

The background of the cover is a photograph of a winter forest. Two turkeys are standing in the snow-covered ground, surrounded by dry, yellowish-brown grasses. The trees are bare, and the overall scene is serene and wintry. The text is overlaid on this image.

The Iowa Association Of FSA
County Office Employees

IASCOE NEWS

March 2005

2005 IASCOE/IACS/IASE CONVENTION

APRIL 1 - 2, 2005

Best Western Regency Inn in Marshalltown, Iowa

---Hotel Reservation Deadline - March 18, 2005---

Phone: 800-241-2974

Mention IASCOE/IACS/IASE when registering

Room Rate: \$66.00 plus tax (Double Occupancy)

Friday April 1st

IASCOE Past President's/Retiree's Luncheon 12:00 Noon

Registration 1:00 to 5:00

IACS Meeting 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

IASE Meeting 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

IASCOE Committee Meetings 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Hospitality Room 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Talent Show 8:00 p.m.

Dance 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

Saturday April 2nd

Registration 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Breakfast Buffet Banquet 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Awards and Scholarships 8:30 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

IASCOE/IACS/IASE General Session 9:30 to 12:30

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged! It will save you time and money!!

Pre-register for all of the above activities for \$20.00.

The registration at the door will be \$25.00.

*GET INFORMATION FIRST HAND!
JOIN THE FUN!!!
CALL NOW FOR RESERVATIONS!*

*Each County is asked to bring an
item to be used for a door prize or
silent auction.*

It is your convention- Let's make it a good one!
Please try to attend and see old friends and make new ones!

-----IASCOE-----

~THE 2005 IOWA TALENT SEARCH~

WHEN: Friday April 1, 2005 8:00 p.m.

WHAT: Any talent you have (or think you may have)

WHO: Any group or individual (be brave)

*Please notify Tammy Eibey in Delaware County by March 25
so a schedule may be prepared!*

Good Luck and Have some Fun!



2005 IASCOE/IACS/IASE CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

NAME _____

COUNTY _____ POSITION _____

Pre-registration & Breakfast Banquet: \$20.00 _____

Registration at Door and Breakfast Banquet \$25.00 _____

Registration Only \$15.00 _____

***Registration includes: Meeting Room rental, Hospitality room and DJ for dance.

TOTAL: \$ _____

Please check one of the Following:

IASCOE Member _____
 IASE Member _____
 IACS Member _____
 IASCOE Associate Member _____
 Out of State Guest _____
 Other _____

Mail completed form and payment to

Connie Safley
 1252 230th Street
 Linden, Iowa 50146

All pre-registration forms should be received by March 25, 2005

PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO IASCOE

This Pre-Registration Form can be printed from our web site at iascoe.org

A Letter To The Members

From Alan Donaldson – DD District 1

I would like to take this opportunity to explain to the IASCOE membership the current Officer status of your employee association. Do to unforeseen circumstances our State employee association was temporarily without a President and Vice-President.

The IASCOE Constitution and Bylaws state that the Association's Officers are elected from the Board of Directors by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors, like yourselves, are permanent County Office employees of the Farm Service Agency elected by you, the membership. Each member of the Board of Directors represents you from a specific area of the state (see district map on website). That is a quick summary of the constitution and bylaws on the subject.

On July 12 2004, your elected IASCOE President, Tom Lane transferred from Henry/Lee County where he also served as District Director representing IASCOE District #9, to Jackson County (IASCOE District #6). Since Tom could no longer serve as a District Director representing District #9 he could also no longer serve as an IASCOE Officer as the bylaws require that Officers be from the membership on the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors determined that as IASCOE Vice President, I would assume the position of President and the position of VP would remain open until the next annual State Convention on April 1-2, 2005. At that time the Board of Directors would elect Officers to serve for the coming year. I served in this capacity until January 23 when I filled the vacant FSA District Director position for northwest Iowa. Since I am no longer a permanent employee of an FSA County Office I can no longer represent District #1 as a Director and therefore no longer eligible to serve as an IASCOE Officer.

So it was due to these circumstances, a change in the working location and working position of the IASCOE President and Vice President that created these vacancies.

As the Association could certainly not operate without a President and Vice President, the Board of Directors met on January 28th and appointed temporary officers to fill the vacant positions for the remaining 60 days until the April 2005 annual convention. Due to the limited time left before the annual meeting, some of the Board membership suggested that the temporary President have previous experience as an officer. As there was only one Past President serving on the Board of Directors, they appointed John Landgraf to serve as IASCOE President for the remaining 60 days and Tammy Eibey was elected to fill the vacant Vice President position until the April 2005 Annual Convention.

I appreciated the confidence that you as members placed in me while I occupied the office of IASCOE President. I have a greater understanding and appreciation of all the work that goes into making IASCOE an association that truly has the interests of the employees and farmers at heart. As you know many of the members, directors, and officers spend their own time and resources in working for maintaining and improving employee benefits. Please continue to support the organization. I know that I will as an associate member.

