASCOE members will be determined by individual state's self-certification received no later than

October 1 of each year. This date coincides with the date previously established by the Executive Board for determining member's eligibility for J M Marketing benefits. (Executive Board meeting September 2001.)

6. Paragraph 36 of the NASCOE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POLICIES should be revised to allow payroll deduction by individual states as authorized by the National Finance Center. Benefits exempted from this provision would be those specified in the contract with J M Marketing. Current exemptions are listed in Exhibit A of the J M Marketing Contract with NASCOE. (It does not include dental). NASCOE dues check off would not be authorized.

The Chairperson also expresses his appreciation to Randy Cook for the opportunity to serve in the capacity of National Chairperson and working with the Executive Board and other National Committee Chairperson. The time served has been rewarding and an honor to serve the NASCOE membership.



IASCOE Membership

SOME THOUGHTS

Do you receive a yearly cost of living adjustment?

Do you want to improve yourself professionally and serve agriculture better?

Do you believe that the USDA should treat all employees with fairness and equality?

Have the achievements of IASCOE/NASCOE made a difference to you and your pocketbook?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you should join this great association known as IASCOE/NASCOE.

If you have not yet joined IASCOE, you may contact the membership committee person in your district, an IASCOE director, or Denise Dugan, the membership chairperson.

RASCOE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Retired Association of State and County Office Employees

2001-2002

RASCOE is heading into the ninth year and this past year was quite successful—even if I do say so!

I was able to represent the RASCOE membership last September at St. Paul (Raddisson Riverfront) during the NASCOE organizational meeting. Thanks to NASCOE for including our retirees group in the session.

RASCOE purposes continue as put forth at the Milwaukee founding meeting. Those are to promote the welfare of association members by alignment with other organizations and by actively lobbying to maintain the integrity of our earned benefits.

Our membership increased for the year and this is good—BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH! All retirees should be concerned about issues that affect us and more could be done if ALL retirees joined the efforts that are being made through RASCOE.

Thank you to Vice President CLAYTON BRUCE; Secretary/ Treasurer LEO HOLMSTROM; Legislative Chair GENE LUTZ;

Benefits Chair CLARA RUTH SAINT; Publicity Chair DORIS STUCKY; Membership Chair BLANCHE GEORGE and Past President JULIAN THOMAN for all their efforts and support during these last two years during my presidency.

GENE LUTZ, CLAYTON BRUCE and I attended the March NASCOE legislative conference and feel that some hope is there to right the GPO/WEP legislation that was put in to affect some years ago. Follow-up is being done with those March contacts.

Hopefully all retirees will see fit to join RASCOE for the 2002-2003 year. Every current member should re-enlist and also encourage those that have not done so to date.

It's been a privilege to have served as RASCOE President these past two years and I know that your officers and committee chairs tried very hard to serve you properly.

Yours in Optimism,
Conrad D. Schepp Jr.
7/18/2002

FSA Employees are encouraged to let retired office staff know about RASCOE. Iowa's contact is Patty Sorgenfry, retiree of Jones County FSA Office. She can be reached by email at hpsorg@netins.net.

IOWA CHARM

A Poem By Barb Bombei
PT From Washington County

We come from Iowa, a land of plenty.
We've heard it said, "A land of milk and honey."
But there's much more we're proud to say.
That our folks produce and send on its way.

Corn, beans, oats and wheat:
Cows, pigs and turkeys to eat
And if you say, "that's not enough"
We have a whole line of specialty stuff.

Melons, popcorn and even some wine,
Fruits and veggies are doing just fine.
Farmer's Markets are a social event
Where words of wisdom and monies are spent.

"A Great Place To Live," we surely agree
With goldfinch and roses growing wild and free.
Whitetail deer and pheasants abound.
Our conservation practices will keep them around.

And, if you haven't been to our State Fair,
You've missed an experience beyond compare.
It's an ageless event where diversity thrives
Between urban, country, young and old lives.

But, our most prized possession would surely be
The pride we share as a community.
In the young minds we nurture and educate,
To guarantee the future of our great state.

If you have a chance to travel about,
We recommend you check us out.
The road's never long from city to farm
And both are filled with Iowa Charm.

THE NEW FARM BILL

(According to Dr. Seuss)

We've passed a new farm bill said Congress with glee.
We've worked really hard dotting I's, crossing T's.
We've done the hard part. You take it from here
All you have to do is rebuild these 4 years.

We know we can do it. We've done it before.
We'll be prepared when they come through the door.
It'll be top priority, our number one mission.
You want it done when!!?? said the program technician.

So they hauled out the folders and marked with a pen
The acres on tracts where the fields should have been.
They thought and they figured, subtraction, addition.
We'll get it done said the program technician.

