

IASCOE

The Iowa Association Of FSA County Office Employees

DECEMBER 2010



Merry Christmas

2010/2011 IASCOE OFFICERS

President
Cindy Mensen
CED Clayton County



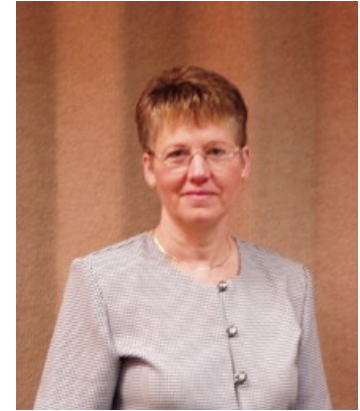
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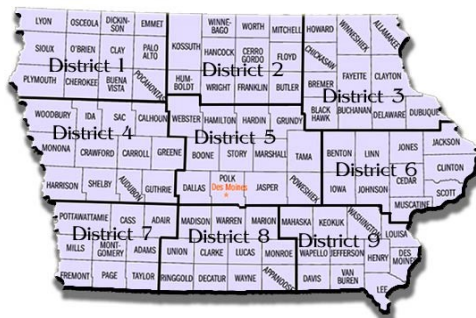
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2010/2011 IASCOE DIRECTORS

DISTRICT	P.T. DIRECTOR	CED DIRECTOR
1	Karen LaCour - Dickinson Alt - Nancy Heideman - Clay	Jeff Davis - Plymouth Alt - Larry Lago - Dickinson
2	Cindy Pistek - Hancock Alt - Jeanine Diekhuis - Hancock	Tammy Pruin - Wright Alt - Barry Terhark - Cerro Gordo
3	Karen McNeil - Winneshiek Alt -	Cindy Mensen - Clayton Alt - Kevin Keegan - Buchanan
4	Mary Lageschulte - Ida Alt - Amy Carlson-Hammen - Calhoun	John Landgraf - Sac Alt - Kevin Fitzpatrick - Greene
5	Chris Grieder - Polk Alt - Teresa Heck - Polk	Steve Kennedy - Jasper Alt - Lee Ann Davis - Boone
6	Jessica Yuska - Scott Alt - Joni Birkhofer - Muscatine	Devalyn Wilson - Cedar Alt - Randy Madsen - Muscatine/Scott
7	Sue Beemer - Taylor Alt - Judy Lundgren - Page	Cindy Bebout - Fremont Alt - Lynette Gruchow - East Pottawattame
8	Patsy Bence - Madison Alt - Connie Bence - Madison	Kelly Cain - Madison Alt - Joyce Frost - Wayne
9	Judy Dameron - Louisa Alt - Dawn Stewart - Henry	Dee Ann Lehn - Keokuk Alt - John Bartenhagen - Louisa





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District 1

Benefits/Legislative: Rex Wittrock, Buena Vista
Awards/Scholarship: Larry Lago - Dickinson
Publicity: Kelsey White, Emmet
Membership: Mark VonArb - Cherokee

District 2

Benefits/Legislative: David Stromer - Kossuth
Awards/Scholarship: Jeanine Diekhuis - Hancock
Publicity: Barry Terhark, Cerro Gordo
Membership: Janine Schwarck - Mitchell

District 3

Benefits/Legislative: Karen McNeil - Winneshiek
Awards/Scholarship: Connie Straw - Chickasaw
Publicity: Rose Woerner - Black Hawk
Membership: Sheri Rodman - Clayton

District 4

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

District 5

Bene./Legislative: Teresa Simonton - Poweshiek
Awards/Scholarship: Connie Safley - Dallas
Publicity: Kitty Benda - Marshall
Membership: Rodney Biensen - Story

District 6

Bene/Legis.: Joni Birkhofer - Muscatine
Awards/Scholarship: Angie Reynolds - Muscatine
Publicity: Jessica Yuska, Scott
Membership: Renee Schultz - Cedar

District 7

Benefits/Legislative: Chris Irvin - Page
Awards/Scholarship: Phyllis Reineke - Taylor
Publicity: Carole Dawson - Taylor
Membership: Dan Wells - Adair

District 8

Benefits/Legislative: Kelly Cain - Madison
Awards/Scholarship: Dave Wynn - Monroe
Publicity: Rhonda Cooper - Union
Membership: Marla Morlan - Monroe

District 9

Benefits/Legislative: John Bartenhagen - Louisa
Awards/Scholarship: Carol Long - Mahaska
Publicity: Anna Boecker - Van Buren
Membership: Cynde Briggs - Mahaska



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2010 Awards & Scholarship Committee



2010 Publicity Committee



2010 Membership Committee



2010 Legislative and Benefits Committee

PAST IASCOE PRESIDENTS

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

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

A Message from our State Executive Director

I want to express my sincere thanks to all Iowa FSA employees for the great work in getting our payments out to producers timely and correctly. As we monitored the payments as they were made, we noticed that they were much faster than last year. I know that we all understood the web payment system better and Iowa really lead the way in getting this important part of our job done.

Our ability to communicate continues to grow each year with the advent of new technology. When our son deployed to Iraq, we had email and an occasional call to keep in touch. Now that he is in Afghanistan, we are using web video to communicate, and it is free over the internet. It is great to be able to see him but we also see where he is, which can be discomfoting. As I thought about this, I thought about the training programs we as an agency would like to accomplish during the next year. Web-based training is our most economical source of training but unless it is one on one, the trainer is unable to see the expressions of all of the class. In a lot cases this may not be a problem, but it will depend on the subject.

STC Chair, John Judge and I have had the privilege of visiting 67 county offices so far. This has been by far one of the most enjoyable parts of this job. Each county has its own unique set of producers, committee members, and employees - the connections and relationships we have been able to make are truly remarkable. The other members of the STC have all had the opportunity to join us from time to time and they also have commented about how impressive the Iowa FSA staff is in each office. To those county offices where we have been, thank you for your hospitality and time. To those where we will be visiting in the future, we look forward to spending a couple of hours getting to know you.

John Whitaker, SED





A President's Perspective Cindy Mensen, IASCOE President

Holidays....enjoy these times with thankfulness and treasure the memory making opportunities! I am thankful for all of you who have made the Iowa Association of FSA County Office Employees – IASCOE – the impressive organization it is today. Nearly 90% of eligible employees in Iowa are paying their dues. Help us pass the word to those who are holding back – we'd like to tell our Kansas neighbors we can top their 94% membership! Bragging rights are on the line! 😊

Speaking of memory making opportunities – check this option out: members who have never been to a national NASCOE meeting are invited to submit their name to win a chance for a paid trip to either the National Legislative Conference (WDC -- March 2011) or the National NASCOE Convention (Corpus Christi, Texas -- August 2011). The NASCOE Executive Board continues to promote the inclusion of all members and has approved this “contest” as a way to show their passion. All counties should have recently received a printed NASCOE Newsletter – inside you will find a form to complete to submit your name for this opportunity.

Legislative Conference – this will take place in Washington D.C. in early March, 2011. This event brings NASCOE members together from across the nation. Congressional representatives are contacted and issues and concerns of NASCOE members are presented. Would you like to take part in this experience? The IASCOE Board will soon be choosing whom to send to WDC. Our goal is to take a member from each Congressional District hoping to include a mixture of experienced Leg Conference attendees as well as some new to the mission. This is another memory making opportunity! Let me know if you are interested.