Alan Donaldson – DD District 1



The Cover Photo Of The Wild Turkeys Was Taken From The Front Window Of The Sac County FSA Office By Brian Beach - IASCOE Webmaster & PT Sac County

Hello IASCOE !

As you have read in Alan's article, there have been many changes to IASCOE since the 2004 Convention. Election of Officers will be held at the directors meeting and those officers hopefully will be in place for 2 years.

I have been serving as the Midwest Area Legislative Chairperson since September. It has been a huge eye opener learning about the issues that are affecting our employees and agency. Attending the meetings, has also given me the opportunity to meet others from across the nation that are working very hard to promote the FSA County Office Employee system. I am greatly impressed with our National Officers and directors. I also had the great opportunity to participate in the National NASCOE Legislative Conference that was held February 26 to March 3rd. I attended as the Midwest Area Legislative Chair, but Iowa was also represented by Steve Abbas, Joni Birkhofer, Greg Jobe, Steve Kennedy, Cindy Mensen and Trice Smith. I have encouraged each of them to write about their experiences. I also know that Greg took many pictures. I felt the whole process was a success. I am always humbled when visiting Washington D.C., not only to witness the extraordinary buildings but to participate in a grass root process of contacting our representatives in the way intended by our founding fathers. I was in awe of the place! There were about 190 FSA employees from across the nation in attendance at the conference. The Midwest Area was very well represented. I encourage all IASCOE members and those that are not members yet to continue the process by being members of IASCOE. It does work!

I would also encourage those in all the counties to participate as a committee member, district director or a convention attendee. It is an excellent way to make the friendships and network with other employees. I hope to see you in Marshalltown April 1st and 2nd. If you have comments or questions, please contact me!

*Tammy Eibey – FLPO Delaware County
IASCOE Vice President
Midwest Area Legislative Chairperson*



*The following is a proposed amendment to the IASCOE By-laws,
which will be voted on at the 2005 IASCOE Convention*

In the event that a duly elected officer (ie) President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, accepts another position within the state in a position entitling them to full membership within the association and the new position is not located in another officer's district, be it resolved that the officer may retain his or her position as an officer until the end of his or her specified term.

*Check our web site at iascoe.org for the entire
text of the IASCOE Constitution & By-Laws*

2005 NASCOE Legislative Conference Report From Chris Hollis - Midwest Area Executive

The 2005 Legislative Conference was attended by 33 members from the MWA, all the states in the area was represented. The National Officers, Area Legislative Chair, Tammy Eibey and the rest of the Legislative Committee did a commendable job. This conference started in Baltimore and ended in Washington. The move (on Monday morning) went well. A testament to the "can do people". We did however dodge a bullet, as there was an eight-inch snowfall in the forecast for Monday that did not materialize. Thank goodness because that would have shut the city down.

The position papers, which were carried to the hill and discussed with the congressional offices, are posted on the NASCOE web site under the legislative tab. Every employee and NASCOE member owes it to themselves to review these position papers. They should also be reviewed with the staff at the congressional member's home office in your state. If you have any question or need further clarification please contact your state or area officers.



Under the present budget climate, any way that programs can be implemented or services delivered, that reduces the burden placed on the public and/or reduces redundant business processes, will get the attention of congressional members. Why? Because it reduces the strain placed on the Federal Budget. This is the result of increased efficiencies of delivering the services. Two of the three position papers accomplished this.

Administrator Jim Little welcomed the group on Monday after the move to Hotel Washington was completed. Also giving a brief address followed by a Q/A panel session were the following:

- Keith Gray, Director of National Affairs, Alabama Farmers Federation
- Ben Noble, VP of Federal Affairs, Troutman Sanders Public Affairs Group
- John Minnick, SR VP, Washington Operations, Nat. Cotton Council of America
- Mary Kay Thatcher, Director of Public Policy, American Farm Bureau Federation
- Dana Brooks, Dir. Of Congressional Relations, American Farm Bureau Federation
- Robert L. Guenther, VP of Public Policy, United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Ass.

Lunch and dinner meetings were held on Monday and Tuesday with key congressional offices. This has become an acceptable way to conduct business and review issues. Compared to having an office meeting in which you may have 15 minutes to review issues, a dinner/lunch meeting will allow for a more relaxed setting and provide more time to discuss our concerns.

Continued...

On Wednesday Dan and Mike Mayberry from Tennessee presented a slide show of our potential role in animal ID with our GIS capabilities. This was presented to Mr. Mike Yost and will also be presented to Cheryl Maddox of the Homeland Security Department. It is my understanding they were very impressed.

We have already gotten some support by the minority members of the house Ag Committee who have written up a letter requesting the Secretary to increase staffing for FSA. Though it is not a bill, it is a start. This would not have happened without our presence on the hill last week!

