

IASCOE

The Iowa Association Of FSA County Office Employees

OCTOBER 2014



2013/2014 IASCOE OFFICERS

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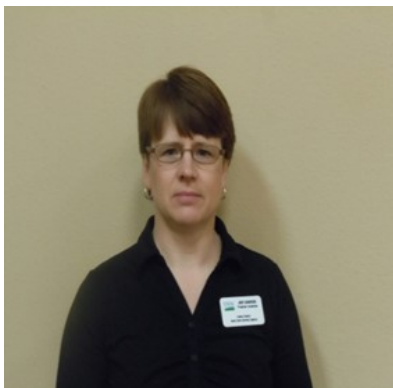
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1 Director Alternate	Karen LaCour, Dickinson Samantha Erie, Pocahontas	Les Zobrist, Clay Larry Lago, Dickinson
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3 Director Alternate	Andrea Carroll, Clayton Megan Koenigs, Howard	Curt Goettsch, Howard Heidi Nickol, Delaware
4 Director Alternate	Michelle Bruck, Shelby Cathleen Borst, Carroll	Steve Luke, Shelby Pat Warmbier, Harrison
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6 Director Alternate	Joni Birkhofer, Muscatine Renee Schultz, Cedar	Kris Koth, Jones Randy Madsen, Muscatine/Scott
7 Director Alternate	Jennifer Comer, Page Monica Robinson, Cass	Cindy Bebout, Fremont/Mills Chris Irvin, Page
8 Director Alternate	Keith Wheeler, Madison Ronda Harrison, Lucas	Daniel Curry, Ringgold
9 Director Alternate	Judy Dameron, Louisa Deanna Rood, Mahaska	Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk Gretchen McLain, Jefferson



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BENEFITS CHAIR – Dee Lehn

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2	David Stromer	Hancock
3	Adriana Foxen	Buchanan
4	Pat Warmbier	Harrison
5	Teresa Simonton	Poweshiek
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2014 Awards & Scholarship Committee



2014 Publicity Committee



2014 Legislative and benefits Committee



2014 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



A Message from our State Executive Director

We are involved in the business of agriculture. Yes, I have heard it said many times that government is not needed in agriculture but to those who say that; I would remind them that we are a food secure nation. We can produce enough food to feed ourselves.

As I think about our involvement in agriculture and food security, I realize that five years can be a very long time.

Sometimes when markets are rapidly declining, five days can be a very long time! Those times when the Markets rapidly decline are the times when FSA and you, the dedicated staff of FSA really shine. The thing is, none of us know the direction the markets will take and that includes us at FSA.

Producers are going to have many important choices in the new Farm Bill and those choices can affect their financial outlook for the next five years. They do not have the opportunity to change programs after the election process deadline. We will give our producers accurate information of how the programs operate, I am very confident in that. What producers do with that accurate information will be up to them.

We must encourage our producers to utilize all of the educational tools available to them, particularly the Extension Service. We should remind them that this is a long term decision that stays on that farm until the next Farm Bill is signed into law.

John Whitaker
State Executive Director



2013-2014 IASCOE President



What a year this has been, the challenges we face within our agency keep growing. Just as it has seemed that we have climbed to the top of the mountain we see another in the distance that is even taller. Let's look at some positive aspects of this. Workload with this new farm bill is definitely not a worry. What makes the climb a challenging one is the lack of resources that we have been afforded to complete the mission.

This year sure has been a challenging one in which we have seen compounded deadlines, extended deadlines, and near impossible feats in that we have been expected to complete. Seems like my motto has become, "We just have to keep taking things one deadline at a time and we will get done what work we can." In

times like these it is important for people to make sure that they are taking care of themselves as best as they can both physically and mentally.

Last month was the 55th NASCOE National Convention in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The great state of Oklahoma and OKASCOE were tremendous host. It is always good to see members of our NASCOE family from all over this great nation. Some of the happenings in Oklahoma include me being elected to serve on the NASCOE Executive Board as the Midwest Area Executive Committee Person. With this new role I am charged with the task of representing eight states that make up the Midwest area. Those states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. I am proud of the job we do. Proud to serve the people we serve. I honor the opportunity to serve you on the NASCOE Board. Chris Hare from Indiana was voted on the NASCOE Board as my Alternate director. I feel that Chris and I make an excellent team and I look forward to serving as MWA Exec this upcoming year.

With my new role I have the opportunity to travel beyond our state bounds and meet many new people. A common question that I get is what has IASCOE/NASCOE done for me? Why should I keep paying my dues? I am always glad when asked this question because it gives me another opportunity to tell our story. There are many positive things that come from the work and effort that NASCOE has expended.