I want to sign up. I want to right now
And increase my yield and my base. Tell me how.
I've got these two acres I've never reported.
It's always been grass but I want that recorded

We'll map it all out and we'll make a new farm.
We'll keep it forever, no cause for alarm.

We'll have it all ready when we get permission
We'll update your base said the program technician.

They came to work early and stayed late each night
Doing their best to get it done right
Just average people turned into magicians
They got the job done, those program technicians.

Submitted by Larry Lago – CED Dickinson County

*A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will
annoy enough people to make it worth the effort*

National Balloon Classic



The National Balloon Classic was held August 2 – 10 just east of Indianola. This year, with winds in the east almost every day, the balloons flew over Indianola and provided entertainment for the entire city.

The National Balloon Classic gathers about 100 balloonists to Indianola for 9 days of flying, fun and fellowship. Balloons are allowed to fly in the early morning and late evening each day of the Classic, weather permitting. In the mornings, between 6 & 7 a.m., pilots are given tasks to perform to earn points for the Classic's competition. A typical task will ask pilots to

drive 3 to 5 miles into the country, inflate their balloon and fly into the Balloon field, where they will attempt to drop a "Bean Bag" as close to an 'X' on the field as possible. If the winds do not switch while they are inflating, many of the pilots are able to fly directly over the field, to the delight of the spectators. This year, a pilot managed to drop his "Bean Bag" within 3 feet of the center of the X. Great flying.

Other tasks include leaving the balloon field and following the "Hare", trying to drop their "Bean Bag" as close to the "Hare" balloon as possible. Or the pilots may fly into the field and attempt to grab a ring from the top of a pole located on the balloon field.

Pilots move their balloon up or down to take advantage of the different wind directions at different altitudes, which allows them to "steer" the balloon and reach their destination. A support crew of five to eight people follow the pilot, helping to lay out the balloon, inflate it, chase it and pack the balloon making it ready for the next flight. It takes many volunteers to help the balloonists. This is a great way to get introduced to ballooning.

Each day, 40 to 60 balloons will fly allowing spectators to view the myriad of colors displayed by the balloons scattered across the deep blue sky.

Several nights during the Classic are designated as "Night-Glow" nights. Wednesday nights are labeled "Fire-In-The-Sky". Wednesday nights 40 – 50 balloons will inflate on the balloon field at dusk, adjust their burners for maximum light, and Light-Up their balloons for spectators on the field. So many balloons against the twilight sky makes for a marvelous sight.

The National Balloon Classic relies very heavily on support from our area farmers. Without permission from the farmers, it would be impossible to hold the Classic. Most farm owners allow the balloon pilots to land or take off from pastures or hay ground. Some farmers choose not to permit the pilots to land. These places are designated in Red on a map of the county, which requires the pilot to always know his location.

The National Balloon Classic is usually held the last weekend in July through the first weekend in August. Check out the Classic's website: <http://www.balloon.weather.net/> for next year's dates and make plans to attend. You will not regret it.



The National Balloon Museum is located in Indianola, Iowa. The National Balloon Museum chronicles more than 200 years of ballooning history. Visitors can browse at their leisure among the displays of balloon envelopes, inflators, gondolas, and other instruments, which demonstrate the actual equipment used in both hot air ballooning and gas ballooning. If you have not had a chance to visit the museum you will find many facts about the history of ballooning. For more information check out the Museum's web address at: <http://www.balloon.weather.net/museum.htm>

I received this e-mail and thought we could all apply this to our lives.
Rosalyn Kahl – PT Lyon County

WHO I AM MAKES A DIFFERENCE

A teacher in New York decided to honor each of her seniors in high school by telling them the difference they each made. She called each student to the front of the class, one at a time. First she told each of them how they had made a difference to her and the class.

Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters, which read “Who I Am Makes a Difference”.

Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this acknowledgment ceremony. Then they were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom, and report back to the class in about a week.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. Then he gave him two extra ribbons and said, “We’re doing a class project on recognition, and we’d like you to go out and find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra blue ribbon so they can acknowledge a third person to keep this acknowledgment ceremony going. Then please report back to me and tell me what happened.”

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his boss, who had been noted, by the way, as being a kind of a grouchy fellow. He sat his boss down and he told him that he deeply admired him for being a creative genius.

The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon and would he give him permission to put it on him. His surprised boss said, “Well, sure.” The junior executive took the blue ribbon and placed it right on his boss’s jacket above his heart.

As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, “Would you do me a favor? Would you take this ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school and we want to keep this recognition ceremony going and find out how it affects people.”

