

The Iowa Association Of FSA
County Office Employees

IASCOE NEWS



March 2007

March 2007 IASCOE Newsletter

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FROM THE DESK OF DERRYL MCLAREN, SED



Spring is just around the corner, and none-too-soon, if you ask me. With Spring comes new life, longer daylight hours, and a general sense of encouragement and hope. Just in the nick-of-time, I might add!

I know your frustrations and concerns, for I have felt them, too. I have given every effort to identify our obstacles, analyze them, develop solutions, and lobby for their resolution. The combined leadership of our State Office Specialists has been instrumental in providing direction. The fact is, when the 8 million eligibility flags were negated on November 3, 2006, we became “bound” to a “Process”. To restore payment eligibility to every single program recipient in Iowa, we were compelled to scrutinize every person(s) and entity, acknowledging these verifications by physically switching each “bad” eligibility flag. Not a small task!

I look back now, and I am satisfied we have given you the proper direction, along with the tools to complete the Process. On October 11, we directed you to undertake Phase I signature authority review and accomplish it by December 1 (arbitrary). Second, embrace the Phase II program eligibility review as outlined. All of the Process steps we identified and for which we provided direction eventually became national policy. Not bad!

Now, what about those tools you were talking about, Derryl? Well, the first issue was the Administrator’s Relief provided by Teresa Lasseter. That broke the log jam and allowed us to “fix” the date sensitive signature authority issues. The other tools I have provided as budget has allowed.

The budget situation has been clouded with the November election, the continuing resolutions, and the CR for the remainder of the year. Not knowing the outcome, I committed TO’s through March and additional permanent CO hires in consideration of upcoming retirements. The last thing you needed was a crippling loss of key personnel in your office due to 40-60 day security clearance backlogs on new employees. Fortunately, the budget appears to be a “best case” scenario for FSA. The bet paid-off!

I know you have other concerns about your future in FSA, but you don’t need distractions right now. Six of the 28 hires I authorized in January were for additional COT’s. Currently we have 12 openings and 9 COT’s on board. We need more COT’s! The Farm Bill proposal offered with open arms by the Secretary should have eased your other concern. I certainly had no problem identifying FSA’s role in his outline.

Stop jumping ahead of me! I haven’t forgotten the IT problems. Picture in your mind our computer system as a patient occupying a hospital bed. In walks the doctor and states, “We still don’t know what is causing your symptoms. I guess we will have to wait for the autopsy report”. Well, this scene has changed dramatically since the computer docs from HP, Microsoft, and IBM were called in for consultation. All of the agriculture community is now aware of the ill health of our computer system. What’s more, the Secretary will soon plead our case before Congress in an attempt to modernize our technology in advance of the Farm Bill.

So don’t falter now! Let me assure you that our Mission, the Process, is a worthy one. Our signature and eligibility reviews will cleanse and perfect our data base just in time for the next Farm Bill implementation. Hang in there!



Dee-liberations

By Dee Ann Lehn
IASCOE President / CED Keokuk County

I have had plenty of time to reflect the last few days as we have been out of power at home due to the ice storm that came through with no immediate relief in sight. I had been considering how I wanted my last column as your president to read and quite frankly was having quite a time deciding what tone I wanted to convey.

As I was working around home with only the light from a few candles and the only warmth radiating from the fireplace in the family room, I realized this is what you call going back to basics—no lights, no hot water, no way to cook but yet we manage. Certainly, life is much easier and much more comfortable with all the benefits of our modern day world.



Since I had time to ponder the ways of the world during our little black-out, I begin to make a comparison in my mind—my current situation compared to working for FSA in the early years when benefits were limited. Of course, those employees were able to do their work without all the benefits we have now just as I could do my work at home without the convenience of electricity but do I want to continue to live without electricity or would FSA employees want to do without the benefits they now have? I'm assuming the answer in both cases would be a great big "NO"! NASCOE of course, cannot take credit for all the benefits we now have as FSA employees but NASCOE was certainly instrumental in securing many of the benefits we have.

There is always room for improvements and NASCOE is constantly negotiating for more benefits for the employees of FSA. However, as with any negotiation process, these things take time and in many cases an act of congress is needed to implement change-literally! In order for NASCOE to remain a positive influence on our future, we must keep the organization strong which means increasing membership and encouraging members to take advantage of the tools we have available to help our cause such as CapWiz.

So my parting advice to you all is this—do something to help yourselves. Become a member of IASCOE if you are not and current members find ways to become active in the organization. There are endless opportunities for you as a member not only at the state level but at the national level as well.

I cannot say all of my days as your president have been easy ones but I have grown as a person and feel a sense of pride in knowing that I have been able to make that little bit of difference that may lead to a better life for all of us. I hope to continue my work in NASCOE as I plan to run for the position of Midwest Alternate Director. The election will not be held until the national convention in August so I have a long road ahead of me and I certainly will appreciate all of your support. Iowa has more members than any other state in the nation and we need to have our voice heard at the national level.

So as my tenure as president ends, I'm looking forward to new opportunities that await me. Just remember, there are opportunities out there just waiting for all of you too!

Dee



Cover photo taken by Brian Beach – IASCOE Webmaster/PT Sac County

Cabin Fever

By Steve Kennedy,
IASCOE Vice-President / CED Jasper County

I am sure we are all feeling a little cabin fever. It has been a long winter. As I write, a storm outside is brewing. One of those like we haven't experienced in a number of years. The trees are covered with a glaze of ice and the ice covers our east window. The lights have flickered a couple of times, which causes me to pray fervently we don't lose power. I don't relish the idea of spending the remaining weekend in a cold house.

While I do feel a sense of being trapped inside, it does provide me with time to collect my thoughts. Here are a few of them.

Life in FSA – FSA has also been experiencing a storm. Whether it the computers that won't function, more workload, or increasingly complex programs to administer, it is all taking a toll on our employees. As an employee organization, NASCOE is continually involved in addressing the serious issues we face. Admittedly, like the weather, there are certain things that we have no control over, but by staying involved we may be able to minimize the long-term effects. Let's look forward to Spring!!!

Retirements – Maybe it is my imagination, but it seems to me that we are witnessing a lot of retirements lately. I may be wrong, but I wouldn't be surprised if some had planned to stay with FSA longer, but have decided the pressure and stress are no longer worth it. If that is indeed the case, this is sad for FSA. We are losing a wealth of knowledge and individuals we are extremely dedicated to their jobs. These assets will not easily be replaced.

To those who are retiring, thank you for all you have given to FSA. You have a right to feel proud of your accomplishments. I wish each of you the best and hope you share many years of enjoyment with your families.

Legislative Conference – In early March, several IASCOE members will be attending the 2007 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. I won't be going this year, but my past experiences have been unforgettable. I quickly learned that everyday there are many, many voices vying for the attention of our elected representatives. The 15 to 20 minutes of time you have with either the representative or his Aid goes very quickly. They take a few notes of your concerns and then fly on to the next appointment. It is easy to question whether you are making an impact. Then you realize that you are just planting a seed. A lot of follow up has to take place. And that is where IASCOE members back home can help. The next time a Senator or Congressman (or one of their Aids) makes a local visit, meet with them to re-enforce our issues with them. The more they hear from us, the better our chances of obtaining real change.

IASCOE Convention – There are plenty of reasons to attend this year's IASCOE Convention Friday, March 30 to Saturday, March 31. First of all, we all need a break. Take the chance to get away for a while and spend some good time with friends and co-workers. The site of this year's convention is again at the Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston. There are several speakers lined up including our Administrator, Teresa Lasseter. So come join the fun and a sure way to cure Cabin Fever!!!

Think Spring!!!

2007 IASCOE/IACS/IASE Joint Convention

It's time to think about making your reservations to attend the 2007 IASCOE/IACS/IASE Joint Convention. This upcoming event will be held March 30 and March 31, 2007 at the Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston, Iowa

The Stoney Creek Inn has a unique way of letting you enjoy the great outdoors indoors! The atmosphere is that of a hunting lodge decorated with an abundance of items that make you feel as if you are sitting around a warm camp fire in the middle of wooded wonderland.

The Stoney Creek Inn is just a few miles from Des Moines and all that our Capitol City has to offer. Great shopping, fine dining and a variety of entertainment options are just minutes away.

Administrator, Teresa Lasseter will be speaking Friday afternoon shortly after the Lunch Hour!

To make your reservation please call the Stoney Creek Inn reservations line at 1-800-659-2220.

Please mention you are attending the IASCOE convention when making your reservation to get the special rate of \$73.00 per room.

We hope to see you there!