- Back to having regular COC meetings.
- Ag appropriation funding S&E's at a higher level than the proposed president's budget.
- Hiring freeze lifted.
- Employee ceilings staying the same or going up.
- Temporary Office employees available.
- New permanent employees hired nationwide.
- 1% COLA
- The ability to give TOA reinstated.
- Employee associations having representation on national task force.

These are all examples of positive changes that IASCOE has helped NASCOE accomplish over the past year. IASCOE has made a difference! NASCOE has made a difference!

As we move forward into the next year, we should remember that even last year at this time we were concerned if a new farm bill would bring us enough work. We can thank congress that they still count on us heavily to administer and deliver programs to the farmers and ranchers of this great country, that feed the world. I think all of you agree that we have plenty of work to do. We all need to soak up all the training we can on all the programs and deliver them at the highest level possible, our farmers deserve the best. NASCOE will continue to work for funding for the necessary staffing to administer all of our programs.

If you ever have any questions about what the agency or association is doing to represent you please feel free to contact either myself or a director. One thing to remember is that IASCOE/NASCOE is looking out for all FSA employees no matter where you are from. If you want to know something, just ask, there is no such thing as a dumb question.

Until next time.

Curt M. Houk
IASCOE President

2013-2014 IASCOE Vice-President

Its official, Iowa will host the 2016 NASCOE National Convention in Cedar Rapids, IA. Last month a group of members from Iowa traveled to Oklahoma City for the 55th NASCOE National Convention. Part of going was to present Iowa's bid to host in 2016. We worked with Cedar Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Iowa State Visitors Bureau and the Iowa Pork Producers Association to host a booth in Oklahoma City to provide information to the attendees and voting delegates about why Iowa is the best choice for the 2016 NASCOE National Convention.



On Friday afternoon, I and Sarah Tarnowski, Director of Convention Sales for Cedar Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, presented Iowa's bid package to host in 2016. The NASCOE Board was blown away, in fact they even stated that they had not seen a bid package this well presented ever. That is a testament to the IASCOE Board and IASCOE members who have helped with in this bid process. After all we have only been working on this for over two years. We got the news Saturday morning that the delegates voted unanimously for Iowa to host the 2016 NASCOE National Convention in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Throughout our time in Oklahoma City we got tons of positive feedback from many states, which are very excited to come to Iowa in August of 2016. Now the real work begins and we will need lots of help from every county in Iowa. If you would like to help or have questions about how to help, by all means give me a call at 319-290-6339. There are many ways to help, maybe you just want to help the week of the convention, great we have a job for you. Maybe you want to be a bit more involved, we have that too. Just get in contact with me or any of your IASCOE Board members and we will figure out a way we can get you involved.

Want to get a chance to see the hotel that will host the 2016 NASCOE National Convention, come to the IASCOE State Convention, March 27th & 28th in Cedar Rapids and explore the newly opened DoubleTree by Hilton and Cedar Rapids Convention Complex. Our theme for this year will be Mardi Gras "Let the Good Times Roll". We have set up a website for members to book their rooms at \$86.00 per night. That rate is good for 3 days before & after our meeting, so if anyone wants to stay for the weekend you can. The link to book rooms: <http://goo.gl/3rAqdu>

You are always welcome to voice a concern, comment, idea or question to your IASCOE directors, President or Vice-President. We can only gauge what the feeling is in Iowa on topics, based on what you tell us. We share these things often with the SED and the NASCOE leadership. Curt Houk and I met with the SED last at ARC/PLC training on September 22nd. One of the topics covered in that meeting was the looming CRP September 30th deadline and what could be done to help out offices that may not make that deadline. The organization is only as good as its members and we all have something to contribute. Let us know how we can help you. Together we will make a difference.

Curtis Goettsch
curt.goettsch@gmail.com

2014 NATIONAL CONVENTION IN OKLAHOMA CITY

The NASCOE convention is not only a great time, but an opportunity for you to hear from “those guys in DC” that we are always referring to. The days are full of meetings, information and opportunities to bring our concerns to the attention of those people who just may be able to do something about it.

Thursday morning’s agenda was packed with many special guests. Juan Garcia (FSA Administrator) talked to us about the Vision Statement - “Transform into a More Diverse and Innovative Agency”. This vision points towards concentrating on people (the customer and the employee), the process and the technology. He informed us about the Task Force that looked at the impacts of the Farm Bill, the customer self-service portal, MIDAS, IT modernization and the workload model to name a few. The data from the Employee Viewpoint Survey will be reviewed carefully and items of concern will be addressed.