The latest CAPWIZ numbers show the MWA has a little over 100 participants. A total of 686 are signed up for all Areas. Folks, this is a very important tool that we can all use, members, and non-members. This is even more important as we enter into the period of field hearings for the next farm bill, which have already begun. Let me give you an example of how important this tool could be for our agency. Let's say they want to close one of my shared management offices. We could use a letter set up by NASCOE to send to the congressional offices to counter this action. Not only employees could send this letter but COC and other producers and business people in the community. That is why we have the "tell a friend" program for CAPWIZ. Timing could be vital, therefore it is important to sign up today. I plan to attend all of the state conventions this spring and sign new members up into CAPWIZ. If you would like to sign up prior to the convention go into the NASCOE website and click on CAPWIZ. Remember this must be done on your HOME computer! An immediate to intermediate goal of NASCOE is to get into law a permanent employee baseline of 9500 employees. CAPWIZ could be used as a tool to get this issue told to the congressional offices. This tool will also be used to support introduced legislation that is beneficial to our membership, such as, increasing the Governments share of health insurance premiums. If online capabilities are not available at the conventions I will have a manual signup sheet to enroll participants that own their own home computer.

The National Officers, Area Executive and Area Negotiation/Consultant are working to prepare NASCOE responses to items submitted by our membership. Thank you to those states that responded promptly to some surveys sent out. We needed to gather more information and frequency of occurrence of some of the items submitted before writing our response. The final negotiation session with Management will take place the first of May.

David asked me to attend the NACS/NASE Zone meeting held in Indianapolis last week in his absence. It was good to interact with the FL side of FSA as well as RD. If you know of anyone in your county that attended hopefully they thought I was a good guest.

Mark your calendars for the MWA/NWA Rally to be held in Nebraska City, Nebraska June 3-5! A registration form should be sent out within the next couple of weeks.

As always if you have any question or concerns on some issues, please feel free to contact me.

Chris Hollis - MWA Executive

NASCOE Legislative Conference Report

By Greg Jobe – CED Ringgold County

I was contacted in January by Bob Wegand, who asked if I would be interested in attending the NASCOE Legislative Conference in Baltimore/Washington D.C. from February 26th through March 2nd. I agreed to attend the conference along with Steve Abbas, Joni Birkhofer, Tammy Eibey, Steve Kennedy, Cindy Mensen, and Trice Smith.

The trip was quite a memorable experience, and although I have always been aware of the functions of IASCOE/NASCOE, I have never been a very active member. I can only assume that most are like me, we pay our dues and read the newsletters, attend state conventions, etc. I was amazed with the entire Legislative Conference process and would encourage anyone who has not taken part, to make the trip for themselves. The overall organization was outstanding, the information that we were provided with to make our presentations was in depth and in a format that could be presented with minimal preparation.



I had never been to our Nation's Capital until the Legislative Conference and was somewhat taken back by the overall picture of what all goes on in Washington, D.C. While eating lunch in the food court of the Longworth House of Representatives Office Building, Tammy stated that we all have to realize when we are making our legislative visits that the thousands of people in this food court are all here doing the same thing that we are doing.

Each and every one of them has the most important cause or message to present!

With that being said, I realized that without representation of our employees needs and the overall mission of FSA, all of the other issues that are being presented by the thousands of people "lobbying in D.C." each day, will be the issues on the minds of the legislators and their staffs. We should all consider where we might be without IASCOE/NASCOE representation.

In closing, I wish to thank Bob Wegand for asking me to make the trip, and Steve A., Joni, Tammy, Steve K., Cindy, and Trice for all of the assistance that you provided in making the Legislative Conference an enjoyable and meaningful learning experience.

Greg Jobe - CED Ringgold County FSA Office

Thoughts From A First-Timer To The NASCOE Legislative Conference

By Cindy Mensen – CED Clayton County & IASCOE Director/District #3

A trip to Washington DC--a commitment of a weekend plus three days of annual leave. Includes a chance to meet our NASCOE leadership. Thank you, Iowa IASCOE members, for giving me this exciting opportunity!

Seven IASCOE members hit Baltimore MD beginning Saturday, Feb. 26, 2005. That night we met NASCOE members from across the US. The Midwest states were very well represented. FSA employees gathered together to bring a unified voice to the members of Congress. Program Technicians and CED's from nearly every state--all with the same agenda. I was impressed.

On Sunday, we began our first meeting at 9:30 am. NASCOE President, David Vidrine, a CED from Louisiana, called us together with a message to get on the train and hang on—get involved to help influence our future. Look at the worldly picture. NASCOE National Legislative Chairperson, Mark VanHoose, encouraged us to take a message to Congress that tells them what we do and how well we do it. However--no whining...be positive. We received instruction from other Legislative Committee Members (including Iowan Tammy Eibey) on how to effectively contact our public representatives, ethics and the Hatch Act, review of the Position Papers that we would take to “the Hill”, and the importance of CAPWIZ and how email may be the best way to keep all membership informed.

We heard the message over and over again about how important our network was, how important it is to get GIS up and running. We are the stats keepers and other agencies will need/want our information.

Sunday meetings ended around 5:00. A group of us had a great seafood meal at a restaurant along the beautiful Baltimore Waterfront. On Monday, we all packed our suitcases and were bussed to Washington, DC. The Hotel Washington was our new headquarters for a few days. Snow blanketed the city. From the top of our historical hotel, we could catch a glimpse of the White House. Think of all the people who have walked these steps before us. Those founding fathers had quite a vision!