Our NASCOE President has given us a challenge – speak our piece! Mr. Stroup wants 50 Negotiation items from every area – I think we could submit a Negotiation item from every county in Iowa! Take note that December 15th is the deadline to submit Negotiation items. NASCOE provides **ALL** members the chance to voice concerns and suggestions for improvements through the Negotiation process. Go to www.nascoe.org, click on **Negotiations** from the left side bar -- and you will find the fillable form. *Give yourself and your co-workers a gift – solve a problem in your work life!* I hope many of you will be so inspired.

We are keeping a watchful eye on the budget battles facing FSA and all of government. Please consider participating in CAPWIZ if NASCOE sends a notification. It seems we have just started implementing the 2008 Farm Bill – and yet 2012 changes are being contemplated at this time. We want to send the message that FSA employees are willing and able to deliver programs to our precious customers....our farmer friends and family.

Take special note of these items:

- *Are you reading the NASCOE Now publications? Check them out @ www.nascoe.org --- stay up to date on the latest NASCOE news. You may view previous editions on the Publicity page.
- *JM Marketing offers a free \$1000 Accidental Death policy to all NASCOE members – all you have to do is fill out the designated beneficiary form and send it to them. Have you done that yet? Ask your IASCOE director if you need the form – or check with Benefits Chair, Kelly Cain.
- *Want a Christmas gift idea? The Texans are selling cookbooks to help fund their hosting of the National Convention next summer, and I have a few on hand. \$20 will get you a great fun gift! Let me know....and I will find a way to get it to you.
- *Mark your calendar – the IASCOE convention will be held at the West Des Moines Marriott over the last weekend of March. We are contemplating changing the agenda format – stay tuned for details. One detail you can plan on though is the addition of an inspirational group called Sheltered Reality. This group will perform on Friday night March 25th. It is too good to miss – so keep that date free to meet your friends in Des Moines!

I wish you blessed holidays – thankful experiences and memories to hold dear—

Cindy T. Mensen



Hello all,

I have one thing I would like to talk about and that is being part of the team or **Team Work**. I have been part of many teams over the years; from Little League as a child to the team that works in the Plymouth County FSA office. The FSA team's goal is to inform the farmers in Plymouth County about the programs we implement at FSA.

As a kid growing up I learned that team work was vital in almost everything we do. Yes, there are a lot of things that we do as individuals but there is even more that we do as members of a team. There are many diverse teams such as Sports teams, Work teams, Social teams, Religious teams, etc.

When I was eighteen, I was getting ready to graduate from high school and go out into the big world. I would not be under the watchful eye of my father (a teacher and coach at my high school) or my mother (a secretary at my grade school). It was apparent to me that my mom and dad had instilled a couple of things in me and one big thing was the team or teamwork and how it is used on many levels every day of your life.

I remember walking into the kitchen a few days before graduation and no one was home, but I saw a wooden plaque with a letter to me burned into it. My dad was a woodshop teacher and he had written the following:

1978

Dear Jeff,

I am giving you the ball and naming you the quarterback for your team in the game of life. I am the Coach, so I'll give it to you straight.

There is only one schedule to play. It lasts all your life but consists of only one game. It is long with no time outs and no substitutions. You play the whole game all your life.

You'll have a great backfield. You are calling the signals but the other three fellows in the backfield with you have great reputations, they are Faith, Hope and Charity.

You will work behind a truly powerful line. End to end; it consists of Honesty, Loyalty, Devotion to Duty, Self Respect, Sturdy Cleanliness, Good Behavior, and Courage.

The Goal Posts are the Gates to Heaven. God is the Referee and sole official. He makes all the rules and there is no appeal from them.

There are ten rules, you know them as the Ten Commandments and you play them strictly in accordance with your religion. There is also an important ground rule. "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Here is the ball; it is your mortal soul! Hold on to it. Now son, get in there and let's see what you can do with it.

Also remember the Three D's and use them all the time. Do your best at all times. It is the game of your life.
Your Dad (Coach) and Mom

Growing up in my family I learned what it was like to be a team player. I knew what my parents had instilled in me was to become part of the team. It is kind of nice when you are part of a team because there always seems to be someone there to pick you up when you fall or catch you when you might stumble. The first team that I think of is my family. I am on many other teams throughout everyday life.

The three D's my dad talked about were Dedication, Desire and Determination. As my dad always said; have a dedication to a goal, desire to attain that goal and the determination to work your hardest to get there.

There are so many teams out there and you can get involved with any of them. One team that I want you to get involved with is the **IASCOE/NASCOE team**. We need your help and there are all kinds of teammates needed to fill the roster. I know there will be those that are members of the team by paying their dues on a yearly basis. If this is all you can do, thank you for being part of the team. I know that there are others out there that can do more. We have a board of eighteen individuals that put in time to attend meetings and try to do what is best for all of the employees of IASCOE/NASCOE. Many times we need more from the team players. We need more people to volunteer to be on different committees. It has been brought up that Iowa should think about hosting a future NASCOE National Convention. That is going to take more people than just the 18 board members and a few of the other attendees of the IASCOE Convention every year.

I guess I would just like to say in ending that I am very proud to be a member of the IASCOE/NASCOE Team and I am inviting you to get more involved with the team. A team is only as strong as its weakest link. There is strength in numbers so talk to a fellow employee and figure out a way to become a bigger part of TEAM IASCOE/NASCOE.

I am always open to ideas so just give me a call or drop me an email if you have some ideas that will help.

Jeff Davis, IASCOE Vice President



GREETINGS FROM BEAUTIFUL SOUTHWEST IOWA

What a beautiful fall we have had - perfect for harvesting. Lots of farmers have been in remarking they can't remember when they have had so many "good consecutive harvest days". Many were done by Halloween which has to be a record. A lot of fall tillage and fertilizer application has also been done.

As I write this, do you realize there are only six more weekends until Christmas? Even though Christmas is my FAVORITE holiday, I really don't like to decorate until after Thanksgiving. I was driving through town the other day and there was a Christmas tree all decorated in someone's front window. Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby, Sears and many other stores have been decorated for weeks. Sometimes I think Thanksgiving gets lost in the shuffle because the Christmas season starts earlier every year.

This year I think we should give thanks for all our blessings. We live in the greatest nation in the world where our success is only limited by our own ambitions and visions. We work for an agency we can be proud of. We always get the job done, thus resulting in the nickname the "can do agency".

As we start this holiday season may we remember that the true gifts aren't the expensive ones under the tree, but the memories made by being surrounded by the warmth of family and friends, the comfort of love and the light of hope. May you be blessed with these gifts this holiday season and all year through.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas.

Sue Beemer,
IASCOE Secretary/Treasurer
PT Taylor County



Midwest Area Executive Report

Charlene Neukomm

The fall in Illinois this year has certainly shown some beautiful colors. The crisp mornings are definitely a welcome change from the extremely hot summer that was experienced in July and August. I hope this finds all FSA employees looking forward to the upcoming holiday season. Remember to spend some quality time with family and friends.

I recently spent some quality time with my NASCOE family. Your NASCOE Exec Board is a great group of FSA employees, from all parts of the country, working together on behalf of all FSA employees to serve the American farmer and rancher. At the end of September I attended the NASCOE organizational meeting in Corpus Christi, TX at the Omni Hotel, the site of the 2011 National Convention. It is a beautiful hotel right on the bay. The dates are August 10-14, 2011. Reservations are already being made. Start making your plans now to attend.

It is now time to start submitting your Negotiation items. If there is an FSA policy or procedure that needs to be changed that would make your job more efficient and effective, or if there is a change that could benefit many employees, send it in. All areas have been challenged to submit 50 items. You can find the form at www.nascoe.org under Negotiations. If you have a question about completing the form, please let myself or Dennis Ray of Missouri know. We would be glad to help. The deadline is December 15.