Greg Diephouse, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, informed us that we have already issued \$2 billion dollars in payments for the Livestock Feed Disaster Program. In NE, KS, OK, TX and MO 27,000 appointments are on the books waiting to complete an application. More than 62,000 people are waiting for appointments to be scheduled. Greg said the agency continues to seek employees to detail to those areas to assist with applications.

The Secretary of Agriculture views FSA’s foot-print as an asset and wants to see us do more. Bridges of Opportunity is the concept that would make us a referral point for other agencies. We would possibly have a data-base for all other agencies so that we can refer individuals to the proper agency that can assist them, have fact sheets on hand from other agencies, be ready to assist beginning farmers in finding all assistance possibilities and help with the ag labor portion of Immigration Reform. All of these are “potential” areas of expanding FSA’s areas of service.

MIDAS UPDATE: The Farm Records System was the first step of MIDAS. The next will be Business Partner which will allow us to update information at any office which should allow us to automate current manual processes and improve accuracy. The design is complete and is being tested with an anticipated December roll-out. Acreage reporting is a Farm Bill requirement and will be the next step in MIDAS after Business Partner, the final step in MIDAS will address customer self-service. MIDAS is an important aspect of our operations and we need to move forward and get it finalized. The decision to put new programs on an old system was not welcomed by Congress, but with constant changes it is difficult to utilize MIDAS.

Hunter Moorhead, from Crossroads Strategies, is our NASCOE Legislative Consultant. Hunter continues to work hard in DC to keep us informed of those things which would affect our agency and its employees. Some of his comments were:

13,600 Lobbyists in DC and we represent 9 of them. Let Hunter know of anything you have a concern with-follow the lead of the NASCOE Execs, be ahead of the game.

Now hiring 400 new people because we have worked with Juan Garcia and he understands the issues. Congress appropriated additional money because NASCOE pointed out that the \$60 million decrease would not allow us to do the tasks we have been assigned.

Other agencies had greater cuts than FSA; we were able to keep FSA cuts not so deep due to our diligence and the fact that we work directly with the agency leaders

Discretionary spending will not balance the budget, we have to address programs

FSA remains a pillar of efficiency, there are many things that can be eliminated before S & E is adjusted

PAC is very important so we can have a seat at the policy table and the campaign table

The afternoon began with meetings of the National Committees; Benefits, Awards, Scholarships and Emblems, Legislative, Membership, NAFEC, Programs and Publicity. After the general session each area has a meeting to discuss the information we received from the National Committees.

Friday morning is our opportunity to ask questions directly to individuals from Washington face-to-face. Juan Garcia (FSA Administrator), Greg Diephouse (Deputy Administrator for Field Operations), Heidi Ware (Deputy Director of OBF and Acting CFO, and Craig Timm (the representative for Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs) were just a few on the panel. Of course there were many questions; some could be answered, some had no answer and others would be referred on.

Q: Mark VanHoose, NASCOE President, addressed the fact that we have too many changes too fast and is there a plan for office closures. Also, Handbook updates are way behind regulation changes.

A: The Secretary of Agriculture says there will not be any office closures in FY 2015, but it is budget driven. The handbooks that you are referring to, we need to identify which ones we are talking about. Management agrees that we are dealing with too many changes, too fast.

Q: If a CED is a grade 12 in the county office then becomes shared management how can that CED managing two offices still be at a 12? If CED was a 9 and gets 2 offices he goes to a 10, if he/she is an 11 and gets 2 offices the CED becomes a 12.

A: Maybe NASCOE needs to make a request to DC inquiring about a grade 13 CED position in those instances.

Q: MIDAS- when can we expect our system to be 100% acceptable; not slow, timing out etc.

A: We are in an environment where the agency is not responsible for connection issues. Hearing direct contact from the county offices encourages them to address these issues.

Q: Will there be a national directive for those who have excess leave to roll that leave to calendar year 2015?

A: Greg Diephouse said there has not been any thought on that yet. State Directors have the discretion in October for leave carryover.

Q: Acreage Reporting Inventory

A: RMA acreage reporting process is similar to ours, but common data terms are different. We are working on establishing a common model. The Farm Bill is very specific in regards to RMA. CARS stopped going to MIDAS in order to evaluate RMA/FSA issues.

Q: What purpose does ARS serve? It takes too much time to complete with multiple activities.