On Monday afternoon we started the session hearing from James Little, FSA Administrator. Mr. Little said the President had asked USDA how we could help the hurricane ravaged states and disaster assistance was allocated. The tobacco buy-out program begins this month. Conservation's future is being reviewed. Over 5000 comments were received last fall. Budget: Ag /USDA is part of the Federal government and will be expected to share in the reduction in spending. Proposed Payment Limitation changes are being considered. Expect historical direct yields to be involved in reductions in Price Support benefits. All FSA programs would be impacted by some reduction. Mr. Little stressed the eGOV initiative, which is on the President's management agenda. Push to get GIS completed so all web-based programs can be integrated. Mr. Little's challenge is to balance costs of modernization and still provide the needed human resources to carry out field office duties. He will be going to the Hill to ask for more money for temporary office assistance. He encouraged all employees to learn better ways to use the computer resources provided to us. He concluded by complimenting NASCOE for being an honest and forthright organization.

Continued...

David Vidrine thanked Mr. Little for his time and left us with this thought about computers taking over:

Computers are	Fast & Accurate - but Dumb
People are	Slow & Make mistakes - but are Smart

We will continue to need both to survive...so do not be afraid of the modernization...embrace it.

A five-member panel including commodity group representatives from cotton, rice, fruit & vegetables & a Farm Bureau lobbyist then addressed the group. Their message was essentially the same: let's stick together to provide the best service for America's farmers. All of them were concerned about the World Trade Organization (WTO), Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), upcoming talks and how a recent lawsuit against cotton would impact our trade and supports. The current budget debate in Congress will have long term as well as short-term ramifications. We were encouraged to remind our representatives that an investment in Ag was very important and benefited every American. These commodity groups said that the last thing they want is less FSA staff.

Now to the Hill--between Monday and Wednesday, your Iowa NASCOE members spoke with staff from all seven Iowa Congressional members. NASCOE is recognized by veteran staffers--they wanted to listen to our concerns. We also talked about the Animal Identification Plan and how FSA's computer network could assist in that record-keeping task. With the tight budget, ideas to save tax dollars were well received. NASCOE's goal was to visit every Congressional member from every state and to deliver the same message at the same time. You can imagine the impact this could have!

The capital, House and Senate office buildings are only a metro ride away from downtown DC. Do you know how massive all the buildings are in Washington DC? We snuck in a visit to the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress, which are across from the capital. Several protestors were in town helping us to realize how free speech works in America. Seeing the Pentagon from out the airplane window brought back visions of a September not too long ago. I am proud to be an FSA employee, an IASCOE director and a participant in the 2005 NASCOE Legislative Conference. I want you all to know that even though you might not have been there in person, your voice was heard. Thanks for being a member of NASCOE. I challenge all of you to become more involved in IASCOE and get a first hand look yourself at how the legislative process works. I leave you with one last quote from one of the speakers at the conference, "Take change by the hand----or change will take you by the throat." Something to think about....

Cindy Mensen – CED Clayton County



See A Washington D.C. Photo Slide Show

Steve Kennedy, CED Jasper County, has created an online slide show of some photographs he took on his recent trip to the 2005 NASCOE Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. You can see this slide show at the following web address -

<http://share.shutterfly.com/osi.jsp?i=EegM3Ddi1atWUy>

Go to this web page and click on the View Pictures button. You can view each photo separately or click on the View Slideshow button to start the slideshow.

CapWiz

Have you ever said one of these statements?

“I sure wish I knew what Congress was up to and how it may affect my job.”

“Who are my congressional representatives?”

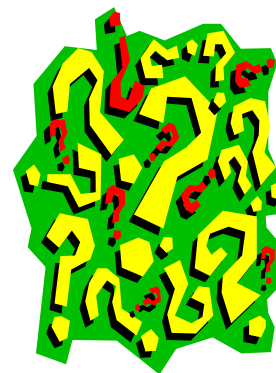
“Wonder how my congressional rep voted on a particular issue?”

“How do I get in touch with them? What should I say?”

“I am not informed as well as I need to be.”

“Is the media really telling us the true story?”

“What action can I take to make use of my IASCOE/NASCOE dues?”



Grab hold of some information
and stay informed by
signing up for CAPWIZ!!

Information available on the CAPWIZ web-site includes:

- Action Alert system Get on an e-mail list (MUST BE to your HOME email address) and you will receive updates on hot issues.
- NASCOE composes letters on issues and you can use them or write your own to let your congressional reps know how you feel—email them from this Capwiz web-site!
- Information about all your congressional contacts that also shows how they voted on bills.
- Follows current legislation deemed important to NASCOE.
- You can also send messages to local and national media through Capwiz connections.