**IASCOE/IACS/IASE PRE-REGISTRATION FORM
MARCH 30 – 31, 2007**

NAME: _____

COUNTY: _____ POSITION: _____

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING _____

Pre-registration & Breakfast Banquet: \$25.00 EA _____

Registration at Door and Breakfast Banquet: \$30.00 EA _____

Registration Only: \$20.00 EA _____

Breakfast Banquet Only: \$12.50 EA _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

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

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:

Judy Dameron
718 Mill St.
Wapello, IA 52653

All pre-registration forms should be received by March 23, 2007
PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO IASCOE

2006 Final Membership Report

By Daniel Wells, State Membership Chairperson

The numbers are finally in!!! The 2006 IASCOE Membership drive turned out to be another success. Our IASCOE membership is up again this year to 89.0%. Thanks to all of you and the hard work of your membership committee. Our continued goal is to have as many members as possible in Iowa. Hopefully each of the upcoming years we will see a continued 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.

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. We currently have 40 active associate members.

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:

Sheri Muench – Buchanan County
Pat Helmrichs – Delaware County
Kathy Moorman – Wayne County
Renee Price - East Pottawattamie County
Connie Johnson – Fayette 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.



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

Scholarship Application Process 2008

Recently our directors met with a fellow IASCOE member who had some concerns about our scholarship application process. After much discussion we decided that for the 2008 scholarship application process we would offer two options for applicants.



If an applicant only wished to be considered for the IOWA scholarship, the application will no longer include any student/parental financial information. When scoring applicants for the IOWA winner, we will no longer use financial data as criteria for the applicants. It is our hope that this might afford more students an opportunity for the IOWA scholarship.

If an applicant wishes to be eligible for the IOWA, the MIDWEST and possibly the NATIONAL scholarship, they will continue to use the National application. This way those individuals might continue to have a chance at more than one scholarship with only one application.

Remember that a portion of your membership dues goes directly towards this scholarship program which supports the students of current IASCOE members.

Cindy Pistek
Scholarship Chairman



Just another day in paradise!!!

Someone found this picture tucked away while restocking some supplies... recognize anyone? A crazy Halloween group, aren't they? Do you give up? They are Mary Jane Leach, Carol Boos and Lisa Leyh from the Chickasaw County Office all decked out to trick or treat at the counter in New Hampton.



Midwest Area Executive Report

By Mark VanHoose – Midwest Area Executive

It has been a very busy winter for NASCOE as we move toward spring. Members just wrapped up the legislative conference in Washington, DC, March 4-7th. Our three main points for presentation were conservation administration, FSA's role in the next farm bill and employee benefits. I am sure others are giving you more details on this so I won't go into the fine points. I am constantly amazed by the attendance (almost 200) and the dedication of those who are there on our behalf. I will tell you that I see the Midwest Congressional delegation becoming more influential in farm program matters and so I want to encourage you to continue to be active in this area. Many state representatives were in DC visiting those who represent you so please build on this with the local Congressional staffs. Position papers should be on the web site shortly and these are good tools to use in educating members of Congress. Remember to do all legislative contacts on behalf of NASCOE on your own time and dime. It is so important that you not let the conference be your only contact.

Negotiation items are being readied for management and we will be meeting with FSA leadership in April or May. There were many important items submitted and that list will be out soon. I want to thank everyone who took time to send in an item in November.

We had a very good Political Action Committee (PAC) donation signup at the legislative conference. NASCOE is planning on providing secure internet access at state conventions to do signup on-line. A small amount out of each paycheck is a great way to contribute with little pain! I also want to encourage you to get signed up for the legislative alert system known as Capwiz. If you are a member with very little time to commit to the association, both the PAC and Capwiz are fairly "pain free". There was a flap in Washington where the Secretary of Agriculture was asked in a hearing about our poor computer system. He admitted things were bad and that funding was needed (though not requested). This is the kind of issue Capwiz can cause Congress to take note. Many alerts about the problems in our offices went to Congress before this hearing. You can sign up on www.nascoe.org.

Leadership has had ongoing meetings with the National Association of Conservation Districts about conservation administration. We are working on getting contacts with Homeland Security, OPM and OMB to foster better understanding of employee benefits and what FSA has to offer other agencies. There is a lot going on!

I have recently been charged by our national president to lead the NASCOE committee working on Program Technician classification. This is a daunting task but one I find challenging. As I start to dig in on this I would very much appreciate your comments about this endeavor. I will keep you informed as this proceeds.

Remember our Midwest Area Rally will be in Michigan May 4th and 5th in Frankenmuth, Michigan. The meeting will be in a Bavarian Inn with many amenities and lots of good information. Please plan to attend.

Again, thank you for all you do and it is an honor to serve as your Midwest Area Executive!

Report From Washington DC

By David Stromer - CED Kossuth County

This past week I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the National Legislative Conference for NASCOE in Washington D.C. It was both educational and productive. We were fortunate enough to meet with each Iowa Congressman or a staff member as well as both Senators and their staff. The positions we reviewed with each legislator were received with understanding and questions. The fact they asked questions is reassuring that they will give attention to these positions as they write the new farm bill and address legislation that comes up in both the House and Senate.

The one topic that seemed to stir the most attention was the Whistle Blowers Act and the fact that we as county employees are not covered under this legislation. We were told this has been moved out of the Armed Services committee and should be placed on the calendar for debate in the near future. Our job now is to be sure the proper amendment gets introduced to include language that will include title 7 employees.

They also listened to our concerns about the web situation and asked for our input in what we needed or how we thought it could be fixed. The new farm bill was also a great talking point. Not so much of what is in it as much as how we can administer it and what we need to do that. We encouraged each of them to consider moving all the administration part of conservation back to the FSA side of the USDA and leave the technical side solely with NRCS. We explained that these are the agencies strong points and it would make the process more efficient and give NRCS more time to do what they do best.

We encouraged the same cooperation to be extended to the reporting of acres between FSA, RMA and NASS. We explained that the same acres need to be reported to FSA and RMA and to duplicate data bases is both inefficient and time consuming. I think our talking points were well received and will have an impact on the legislation dealing with each of these topics. It was quite a learning experience.

Just walking around the Senate and House office buildings gives you a sense of awe thinking that this is where the bulk of the work gets done. As my daughter put it, you can't go to Washington D.C. and not feel moved by the political process, even if you are not political in any other way. And the historical buildings that present the history and elegance of our heritage are unbelievable. We found a little time to see the Library of Congress and tour the Capitol. And one night we walked the area around the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. I even found the name of a relative of mine on the Vietnam Memorial wall. It truly does make you feel emotional to see the number of names who gave their lives in Vietnam all listed on one wall. It was amazing seeing the monuments at night with all the lights illuminating them against the darkness.

I want to thank IASCOE for the opportunity to be involved in this important part of our organization and assure you our job is not over, but we will continue to follow up on these issues throughout the year.

NASCOE Legislative Conference - 10 Years Later!

By Jolene Fechter – CED Page County

Thanks to IASCOE members for allowing me to attend the 2007 Legislative Conference representing you in our visits to “Capitol Hill”. It had been 10 years since I had been to DC on a Legislative Conference and it still generates the same energy and excitement as the first time I went. When you go up and down the halls of Congress seeing NASCOE members from other states taking the same message to their Congressional people it is truly an experience you never forget. If you ever have the opportunity - go for it!

The delegation from Iowa battled snow, ice, delayed flights and even lack of power just a few days before departure to arrive in Washington on Sunday, March 4th. Monday we kicked off with an address from the Administrator. She talked about a variety of topics but she felt good about our IT situation because it had risen to the level of the Secretary. Now he will be asking something be done about it! She also discussed the possibility of delivering the new farm bill manually if something wasn't corrected - that created a large groan from the audience!!!! Let's hope that doesn't happen!

Her discussion continued with office closures and how we need a good delivery system with better service and a state driven plan instead of one from Washington. She quoted the figures on the number of offices with very few employees - 58 offices with 0 employees, 139 with 1 employee, 338 with 2 employees, 515 with 3 employees and 361 offices with no CED. She further reiterated the need to redesign FSA with offices where they need to be to administer the farm bill and to service customers. With regard to IPIA, she stated we must be accountable and while she has authorized some relief for the next round of reviews suggestions to Washington to make the processes easier are welcome.

Secretary Johanns has been more involved than previous Secretaries in the administration's proposals for the Farm Bill as he conducted 52 listening sessions. Those comments were recorded, analyzed and utilized in the Administration's proposal. Regarding disaster legislation, she stated Congress may authorize some but she didn't know if the President would sign it. If one is authorized FSA would deliver it.

In addressing employee morale, she commented that jobs at FSA are not easy and we should view those as rewarding and meaningful as we are appreciated by the producers who feed and clothe the nation. She believes in the safety net and as employees we play a major role for which we should be proud of the fact agriculture is important and we are part of the process.