A: In addition to determining our workload needs it is used to get reimbursable funding from other agencies.

Q: The workload formula; new staff takes much longer to complete tasks. Does this workload formula take that into account? Also, not including NASCOE in the discussions was a mistake.

A: No concrete answer for new staff and additional time takes to complete tasks. The SED's were brought in to expedite the process instead of NASCOE to somehow get the workload project done.

These are just a few of the questions asked at this session. One individual, Calvin Johnson from Arizona, spoke to the panel with great passion for his Navajo Indian customers (95% of his county are Navajo Indians). He started out with the statement; this is not a question but a request for action. He pointed out that his customers do not have internet, many do not speak or read English and live many miles from his office. He travels many miles to take the FSA message to them and has to add pictures of cattle etc to the newsletter so that they know the newsletter is from the FSA office. We can't make all communication methods the same for everyone, it just does not work. Everyone in the audience was pleased to have this point made. The panel indicated they would take his concerns to DC for discussion. In the afternoon we had area meetings and NASCOE committee meetings.

Saturday morning began with a memoriam slide-show for fellow NASCOE members who have passed away in the last year. After the reports from the meetings the vote for the 2016 Convention site was announced. IOWA will be the site for the 2016 Convention!! Let the planning begin!!!

I encourage all of you to consider attending a National Convention, it's truly a great experience to share several days with many who have the same concerns and experiences that you have. You will have a great opportunity to be a part of the convention in 2016. We are looking forward to showing the nation what Iowa is all about and just what a great place we live in.!

Submitted by:

Cindy Pistek



OKLAHOMA CITY ROAD TRIP!

Yes, we do like a road trip-especially when we are headed to a NASCOE Convention. How much stuff does Mary Robert's suburban hold- A LOT!! Dee Lehn, Joni Birkhofer, Judy Dameron and Cindy Pistek climbed in with Mary and headed south. The drive through Kansas showed us cattle, corn, hay, pasture and as we got closer to Oklahoma, oil fields.

As we came closer to our destination we headed to a SAM's club, flashed our SAM's card at the door and grabbed a cart. Since we were bidding for the 2016 NASCOE National Convention we had to host a Hospitality Room on Wednesday and Thursday night. Mary was cruising down the snack aisle and something caught her eye – a BIG jar of spicy, pickled sausages right next to the pickled eggs. She quickly took a photo and sent it to Judy – can I buy them, please? We all thought they looked disgusting, but if Mary wanted to buy them who are we to argue? Mary was convinced that they would be a big hit in the hospitality room and we thought she would have to eat them all! After packing the suburban to the max with our luggage and all of the hospitality goodies, we made our way to our hotel and prepared to unpack. OMG, did we really have all of that in the vehicle (oh yeah, I forgot we had a carrier on the receiver hitch with a small fridge and a large cooler to give us some more room)!!!

On Wednesday morning we were up and ready for the Ag Tour. We went to the EXPRESS Ranch and learned about their famous pure-bred Angus operation as well as their Clydesdale horses. Our second stop was at the Stockyards, one of only two in the United States still fully operational. During our full-course meal we learned about the history of the Stockyards and how it operates today. The meal started out with an appetizer of calf fries, featured a good steak and ended with home-made pie. Next stop; Braum's Dairy. Braum's Dairy is an operation that does everything from producing the feed for the cows to shipping their dairy products to their own "market" stores! We were able to tour the dairy processing plant and their bakery to learn about the production of their own ice cream, cottage cheese, breads and cookies (to name a few). Once the products are packaged they are shipped to their own markets for sale. The markets are all located within 300 miles of the plant so the drivers can be home with their families at night. After the tour we were treated to ice cream bars and they sent fresh cookies home with us on the bus.

Once we returned from our tour it was a scramble to put together the hospitality room and showcase our IOWA hospitality. Remember those spicy pickled sausages Mary bought? She was right- they were a hit with many, but not everyone could bring themselves to try them. In fact on Thursday night certain individuals were very disappointed when they were gone. Score one for Mary; we now have a new "signature" food!!

Wednesday evening was the Get-Acquainted Masquerade Party. IASCOE members are known for their willingness to fully participate in activities and we did NOT disappoint! Did you know that Bob Braden is a make-up artist? Bob is Iowa's NAFEC (National Association of Farmer Elected Committee) representative and really has a knack for face paint! Thankful for his talent, we were able to get to the ball on time. Guess who arrived at the party, do you recognize them? KISS entered the room and gave a "rock concert" to the audience (the DJ helped us out with a great KISS song). Sonny and Cher treated everyone to one of their famous hits "I Got You Babe". The evening was a great time, especially since many of our friends did not recognize us!! Well, the day had been a great one and Thursday the convention would convene at 8:30 am sharp--time to "hit the hay".