NASCOE is planning a spring legislative conference somewhere around the end of Feb-beginning of March, 2011. Farm Bill 2012 talks have already begun. Do you want an opportunity to get involved? NASCOE is going to give away a "free trip" (in accordance with the NASCOE travel policy) to the upcoming legislative conference to one NASCOE member from each area. Each area winner can never have attended a NASCOE convention or a legislative conference. More information and how to apply will be forthcoming.

Please mark your calendars now for the upcoming MWA convention season. So far, the following dates have been set for conventions in 2011 in the MWA: Mar 11-12 in Springfield, IL Convention and MWA Rally; Mar 25-26 in Des Moines, IA; Apr 1-2 in Florence, IN joint Convention with IN, OH, KY; and Apr 23-30 in Michigan.





Membership

Mary Lageschulte, State Membership Chairman

The numbers are finally complete!!! The 2011 IASCOE Membership drive turned out to be another success. Our IASCOE membership this year is 89.0%. Thanks to all of you and the hard work of your membership committee we are reaping the benefits of another successful year. Our continued goal is to have as many members as possible in Iowa and we should be striving to encourage growth in our membership.

We have seen a lot of our co-workers retire this year and we wish them all well with their new endeavors. However, as those positions are filled it is going to be very important and it should be our duty to inform these new employees about IASCOE and about how important it is to maintain a strong membership. The County Office is a good place to start the work for those of you that are already members to spread the word.

For those of you who have recently retired, we would like to suggest that you become an associate member of IASCOE. Many of you have been receiving benefits through IASCOE and to continue those benefits should consider becoming an associate member.

Each year your IASCOE directors draw five (5) members for the "Early Bird" special. Each IASCOE member whose dues are received before June 15th is eligible for a refund of \$50. This year the following IASCOE members were drawn:

Karen Widman ~ Buena Vista County
Candace Fette ~ Clayton County
Tracy Zimmerman ~ East Pottawattamie County
Tom Abbas ~ Hamilton County
Sue Beemer ~ Taylor County

Congratulations to the winners!!! Remember next year to get your dues in early to be eligible. You have to play to win!!!

Thanks to those who choose to be members of IASCOE we are able to receive and maintain benefits that do not come automatically like many people think. All the benefits we receive as County Office employees are a direct result from the efforts of NASCOE/IASCOE. It is very important for us to maintain a strong membership to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. As you are all aware, NASCOE continues to work to ensure the fair treatment of all our employees and to provide a work environment beneficial for all. This process would be virtually impossible without a strong membership and your continued support.

HELLO IOWA ARE YOU READY TO MEET A CHALLENGE?

Jessica Yuska, District 6 Director

Myron Stroup, our NASCOE President, has challenged each area to submit 50 Negotiation items. Our IASCOE President, Cindy Mensen's expectation is for us to strive for at least 2 items per district. Please use the attached Negotiation form or visit www.nascoe.org, click on NEGOTIATIONS on the left side bar, fill out the fillable form, and return your forms to Annette Hyman, NASCOE Secretary, at ahymana@aol.com. Please read the following article from Dennis Ray-- it is inspiring! Dennis is from Missouri and is our Alt Exec for the MWA. Also take a look at the Negotiation Items for 2011 on the NASCOE Negotiation web page, hopefully this will give you some inspiration to submit your own item.

Let's meet our President's challenge -- 18 items from Iowa will help in the 50 for the MWA! We have the most employees, so we must have the most issues/concerns/suggestions! Be creative – and submit by December 15th!!

What Would You Change?

Dennis Ray, MWA Negotiation Consultant

I hesitate to start this article sounding negative, but the reality is we all face daily challenges and frustrations in our jobs. It may be receiving a clarification to policy that means we have to revisit something that we were sure had been put away for good. Or it might be working with a report that doesn't quite have all of the necessary information, requiring us to dig in several places to find what we need. Or maybe you had people waiting to sign up in CRP while you were dealing with CRP software that couldn't handle the acreage from the CLU layer being in hundredths and not tenths. The truth of the matter is that at some point in time you will run into something that is hindering you in the performance of your job.

Now let's pretend for one moment that I have the authority to let you change one thing that would help you better perform your job or provide you and the membership a benefit. After giving it a little thought, what would it be? Would you change a report format? Would you change software? Would you like to be assured that we have policy and procedure before the program is announced? Is there a benefit that would be meaningful to the membership? We have all been around long enough to know that we can't make any changes just by pretending. However, that doesn't mean that we don't have a say or that we can't affect change in the way we do business.

Hopefully you have participated in the negotiation process in past years, but in case you haven't let me tell you how it works. Every fall NASCOE petitions its membership for negotiation items that can be taken to management and try to affect change. The national officers, area execs, negotiation consultants and programs committee chair then meet to research, discuss and formulate a NASCOE proposal to management regarding the item. In the spring, the negotiation team meets face to face with agency personnel to discuss the proposal. While not every item submitted will be taken to Washington and not every item taken to Washington will be resolved in NASCOE's favor, some will. This process is an excellent way for you to actively participate in your organization for the betterment of all.

Myron Stroup, our NASCOE President has challenged every area to submit at least 50 negotiation items. The deadline for submitting items this year is December 15th. Members can browse to the negotiation link on the NASCOE webpage and submit the item directly or you can save it and email it to your Area Exec or your area negotiation consultant.

While the negotiation process can be used to address your frustrations, it is not designed to be a place to just vent. In addition to calling attention to an issue, please note that the submission form asks for recommended solutions. One of the great things about working with this agency and organization is that it is filled with creative individuals and I know many of you have excellent ideas. I hope that each of you will take the time to participate in this process and share your ideas. You never know, your suggestion just might make all of our days a little better.



Deadline for Submission is December 15th
NASCOE
Negotiation/Consultation Submission Form

Please select the category that best represents your concern:

Staffing/Personnel Benefits Program Policy/Procedure Workload IT Miscellaneous

ISSUE (Background and Facts):

POSITION:

RECOMMENDATION FOR RESOLUTION:

HANDBOOK/NOTICE REFERENCE(S):

Name of Contact _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

County/State/Area _____



Publicity Report

We are coming to that time of year when we are able to submit our newsletter for awards and I need your help! In past years the first contest has rewarded winners in each area and then those winners went on for National judging. Beginning in this contest year there will only be a National contest so we need to be sure and submit our very BEST for judging. This is where I need your help. There are five categories for judging:

- Best Website
- Best Newsletter
- Best Single Issue
- Best Feature Story – Humor
- Best Feature Story – Human Interest

I need your input in regards to what YOU the reader think is the best in each category. We don't need to submit anything special for the website category.

I challenge each of you to review the 2010 newsletters from March, June, September and December carefully and let me know what articles you think are the best. The feature articles submitted must have been written by a NASCOE member (regular or associate) under a permanent appointment in a county office. The newsletters can be accessed on the IASCOE website.

You may notify me what articles you think should be submitted by sending me an e-mail at Leonard.Pistek@gmail.com. The submissions need to be made by January 21st, so be sure to send me your selections in early January. Enjoy your reading and I look forward to hearing from you all!

Cindy Pistek – IASCOE Publicity Chairman

DID YOU KNOW?!!

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



The **NASCOE Members Scholarship Program** is a special NASCOE Scholarship award that is be awarded to NASCOE Members that are taking additional college credits to further enhance their careers within the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Each Area will be allowed to award one scholarship winner \$200.00 to broaden their portfolio for adult education courses to enhance and advance their careers within FSA.