The timing of this legislative conference gave us the opportunity to lay the groundwork for delivery of the next Farm Bill as well as administration of conservation programs and several employee benefits. Be sure to read the position papers included in this newsletter for details. *(Farm Bill position paper prepared by NASCOE included acreage reports, availability of our data base, NAP for specialty crops, Egov using IT funds and our ability to administer programs with our proven track record. Other papers included FSA handling administration of conservation programs and a large list of employee benefits. While benefits are very fragile now in light of budget deficits, we did highlight the lack of language to include County Office employees in the Whistleblower Act.)*

continued...

Visits to our congressional representatives were much easier than those who have urban representatives as all of Iowa Congressional people are aware of FSA and what we do. As usual, we only saw aids to review our position papers but for the most part they understood our information and all were in agreement the timing was good due to pending Farm Bill debate. I would encourage you to contact your representatives regarding these issues as the more they hear it the better chance there is of success. Senator Grassley attended the reception hosted by NASCOE on Tuesday evening and Senator Harkin held his constituent breakfast on Wednesday so we did get a chance to see those two personally.

We did try to see some of the sites while there although our time was limited. I tried my hat at being a tour guide on a very cold night (I think I will keep my day job ☺ ☺ ☺) but we did get to take a tour of the Library of Congress and the Capital as well as seeing the Congressional offices and buildings. As always it is fun to navigate through the district on the metro as well as eat at some of those expensive restaurants in the DC area. 10 years later it requires you to take more cash (or make lots of trips to the cash machine) as everything in Washington is expensive!!!! Thanks again IASCOE for letting me represent you.



Jolene Fechter, Dee Lehn, Senator Tom Harkin, & Barry TerHark

2007 Legislative Conference

Unofficial minutes and notes submitted by Deb Esselman-Baird, CED Taylor/Price County Wisconsin may be found at www.iascoe.org

NASCOE LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

By Barry TerHark -CED Poweshiek County

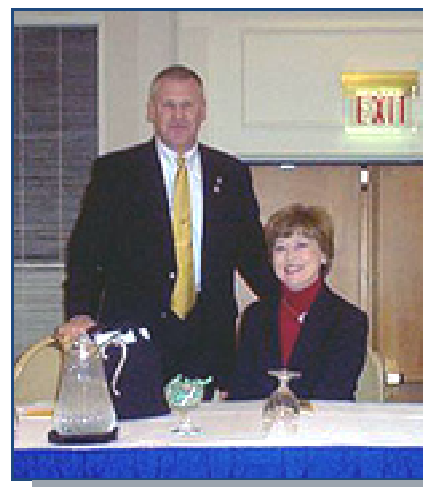
Where do I even begin? It was my second flight, and my first time to DC. I remember taxiing down the runway thinking that my life was about to end wondering what the next few days were really going to be like. I had concerns of getting lost or losing my metro ticket which is the "only way to get around out there". As the airplane landed, and we awaited our luggage, the thoughts of, "do I really know what I am getting myself into?" came into my head.

A meeting on Monday, conferences on Tuesday and Wednesday, and make sure you spend a little time to see the sites was racing in my mind as I walked to my room. As I sat in the meeting room, listening to Dan Root, Trice Smith, Mike Mayfield, and Tammy Eibey among other NASCOE members discuss the conferences we were going to have with the Congressman, I thought these individuals have made an amazing contribution to this organization. It is only through a large donation of time by these individuals that such a conference could happen.

Teresa Lasseter had time to come to the conference to give us all a little boost on IT issues, Office Restructuring that is occurring in areas of the nation, the new Administration Undersecretary, Improper Payments, the new Farm Bill proposal, Disaster Legislation, and the moral in the county offices. I wrote down this note during her speech that she made: Moral should be high. Jobs are rewarding, meaningful, and important to agriculture as we feed, clothe, and now provide fuel for our nation. Not only do we feed ourselves in this country, but we feed the world through our agriculture which is pushed by our agency. We as an agency need to recognize that we are important. I thought these were powerful words.

On Tuesday and Wednesday we pushed to get to appointments timely to visit with Congressmen and Senators concerning our key notes. I did not realize that when we talk to them at a legislative conference, we are to focus on certain key notes so every Congressman and Senator hears the same message. We also give a packet that contains detailed letters explaining these key notes so they have something to review later. Every Congressman and Senator (or their aide) is approached during these two days, and the same message is proposed to them. It is an amazing process. I felt like the discussions were positive. Some were more positive than others, but the majority of our visits seemed like the aides were receptive to our message.

As the plane departed from DC, a thought drifted into my head, if one would come to Congress to sell a certain fact, that fact may drift into the stacks of paper listing someone else's ideas and facts. But when many people come to Congress, all to sell the very same fact, the stacks of all that paper, explain the very same fact. If one were to review the day's work, and read all of the notes on paper. The conclusion would finally come to you, that fact must be a fact. A choir sings louder than one person's voice.



Dan Root & FSA Administrator Teresa Lasseter



National Association of FSA County Office Employees

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Introduction to FSA and NASCOE

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

The Farm Service Agency, a part of USDA, ensures the well being of American agriculture, the environment and the American public through efficient and equitable administration of farm programs. They include commodity programs, farm ownership, operating and emergency loans, conservation and environmental programs and emergency and disaster assistance.

One of FSA's greatest strengths is its "grassroots" delivery system of farm programs to Agency customers. FSA's programs are delivered through an extensive network of field offices including over 2,350 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Centers and 51 State Offices, including Puerto Rico. Area and County elected committees and appointed minority advisors, comprised of farmers in the local area, are responsible for overseeing FSA services delivered to the farming community. Minority and/or female advisors are appointed to guarantee equitable representation. This extensive network enables FSA to maintain close relationships with Agency customers and successfully address customer's needs in an effort to continually improve the delivery of FSA programs.

FSA is faced with the challenge of streamlining operations and reducing expenditures, consistent with balanced budget mandates, while maintaining a field office presence sufficient to ensure quality customer service. We strive to provide equitable, friendly, effective, and efficient customer service and to enhance the ability of small, limited resource, beginning and socially disadvantaged family farmers/ranchers to operate successfully.

INTRODUCTION TO NASCOE

The National Association of Farm Service Agency County Office Employees (NASCOE) is an organization that represents the county level employees of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). This professional association represents the interests of all county office employees of the FSA, regardless of membership. NASCOE was chartered in 1959 to provide a nationwide, nonprofit, nonpartisan, non-governmental association through which the County Committee employees of the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), now FSA, could render better service to American Agriculture. NASCOE provides a national medium for the exchange of ideas and information, and to facilitate closer cooperation in identifying mutual concerns and the solutions.

Our objectives are: (1) To assist in every way possible to assure successful operation of the Farm Service Agency and the attainment of the Agency's objectives, (2) To cooperate with common interest groups and organizations to conserve and improve our nation's natural resources, (3) To secure equitable salaries, working conditions, and retirement provisions for all county office employees, and (4) To promote professionalism in our employees.

NASCOE membership is strictly voluntary. Of the approximately 8775 eligible county FSA employees, more than 85 percent are members. Each state has an independent state organization. These state associations are affiliated with the national organization (NASCOE). After the USDA reorganization of 1995, FSA granted NASCOE exclusive recognition to represent Farm Service Agency county office employees in negotiations with management. All officers, executive committee members, and standing committee members are full time FSA employees who perform their NASCOE duties on unofficial time. Travel and business expenses are paid from membership dues.



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FSA and the Next Farm Bill

NASCOE views the development of the next Farm Bill as an immense opportunity for Congress and the Administration to meet agricultural challenges and to provide opportunities for the future. The employees of the Farm Service Agency stand prepared to provide the means for Congress to administer many of the programs and duties provided for in the next Farm Bill. Since the 1930's the Farm Service Agency and its predecessors have been USDA's most efficient and effective agency for administering farm programs. With a grass roots system of locally elected farmers and ranchers serving each county, and a committed staff of county office employees who are accountable to both USDA and the locally elected committee, the system is a shining example of government of the people and by the people. FSA has provided one of the only systems in government where local control and national direction work hand in hand to accomplish the goals set forth by Congress and directed by the President.

As Congress develops the Farm Bill, NASCOE asks that you consider the following suggestions for effective implementation of current and future farm and commodity programs:

- Designate FSA as the sole Agency for the collection of crop acreage reports.
- Utilize FSA resources and skills by appointing FSA the centralized data management agency within USDA.
- Consider expansion of the Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) to provide needed assistance to specialty crop producers.
- Information Technology Initiatives implemented by USDA should be more accountable.
- With a proven track record in administering payment programs FSA should be assigned any new payment programs developed by Congress such as: Permanent Livestock and Crop Disaster Programs, Crop Revenue Programs, and Energy-Based Programs.