Easy steps to follow to get signed up for CAPWIZ Action Alerts:

1. Go home and get on your own computer
2. Access website: www.capwiz.com/nascoe
3. Click on Action e-list (toward the bottom of the page)
4. Load in your name, your **home** email address, etc
5. Hit the “Submit” button

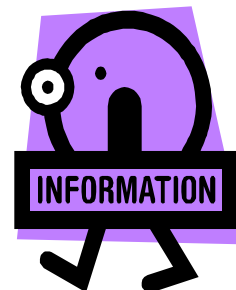
(NOTE: your government email address will not update to Capwiz and cannot be used for this process.)

Another way to access the CAPWIZ information --

Go to: www.iascoe.org

Then click on NASCOE link at bottom of home page (www.nascoe.org)

*At NASCOE web-site, click on **CAPWIZ Registration***



Contact **Cindy Mensen**, (the newly “appointed” IASCOE Capwiz Coordinator) if you have any questions about the CAPWIZ process. Contact me by phone at work –Clayton County FSA--(563) 245-1713 or at home (563) 927-5455 or cell (563) 920-8979--or use my e-mail at home: mensencat@n-connect.net.

-----IASCOE-----

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To receive notification of new IASCOE Newsletters and web page updates,
go to our web site at iascoe.org and click on the subscription link.

MWA Senate and House Committee Assignments

Senate Committees

Republican Members

Democrat Members

Agriculture Committee

Richard Lugar - IN
Jim Talent - MO
Norm Coleman - MN

Tom Harkin - IA
Debbie Stabenow - MI
Mark Dayton - MN

Appropriations

Christopher Bond - MO
Mike DeWine - OH

Tom Harkin - IA
Herbert Kohl - WI
Richard Durbin - IL

Budget

Charles Grassley - IA

Russ Freingold - WI
Debbie Stabenow - MI

Finance

Charles Grassley - IA

Homeland Security

George Vionovich - OH
Norm Coleman - MN

Carl Levin - MI
Mark Dayton - MN

House Committees

Republican Members

Democrat Members

Agriculture

John Boehner - OH
Gil Gutknecht - MN
Timothy Johnson - IL
Mike Pence - IN
Same Graves - MO
Steve King - IA
Chris Chocola - IN

Collin Peterson - MN
Leonard Boswell - IA

Continued...

House Committees Continued

Republican Members

Democrat Members

Appropriations

Ralph Regula - OH
David Hobson - OH
Joseph Knollenberg - MI
Tom Latham - IA
Jo Ann Emerson - MO
Ray LaHood - IL
Mark Kirk - IL

David Obey - WI
Martin Olav Sabo - MN
Marcy Kaptur - OH
Peter Visclosky - IN
Jesse Jackson - IL
Carolyn Kilpatrick - MI

Budget

Jim Nussle - IA
Gil Gutknecht - MN
Rob Portman - OH
Kenny Hulshof - MO
Thaddeus McCotler - MI

Tammy Baldwin - WI
Rahm Emanuel - IL
Ron Kind - WI

Homeland Security

F. James Sensenbrenner - WI
Dave Camp - MI
Mark Souder - IN

Government Reform

Dan Burton - IN
Mark Souder - IN
Steven LaTourette - OH
Candice Miller - MI
Michael Turner - OH
Patrick Tiberi - OH

Danny Davis - IL
Wm Lacy Clay - MO
Betty McCollum - MN

Ways & Means

Dave Camp - MI
Jim Ramstad - MN
Jim Nussle - IA
Jerry Miller - IL
Kenny Hulshof - MO
Paul Ryan - WI

Sander Levin - MI
Stephanie Tubbs Jones - OH



Contribute To The Next IASCOE Newsletter

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

Care Packages for Overseas Troops

*Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn
CED - Keokuk County*

The Keokuk County USDA Service Center has been compiling items for care packages to send to local troops who are currently serving overseas. Over 500 soldiers from the Iowa National Guard 224th Engineering Battalion were deployed to Iraq on News Years Eve. We invited the members of our local community to participate in our project and the response has been amazing. We have set up a mini warehouse in the map room until we are ready to start mailing packages. We have, however, delayed our mailings since many of the troops will not be stationed at a permanent location until March.

Several other county offices have expressed an interest in the project. One employee suggested each county send a care package and we thought it was a wonderful way to involve the whole state in this outreach project. We do have a list of items the troops are in need which can be faxed upon request.

One of the biggest challenges we will be facing with the project is the cost of postage. The most economical ways to mail packages is using Priority Mail Flat Rate boxes, which are available at your local Post Office free of charge. The Flat Rate boxes come in two sizes (one is the size of a large shoe box and the other is the size of a large shirt box) and cost \$7.70 to mail no matter how much the package weighs. All packages must be sent to a specific soldier. Packages addressed "Any Soldier" will no longer be delivered. We also have a list of soldiers' names and addresses available.

If counties would rather have Keokuk County send items instead of mailing packages themselves, please bring items and postage money to the IASCOE State Convention and Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk County CED, will transport items back to Sigourney.



*Let's show our troops Iowa
is behind them 100%!*

Keokuk County NRCS Employee, Kyle Morrison, helps organize contributions from local citizens.

MABEL KNOWS THE RULES!!!