Jim and Teresa Mace (JM Marketing) believe so highly in the opportunities that higher education can bring to each and every one of us that they have generously donated \$800.00 towards the NASCOE Members Scholarship award program! Please consider taking a few minutes from your studies and complete the nomination form to compete for the award! The deadline to submit the scholarship application to your Area Scholarship Chairperson is January 15, 2011.

This year one of our own Iowa members was the recipient of this award. Joyce Davidshofer, CED in Allamakee County, won a \$200.00 scholarship. This is what she had to say:

Hi, my name is Joyce Davidshofer, CED for Allamakee County, Iowa. I am presently enrolled in college to earn my Masters degree in Business Administration at Ashford University. I encourage all members of NASCOE to apply for scholarships for your continuing education. Besides being a CED, I am a farm wife on the side. My husband and I have a 100 head dairy herd and the farming economy is not the greatest. I was attending college, when I became aware of the NASCOE scholarship program for employees. I talked with Tom Oasen, the NASCOE Scholarship Chairperson, about the employee's scholarship program. Mr. Oasen was very helpful and I applied for the scholarship. I was selected as the recipient of the Midwest Area NASCOE Member Scholarship for 2010. The scholarship went towards buying books for my classes. This was indeed appreciated. This can be possible for any NASCOE employee, it did for me.

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

Les Maierhofer
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Yorkville, IL 60560
nadinemm@csky.net



IASCOE/NASCOE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The traditional IASCOE/NASCOE **Scholarship Program** is provided to the children and legal dependants of eligible NASCOE Members. This award may only be used to defray expenses for a student at an accredited school. Applicants must be a NASCOE member's child or member's legal dependent. The NASCOE member's dues must be paid and membership kept current for the past 5 years, or since becoming a permanent FSA County Office Employee. The evaluation criteria are based on academics, extra curricular involvement, and work and community contributions. A state committee reviews the applications that are submitted and scores them. IASCOE currently awards four scholarships of \$300 each.

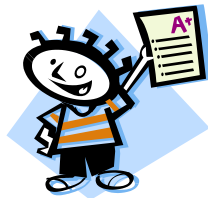
Each application submitted to the State Scholarship committee is forwarded onto the Area competition – regardless of whether they won at the state level or not. Area winners are selected from State entries. Each Area awards \$1,500.00. The National winner is selected from Area winners, and the National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

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

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

Tammy Pruin
16316 190th
Mason City, IA 50401
tammy.pruin@ia.usda.gov

Even though the school year is just getting started, you need to think ahead and begin planning your application!





Legislative Update

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn

The recent elections have been referred to as “The Election of Discontent”. As a result, we will be seeing several new faces in Washington D. C. There will be a shift of power in the House of Representatives lead by a new Speaker of the House and we will see a new chairperson for the Senate Ag Committee. Change brings the uncertainty of what the future will hold for our members, our producers and our agency as a whole. NASCOE will have to closely monitor the activities of the House and Senate.

Our national legislative co-chairpersons, Mike Mayfield and Terry Stehr have put together a 2011 legislative agenda with information gathered from members, national officers and our legislative consultant, Bob Redding. The following priorities have been established for 2011:

FSA should be the primary acreage reporting contact within USDA.

FSA should be the administrative agency in the delivery of Conservation Programs.

FSA is ready and willing to be the vehicle to deliver any new programs which may be a part of the new farm bill.

FSA has needs in the area of IT. The delivery of programs is greatly enhanced when the proper tools are available.

Benefits--we need to inform Congress that we favor rolling lump sum payments into TSP, self plus one insurance coverage, health spending accounts of \$5000; CO/GS leave sharing and protection from increases in health care taxation.

A legislative conference is scheduled for March 7th through March 9th in Washington D. C. to discuss these issues with our Congressmen. I would encourage you to contact the IASCOE directors in your area or the IASCOE officers if you are interested in being a member of the team Iowa sends to the conference. If you have a special relationship with one of our Congressmen or Senators, let IASCOE know as we are always looking for people with connections to give us more political leverage when trying to secure an appointment with members of congress.

Other tools available you should utilize as a member are the PAC and CAPWIZ. There is strength in numbers so the more members we have actively participating in the PAC and responding to CAPWIZ alerts, the stronger our position becomes. Working together, we can ensure a bright future for FSA!

EMBLEMS NEWS

The NASCOE Store (www.nascoeemblemsonline.com) is your one-stop shop for emblem items. The store is provided as a benefit to NASCOE members (as well as all USDA-FSA employees). We provide a variety of officially sanctioned emblem and logo items. We make every effort to process all orders in two weeks. Feel free to contact us by email (link on our web site) with any questions you might have regarding this store or any products sold here.

ARE YOUR TEAM COLORS PURPLE? OR MAYBE RED? OR MAYBE ROYAL BLUE? OR MAYBE WINE? SOMEONE SUGGESTED THAT WE CARRY TEAM COLORS FOR THE UPCOMING FOOTBALL/SCHOOL SEASON TO WEAR ON DRESS-DOWN FRIDAYS TO SHOW "TEAM SPIRIT" AND ITEMS TO TAKE TO THE GAME. EMAIL US AT info@nascoeemblemsonline.com AND TELL US WHAT COLOR ITEMS YOU WANT US TO DO NEXT. CHECK OUT THE NEW TEAM COLOR CATEGORIES ON THE WEB SITE (www.nascoeemblemsonline.com). WATCH FOR ADDITIONAL TEAM COLOR ITEMS COMING SOON.

REGISTERING FOR THE FIRST TIME? BE SURE TO USE YOUR HOME E-MAIL ADDRESS, NOT YOUR .gov ADDRESS.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please note that all credit card transactions will show on your statement as thenascoestore.com/BEJs Advertising, 706-867-7571.
Charges to your credit card will be made when order is received.

We have a huge variety of items with either the USDA-FSA or the NASCOE logo on them. GIFT COUPONS IN \$10, \$25, \$50, AND \$100 INCREMENTS ARE AVAILABLE. Anything that you need for any purpose; if we don't have it, call us and we will see about offering as an item.

We have Outreach Products available in large quantities for State Outreach Coordinators or for smaller county groups, for county office purchases. Be sure that your State Office approves Outreach Purchases before you submit your order.

Program note: The NASCOE Store is a small female owned business and meets the JWOD requirements!

- Polo & dress shirts for office attire
- Denim shirts for both men and women
 - Embroidered **FSA** t-shirts
 - Embroidered sweatshirts
 - Embroidered logo jackets
 - Head Wear
- NASCOE and FSA Emblems Items

BEJ Advertising, the vendor for our emblems offers a wide variety of items. Men's and women's clothing is available in a variety of styles, sizes and colors. Also, the store has gift sets and many accessories available. The website is a great place to order gifts for Christmas, birthdays, retirements or any other special occasion. Gift certificates are available too!! Emblems sales remain the backbone of our scholarship program. Please support this program, get quality merchandise and give a young person a great start in life!!

Visit the website www.nascoeemblemsonline.com

**Era R. Jarrard
BEJs Advertising
Dba/thenascoestore.com
141 Leon Ricketts Road
Dahlonega, GA 30533**

**info@nascoeemblemsonline.com or bejs@windstream.net
www.nascoeemblemsonline.com**

Not sure about buying on-line? Are you someone who has to see it before you buy it? Do you want to save on the shipping? Come to the IASCOE State Convention being held March 25th & 26th at the West Des Moines Marriott to see a variety of products for sale. If there's a specific item you would like to 'see', and of course 'buy', please let me know and I will be glad to have it included in our 'convention packet'.