Programs administered by FSA are vital to American agriculture, family farms, and the rural economies of the communities in which we serve. Since 1993 FSA staffing levels have been drastically reduced to a level where our excellent service could be compromised. With the *current level of program delivery* NASCOE feels we must be staffed with 9800 employees. This level will protect our infrastructure, program delivery, and ensure that the required checks and balances are properly executed. In the future we must continue to staff according to our program delivery needs. If a permanent disaster program is developed or a disaster type program implemented we ask that a level of temporary employees be written into the legislation to be aligned with the size of the disaster.

To meet the changing needs of our agency we must maintain integrity in our mandated programs at the least cost of delivery. We must make the most of our limited fiscal budgets and use our resources wisely. We hope you will consider the items contained in this paper for the future of American Agriculture.

TALKING POINTS – NEXT FARM BILL

1. Crop Reporting—USDA is currently funding the collection of acreage and yield information in three separate agencies. Risk Management (RMA), National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Consolidation and collection of this information into one agency should save a considerable amount of dollars. FSA has the local presence to easily collect this information and share it with the other agencies. The development of a joint program such as this has partially been developed but never implemented.

2. FSA Database Capabilities-2346 county offices and about 8000 locally elected County Committee members provide for a fair and equitable way to solve local issues while remaining accountable to both the producers and the Secretary. FSA has the GIS /Common Land Unit and also an extensive farm record system that can manage information for NRCS and other agencies. We are the only agency with an extensive field office structure that can handle datasets in real time. The Homeland Security Agency could use this system to identify points of vulnerability such as nuclear power plants, nitrate storage, food storage and shipping ports. FSA offices could be assigned by the Department of Homeland Security as a response station for natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Anytime in the future if USDA deems the National Animal Identification Program mandatory FSA would be a logical choice to administer such a program. States such as Wisconsin who are currently involving FSA in the reporting process are showing an impressive track record in reporting.

3. Specialty Crops (NAP)- Expansion of this program could better ensure crop protection tools for those not covered by the traditional crop insurance programs. We feel that the specialty crop producers would have the protection they require without creating a new program. By adjusting the loss thresholds and payment rate percentages this program could be beneficial to this group of agricultural growers. As mentioned before this would make an efficient use of funds if FSA completed the entire crop reporting functions for this program.

4. IT issues—E-Gov is the way of the future and our clientele should be afforded this opportunity. FSA has moved into the future with on-line applications but we believe that a re-evaluation of IT initiatives should be taken. Have our goals been met? Have the dollars spent on E-Gov shown results accordingly? Does the current rate of participation for on-line signup fit the projected budgets for this project? A very small percentage of producers utilize this option. Most producers find the E-Gov option difficult and time consuming therefore; they continue to rely on the county offices to conduct their business. When looking at a tighter budget for agriculture and a possible lower base-line is this quality use of funds?

5. Permanent Disaster/Crop Revenue/Energy-For many years a permanent livestock program existed to expedite response time in the event of a natural disaster. The FSA County Committee had the authority to set up the request for implementation of this type of program by using stringent eligibility requirements. NASCOE feels that the County Committee can be very successful, responsive, and efficient in managing this program. Allowing a permanent disaster program or Revenue Based program would allow disaster funds to be quickly distributed in a timelier manner without paying late payment interest. Any un-obligated funds would hopefully be able to be transferred over to the next year. For many years FSA has responded to natural disasters from hurricanes, to drought, to ice storms and has been on the front lines working with producers and providing them the financial assistance they need to survive. FSA has the crop and producer data in place to implement these types of programs. FSA is the perfect match for any crop-based energy program.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FSA COUNTY OFFICE EMPLOYEES
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED ASCS-FSA COUNTY OFFICE EMPLOYEES



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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The 109th Congress of the United States attempted passage of several pieces of legislation supported by NASCOE and RASCOE. NASCOE and RASCOE applaud those Congressional Representatives supporting this legislation. It is hoped that the 110th Congress will, at a minimum, address the inequities described below;

❖ **Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision.** The formula for calculating a federal employee's retirement under this provision reduces the earned annuity by as much as 60% . HR 82 and SB 206 introduced in the 110th Congress address this inequity.

❖ **Government Pension Offset.** The law requires two-thirds of a government annuity be offset from a spousal social security benefit. HR 82 and SB206 also correct this situation.

❖ **Retirement.** Federal County Office Employees dedicate their career to serving the Agricultural Community with a promise of certain retirement benefits. Many federal employees would be very disappointed if Congress made a change in the retirement formula at this time.

❖ **Cost of Living Adjustments.** The 1990 Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act was designed to equalize pay between federal and non-federal workers within 10-years. The average pay for FSA employees lags 8 to 12% behind comparable jobs in the private sector. Congress needs to act to correct this disparity.

❖ **Health Insurance.** NASCOE and RASCOE support several changes to the health insurance programs offered our employees. Items of concern include; premiums continue to rise approximately 10% each year, non-participants should receive monetary compensation, the age of discontinuing coverage for dependents should be raised from 22 to 25, the law should allow retirees to use pre-tax dollars to pay health costs (H.R. 1110 provides this correction for our retirees), and we support the availability of affordable dental and vision coverage. Our membership is counting on Congress to assure that our employees carrying health insurance during the last 5 years of their federal employment maintain eligibility for full health benefits into retirement. Your support of legislation addressing our member's concerns for improved health insurance benefits will improve working conditions for all federal employees.

❖ **Leave.** Federal Employees covered under the Federal Employee Retirement System (those hired since 1/1984) should be rewarded for conserving their sick leave. We support removal of the requirement that GS and CO employees be from the same employee system to utilize donated leave. Finally donated leave should not be limited to annual leave.

❖ **Liability Protection.** Congress must act to revise 7 CFR Subtitle A to include former USDA employees. Employees leaving USDA should be protected from lawsuits generated from actions taken during their official employment.

❖ **Whistleblower Act.** Federal Law, Title 5, U.S.C. Sec 1213 and Sec 2302, provides a secure channel for current, former, and prospective federal employees to make confidential disclosures of the following: abuse of authority, violations of law, gross mismanagement, waste of federal funds and evidence of specific danger to public health and safety. Federal Law also protects these groups from retaliation related to any persons that have filed a whistle blower complaint. Title 7 Employees (non-federal County Committee employees) should be afforded the same protection offered other Federal Employees under the Whistleblower Act. This oversight could be addressed by Congress by including our members in the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (H.R.985) and the Executive Branch Reform Act (H.R.984).

NASCOE and RASCOE ask that Congress consider ways to make federal employment more comparable to the private sector. We believe enactment of legislation to address the above issues will allow USDA to continue providing the high quality of service the farm community has become accustomed to, and to continue to attract high quality employees in the future.

TALKING POINTS FOR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The 109th Congress of the United States attempted passage of several pieces of legislation supported by NASCOE and RASCOE. NASCOE and RASCOE applaud those Congressional Representatives supporting this legislation. It is hoped that the 110th Congress will, at a minimum, address the inequities described below;

❖ **Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision.** This provision greatly reduces the Social Security benefit of a retired or disabled worker receiving an annuity based on his/her own earnings. The formula for calculating a federal employee's retirement under this provision reduces our annuity by as much as 60%. Our employees earning income from sources subject to social security deserve to have their benefits calculated the same as someone earning all their income from social security covered sources. This provision should be repealed to make federal employment comparable to the private sector. Current legislation addressing this issue includes H.R. 82 and S. 206.

❖ **Government Pension Offset.** This provision affects government retirees collecting a government annuity based on their own work and social security benefits based on their spouse's work record. The law requires two-thirds of the government annuity be offset on whatever social security benefit would be paid as a spouse of a social security covered worker. Many workers receive retirement benefits from sources other than social security, yet this provision unfairly targets government employees. Action to make federal employees comparable to the private sector must include repealing Government Pension Offset.

NASCOE and RASCOE express appreciation to members of the 110th Congress who have introduced or voiced support via co-sponsorship of legislation (H.R. 82 and S. 206) to correct the discrepancies described above. All Members of Congress are encouraged to join in this effort of "fairness." Congressional support of this legislation demands that it be brought to the floor for a vote in 2007.

❖ **Cost of Living Adjustments.** Cost of living (COLA) adjustments for employees and retirees should be maintained and increased in the same general amount received in the private sector. Congress must grant and improve these adjustments for its employees and retirees to maintain a quality workforce. The 1990 Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act was designed to equalize pay between federal and non-federal workers within 10-years. According to the American Federation of Government Employees' website www.afge.org, the average pay for FSA employees lags 8 to 12% behind comparable jobs in the private sector. Congress needs to assure federal salaries continue to attract a quality workforce.