This article came out in 1983. It was during the PIK years and if you have been around long enough to remember this, you belong to a very elite club! At the time of its publication, it was a big hit as the author hit the nail squarely on the head!!! I remember clearly, Bremer County had a Mabel and she did know the rules!

THE SIGN-UP PANDEMONIUM - PIKs, PAINS AND PAYOFFS

By Bill Gnatzig

Signing up for the government programs is no easy way to boost income.

To the casual observer, such income would seem to be "found" money, a "fringe benefit" so to speak, of the farming business.

HA!

It's some of the toughest money a farmer ever acquires. It's earned income. All the necessary ingredients are there---work, sweat, and a large dose of mental anguish.

County ASCS offices are normally found in old courthouse buildings. The area between the office door and the counter is approximately 3 X 5 feet. In that space, 37 to 48 farmers cram themselves, all at once, seeking program applications.

The crowded conditions are caused by the fact that no one really signs up until the final deadline is at hand. There are two reasons:

First, each farmer is anticipating a magic jump in grain prices that will make the entire effort unnecessary. Never mind the fact that grain is overflowing in every bin in the country. Hope springs eternal.

The second reason for waiting is that farmers always have something more important to do, right up until the moment of signup cutoff. Most often, those more important things involve cleaning silage out of silos, or cleaning calf or hog pens. Or both.

So, fresh----if you will forgive that use of the term---from the above endeavors, 37 to 48 farmers cram themselves into that 3 x 5 ft. space between the door and the counter in the ASCS office.

Each, of course, is trying to clarify his own situation while visiting with neighbors about the status of crops, lamenting equipment breakdowns and wailing over the price of grain, which has made this mad scene they're reacting necessary.

A fresh-looking, business-like fellow sits in a private office back off in a corner, furiously studying papers and scribbling notes, often with a phone locked between his cheek and collar-bone. He's the official ASCS representative, and he's looking busy for a good reason:

No way is he going to join the madness going on in the outer office. That's a job best left to Mabel. Mabel----and every ASCS office has one----is the sole employee who's been there since the courthouse was first built. Perhaps since the county seat was first established. She looks it. But, Mabel has some definite assets.

She doesn't get flustered, no matter how much confusion is on the opposite side of the counter. Her side of the counter is her domain. In it, she works at her own pace.

She also has the good fortune of having lost most of her olfactory senses—in other words, she can't smell much anymore. That's good, for her.

Continued...

For, while the aura of barnyard pursuits is weakening the knees of the staunchest farmer milling about on the opposite side of the counter, Mabel goes methodically about her business.

Still, her most important asset is this: MABEL KNOWS THE RULES!!!

And Mabel is the only one in the office that knows the rules. Not the fellow shuffling papers in the back office, not the three girls fresh out of high school, single-finger typing at the desks behind her. Only Mabel.

Farmers are nice to Mabel. To not be nice to Mabel is to not get signed up before the deadline. That can be expensive.

So, you wait, inching your way toward the counter, cursing yourself for drinking that final cup of coffee now threatening to create an emergency that will send you to the back of the mob, once again.

The wait is long.

A counter top never felt so solid as the one you finally lean on in the ASCS office, with Mabel on the other side.

"Name," says Mabel. It's not a question, it is a demand. Mabel is like that.

"Section," she orders. "Sign up here before and if so, why not." That's as close to a question as Mabel will come.

She leaves and reappears with your file. Acres of corn last year, acres of corn this year. Acres of small grain, hay, last year and this. Loans outstanding on last year's crop. You can't fool Mabel, SHE KNOWS THE RULES.

Now comes the interesting part.

"Your corn base on that piece of land is 25 acres," Mabel states.

You start to protest, catching yourself at the last moment, the words hanging precariously around your tonsils. No one shouts at Mabel. It's too expensive.

"I don't understand," you breathe politely. "I planted 160 acres last year; 180 the year before."

"Doesn't make any difference," says Mabel. "Your base isn't figured on those years. This program uses a running average of the previous decade divided by the average corn acreage in the county less credits for any previous set-aside plus grain quality discounts as related to any previous disaster payments or attempts to receive thereof."

Mabel says all that without inhaling, making absolutely no sense, but somehow leaving you with the feeling you should understand. Not about to admit, especially with your neighbors standing behind you listening, that you don't understand, you answer:

"Oh."

As Mabel scribbles numbers on the papers in front of you, you mentally calculate that your grain base was established somewhere between the advent of the moldboard plow and prior to McCormick's reaper. Your farm was virgin prairie at the time. But, those are the rules, and MABEL KNOWS THEM.

"Sign here," Mabel demands, shoving a sheaf of papers across the desk. Forget that promise to yourself that you'd never, ever sign anything without reading it all the way through. To Mabel, such an action on your part would be interpreted as questioning her authority. Questioning her knowledge of the rules.

That's Cardinal Sin #1 in the ASCS office. So, you sign, right where Mabel has penciled in the large "X" next to the bottom line.

Continued...