**Chris Grieder
Chairperson**



AWARDS

IASCOE has a wonderful awards program which recognizes and honors NASCOE/IASCOE members that have gone over and above their FSA duties. Distinguished Service Awards (DSA's) are given annually in three categories; 1) Service to Community 2) Service to FSA-Agriculture and 3) Service to NASCOE.

Iowa awards are given at our State Convention. The winners in each category are submitted for the Midwest competition and the winners at that level are submitted for the National Competition.

This process starts with a nomination of a fellow employee who is an IASCOE/NASCOE member. We all know someone who has gone above and beyond in one or more of the categories. I ask you to please take the time before the end of the year and complete a nomination for that special person. DSA nomination forms can be found on the NASCOE website. The applications are in a fillable format which makes it extremely easy to use. All the eligibility requirements and filing deadlines are posted on the site as well. As your State Awards Chairperson I would be glad to help answer any questions you may have about the process. Please contact me by phone or by email.

In addition IASCOE also recognizes members who achieve milestones of unused sick leave, Extra Effort awards, Professional Improvement awards and the First Timers Award Program. A separate mailing on Awards will be sent shortly to each county office. In the mean time please be thinking of that dedicated IASCOE member you can nominate!

Devalyn Wilson / Cedar County



Share Your Strengths through NASCOE Programs Committee

My husband is working his MBA, and a class assignment this week is to survey family, friends & co-workers to identify his strengths. Well today I sit here considering what FSA's strengths are - my first thought is all the amazing people in FSA County Offices! Time and again we are asked to deliver programs under extreme conditions, be it time or lack of knowledge of a new program.

New software and programs continue to be released without all those *kinks* worked out and most recently we have experienced some very short signup periods. Unfortunately I am no longer surprised to hear *software drives the program*. On a daily basis we work in our programs, use the forms and at times battle with software. Who better to find an easier way to provide an alternative to complete a task, ease data loading, or find a more efficient way to serve our customers - **County Office Employees**, of course! We are the best source to provide suggestions, find solutions and pass them on to make change happen!

I am always very excited to receive an email with a Program recommendation. I read through the proposal and think... 'What a great idea, I can't wait to see that happen', or 'Wow that would make my job so much easier'. Well NASCOE Programs Committee continues to ask for those suggestions from everyone at any time.

I have enclosed the Programs Recommendation form for you to use. Please consider filling it out with your latest and greatest idea J You can submit your suggestion through the NASCOE website, send the form to me at my email address, or submit it to our new MWA Programs Chair - Rosemarie Gallagher (rosemarie.gallagher@mi.usda.gov). There are no deadlines to submit a Program suggestion so ANYTIME you find yourself struggling and think you have an alternate solution, please consider forwarding a recommendation to us.

So fellow lowans, I challenge you – focus on those strengths and complete the Programs Committee recommendation form and MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN!

And I will go back to my husband's request....tomorrow night.

Respectfully submitted by

Jessica Yuska

jesshovie@hotmail.com or jessica.yuska@ia.usda.gov



NASCOE PROGRAM EFFICIENCY Submission Form

STATE _____ COUNTY _____ DATE _____

ISSUE (i.e. program efficiency/area of concern and procedure reference if applicable):

FACTS (i.e. circumstances of the concern):

SOLUTION (i.e. your suggestion for correcting the inefficiency):

Submitted By: _____ Phone: _____ ext: _____
(name and
address) _____ Email: _____

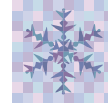
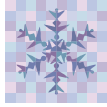
Items of concern may be submitted at anytime. Timing could be critical to program efficiency. It is not necessary to wait for negotiation/consultation time. These items will be acted on upon receipt.

Mail or email to your State Program Chair

(State Program Chair add comments and forward to Area Program Chair. Area Program Chair add comments and forward to Area Exec and National Program Chair)

State Program Chair comments: _____

Area Program Chair comments: _____

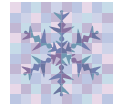
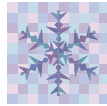
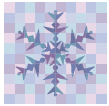


NASCOE has negotiated a partnership with Sam's Club that will give you a price-break on a Sam's Club Membership. When you become a new Sam's Club member or renew an existing membership you will be given a credit in the form of a gift card. In order to utilize the savings you must present the certificate and show proof of NASCOE membership at any Sam's Club. This offer is only valid until January 31, 2011."

Kelly Cain, Benefits Chairman

http://nascoe.org/Documents/Nascoe_and_Rascoe_ADV_041110.pdf

http://nascoe.org/Documents/Nascoe_and_Rascoe_ADV_041110.pdf



How They Forecast a Cold Winter

One day in early September the chief of a Native American tribe was asked by his tribal elders if the winter of 2009/10 was going to be cold or mild. The chief asked his medicine man, but he too had lost touch with the reading signs from the natural world around the Great Lakes.

In truth, neither of them had idea about how to predict the coming winter. However, the chief decided to take a modern approach, and the chief rang the National Weather Service in Gaylord Michigan.



'Yes, it is going to be a cold winter,' the meteorological officer told the chief. Consequently, he went back to his tribe and told the men to collect plenty of firewood.

A fortnight later the chief called the Weather Service and asked for an update. 'Are you still forecasting a cold winter?' he asked.

'Yes, very cold', the weather officer told him.

As a result of this brief conversation the chief went back to the tribe and told his people to collect every bit of wood they could find.

A month later the chief called the National Weather Service once more and asked about the coming winter. 'Yes,' he was told, 'it is going to be one of the coldest winters ever.'

'How can you be so sure?' the chief asked.

The weatherman replied: 'Because the Native Americans of the Great Lakes are collecting wood like crazy.'



Have you ever watched the TV show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* on ABC? My family is not avid fans, but we do turn it on from time to time. Who knew we would come to experience firsthand how much hard work goes into the week long experience of demolition, construction, to the *Move that Bus* celebration.

Last month my husband, Chris, came to me 'I am going to be gone for a week, but I can't tell you why yet.' Then when he did share his news, I couldn't tell anyone until his company made the announcement. You may have figured out what the big secret was: Chris' company was sending him to Nashville, Tennessee to help rebuild a school with Ty Pennington and the *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

Chris works for the office furniture company, the HON Company in Muscatine, Iowa. If you look at the chair you are sitting on I bet most of you will find yourselves in one made by HON. Not only do they manufacture office furniture, but have been outfitting classrooms with student chairs, student desks, whiteboards, and classroom storage cabinets.

In September, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* visited Lighthouse Christian School in Nashville that fell victim to floods earlier this spring. The school literally had a temporary classroom swept away down the interstate -- sounds very familiar to us, doesn't it? If you would like to see more on the experience visit www.thenashvillebuild.com (The show aired November 14th after I have submitted this article so I have no idea or expectations as to what made it to the show.)

The show's design team asked HON to contribute and they provided enough furnishings for administrative offices and all of the classrooms. HON also provided furniture which outfitted the temporary VIP tent overlooking the build site, which was later given to a local non-profit, Southeast Nashville Flood Relief, to be disbursed to those in need.

My husband led the team from HON with few expectations for the week except to get their product ready for the kids. I shared in his excitement, but he was worried. He knew this show comes with time constraints. And my husband, the design engineer, knows to the minute how long it takes *experienced* installers to put it all the furniture together. Throw in a lot of people wanting to help with the best intentions, and well he took along the migraine medicine anticipating the worst ~ *just in case*.