An article by Karen Rutzick, from www.govexec.com cites the tools used by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to retain high quality workers. Higher pay, higher contributions toward health insurance, subsidized vision and dental coverage, additional retirement savings accounts with matching agency contributions, agency match to TSP for CSRS employees and special accounts for "life cycle" needs are part of FDIC's compensation package. Glen Bjorklund, the agency's deputy director in administration, attributes the above average compensation package to a need to retain a high quality workforce and to the requirement that pay and benefits must be negotiated with an employee union.

continued...

❖ **Health Insurance.** NASCOE and RASCOE support several changes to the health insurance programs offered our employees. Increasing the government contribution would assist in alleviating some of the salary discrepancies, now in effect, between government employees and the private sector. Current and former employees are experiencing a decrease in their purchasing power as health insurance premiums continue to increase by 10% each year since 1998.

Many employees in the private sector receive remuneration for declining participation in health insurance programs. Federal employees given this option may opt to be covered under other programs with possible cost savings to the government. Employees choosing not to participate in a government sponsored health plan should receive monetary compensation.

The age of discontinuing health benefits for dependents should be raised from 22 to 25. In many cases, students are unable to complete their studies by age 22 and they are dropped from the employee's health plan. As a non-wage earner, this creates a hardship for the employee's family.

NASCOE and RASCOE support revisions to the law, which allow retirees to use pre-tax dollars to pay health costs. This will help our retirees maintain a portion of the COLA Congress gives them each year. H.R. 1110 introduced in the 110th Congress would allow retirees to subtract the amount they pay for health insurance from their reportable income. We also support dental and vision coverage, which is affordable. We believe the health benefits afforded FDIC employees should be made available to USDA employees. Our workforce assures a stable food supply for the Nation. Is this task any less critical than that of FDIC? We need to assure retention of the capable workforce within FSA by providing health benefits similar to those provided FDIC employees.

A recent budget proposal revises our retiree's health benefits by requiring coverage during the last 10 years of employment for full benefit upon retirement. Presently retirees are eligible for full benefit with 5 years of coverage prior to retirement. Our organizations are counting on Congress to assure this provision does not become law.

❖ **Retirement.** Federal County Office Employees dedicate their career to serving the Agricultural Community with a promise of certain retirement benefits. Congress must assure employees that their retirement benefits will be calculated using the high three salary years. Many federal employees would be very disappointed if Congress made a change in the retirement formula at this time.

❖ **Leave.** Federal Employees covered under the Federal Employee Retirement System (those hired since 1/1984) should be rewarded for conserving their sick leave. Civil Service Retirement allows retirees to credit unused sick leave to their years of service. FERS employees should be afforded the same opportunity. NASCOE and RASCOE support a General Accounting Office (GAO) study to determine how this loss of benefit affects the usage of sick leave among federal employees.

Congress has provided employees with some very useful tools to protect employees suffering from a catastrophic illness. Fellow employees can donate unused annual leave to needy individuals if they are in the same employee system (CO vs. GS.) We support

continued...

removal of the requirement for the employees to be from the same employee system. We also support removal of the limitation that donated leave be annual leave. Many employees fully utilize their annual leave but would consider donations if it was sick leave. This would help those in need and would encourage FERS employees to conserve sick leave for those truly in need.

❖ **Liability Protection.** Congress must act to revise 7 CFR Subtitle A to include former USDA employees. Current employees have the benefit of OGC representation and the Freedom of Information Act. Former employees should be afforded this same protection for acts taken while working for USDA.

❖ **Whistleblower Act.** Federal Law provides a secure channel through the Whistleblower Protection Act where federal employees, former federal employees, and applicants may make confidential disclosures of the following: abuse of authority, violations of law, gross mismanagement, waste of federal funds and evidence of specific danger to public health and public safety. Federal law also protects the same groups from any retaliation related to any persons that have filed a whistle blowing complaint.

Title 7 Employees (non-Federal County Committee employees) of USDA who work within the federal system for the Farm Service Agency are currently not protected under the Whistleblower Act as are their Federal counterparts.

Non-federal County Committee Employees are USDA employees, and pursuant to the Federal Crop Insurance Reform Act of 1994, these non-federal county committee employees are used interchangeably in the local USDA offices with Federal USDA employees in the implementation of programs and activities assigned to the Farm Service Agency. The omission of coverage under this protection act makes for an inequity between non-federal county committee employees and the Federal Civil Service employees. All Farm Service Agency employees should be protected with this act.

Congress can address this oversight by adding language to include non-federal county office employees in the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (H.R.985) and the Executive Branch Reform Act (H.R.984) as introduced in the 109th Congress...

NASCOE and RASCOE ask that Congress consider ways to make federal employment more comparable to the private sector. We believe enactment of legislation to address the above issues will allow USDA to continue providing the high quality of service the farm community has become accustomed to, and to continue to attract high quality employees in the future.



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



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Farm Service Agency and Efficient Conservation Title Implementation

The primary goal of the National Association of FSA County Office Employees (NASCOE) and the employees of the Farm Service Agency is to support American Agriculture. NASCOE members are dedicated to implementing all federal agriculture programs as efficiently and effectively as possible. The development of the new farm bill will offer many challenges and also opportunities to improve the quality and efficiency of farm bill delivery. As the farm bill develops, it is imperative that all avenues are explored and comments considered creating, the most functional and monetarily efficient bill possible. There are numerous areas of duplication currently occurring within USDA that can be corrected during this farm bill that will provide budget savings to assist with financing infrastructure needs without additional burden to taxpayers. The primary purpose of this paper is to specifically address conservation administration. At many of USDA's farm bill forums, frequent comments from producers suggested operational changes. Some of these comments were:

- NRCS staff needs to be back in the field working with individual farmers and ranchers, not working at their office computer
- Some comments suggested streamlining and consolidating NRCS conservation programs
- A few comments wanted USDA to eliminate loopholes and simplify, streamline, consolidate, and coordinate programs, and they noted confusion with various acronyms
- The application process for EQIP needs to be simplified and timely for the participants.
- NRCS spends too much time doing compliance and status reviews on conservation programs rather than helping clients.

In addition to creating a more efficient operation that is more seamless in its delivery for all conservation programs such as CSP, WRP, WHIP, EQIP and GRP, realignment of conservation duties should help USDA's bottom line.

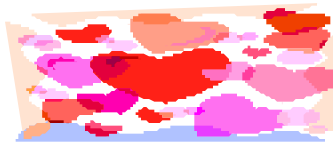
There are two primary agencies responsible for delivery of conservation programs at the field level. Farm Service Agency (FSA) has by and large been known as an administrative agency with over 60 years of success in that area. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has generally been known as a technical agency with many years of success in that area. The 2002 farm bill blurred these duties by assigning some administrative and technical responsibilities to both agencies. A resolution passed by National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) on February 9, 2005 addressed these concerns in stating, "The recent increase in program administration by NRCS has created a tremendous and burdensome workload for NRCS staff at the field office level. Technical staff now spends a great deal of time processing contracts, following paper and electronic project files, and tracking payment requests. This additional workload did not come with additional staff. Therefore, existing staff that have vast experience and knowledge in varied technical fields of natural resources are not able to provide either the quality or the quantity of technical assistance that is needed. This transfer of work has resulted in a fundamental shift from the purpose for which the agency was originally created. That mission was to provide technical assistance to producers and resource users that address conservation needs with consideration for local priorities and conditions." NACD also expresses the same concerns in their Farm Bill Core Statements adopted by the board of directors February 7, 2007 which states, "The delivery of technical assistance is the most critical element to the adoption of conservation practices and participation in Farm Bill conservation programs. NACD supports efficiencies and allocation of assets to allow technical personnel more time in the field."

The dual roles have caused inefficiencies within FSA as well. Many times producers are required to make multiple office visits for eligibility determinations required by conservation programs. This could have been avoided if all of the administrative responsibilities of application processing, eligibility determination, maintenance, and payments were completed by one agency. NASCOE supports a realignment of conservation responsibilities to take advantage of FSA's long history of conservation program administration and NRCS's expertise in providing conservation program technical assistance. The NASCOE leadership is willing to discuss all suggestions of local authority, streamlining, and simplification made by producers and our partners as long as those discussions will create a better, more efficient USDA and stronger support of American Agriculture.