After a full day of meetings on Thursday, hosting the hospitality room and cleaning up we were on our own and several of us took a trip to Bricktown- an area full of restaurants, shopping and entertainment all within walking distance. What to do after a dinner of ribs – find a place filled with FSA employees enjoying the evening. It certainly wasn't difficult to figure that out as we walked by Michael Murphy's Dueling Piano Bar-it's a Thursday and the place is PACKED!! The music was unbelievable as we threw in our requests, including a piano play-off between two rival football teams and a pair of fellow employees doing the Macarena on stage. A farewell serenade to Juan Garcia (sitting in the audience enjoying the entertainment) and a MIDAS notation written on the window by the pianist let everyone know that FSA was in the house!

On Friday morning our Vice-President, Curt Goettsch, along with a representative from the Doubletree by Hilton Convention Complex in Cedar Rapids gave a brief pitch for our proposed site for the convention. We are all excited for this opportunity and had our fingers crossed for success in winning the bid.

Friday night we were all treated to a Wild West Night at Remington Park, to watch the horse races and raise money for scholarships with our annual auction. Horse racing was a whole new experience, but of course we were up for the challenge. We had a scientific way of choosing the winners- the horse's name, the jockey's name or where they were from. Oh yeah, I guess we were supposed to look at the odds, but what fun is that? The auctioneer was a very funny man who managed to get some very good money for the items everyone brought. Iowa brought our Templeton Rye for the auction which made a nice contribution to the cause. Someone made a quilt using NASCOE t-shirts, that item was a big hit bringing \$1200! After the auction, dancing and music went on until midnight.

Saturday morning was the vote for the 2016 NASCOE Convention. The vote was called and IOWA was the winner!! Let the fun begin.

The suburban was ready to pack up and hit the road at noon on Saturday. The evening banquet, awards presentations and dance just wasn't in the cards for Judy, Joni, Cindy, Dee and Mary. What – leave without going to a Braum's Dairy Market for one of their famous burgers and ice cream, no way! We pulled into the market for lunch, those ice cream shakes were the best, and headed home.

The week of convention was a great experience full of new friends, old friends, information, new experiences and exhaustion. Next year it's on to Wisconsin for 2015, its close by and we would love to have you along. In 2016 we all look forward to hosting our friends across the United States in Cedar Rapids and can't wait to share the experience with all of you!!!

Submitted by
Cindy Pistek



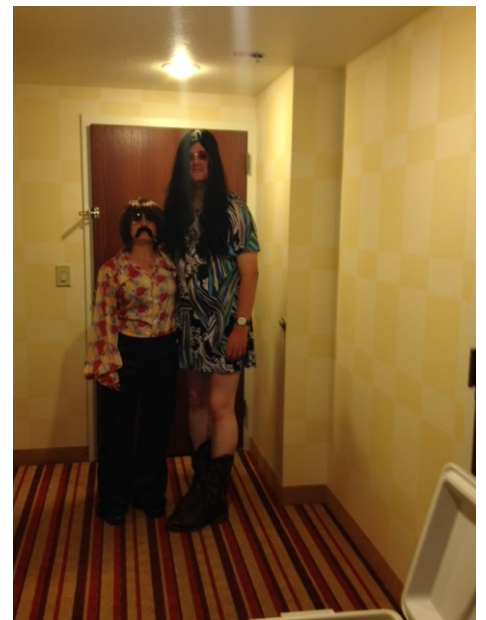
Braum's Dairy Truck



KISS



Purebred Angus at Express Ranch



Sonny & Cher



Bricktown in Oklahoma City



Remington Park





Ag Connections

By: Allison Vavroch

Many of us have agricultural ties that reach far beyond the office and the producers we serve whether we grew up on a farm or it was introduced later in life. Sue Birker is a program technician in Benton County. Her programs include ARC/PLC, livestock disaster, and MPP. She worked as a temporary from 1986-1989, came back for disaster in 1993 and has been full-time since 2009. What Sue enjoys most about working for FSA is the diversity that each day brings and seeing the producers.

Sue grew up a town girl but married Ken, a farm boy in 1977 and has lived the farm life ever since. Sue and her family are involved in many different facets of agriculture. She has three grown sons who are all a part of this operation. They run a 325 head dairy operation, have around 200 beef cows, custom chop, row crop farm and have acres upon acres of hay. Sue spent many years being actively involved in the Benton County Dairy Producers. Ken has sat on many boards throughout the years and currently serves as a director on the Dairy Farmers of America Board.