He and his team from HON worked 2 long days prepping, unloading, and assembling... followed by the camera crew arriving to film the HON team in action as they put on the finishing touches. I recall Chris called Thursday morning of the build upset he had been given only a 2 hour window to unload and assemble the classrooms – he argued best case was they could get it done was in 8 hours. But that doesn't make for good TV and the next crew (window treatments I think) needed to be in at a set time and so on and so forth. Needless to say he had an excellent team from HON and they were able to get organized, stay on task and finish late that night. Unfortunately they missed out on the Carrie Underwood concert at the Grand Ole Opry L

The community of Nashville willingly stepped forward to volunteer on the build. Chris was hoping to get his hands dirty and participate elsewhere, but he learned right away the largest need on the build site was specialized labors and materials. Yes there were a few bumps along the way with people hoping to grab some of the limelight. But in the end the smiles and tears from the teachers, administrators and children when they saw their new school and classrooms was *priceless*. Happily Chris admits that it was a great experience, but not something he would choose to do again – leave the stress of it all to someone else!

If you would like to see more of the photos of the build progress and classrooms please visit:

<http://www.thenashvillebuild.com/> or

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/thenashvillebuild/sets/72157625270783989/>

Submitted by: Jessica Yuska



Finish Lighthouse Christian Preschool Building



Unloading HON truck



Unpacking the HON truck with Ty, Paul & LeAnne



Reception Area



Classroom



Classroom



Classroom

Each year we all get out the “old photos” from Christmas’ past and chuckle at how cute we were as small children. Well, this year we are getting out the photos of a few of your IASCOE Directors. Check out the photos below and see if you can guess who they are. The answers are somewhere else in the newsletter so test your skills at recognizing us as small children!



1.



2.



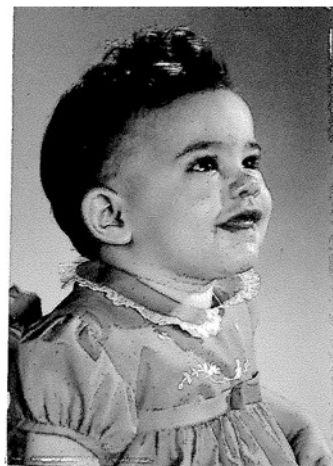
3.



4.



5.



6.



One Fine Morning

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn

A wonderful opportunity arose for my husband, Ray and I back in October. Ray had met Secretary Vilsack while serving on the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan and again earlier this year when he was attending a PRT meeting and awards ceremony in Washington D. C. The Secretary mentioned to Ray at that time, he would like to meet with him on his farm in Davis County just to look over the land and timber.

In October, we received an invitation from the Secretary to meet with him and his wife later that month. So on a bright, crisp, morning of October 15th; we arrived on the Vilsack farm joined by the farm operator, the farm manager, another forester, Secretary Vilsack and his wife, Christie. The Vilsacks were also accompanied by a staffer and two secret service agents.

We spent 2 hours discussing condition of crops, timber management, the recent CRP sign-up, E85 fuel and the new farm bill among other topics. We also enjoyed sharing a few family antidotes and stories about the history of this particular farm. As Martha Stewart would say "It was a very good thing!"

RETIREMENTS

After many years of service to FSA, the following individual has decided to retire and begin a new chapter in their life. We wish her well.

Barbara Cross – Mills County on September 30, 2010

We have tried to include the names of all individuals who have retired. Our apologies if we have missed someone.

John's World
John Phipps' My Thanksgiving Prayer

It was a significant event: my first Thanksgiving as a grandparent. All the gravitas that had eluded me for 50-odd years would shroud my persona like a Martha Stewart poncho.

At least, that was my dream.

It was an “away” game. One of the consequences of a highly mobile population is that every holiday location is negotiable. So when a family located in Illinois, Texas and California tries to get together, it's predictable they would end up in Reno, Nev. Isn't it?

Anyhow, like leftovers thrown into a stew, we were part of a multifamily conglomeration of un-relatives who had nowhere else to go. Miraculously, my daughter-in-law's sister was hospitable enough to include strange agrarians from Illinois. After all, what harm could we do?

The holiday was delightful. More wonderfully, my daughter-in-law's family included two irresistible little girls who traveled with their grandparents to be a part of the festivities.

Unprepared. As a man who only has sons, I was thoroughly unprepared for the effect 7-year-old girls can have on intellectual, purposeful men like me. Oh sure, I had sneered at the quivering, spineless girly men that my friends became in the presence of their daughters, but I had assumed that it was their moral failing, not a law of nature. What I know now is that God in his mercy gave us sons. Little boys are proof that humans have a larval stage. Uniformly disgusting, they are therefore easily understood by fathers.

Little girls, on the other hand, have the intrinsic power to exploit every character weakness in the male psyche. So when we gathered for this family holiday and I was thrust unprepared into the company of two seven-something little girls, the result was catastrophic.

They danced, they played singsong games, they talked and laughed incessantly. They doted on my grandson in ways only two x-chromosomes permit. And I was completely enthralled.

When dinner was ready and places were being allocated, I volunteered for a seat at the “kids' ” table to acknowledge my senior counterpart—Jimmy, my son's father-in-law—as presiding officer at the far end of the gathering. Erica and Hope sat smiling beside me and across from me; my wife Jan was close by. We approached a Rockwellian moment of throbbing domesticity.

Then my colleague—the senior Grandpa—began a sincere prayer of blessing over the food. A few seconds into his monologue, I recognized the first stages of childish inattention beside me. Glancing down with one eye, I saw blonde curls surrounding a tiny hand clamped ineffectively over a small mouth as she shook with repressed giggles. Her counterpart amplified the reaction.

A wiser man than I would have faked a heart attack right there and excused himself, but I didn't know about little girls, did I? The sight of these pixies stifling (barely) irrepressible humor was suddenly the funniest thing in the world. I bit into my lower lip (the scars remain today) to control my own risibility, but it was too late. I could no longer hear Jimmy praying earnestly at the end of the table—the only sound I noticed was the muffled, high-pitched whimpers of two little angels beside me.

Men with daughters, I am sure, already know where this story is going. That is why there are so many horses in America and \$30,000 weddings. We capitulate like French generals to our little daughters. Still, I might have held out, but as I was chewing my lip to stay silent, my effort was undone by the sound of a badly strangled half-snort, half-gurgle from . . . my wife!

Nothing is more painful than suppressing honest mirth, and I had no anesthetic, sooo . . .

Little women. My guffaw was more than enough to pause the blessing, ensuring the event could not pass as a pulmonary mishap. When Jimmy finished, all eyes turned to the kids' table and its most immature member. But I misspeak—my sons stared fixedly at their plates, once again mortified by their undeniable father.

To deflect the critical gazes, I turned disapprovingly to the initiators of this fiasco, only to see—to my horror—their innocent disapprobation on me. In that moment of feminine betrayal I saw these cherubs for what they truly were—miniature women.

In mortification, I scanned the table for a sympathetic face—and found none. As the silence of my disgrace hung in the air, I caught the slightest grin at the corner of Jimmy's mouth. So this Thanksgiving please let Grandpa sit with the grownups.

This reading appeared in the Farm Journal Magazine years ago. John Phipps farms in central Illinois and is the host of U.S. Farm Report. Visit www.AgWeb.com for station listings. To view past columns, visit www.farmjournal.com or www.johnwphipps.com.



Did you guess who the child directors are???

1. Cindy Pistek
2. Dee Lehn
3. Karen LaCour
4. Patsy Bence
5. Chris Grieder (the one on the left)



Want to make a difference in an injured Marine's life...Here's how.

You can send cards/notes/tracts to wounded Marines. What an opportunity!! The Operation PAL (Prayers And Letters) website is operationpal.com/list.asp there will be a link to this cause on the www.usdamilitaryfamilies.org website, too.