Talking Points – Farm Service Agency and Efficient Conservation Title Implementation

- FSA has a long and successful history in delivery of conservation programs. FSA has been delivering the premier conservation programs for USDA since its inception and continues with the CRP program today. The old Agriculture Conservation Program (ACP) was arguably the most successful annual cost share program ever implemented. This program was a true partnership of FSA and NRCS. A broader number of persons were served than in any of the current conservation program initiatives. The past Farm Bill transferred some of FSA's administrative responsibilities in Conservation to NRCS. This has resulted in NRCS not being able to meet their technical demands and working with administrative duties they are not accustomed to completing. Producers have been the loser in both cases. A return of the administrative duties of conservation to FSA will take advantage of each agencies strength and save money for the American taxpayer.
- While more dollars have been spent on Conservation than ever before, the level of on farm technical support has been diminished while the cost per participant to the taxpayer has increased.
- The current budget environment dictates that all program operations must be as efficient as possible. For this reason each program assignment must be to the agency with the most cost effective record of implementation. History suggests that FSA has always been the most efficient administrative agency. The economy of scale allows FSA to spread administrative costs over millions of participants and billions in payments. It is essential as program administration is debated on various programs including CSP, WRP, WHIP, GRP, and EQIP FSA be considered as the administrating agency.
- NASCOE is committed to working with NAFEC, NACD and other farm bill partners in support of American Agriculture. NASCOE believes that by utilizing the strengths of each association and agency this could be the most effective farm bill in recent history.

Congratulations!



I am pleased to announce that: Julie Vulk, CED Winneshiek County, is the winner of IASCOE Sweetheart of a Deal CAP WIZ Promotion. It was a random drawing from all of Iowa's "Subscribed" users to CAP WIZ!

CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN!

*Tammy Eibey
NASCOE Cap Wiz Coordinator
IASCOE District 3 Director*

CAP WIZ NEWS

March 1, 2007

NASCOE's CAP WIZ has, as of March 1st, 2254 subscribers. When the messages are sent out through CAP WIZ, it verifies addresses and status of the users. In all the Alerts we have had a highly successful deliver rate of over 95%. But unfortunately of the 95% that do receive the message only about 20% actually send the messages. We need to really improve on this percentage. NASCOE leadership and the Legislative Committee work hard to keep the members informed and CAP WIZ is a quick and easy tool to notify all congressional offices with a united message. We also have some subscribers that only click through the messages and do not send. The NASCOE Legislative Committee has developed a power point presentation to help educate members on CAP WIZ and how to properly use the system. Also you may contact MWA Legislative Chair, Tammy Eibey with any questions. Many states have also appointed a CAP WIZ Coordinator to work with Tammy on issues going on in that particular state.

Here is the break down by Area:

MWA	774 Subscribers	34.4% of the total
NEA	122 Subscribers	5.4% of the total
NWA	332 Subscribers	14.7% of the total
SEA	583 Subscribers	25.9% of the total
SWA	442 Subscribers	19.6% of the total

Remember, alerts and messages are not sent out through the CAP WIZ message system, unless it is deemed very important by the NASCOE Officers, Area Executives and the Legislative Committee. We have this tool that allows our organization to be innovative in its communication with our Congressional Representatives so let's all start by being a more active advocate for our future. This is what Grass Root politics is all about. Try to remember that NASCOE's leadership is trying to be Proactive and not Reactive.

*Tammy Eibey
CAP WIZ Coordinator
MWA Legislative Chair*

Visit our website at www.iascoe.org

Non-Official Zone B Meeting Notes (2/9 & 2/10/07)

Submitted by Judy Rains, IASE President

The 2007 Zone B Meeting was held at the Kansas City Marriott on the above dates. I will try to touch on the highlights of each of the speakers.

Donald Sanders, Human Resources Chief:

- “FSA needs to come up with a way to deal with the “knowledge transfer” from people retiring to replacement employees. Employees used to stay on a few years after they were eligible to retire but they are no longer doing this and he asked for our opinions as to why this is happening and how it can be prevented. Also is seeking our thoughts on how to recruit good people. If you have any ideas for Don, please email him or let me know and I'll pass the info on to him.
- A second topic covered by Don was the “cookie cutter approach” to performance appraisals and he was informed that some states were told that no one was to receive a “Superior” rating; everyone must receive “Fully Successful”. The way he explained it was like this: “If you always meet this type of criteria for “Fully Successful” (never having any exceptions [complaints]), then you have actually Exceeded that standard. If you get one complaint, then you cannot meet the “Fully Successful” and would have to be classified as “Does Not Meet”. Instead, there must be criteria to meet the standard, i.e. “To be fully successful, you must have less than 3 exceptions/complaints, etc.” This is still a little confusing but his point was that you should not allow a supervisor to tell you that “if you're just doing your job, you are “Fully Successful””. Don has previously discussed this (and will again, apparently) with John Williams, John Chott and Steve Connelly in WDC and they are all in agreement with the way Don explained it above. In addition, Carolyn Cooksie pointed out that NASE and NACS need to stand up and say NO to this type of practice as it has long term implications should a RIF situation occur. (In case you were not aware of it, in a RIF situation, if two employees are equal in all things but one has received a higher rating than the other, the one with the lower rating would be the one to get RIF'd.)
- The last thing Don talked about is the possibility of a retired Federal employee returning to work Part Time. This is happening now on a case by case basis and if you are interested in this, he said to contact Human Resources. The practice is called “Re-employed Annuitant”.

Karen Campbell, Chief, Program Reporting Branch, Finance Office spoke next. She made the following comments:

- Lenders will be putting in their own status reports (via LINC) in March.
- FLP Loss Claims will also be automated by late summer and lenders will enter that information. (Don't worry – there will be a monitoring process to assure that the information they put in is correct!)
- There will be a limit of \$400,000 Interest Assistance cap with a term of 5 years for new IA loans. BF customers may be eligible for an additional 5 years.
- An EFT process for those borrowers who like to pay their bills online is being developed. Still to be determined is a plan to get the money put on the correct loan. This is a future enhancement.
- The payment reminder letters are only intended to let the borrower know that they have a payment due in 60 days. They are considering adding a statement like “If you have already submitted this payment, please disregard this letter.” and if the customer is ahead on his loan; he/she will not get a letter. [For those of you who are wondering why they even send those letters, it was FSA's agreement in lieu of having Centralized Servicing Center do all of our payment collecting.]
- The lead techs who handle the fax machines in the Finance Office have been instructed to get faxes distributed more timely. FO is hoping to get an imaging system in place which should help get problems cases resolved faster. The new phone system that they are going to will roll calls over to the next available technician so that we will not have to leave a phone message. There are only 16 (or 18) techs left down there now, which makes it hard for one person to cover several states. This way, you should always get a live body to talk to!
- Karen reminded us that the CAIVRS password expires – without notice—every 21 days. They (not I) suggest you change it every Friday!!!!
- SCIMS is not being updated properly. The returned mails from FO have gone up from 2300 last year to 2900 this year. This is due to incorrect addresses in SCIMS.

Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator, FLP

- Funding: As you know by now, \$ from OMB came in a few days ago and all of GIA should be funded, plus some of the DFO.
- 2007 funding should be about the same as 2006 but may be short falls (particularly DFO and DOL) due to more applications and more approvals this year. GIA will probably run out the last quarter of the year.
- FLIPIDS is set to go live in March. PLEASE make sure your MAC data is correct or you will have BIG problems!
- FLP 433--1700 cases have been reported as incorrect and these are creating tax consequences for some people (which lead to congressional complaints). For some reason, FSA is really being scrutinized for how we do business and OIG is looking into all of these cases.
- The National Office now has a total of 45 Non-ceiling positions for FLOTs. The state keeps the person until they are trained and when they are actually hired as a FLO, the state must add them to their ceiling and give the original non-ceiling position back to WDC to be used again.
- The increasing number of identity thefts has created the necessity of suppressing the SS#s on our files. This must be done and the new forms are being corrected to delete this info.
- FLP Streamlining WILL BE DONE THIS YEAR. Carolyn has decided that there will not be another FLP National Policy meeting until this is done. Streamlining will be published in September and effective in November. There will be lots of Help screens and some type of training.

continued...