Barely waiting for the pen to clear, Mabel grabs the sheaf of papers and stuffs them back into the folder.

"Now," she says, "your required set-aside is a minimum of 10 percent of your base for which you will be paid on a minimum yield of 50 bushels per acre. However, in order to collect that, you need to set aside another 10 percent voluntarily, unless the program changes to require you to set aside more.

"Plus you can bid for more PIK under which your PLD will apply to your ARP. Any FOR you now have will be taken into account.

"You agreed to comply when you signed the paper, so you'll be getting a check for 50 percent of the amount in the mail. Should you not comply," she finally stops to take a breath and glare menacingly, "you'll be liable for repayment immediately, plus interest for the entire year and other penalties as deemed appropriate by the committee."

She doesn't say so, but you wonder if a jail sentence would be "deemed appropriate."

You shake off the vision of your wife and children peering at you through the bars, promising yourself you'll comply—at all costs.

"As long as I'm here, can I reseal my grain?"

Mabel gives you a long look of disgust.

"This is deadline for the other program. We don't have time for that now. Deadline for resealing is in 30 days. Come back then.

"Name." She's already to the next man at the counter.

You elbow your way back through the crowd, toward the door. At the fringe, you meet your adjoining neighbor. "Get signed up?" He asks, warily eyeing the clock.

"You bet! Program is just too sweet to pass up. If they're willing to pay me for not planting, I'd be a fool not to take it."

"That's what I figure," shouts the neighbor as you depart down the hall. "Man'd be a real fool!"

Climbing into the pickup you wonder if he really believes that.



AN INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE HUMAN MIND

Believe it or not, you really can read this!!!

I cknoult blveiee taht I cluod aulacilty uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid. Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uivervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. This is bcuseae the human mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas thought slpeling was ipmorantt.



Joe Rieck took over the helm as the CED in Mahaska County a few short months ago in October. What a job he will have trying to steer that crew in the right direction. I'm betting he'll have them saying, "Aye, Aye, Captain" in no time. He comes into the position with 18 years with the agency. Joe worked in Polk County as a PT until 1997. From 1997 until getting into the COT program he worked at the State Office in Urbandale.

Prior to his time with FSA, Joe farmed east of Ankeny, and continues to manage his family's farm there today. Joe's family consists of wife, Jean who is employed with Mid-American Energy. He has two sons, Dan and Adam, who are in college and a daughter Erin, an 8th grader. Joe likes to spend his

free time at college and high school sporting events.

"Smooth Sailing" to Joe as he embarks on this new adventure.



The Computer Swallowed Grandma

The computer swallowed Grandma.
Yes, honestly it's true.
She pressed 'control' and 'enter'
and disappeared from view.

It devoured her completely,
The thought just makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.

I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I've even used the Internet,
But nothing did I find.

In desperation, I asked Jeeves
My searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative,
Not a thing was found 'online'.

So, if inside your 'Inbox,'
My Grandma you should see,
Please 'Copy', 'Scan' and 'Paste' her
And send her back to me!



Visit our website at www.iascoe.org

Connie Safely, IASCOE Awards Committee Chairperson, presented a NASCOE Certificate Of Appreciation to Sue Dennis, PT Dallas County, at her retirement.



-----IASCOE-----

The staff at East Pottawattamie attended the comedy show of Larry the Cable Guy in Council Bluffs. Most employees purchased shirts from the Machine Shed that said "Git R Done" Spouses attended and we all had a 2 hour laugh. Sides and cheeks hurt from all of the laughing. Once back, reality hit and we knew that our Temporary Office employee, Perry Sinner, had to leave us. We surprised him with a potluck dinner and wore our shirts. On his final day we presented him with the following farewell.

Julie Hall – CED E. Pottawattamie

Perry Sinner:

**This is our dedication to you,
we will miss you.**

**Larry the Cable Guy says,
"Git R Done"
We say, "Git him Back"**

**Larry the Cable Guy says, "I don't
care what you say that was funny
right there"**

We say, "I don't care what the OMB says, we need Perry right here"

**Larry the Cable Guy says, "Lord forgive me,
We say, "Derryl, forgive us, for we are now short staffed and will be behind on
reports, etc.**



Julie, Nancy, Renee, Tracy, Linda

A Valentine's Day Surprise



Kossuth County FSA employees, Jayne Olson, Judy Feikema, Lisa Linahon, Sharon Lovstad, Shelly Kohlhaas, Lila Smith, Michele Bell, and Virginia Rickabaugh, COR, were surprised with a special treat on Valentine's Day. The "Tagnicians" a quartet from the Algona Barber Shop Chorus made a stop at the office, mid morning, to serenade the office sweethearts with one of Irving Berlin's most beloved ballads, "How Deep Is The Ocean?" The Tagnicians included Todd Montag, Bill Crook, Wayne Minor and Steve Smith, the husband of Lila, who also received a beautiful red rose and a photo of the group to add to her book of memories.