That night the boss came home to his 14- year-old son and sat him down. He said, “The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the junior executives came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I’m a creative genius. The he put this blue ribbon that says: “Who I Am Makes a Difference” on my jacket above my heart. He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you.

I want to honor you. My days are really hectic and when I come home I don’t pay a lot of attention to you. Sometimes I scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess, but somehow tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You’re a great kid and I love you!” The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he couldn’t stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, “Dad, earlier tonight I sat in my room and wrote a letter to you and Mom explaining why I had killed myself and asking you to forgive me. I was going to commit suicide tonight after you were asleep. I just didn’t think you cared at all. The letter is upstairs. I don’t think I need it after all.”

His father walked upstairs and found a letter full of anguish and pain. The envelope was addressed, “Mom and Dad.”

The boss went back to work a changed man. He was no longer a grouch, but made sure to let all his employees know that they made a difference. The junior executive helped several other young people with career planning and never forgot to let them know that they made a difference in his life...one being the boss’s son.

And the young boy and his classmates learned a valuable lesson. Who you are DOES make a difference.

**WHO YOU ARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE,
AND I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT!**

MAGICAL MADISON COUNTY

Yep, that's us.... The magic of Madison County can be found throughout the whole county. The small town of Peru can boast of being the home of the original Delicious Apple. We have five beautiful covered bridges remaining out of the original 19 that spanned Madison County waters. All are on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Cedar Covered Bridge which became popular due to the book and movie "The Bridges of Madison County" and hosted the Oprah Winfrey Show, was recently lost to an arson fire and is currently closed until it is decided what to do (as in rebuilding the bridge). The skeletal remains are still there for viewing if anyone wants to pay last respects. Imes Covered Bridge built in 1870 is the oldest bridge. Cutler-Donahoe is the bridge in Winterset City Park. Hogback Covered Bridge still rests in its original location. Holliwell Covered Bridge is the longest of the bridges at 122 feet (also called the floating bridge) and the most famous of the Bridges is Roseman (the haunted bridge) also known as Francesca's Bridge.

If bridges aren't your thing, how about a tour of John Wayne's birthplace here in Winterset. I was amazed at the memorabilia collected and shown here including his eye patch from the movie True Grit. Listed among the famous visitors to his childhood home are his family members and former President Ronald Regan.

John Wayne not your thing but you like houses? We have several homes in

Winterset on the National Historic Register including the Kayser-Bevington House at the Madison County Historical Complex. This one even has a stone "privey" with a polished walnut THREE HOLER seat and it's even on the National Register! And speaking of houses, who could resist a tour of Francesca's House propped as it was for the movie "The Bridges of Madison County". You can sit at the yellow Formica kitchen table, wander Francesca's bedroom and even have your picture taken with your Sweetie in THE bathtub. Just think what an interesting Christmas card you could send with that picture on the front!

Fall is one of the most beautiful times to visit Madison County with its vast timbered areas. And what would be more fun than to come to the Covered Bridge Festival at Winterset the second full weekend in October. (for you more slow with the calendar that will be October 11 – 14 this year.) There are enough craft booths, quilt shows, antique options and clothing booths to satisfy every woman's heart. AND there are enough food booths that you guys can graze all day!

We would love to have you come visit us... and if you need directions to any of these magical places or other information just give us a call. We might even be able to arrange a personal tour for you.

Connie Kinser and the gang at the
Magical Madison County FSA

Villages of Van Buren County

Submitted by Dee Lehn - COT From Jefferson County

Bentonsport, Bonaparte, Cantril, Farmington and Keosauqua are the quaint small towns that together create the Villages of Van Buren County. Each has its own unique history and stories to share.

A wonderful opportunity to explore the villages arises each fall on the second full weekend in October. Every year Van Buren County hosts the Forest Craft/Scenic Drive Festival. Visitors not only enjoy a spectacular display of fall foliage along the Des Moines River, but can view the creations of wood carvers, wildlife artists, furniture makers and chain saw artists at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. The buck skinners set up camp in the park demonstrating their backwoods skills and lumberjack competitions are held throughout the weekend.

Professional and beginning artists will have displays at Bentonsport's historic district. This village was thriving when the state of Iowa was born and still retains that atmosphere of years gone by. Visitors have a chance to try their hand at traditional crafts like dipping candles and making bricks.

Bonaparte and Cantril offer flea Markets and craft Shows. Cantril is also the home of the Dutchman's store, an old-fashioned country store, and the Wickfield Sales Pavilion, a 3-story barn built in 1918.

Take a step back in time and travel through the scenic world of Villages of Van Buren County.