Her favorite part of living on the farm and being able to raise her family there is that it instills great work ethic in kids and you all have the opportunity to work together. She loves that her six grandchildren enjoy feeding the calves and coming to play at the farm.

The biggest change she has seen in agriculture since moving to the farm is the use of technology in all areas of their operation and how large the equipment has gotten and the improvements and efficiencies with that. Her boys will be 4th generation farmers and she hopes the future of agriculture will provide opportunities for all young farmers.



24th Annual Gary Brewer Memorial Golf Tournament

By: Mike Praska

Neither rain, nor sleet, nor cold or even the occasional look to the sky for a snow flake could bring down the dedicated participants of the 24th annual golf tournament. The event was held at the Willow Creek Golf Course on the Southside of Des Moines on Friday September 12, 2014. There were many levels of representation at the event from all across USDA. Participants included state office personal, county office personal, currently employed and retired FSA & NRCS staff, district directors, FLM's, FLO's and even a few spouses.



Left: Centered in the picture is this year's tournament organizer Justin Bahnsen from Polk/Dallas County giving words of encouragement to his teammates; on the left from Hamilton County is Travis Moore; and on the right is Chris Hare from Indiana. Chris is NASCOE Midwest Area Alternate Executive Committee person



Above Right: NASCOE Midwest Area Executive Committeeperson and current IASCOE president- Curt Houk attempts a long putt for par. He is getting encouragement from John Bahnsen of Floyd County sporting his Iowa gear and Retired CED Kevin Fitzpatrick with the red and gold in the background.

During the event there are a few holes that have competitions at them and the categories were longest Putt, longest Drive and closest to the pin. Longest Drive was won by Chris Denham spouse of Wendi Denham of Mahaska County. Closest to the pin was Joe Ferguson from Boone County and the longest putt went to Chris Hare's team.



Judy Dameron lines up to show off her skills on her short game.



Left: in the T box is Mary Roberts form Calhoun County. Right: is Mike (poncho) Praska from Adams / Union County with another unsuccessful attempt at putting.

Below—The Winning Team left to right: Paul Hodnefield from Hardin County, Andy Hunziker from Boone, Karla Novotny from Tama County, Tom Abbas from Hamilton and Joe Ferguson from Boone County



Though it may have rained all throughout the morning it did not dampen the spirit of the game. It is always fun to see everyone from around the state and discuss happenings across the agencies. The day ended with prizes and a meal at the club house of burgers, beans, chips and all the fixings'. Next year will be the 25th Annual Gary Brewer Memorial Golf Tournament hosted by the winning team of this year's event and we hope to see you there.

Wide –Eyed Adventures of a Small Town Iowa Girl

By Heidi Nickol

I consider myself a small town Iowa girl. I grew up in Dyersville, Iowa, home of the Field of Dreams, Ertl Toys, and the great concoction of chicken and dressing ‘samwiches’. As a child, I spent my summers living on the softball diamond, in the corn fields doing ‘full pull’ detasseling or swimming off Indian Joe on Lake Delhi. I escaped Iowa for college and ventured so far as to the Twin Cities, 5 hours away from home to endure massive amounts of snow on a daily basis, only to graduate and return to the rolling fields of Eastern Iowa. I have seen almost every state west and south of Iowa over the years, during childhood excursions my mother blessed us with, where I rode in the middle of the back seat between two brothers who dealt out punishments each time a part of my body slipped into their side of the seat. I have always enjoyed the scenery, culture and history. As an adult, I have traveled to tropical islands to partake of the plentiful drinks and blister-inducing sun rays from which there is no escape. Yet no trip I have taken would prepare this small town Iowa girl for the awe inspiring, majesty of Washington, D.C., our Nation’s Capital.

In August of 2014, I was blessed with the opportunity to participate in a “Train the Trainer” session for the Margin Protection Program which was being conducted in Washington, D.C. The entire experience was one of the most enlightening, motivating, and humbling experiences I have ever had. From the sightseeing, to the effective training sessions, I was ecstatic to be selected.