- New Farm Bill: You have all read the proposed copy by now and that's what we need to remember. It's still just 'proposed'. Overall, FLP is making progress. Our portfolio is the best that it's been in 30 years with low delinquency and appropriations staying steady. Carolyn feels that WDC understands how important FLP is and doesn't see any cuts coming in FLP.
- Credit reports will be done in FBP nationwide as of the end of this month. COF will not be able to order a CBR after this happens and there may be a problem getting reports for FSFL applications.
- Lawsuit Status: FSA has won the 1st & 2nd appeals on Garcia and Love, so those are on the back burner. Keepseagle is in discovery and expected to be in litigation by early 2008. "We MUST win this as everyone can jump on this bandwagon!" **Very disturbing news** is that Senator Grassley (Iowa) has introduced legislation to go back and pull in the 63,000 late files in the Pigford lawsuit! Senator Barack Obama has also signed on to this! Up to this point, we have spent \$70 million in administrative costs and if this is allowed to happen, it may shut down our agency. Carolyn has 3 visits scheduled on the Hill during the week of Feb. 12th to discuss this.
- State Reorganization Plans: Carolyn has looked at 21 plans (only 5 have impacted FLP). 3 were turned down because they did not include both FP and FLP closings. Alaska, GA, TX & KY are thru Congress and some offices will close and/or consolidate.
- FYI (I didn't know this.) DD's must supervise GS employees to keep their GS 13 pay.
- RE: FLP 447, Privacy Act: Carolyn expects a similar notice to surface regarding FP files. It is acceptable for FLM/FLO to leave files out in his/her office if locks the door when not there.
- Since program interest rates are coming out so late in the month now, check online around the 15-20th of the month for new rate.
- Still a problem getting enough travel dollars for FLP. Someone asked her if DD travel \$ could come out of CO travel budget since most of the visit time in COF is spent on FP issues. Not sure.

Jim McCoy, Farm Credit Applications Branch, Kansas City

- "Unprocessed Report" will go away after DLM (Direct Loan Making) goes live next month.
- E-Dalrs expected to be implemented in Sept. or October this year
- FLPRA is up and running but transfers to another office are not working well.
- Agcredit: There are no dollars to even schedule conversion to the web.
- FLP Frontline: This allows exporting the FBP to a laptop which can be taken out to a customer's home, revised and then loaded back up to the web from the office. This is in testing now to resolve some security issues.
- FBP has its own dedicated server – which is why we can be in there without problems while the FP programs are having problems. An exception is SCIMS. If SCIMS is down, then FBP also has problems.
- Network problems are whole department IT issues – not just FSA.

Sharilyn Hashimoto, Senior Loan Office, LSD, WDC

Miss Hashimoto provided a demo of the Direct Loan Servicing (DLS) Program. \$ for enhancements are few right now but the hope is to have this live by the end of this calendar year or the first of 2008.

Carolyn Cooksie met separately with NASE members before she left for the airport. She wanted us to know that:

- she, Don Sanders, the employee associations and chiefs are taking a realistic look at the PT job and wondering if our jobs need to evolve into something different (due to FBP, FLIPIDS, etc). They are looking at getting another type of position (between PT and FLO) classified "if we need it". She stated that if the need is there, she'll fight for it. "There is a huge future for everybody in FLP. We just need to determine and define what it will look like."
- Performance Appraisal: Carolyn stated that she will sit down with DAFO and DAM to make sure they understand how this will impact our loan term future.
- The new WLWM has no implementation date as there is a funding problem right now (What else is new?).
- Training modules on DLS will be on AgLearn.
- Even after DLM and DLS are live, we will still be processing payments on the System 36.

MEMBERS THAT ATTENDED ZONE B MEETING

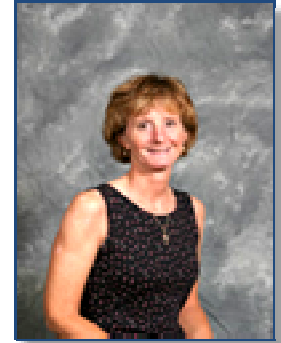
IOWA: Sandrale Scott, Judy Rains, Sharon Moroney, Marla Crawford, Judy Lundgren and Vickie Stephens



THE NASE GROUP AT THE ZONE B CONVENTION
PICTURED WITH CAROLYN COOKSIE

NASCOE TREASURER ANNOUNCEMENT!

Hello! My name is Shelly Odenkirk, and I wanted to introduce myself as I am running for NASCOE Treasurer this year.



I am a 22 year member of OASCOE/NASCOE, and am currently the NASCOE National Program Committee Chair. By being Program Chair, I attend the NASCOE organizational meeting, pre-negotiation meeting, negotiation meeting, and National Convention, so I have a good idea of how these meetings run and what is expected of the Treasurer. My duties as Program Chair include taking program suggestions on procedure and software efficiency from members to program heads in WDC, and meeting individually with these program heads during the negotiation session to discuss current program issues. Over the past two years I have built a good working relationship with these folks.

I have a good working relationship with the current Executive Committee including the Vice President and Secretary and feel I could easily work with them in the future.

Prior to this, I was MWA Membership Chair for 3 years, OASCOE President for 2 years, as well as 1st and 2nd Vice President of OASCOE. I was also honored to be Co-Chairman of the 2006 National NASCOE Convention in Cleveland, for which I developed the budget and kept track of all expenses and income to make sure the budget was followed.

My educational background will be of great value to me in the position if I am privileged to be elected as your next NASCOE Treasurer. I have a BA in Agricultural Economics from Ohio State, and interned with The Federal Land Bank prior to graduation (no - it was not my fault they are no longer in existence!!) This education and work experience developed my deep respect for the value of comprehensive budgets, audits of financial records, and the need for following accepted accounting standards.

I very much appreciate your consideration of me as a candidate for an officer position of NASCOE.

Jon Williams

For Midwest Area Executive



Hello, I am Jon Williams and I am a candidate for Midwest Area Executive. I am currently serving my second year as the Midwest Area Alternate.

I have been a NASCOE member and CED in Wisconsin for more than 20 years. I have served as President of the Wisconsin Association for almost six years. I have also represented Wisconsin at six Legislative Conferences and five National Conventions as a delegate. I have also represented NASCOE at four state conventions as the alternate when the Area Executive could not attend. The opportunity to work with the Executive Board as a second year alternate gave me a feeling of how the NASCOE Executives, Officers, and Committee chairs must work together. It also gave me a feeling of the challenges that are ahead for us as an association.

During this critical time for FSA and NASCOE, the Executive Board will need to work as one unit and be united in the decisions that are made by the board. We do not need unanimous agreement but we need unanimous support of the decision. Each area will have its own concerns and needs and it will be up to the new executives and officers to take the concerns and needs and set a course that is in the best interest for all NASCOE members and the future of the Farm Service Agency

I feel I can express opinions that will represent the Midwest. I am willing to listen and won't be afraid to raise issues that may not be popular if need be. I will do my very best to deliver the Area message to the other executives and the officers. It will be an area message, not my message so I will continue to need everyone's input. I will greatly appreciate everyone's support as Midwest Area Executive and will be honored to represent the great Midwest as the Executive if given the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Jon Williams
Candidate for Midwest Area Exec

\$250 CHANCE

2007 NASCOE NATIONAL CONVENTION

AUGUST 5 - AUGUST 11, 2007

KINGSTON PLANTATION
MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

WWW.KINGSTONPLANTATION.COM

Toll Free Reservations# 1-800-876-0010



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*** GRAND PRIZE ***

2007 HARLEY DAVIDSON

“FATBOY” BLACK PEARL

BRAND SPANKING NEW

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DRY WEIGHT 683 pounds

55 MPG HWY/MPG CITY



**PLUS 4 CHANCES TO WIN
\$500 CASH AND 5 CHANCES TO
WIN \$250 CASH**

\$250 CHANCE

CONTACT: JIM BEDELL, FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

843.423.1341 (Office#)

843.921.3504 (Cell #)

NASCOE'S 48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
August 8, 9, 10 and 11th, 2007



Kingston Plantation
www.kingstonplantation.com
 9800 Queensway Boulevard
 Myrtle Beach, SC 29572
 1-800-876-0010 / 843-449-0006

*** OVERFLOW HOTEL ***
 OceanCreek Resort
www.oceancreek.com
 Reservations: 1-800-845-0353
 Group Code 163545

Hotel Registrations must be made by July 1, 2007.

NAME	GUEST
___ Delegate ___ Member ___ RASCOE ___ NAFEC	YOUTH NAME AGE
Address	YOUTH NAME AGE
City/State/Zip	Phone
Your STO	Email
Arrival Flight Number	Arrival Date & Time
Departure Flight Number	Departure Date & Time

REGISTRATION—FOR AGE 13 AND OLDER	NUMBER	PRICE	TOTAL
Pre-registration—postmarked by July 6th		\$25.00	
Registration—postmarked after July 6th		\$30.00	
SOUTH CAROLINA COOKBOOKS	PRICE	NUMBER	TOTAL
	\$15.00 each		
RAFFLE—CHANCE TO WIN A 42" John Deere Riding Lawnmower	PRICE		
	\$5.00 each		
10 ITEM RAFFLE— CHANCE TO WIN A 2007 New Harley Fatboy OR 4—\$500 cash OR 5—\$250 cash	PRICE		
	\$25.00 each		
Convention T-shirts "Nothing Could Be Finer - South Carolina" T-shirt Colors Available: White, Royal Blue, Orange, Light Pink, Dark Pink, Neon Green, Neon Yellow ; Adult Sizes: Small to 3X-Large	SIZE	COLOR	NUMBER
			PRICE
			\$15.00 each
			TOTAL

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO YOUR MID WEST AREA RALLY in FRANKENMUTH, MI



Bavarian Inn Lodge

Michigan is your Midwest Area Rally Host for 2007

When: May 4th & 5th, 2007

Where: **Bavarian Inn Lodge:** 1 Covered Bridge Lane, Frankenmuth, MI 48734

Phone: 888-775-6343; or go online to view the Bavarian Inn Lodge at
<http://www.bavarianinn.com/bi/home.nsf/public/lodge.htm>

Please see the attached registration form and proposed agenda.