Contribute To The Next IASCOE Newsletter

If you have any stories, photos, jokes, quotes, or information that you would like to include in the next IASCOE Newsletter, send them to Tammy Eibey at tammy.eibey@ia.usda.gov.

THE PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

PART FIVE

By Roseanne Woerner
PT From Wapello County

Visit our
website at
www.iascoe.org
for the first four
parts of "The
Perils of Polly PT"

It's 10:00 am, and I have thoroughly convinced myself that I don't really want to measure bins after all. I'm afraid of heights, I don't like dust, and I have no idea what all those little marks on the tape measure stand for, which in my opinion, marks me for certain failure. I would gladly say as much to Stevie, but he and Gracie Lumpkis have been huddled together in his office, talking about the new DCP program for quite some time, so I haven't had the chance.

Gracie is a fussy woman, with short, gray hair and twinkling eyes. She wears good perfume and gobs of makeup that she applies with a skilled, artistic flair. Her purse and shoes always match and her clothing bears the scent of a ritzy department store.

It is 10:30 when Stevie and Gracie exit his office. Stevie says, "Let's have a staff meeting in the conference room, since everyone's here."

Gracie heads toward the conference room, loaded down with all kinds of stuff, like papers and tablets and pencils. She also has a big bag of treats, so I offer to help carry something, in hopes that she'll double my ration. She hands me a stack of calculators.

My stomach does a tumble as soon as I take them from her. "What are these things for?" I ask.

"We're going to go over a couple of DCP forms," she says.

"The DCP forms require math?"

"That's right," Gracie tells me.

"But I'm no good at math," I say.

She nods at the stack I am carrying.

"That's why I'm giving everyone a calculator."

"But I can't do calculator math either."

She's walking slightly faster than me and I get the feeling that she's not in the mood to answer a lot of questions, which might put us in the same boat because I'm not in the mood to work on my math skills.

"The bad news is, you have to do it, whether you want to or not," she says. "And the good news is, you'll be a lot better at math by the end of the day."

I heave a sigh, a really big one because that's what I do when I'm trying to be especially dramatic. "Won't the computer figure this stuff?"

"It will," she says. "But if you don't do it manually first, you won't grasp the concept."

By now we are all assembled around the conference table. "I'm not a real good concept grasper anyway," I say. "I volunteer to head up the forms and then watch really close while everyone else figures them."

"Polly," Stevie says. "You're whining again."

"I know," I tell him. "Is it working?"

"No," he says and he motions for Gracie to begin.

"Wait a minute," I say. "Can I have a treat first?"

Everyone at the table gives me a steely-eyed look, in unison. I am thinking it's probably because, with the exception of myself, no one else in the room is a morning person.

"I can't help it," I tell them. "I didn't have breakfast this morning, so now I'm really hungry and I just know I'll concentrate so much better if I have a little something in my stomach."

Stevie sighs. He grabs the bag and pulls out a handful of tiny, foil-wrapped,

chocolate treats. He throws me a couple and hoards five or six for himself, however, good manners stops me from making a point of this, even though I know that one of us is obviously going to be shorted if this is how he intends to divide the remainder of the bag.

“Okay,” Gracie says. “I’m giving you all a couple of worksheets that I’d like to review, but first I want to tell you some of the basics. The producers are going to have five base options. Very few people will choose option one and three and if they choose option number four,

which we’ll refer to as updating, they’ll have three yield options. I know this sounds overwhelming, but it’s really not as hard as it seems, once you get onto it.”

I raise my hand and say, “Wait a minute, I have a question.”

Gracie sighs. “What is it Polly?”

I look at Stevie. “I’d just like to say that heights don’t bother me a bit and all of a sudden, measuring bins seems like a piece of cake. How soon can I start?”

TO BE CONTINUED...



Essential additions for today's workplace vocabulary

BLAMESTORMING: Sitting around in a group, discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.

CUBE FARM: An office filled with cubicles

PRAIRIE DOGGING: When someone yells or drops something loudly in a cube farm, and people's heads pop up over the walls to see what's going on.

MOUSE POTATO: The on-line, wired generation's answer to the couch potato.

STRESS PUPPY: A person who seems to thrive on being stressed out and whiney.

SWIPEOUT: An ATM or credit card that has been rendered useless because the magnetic strip is worn away from extensive use.

XEROX SUBSIDY: Euphemism for swiping free photocopies from one's workplace.

IRRITAINMENT: Entertainment and media spectacles that are annoying but you find yourself unable to stop watching them. The O.J. trials were a prime example.

PERCUSSIVE MAINTENANCE: The fine art of whacking the heck out of an electronic device to get it to work again.

OHNOSECOND: That minuscule fraction of time in which you realize that you've just made a BIG mistake