First, I will discuss the training itself. As a county office employee, I often feel very far removed from the National Office and our Legislators that create the many bills we implement at the grass roots level. I thoroughly love my job and like to think I perfect it to the best of my abilities with the tools I am given, including a not so shabby noggin. By the time we were in the training sessions, the team that had met to teach us the program had been meeting for 6 weeks to roll out the MPP. They basically took 3 pages from the bill and wrote the program for the county office. It was amazing to me that they picked each line apart to form software, our handbook, and training for the entire nation. When I envisioned policy being written and the handbooks being composed, I pictured attorneys with white hair, spectacles, and exceptional pedigrees completing the job. (I know, silly, right?) Instead, the team was comprised of State Office Specialists, CEDs just like me, National Office Specialists, Program Technicians, and attorneys, all ranging in ages from 30 – 60 years old, from Texas to Wisconsin. It was eye opening to see they were just like us, discussing, debating, seeking our input on how policy should be, and showing special respect and earnest interest in what we as county employees thought.

When we weren’t diligently working, the opportunity arose to complete some sightseeing. As much as I could go on and on about the training, and the numerous monuments I was able to see, I want to talk about one particular sight that will forever be embedded in my mind. Arlington National Cemetery.

Arlington National Cemetery is breath taking, heart wrenching, humbling, awe inspiring and visually overwhelming. I come from a military family, so I have nothing but respect for the sacrifices our military families sign up to endure. So, visiting Arlington was a must for me. Seeing rows and rows and rows....of tombstones took my breath away.

There are over 300,000 people buried at Arlington Cemetery, including 2 presidents, 3600 former slaves and numerous 5 star generals. Knowing that all these people died for our flag, and for the colors on that flag, so that I may live a free life and enjoy my meager career at FSA flushes me with indebtedness.

We made it just in time to see the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I am so grateful we did. Guards are changed every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. The sheer dedication this position requires is mind boggling! Requirements of the guard include, living in barracks below the tomb, vow of silence for the first 6 months of duty, memorization of name and location of 168 notable people buried at Arlington, 5 hours a day in uniform preparation, and no alcohol or swearing for the rest of his life. During his walk across the tomb, the guard takes 21 steps, pauses for 21 seconds and switches directions. The 21 steps and seconds alludes to the 21 gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary. As I watched the guard walk so smoothly, so effortlessly, the pride I felt for my country was overpowering, but most importantly, I felt a deep love and respect for the guard in particular. Military men see his position as a coveted position of honor, I see it as such a wonderful sacrifice and intense discipline for one's country and fallen heroes.

There were many more stops along the way during my week in Washington, D.C. I saw the Lincoln Memorial, the WWII Memorial, the Vietnam Wall, the Jefferson Monument, and the White House. Every building, including the USDA Building was massive and majestic. It is hard to believe how old things are there and yet still standing with reverence. The people continue to flock to our Nation's Capital. I was particularly impressed with how many foreigners were touring our monuments. To see other nations show such interest in our beloved Democracy brought me such deep satisfaction and pride.

It is my deepest hope that more opportunities like this arise for not only me, but for my coworkers as well. I really feel each employee should have the experience to see where our policies come from and whose face goes with the names on the notices we see. Having seen this other aspect to the agency, away from the county office level, was motivating and enlightening for me. If anyone is ever asked to partake in National training, I hope they jump at the chance and I hope they are blessed to have national training in Washington, D.C. to get the full effect!

Recently celebrating my ten year anniversary with the agency, I know this experience has been the highlight of my career thus far. I like to consider it my anniversary gift. I wonder what the agency has in store for my next 23 years. All I know is that this small town Iowa girl can't wait to live it and will enjoy every minute of the ride!



Worth County Farm Service Agency



(l – r: Teri Dahlby, Rosalie Carlson, Tori Loken, Joni TerHark, Jerri Enderson

Where does one begin to describe the individuals who make up the cohesive, caring FSA team in Worth County? Length of service seems a good starting point.

Teri Dahlby started in December of 1982 working part-time while attending college. She became a permanent PT in the fall of 1984 and now has 31 years of service. Wow! Her family is comprised of husband Darin and two children, Jamie and Casey. Darin has been farming for 25 years. Daughter Jamie is a college junior studying early childhood education. Son Casey is a senior in high school and hopes to farm one day.

Jerri Enderson started as an office temp in August, 1999 and became full-time in May 2001; she now has 14½ years of service. She and her husband Tim live on a farm west of Manly. Tim farms and also has a full-time job off the farm. Their children are Danielle, Josh, and Jared. Danielle is a CPA with KPMG in Des Moines; she was just married (what a beautiful wedding it was!!!!) and lives in Ankeny. Josh is an Agronomist with Dow; he is married and lives in Ames. Jared is a junior at Iowa State majoring in History Education. In her free time Jerri enjoys spending time with family and friends. She also enjoys baking, helping Tim on the farm, and visiting the kids to help them with house projects.