There you will find a list of names of wounded Marines, an explanation of where and how they were wounded, and the injuries they have sustained. As you will see, many have lost limbs- therefore, a Get Well card is not always appropriate. I found Thinking of You, and Thank You (for your service) cards more appropriate. Many places have nice cards for .50 cents each.

The Marine's name and Company are given there. All cards go to the same address.

Marine's Name and Company
c/o Operation PAL
PO Box 670328
Marietta GA 30066

How easy is this????? Please visit the website to find out more and please, please, send cards to these deserving soldiers.

Thank you on behalf of our wounded Veterans

Deb Esselman, Military Mom-WI

Bits and Pieces....

There are several tools or actions at our disposal, which to make up a “four-pronged legislative approach.” They are: 1) the upcoming Legislative Conference in WDC along with continued education and communication with House and Senate contacts; 2) The cooperation, membership development, and coordination with NAFEC; 3) The commitment to using the CAPWIZ system; and 4) The growth and deployment of the NASCOE PAC.

Legislative Conference: NASCOE executives have approved a two-day full legislative conference for this upcoming year. This has always been a critical event for presenting our positions and ideas in mass, and is extremely important this year given the Farm Bill talks and potential changes in House and Senate Ag Committee leadership.

NAFEC: NAFEC members can ask for policy-type changes that we cannot. There is a great potential for this association of FARMERS to work hand in hand with our goals, however they need to have more membership first and foremost. In the coming weeks, CEDs will be asked to promote NAFEC at an upcoming COC meeting, and will be provided with steps to review how to sign up a COC member, dues withholding, etc.

CAPWIZ: This is the most efficient way to drop large amounts of correspondence into a Congressional office, at a much faster turnaround than traditional letters. The effectiveness of CAPWIZ depends on our members not only signing up, but following through on alerts through their home emails. The process is very quick. Steps can be found at the NASCOE website.

PAC: To date, our PAC has grown to become a useful tool for building vital support with members of Congress. Yet, only about six percent of members currently contribute to the PAC. For just a few dollars per pay period, you can make a big difference for NASCOE and your own job security. Instructions on signing up can be found on the NASCOE website or obtained through your Area Legislative Chair.

Participating or assisting with any of the above items will help NASCOE with its legislative goals and continued proactive approach. It's time to get involved. It's time to get fired up.

I feel that it is very important that you become educated on these tools. Visit the NASCOE website to find more information on NAFEC especially. With the COC elections fast approaching and it would be a good time in to promote and educate our COC members at their organizational meeting. We should also to encourage our STC to be members as well. FSA employees can be associate members as well... Are you a member? I am. Show that the County Committee System is important to FSA and be a member and educate your COC.

NASCOE Publicity

The 2010/2011 Publicity Handbook has been updated and is now posted to the NASCOE website under the Publicity tab. The major change is that there will be no Area awards due to the lack of participation. The National Awards will be in still in the same categories as Best Single Newsletter, Best Overall Newsletter, Best Website, Best Feature Story Human Interest, Best Feature Story Humor. Please check out the deadlines on the website. The Area Publicity Chairs will be contacting all state publicity chairs and webmasters with more detailed information.

Also, NASCOE News on facebook. I do put info there to give brief updates on items of interest. There also some photos posted. Currently there are 213 friends.

Website

www.nascoe.org Please visit the site for current information for NASCOE. There is a members only page now. There are links to members only items for benefits and legislative items. It does require a user id and password. You need to request this from the site. REMINDER! You cannot give or use an USDA email account. If you do, I will email you and tell you to provide a personal home email. I also need to know your state of membership. We need to verify membership prior to issuing the password. This is replacing the PAC page and if you were issued a user id and password for that, it is the same one. If you have forgotten that one, please let me know and I will try to find the previously issued password. Remember....important MEMBERS only information will be posted regarding benefits and legislative issues... things will be continually added as they become available.

CAP WIZ

With the new farm bill negotiations fast approaching, there will be legislative issues that NASCOE needs to get to our Congressional members quickly. CAP WIZ is a good tool to do that. Sign up through the website or get me your information and I can get you added. Also, if you have changed your home email address, forward to me the correct email and I will update it so you can get the Alerts timely. Email me at siouxcitychick81@hotmail.com

PAC

Iowa did a good job with the promotion at the 2010 IASCOE Convention. The Legislative Committee is still working on increasing membership. If you have questions, contact me. Information on the PAC is in the members only area of the NASCOE website and requires a user id and password (discussed above).

Thank you for the time and space in the IASCOE newsletter. Contact me with questions or comments or need assistance.

Tammy Eibey

THE TRADITION OF CUTTING DOWN A CHRISTMAS TREE

I was raised in a very traditional house like many of you were, and one of was the annual cutting down of the Christmas tree. This annual event took place Thanksgiving. In the afternoon we would drive to a neighboring town that had a farm and spot the perfect tree for the exact location that the Christmas tree was always right in front of the picture window for all vehicles passing by to view.



those traditions the Friday after Christmas tree meant to be. This

We would find the perfect tree at the farm after about four hours of driving trees. We would fight over which one was perfect. Being the designated tree cutter, I would crawl under a tree to be told “Just wait a second, your mom might have found a better one over here.”

around comparing ter, I would crawl

We finally would find one that satisfied the definition of perfect to all. It needed to be as tall as my mom, soft needles for my brother, and a straight trunk for my dad. I would crawl under the sap drooling, itchy thing that allowed needles, sap, water, snow, etc to fall down my back as I attempted to use a saw I used annually on the Friday after Thanksgiving. After having the entire family snickering at my ineptness of using such a simple tool, and realizing that if I was a pioneer I would NOT have lived, I would finally have the tree on its side for the journey to the “shaker”.

I don’t know what the “shaker” was actually called, but it would vibrate the tree to death until every bird nest, dead branch, needle, and snow flake that wasn’t already down my shirt would be shaken off. The workers would then pull the tree through something that netted the tree, and they would secure it in the back of the pickup with twine. We would then drink cider, view crafts, eat popcorn, and had a very enjoyable time in the little barn where you paid for the tree.

After going home, which typically meant the tree was in the back of the pickup for over an hour, we would display the royal plant in the front picture window. It was very easy to tell which door we entered from the trail of needles, snow, bird nests, etc that the “shaker” didn’t quite get removed. This trail typically led to the plant’s throne. This was of course after evenly sawing the edge of the trunk and placing it in the correct stand (I think there are at least three different types we used over the years, some better than others). We would then turn the tree around, what seemed, four billion times; because what the “shaker” really did was produced half a dozen “holes” that needed to be kept to the back, but not noticeable from the picture window.

My next task was always to be the royal cupbearer and deliver water to the tree. I really think that was to keep me out of the “light stringers” way. Has a year ever gone by that at least one strand of lights did work after draping them on the tree? Everyone would help place ornaments on the tree. I would usually lose interest after one ornament and play video games until the time to drape tinsel. My parents always bought the box of individual strands of tinsel instead of the rope type. It was meant to look like icicles. Each year I would stumble back from my video game because it looked like so much fun. How can people make that job look so enjoyable? I would grab a slab of tinsel and drape it over about three sticks. Needless to say that was the point that I was asked by my parents if I was really done with the video game. I would leave the “tinsel draping party” again and they would even out the mess I created.

The next hour was clean up. I would spend this hour wondering if I could ever hear my video game again for the commotion raised from the vacuum cleaner sucking up sappy needles. I really don’t know how the vacuum handled it. Needless to say it was a very rough life.

That was my boyhood tradition which I treasured so much that after I was married I wanted to make this a part of our family tradition. Of course, working for the FSA, we didn’t get the day after Thanksgiving off since it wasn’t in red on the calendar. That meant waiting until dusk to go find the blessed tree. Have you ever searched for a Christmas tree by using headlights? We had trouble finding the perfect tree in the daylight and now we did it at night.