-----IASCOE-----

TRUTHS OF LIFE

Reprinted from the Riceville Recorder—Author Unknown

1. If you're too open-minded, your brains will fall out.
2. Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
3. If you must choose between two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.
4. My idea of housework is to sweep the room with a glance.
5. It is easier to get forgiveness than permission.
6. For every action, there is an equal and opposite government program.
7. Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious.
8. If you look like your passport picture, you probably need the trip.
9. Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.
10. A conscience is what hurts when all of your other parts feel so good.
11. Eat well, stay fit and die anyway.
12. Men are from earth, women are from earth, deal with it!



3033

Ladies, have you ever heard of a 3/4 SALE !!!! We haven't either, but that's what we're having from now until the end of March. You pay 3/4 of the regular price for 3/4 sleeve shirts - that's 25% off. Items included are SKU 3033, our stretch denim shirt with 3/4 sleeves and Item 3044, our v-neck spandex shirt with 3/4 sleeve. The denim shirt is now \$21.00 and the v-neck is now \$16.50.



3044

Check the website often because we will soon be introducing SPRING THINGS 2005! There will be some new and different items.

Gentlemen! The three styles of polo shirts are still on sale and we still have inventory. Order one, two, or more today. They're still \$20 each. Order them online or email us with what you want. This includes SKU 3003, SKU 3029, and SKU 3035.



3003



3029



3035

We did an email promotion last week advertising our **Sweater Closeout**. We will extend this to everyone. \$25 per sweater with no shipping. You need to email us the order and tell us which sweater from the inventory below that you want and send us a check or money order for \$25 each and we will get the sweater right out to you. Here's what we have:

Style 3021. Crew Neck

Red - 2 Medium, 1 Large
Navy - 1 Small
Burgundy - 1 Medium, 3 Large
Royal Blue - 1 Large

Style 3022. V-Neck

Navy - 1 X-Large
Forest Green - 2 Medium, 1 Large,
1 X-Large

Style 3049. Men's Rugger Sweater

Black - 1 Large

Visit the online store at thenascoestore.com

THE PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

PART FOURTEEN

Written By Lisa Forburger – PT Kossuth County
(Formerly Written By Roseanne Woerner, COT Wapello County)
Created by Dee Lehn, CED Keokuk County

Visit our website at
www.iascoe.org for the
entire story of "The
Perils of Polly PT"

While driving to work this morning I thought to myself, what a beautiful day. The temperature is above normal, the wind is not blowing, and there is no snow on the ground on this winter morning. I remember back when I was a child and how the winter never ended. I remember huddling in tunnels and caves fighting below zero temps to keep warm while playing outside with my brothers and sisters. I pull into the parking lot which is vacant, because I am the first one to arrive, open my door, put my foot out hit a patch of ice while I am beginning to stand up and do the splits. I always wanted to do that in high school but now is not the time to learn that task. I scream because I am in total shock and pain, and then I quickly look to see if anyone has seen my accomplishment and then I see a group of my friendly farmers have gathered at Casey's, right across the street, for their morning coffee. They all wave and I wave back. I find my feet, stand up, brush off my skirt, and I am up and on my way!

I find my Advil along with a hot cup of coffee inside the office. I decided to make my own coffee today instead of grabbing my usual cup at Casey's. I start the computer and realize that printer P1 is not working. I send in a trouble ticket and sit back for my repairman phone call. Two days pass quickly and I receive the phone call. We can never just have the IBM man come anymore in his cute little suit, and we have to go through a series of tests to make sure that we have properly identified there is a real problem. This time I am told to stick a scissors in the two slots in the front of the printer that I have half way torn apart. This will supposedly trigger the sheet to feed and we can see why it is jamming. I have worn a beautiful white sweater, but I believe that Oxy Clean will take care of anything. I have the phone tucked to

my ear with the help of my shoulder, the cord stretched to the max, thinking of a cordless phone for the office supply wish list, and I am trying to follow my repairman's instructions. "I am supposed to what!!!!!!? Now wait a minute, the printer is on," I yell. "Are you sure this will not hurt me?" I ask fearing for my life. I do what I am told and a spark flies across the room and the printer dies. I stand up, brush my skirt off, and pick the phone back up. "Is it working?" The repairman asks. "Me or the machine?" I ask. In a low voice he says, "A new printer will be shipped today." I am excited.

Four weeks later the new old printer arrives. I guess a new one to our office, or maybe they call that refurbished. In the mean time, 65,000 copies have been run on the two printers that work. The entire office staff smiles when they see the big box. We even get a real live person to deliver and set up this machine. I mention port and address and he says, "huh?" I turn pale for I know the stress of this ancient computer system. So he unpacks the new old printer and begins to plug it in and when he plugs in the blue cable I heard an awful beep and sounds like people talking in different tongues from employees that are using the old die hard computers and I know that he has knocked the run out. Great. He prints the config page and says looks like it is working and smiles. My face matches my white shirt but I sign his sheet, thank him and show him out the door. He leaves me the card that rates the service and I grab it with white knuckles. I immediately print my config and start tracing addresses and ports. As I drive home that night I look at all the beautiful stars in sky and wonder if there is life in space....wonder what that would be like?