Joni TerHark started with FSA as a temporary in Wright County in September of 1999; she then went to Hancock County for a full-time PT position in May of 2000; then back to Wright County in July of 2003; then on to Tama County through the voluntary transfer program in February of 2006. She left Tama County in PP18 of 2007 telling her husband that with the next move she just wanted one year off from work. In PP 19 of 2008 she started back to work with FSA full time in Worth County and is still there today! She will have 14 years of service in October. In each county office she was in charge of a different program area so has knowledge of many FSA programs. (She says but mastery of none, but I'd challenge that remark!) She thoroughly enjoys working with the producers in EVERY county! Joni and her husband Barry live in Mason City with their two children; Ethan is 12 and is very active in sports and music; Erin is 7 and is very active at not being in any activity that required performing in front of people! Outside of work Joni likes to stay active in the kids' schools, church, and participating in as many social outings as time allows. This year her time for these activities has been hindered as she was diagnosed with Stage 2 Breast Cancer on April 29. She is doing well and says "I am going to kick cancer's tail!" She is very humbled and thankful for the love and support she has been shown by her co-workers in Worth County taking over a TON of responsibilities for her, but also for the cards, emails, phone calls, etc. she has received from all over the state. Joni loves her FSA family!

Rosalie Carlson joined FSA as a COT in September of 2008. Did she really know what she was getting into at the time? Probably not! Is she sorry for taking that leap of faith? Definitely not! Rosalie became CED in Worth County in January of 2010 and now has 6 years of FSA service. Northwood is "home away from home" for Rosalie during the work week; she spends weekends at home in Shelby County. The old Buick could probably navigate from Worth County to Shelby County by itself! Rosalie's family consists of husband James and two grown children Ella and Aaron. James has been farming since he returned from National Guard training; at one time he also enjoyed having a cow/calf operation included with his farm. Ella is a graduate of Colorado State University and is currently an area rep for Ecolane in Elk Horn, IA selling software for mass transit; she live on Rosalie's parents' home place and loves working with the family quarter horses. Aaron served in the US Air Force for 6 years and is currently helping James with the farming at both farms; he has plans to return to college using his GI Bill (Mom says hopefully soon!) It's no secret that Rosalie loves her horses; she and Ella enjoy showing quarter horses raised by the family. The highlight of the year each summer is the family trek with horses to trail ride in Custer State Park in South Dakota (near Mt. Rushmore).

Last but not least is Tori Loken. She is a Temporary Program Technician. Tori says, "I have had the pleasure of working here for almost two months." She has a two-year degree from NIACC . Tori and Jake were just married last March and moved out to a cute old farm house. They spent the summer doing small projects in the house and fixing up the barn on their property to put it into working condition. Her funny FSA story: The first day of work everyone was quick to inform her of the Friday tradition of lunch ordered from a local restaurant and to tell her not to bring lunch that day. Coming into work that day she was ready for a great meal. She walked into the office to see everyone else wearing jeans and looking somewhat guilty because they failed to mention "casual" Friday in the excitement of telling her about the lunch tradition. Long story short, she had a good lunch but not the comfort of her favorite jeans all day!

Worth County FSA – a great place to work!!!!

Adams/Union County USDA staff participate in charity cancer fundraiser

Members of the Adams / Union County FSA and Union County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) participated in the Relay for Life Team Hope Glows 5K Glow Fun Walk/Run on Saturday, April 12, at McKinley Park. It was estimated that there were over 470 participants at the event. The event was primarily organized by the First National Bank in Creston as a fundraiser and benefit for Relay for Life and The American Cancer Society.

Pictured below in the back row from Left to right are: Lisa Smith-PT Adams/Union, Jaime Brown-PT Adams/Union, Maria Lund-PT Adams Union. Front row left to right is Dixie Baker-Secretary Union County SWCD and Elaine Gordon-Current Member of the Adams/Union County FSA County Committee and retired PT from Union County.



The event was held at McKinley Lake located in Union County. The participants walked the trail around the lake and then up to the hospital and then on a trail back to the lake. Glowing décor ranged from necklaces, sunglasses, wands, butterfly wings and about any other glowing item possible.

Below from left to right are: Maria Lund-PT Adams/Union, Lisa Smith-PT Adams/ Union, and Jaime Brown-PT Adams/Union County.





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More info on the 2015 Convention to come soon!