I also discovered the other luxuries of a Christmas tree that I didn’t need to do before such as light draping, ornament hanging, and clean up. Oh, the cleanup!!! How thankful I am for a wife!!! How fortunate I was that we were newlyweds because she would tell me what she really felt about the situation now!! She also introduced me to rope tinsel. That reduced some stress in itself.



Needless to say in September, 2002 we had our first child. I was happy to introduce this tradition to our first child. We had him bundled in a car seat due to the cold weather and we were driving to the tree farm at dusk with the headlights on. It was muddy and icky everywhere. I really don’t know if snow had fallen or not, but I do know that on our journey to the tree farm the pickup suddenly turned around about two miles away from the tree farm. “Let’s do artificial this year,” I told my wife. “They look pretty realistic anymore, and we can always buy pine incense.” Needless to say she didn’t disagree one bit.

Every year the Friday after Thanksgiving we celebrate the annual Christmas Tree Raising. We grab the box the tree is stored in and have our annual Christmas tree assembly. Our holidays are so much happier.

By Barry Terhark

CHRISTMAS TRADITION



Christmas will soon be upon us and we all will be celebrating with our own special traditions. Everyone has a favorite cookie, pie, soup, vegetable dish or bread. Who doesn't like a golden turkey just waiting to be carved? The Pistek household has a very special tradition.

My husband Leonard is a very generous person and once our children grew out of the Santa Claus stage he thought we needed a more thoughtful tradition. Thus grew our quest to invite a "guest" to our Christmas Eve dinner. Each year we put our heads together and decide who should be invited to share our meal. Our special guest is someone who maybe doesn't have family close by or is just alone for that particular year.

This past year we invited Marie, a spry 90 year old, and her daughter Barbara. Barbara lives with her mother in order to care for her. Marie was so excited, our house just happens to be the home of her deceased husband's family! It was snowing when we came out after Mass so we told them we would follow them to their house and drive them to ours in the country.

The evening was so much fun, listening to Marie tell us about all of the things she remembered when visiting this house in her younger days. Marie and Barbara brought a couple bottles of wine which we all (including Marie) enjoyed. The meal included our traditional crab legs, something new to Marie.

Throughout the evening the snow kept falling and when it came time for Marie and Barbara to go home my husband put on his "elf" hat and helped Marie into the front seat singing Jingle Bells at the top of his lungs! As I watched the car pull out of the drive with the white snow reflecting on the red tail-lights, I felt truly blessed.

Every time we see Marie and Barbara they remind us how much they enjoyed that Christmas Eve dinner. The evening was really more of a gift to us, better than any gift under the Christmas tree.

We haven't decided who we will invite to our meal this year, but I'm positive that Christmas Eve will once again be a celebration of the true meaning of Christmas. The birth of a baby always brings a celebration of family and friends. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ should be the greatest one of all!

The Pistek household wishes you and your family a very Blessed Christmas.
Cindy Pistek

HOLIDAY RECIPES AND THEIR MEMORIES!!!



Chocolate Chip Fudge (Cindy Pistek-PT, Hancock County)

1 can evaporated Milk 12 ounce package chocolate chips (semi-sweet morsels)
1/4 Pound butter 1 Pound miniature Marshmallows
4 cups sugar 1 tsp vanilla

Simmer the milk, butter and sugar until it reaches the soft ball stage. Remove the pan from the heat and add the chocolate chips and marshmallows. When melted add vanilla (you can add nuts if you wish). Quickly pour fudge into a lightly greased 9 X 13 pan (my dad uses a glass pan). Once the fudge is firm, cut into small squares and enjoy.

*****My mom made this every Christmas. When my dad retired he took over the task of making fudge and now he makes a batch every week to share with friends and neighbors!***

Hamburger stew (Michelle Bruck- PT, Shelby County)

1lb of ground beef 1 can of navy beans
1 can of corn As many potatoes as you like
1 can of green beans 1 big jar of V-8 Juice
1 can of kidney beans Salt and Pepper to taste

Brown hamburger and add all to crock pot. Cook on low for several hours until potatoes are done.

*****This is what my mother used to make for Christmas Eve dinner every year when I was growing up. It's not Christmas without it.***

Chocolate Snowballs (Heather Muenchrath- PT, Shelby County)

3/4 cup butter, softened 1/2 cup baking cocoa
3/4 cup packed brown sugar 1 tsp baking powder
1 egg 1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup milk 1/4 tsp baking soda
1 tsp vanilla extract Confectioners' Sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg, milk and vanilla; mix well. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking powder, salt and baking soda; gradually add to creamed mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Shape into 1-inch balls; place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 7-8 minutes or until the tops are cracked. Remove to wire racks to cool completely. Roll cookies in the confectioners' sugar. This makes 6 dozen cookies

*****My mom and I make these for the holidays every year. It's more about spending the time together doing something that we enjoy. Last year, I made these snowballs with my two little boys during one of the many Iowa blizzards. It's the start of another family tradition!***

Cheesy Hamburger Dip (Donita Kenkel, PT, Shelby County)

1 block of Velveeta Cheese 1 small can of mushrooms, cut up
1 pound of ground beef 1 can of tomatoes and green chilies
1 small can of black olives 1 can of water chestnuts, cut up

Melt your block of Velveeta cheese and put in a crock pot. Brown one pound of hamburger and add to the cheese in the crock pot. Drain the olives, mushrooms, water chestnuts and tomatoes and green chilies and add to the crock pot. Mix all together and heat on low. This is a great dip we use with tortilla chips.

*****Our family has this at every holiday for a snack before or after dinner. We all sit down to play Rummy Cube or cards and see who comes out the winner. This dip makes me think of the many great times we all spend together and it's so yummy!***

Hot Chicken Sandwiches (Anna Boecker, COT)

3 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 cups cubed Velveeta cheese
Hamburger Buns

Mix all ingredients together. Put scoop of mixture in each hamburger bun. Wrap each bun in aluminum foil and place them on cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degree oven for 15-20 minutes, until cheese melts and sandwich is hot. You can use left-over turkey instead of chicken. These can be made and kept in refrigerator for a couple of days prior to heating.

****This is a recipe that my family has used for many years. We fix these sandwiches the day before, put them in the oven and have kids open gifts or play games until they are ready. No one has to be stuck in the kitchen missing the fun!!**

Russian Tea Cookies (Tammy Eibey, FLM)

1 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup powdered sugar - divided use
1 tablespoon water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup finely chopped nuts

In a large bowl beat butter until soft. Add 1 cup of flour and stir to combine. Stir in half the powdered sugar, water and vanilla. When well mixed, beat in the 1 1/4 cups flour. Stir in nuts. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

After dough has finished chilling, preheat oven to 325°F (160°C).

Shape dough into 1-inch balls and place 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake 18 to 20 minutes or until starting to brown. Allow to cool.

Before serving, roll cookies in remaining powdered sugar, coating evenly.

-Makes 36 cookies

Powdered sugar puts the finishing touch on these flavorful cookies. Serve them in the afternoon with tea as the name suggests, but you probably won't be able to resist them the rest of the day.

*****I have great memories growing up when my Mom, Aunt Mary, Aunt Marilyn and Grandma Nan would all get together and do Christmas Goodies at our house. It was a weekend event that I miss now that my Mom, Aunt Mary and Grandma Nan are gone. Auntie Marilyn is still a fantastic cook! I now make some of those goodies for my own children and we make several favorites when Uncle Ken comes to our house for Christmas!***