Why you should come: Come to support NASCOE and share your opinions with our leaders while they discuss the future of FSA. Give Mid West input on NASCOE policies and share "war" stories with fellow employees from the front lines of FSA. Of course there's always the fun stuff too.

Nearby is all of the shopping and old world atmosphere that you and your family could ever want:

- ❖ Downtown Frankenmuth has quaint, old world shops and of course, those famous homemade chicken dinners.
- ❖ The Birch Run Prime Outlet shopping center has dozens of the best stores just 9 miles away! It's a real shopping destination all by itself.
- ❖ But wait....there's more.....



The Bavarian Inn Lodge has five indoor pools, and three hot tubs. An indoor Family Fun Center with more than enough arcade games to satisfy the child in all and an indoor Put-Put Golf Course. Bring your swim-suit; you know you need to relax.



Frankenmuth River Place is a short shuttle ride away with a waterfall and lots of boutiques and restaurants.

Bronner's Christmas Store is ½ mile away with acres of Christmas fun year around. There's even an authentic Alpine Chapel on the grounds where you can see and hear the story of that beautiful Christmas hymn, Silent Night.



- There will be a golf outing Friday and a great hospitality room Friday night with a band playing all your favorite oldies. (The leader is the CED from Kent Co and they are good!)
- Saturday there will be a silent auction, door prizes and the 20" Flat Panel TV Drawing!
- Saturday night we will be having a round robin euchre tournament. You switch partners every few hands so it's a great way to meet everyone.

We hope to see you in Frankenmuth on May 4th & 5th, 2007!!!



Michigan Association of FSA County Employees

PRESENTS:

2007 MID-WEST AREA RALLY

WHEN: May 4, 2007: (tentative)
 12:00 p.m. – Registration
 12:00 p.m. - Tee-off time for golf outing (18 holes w/ cart)
 4:30 p.m. – Michigan Director’s Meeting
 5:30 p.m. – Hospitality Room Opens
 7:30 p.m. – Dance - Live Band (Mad Cow); theme of “Mid-West Idol”

May 5, 2007: (tentative)
 8:30 a.m. – Michigan State Convention
 10:30 a.m. – Guest Speakers (includes FSA Administrator, Teresa Lasseter)
 12:00 p.m. – MWA Awards Luncheon
 1:00 p.m. – MWA Rally
 4:00 p.m. – Anticipated Adjournment
 6:00 p.m. – Hospitality Room Opens
 7:30 p.m. – Euchre Tournament

WHERE: Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth, MI (see the attached Invite)
 \$99.00 per standard room or \$149.00 per suite
 For Reservations Call: 1-888-775-6343 (rates good thru April 1st)

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Guest: _____
 NASCOE RASCOE GUEST
 State: _____ County: _____ Member of: OTHER: _____

	# of people		Total
Golf outing:	_____	x \$45.00 =	_____
Friday & Saturday Activities: <small>(Includes Saturday Luncheon)</small>	_____	x \$40.00 =	_____
Saturday Activities Only: <small>(Includes Saturday Luncheon)</small>	_____	x \$25.00 =	_____
Saturday Luncheon Only:	_____	x \$15.00 =	_____
Shuttle from Airport:	_____	x \$20.00 =	_____
Grand Total:	_____		_____

Shuttle service available from
Flint International Airport (FNT)

Flight Arrival (Date/Time):

Flight #:

Flight Departure (Date/Time):

Flight #:

Other Airports: Saginaw (MBS), and
Detroit Metro (DTM) – no shuttle
available from these airports

Please detach and return to Kay Lumsden, 200 S. Outer Dr., Apt. #20, Bad Axe, MI, 48413. Checks may be made payable to MASCOE. All registrations received or postmarked by April 10th, 2007, will be eligible for a drawing to win 15 free raffle tickets for the 20", flat screen, Sony T.V.

2007

Illinois/Missouri Joint Convention

Holiday Inn Collinsville

1000 Eastport Plaza Drive
I-55/I-70 at IL 157 (exit 11)

Collinsville, IL 62234
(618)-345-2800

www.hicollinsville.com

\$70 per Night Single/Double
(Rates good thru Mar 2nd)

For Reservations call 1-800-551-5133

Convention Schedule **Tentative**

<u>Friday, March 23, 2007</u> <i>More activities on Friday!</i>	10:00 am	IL Director's Meeting (<i>members invited</i>)
	12:00 Noon	Registration
	1:00 pm	Guest Speaker
	4:30 pm	Hospitality Room Opens
	8:00 pm	Dance
<hr/>		
<u>Saturday, March 24, 2007</u>	8:30 am	Saturday Session Convenes
	12:30 pm	Awards Luncheon
	2:00 pm	Anticipated Adjournment

PRE-REGISTRATION

Name: _____
Guest: _____
State: _____ County: _____

	<u># of People</u>	<u>Total</u>
Convention Registration (Friday & Sat. Activities)	_____ x\$5. ⁰⁰	\$_____.
Saturday Luncheon Meal	_____ x\$20. ⁰⁰	\$_____.
Grand Total	_____	\$_____.

I am a member of:

IAS COE/MAS COE IACS IAFEC/MAFEC RASCOE _____ State Assoc. Guest

Please detach and return to Charlene Neukomm, 1513 E 750 North Rd, Cissna Park, IL 60924. Checks may be made payable to IASCOE. **All registrations received or postmarked by March 9th, 2007 will be eligible for a \$25 drawing.**

2007 IASCOE Convention

Dates: **Thursday, March 29, 2007 -**
Director's Meeting beginning at 3:00 p.m. (eastern time)

Friday, March 30, 2007 -
Registration beginning at 8:00 a.m. (eastern time)
Convention beginning at 9:00 a.m. (eastern time)

Location: **Salt Creek Golf Retreat**
2359 S.R. 46 East
Nashville, IN 47448



Lodging: Condominiums that are either
One bedroom one bathroom - \$89.00 per night
Two bedroom two bathroom - \$109.99 per night
(2 bedroom 2 bathroom condos have separate bedrooms and bathrooms so that you can double up, but not have to share the same bedroom or bathroom)

Reservations: Call (812) 988-7888 and reserve your room
in the block held for IASCOE.

Registration: \$25.00 per person which includes your
convention registration, door prize entry,
and Pasta Bar Luncheon. Please either
pre-register by sending the second page &
your check made payable to IASCOE to:

Montgomery County FSA Office
Attention: Amy Allen
2036 East Lebanon Road
Crawfordsville, IN 47933

If you are not sure that you are coming, you
can either fax the following page to Amy at
(765) 362-5547 or e-mail Amy at
amy.allen@in.usda.gov to reserve your spot,
and then you can pay your money at the door.

2007 IASCOE Convention

at



NASHVILLE, INDIANA

Registration

Name of Attendee(s) _____
&
County _____

Number of Attendees _____ x \$25.00 = \$ _____

Total Amount Due
(Make check payable to IASCOE)

PLEASE RETURN REGISTRATION FORM TO:

Montgomery County FSA Office
Attention Amy Allen
2036 E Lebanon Road
Crawfordsville, IN 47933

OR

VIA E-MAIL to
amy.allen@in.usda.gov

OR

VIA FAX to
(765) 362-5547


Money for registration will be accepted at the door, but please send in your registration sheet to reserve your spot!!

**WASCOE welcomes you to GREEN BAY, WI
Home of the GREEN BAY PACKERS!**

WASCOE REGISTRATION FORM

	<p>2007 WASCOE STATE CONVENTION APRIL 20-21 RAMADA PLAZA HOTEL Green Bay Wisconsin 920-499-0631 for reservations www.ramadagreenbay.com Mention you are with WASCOE! <i>Reservations need to be made by March 30 to guarantee the room rate of \$62.00 single; \$72.00 double; \$82.00 triple and \$92.00 quad. No charge for children with their parents</i></p>
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At the banquet on Friday night, we encourage everyone to join in the "Packer for a Day" fun and come dressed in your best Green Bay Packer paraphernalia. No "evening apparel" allowed at this event. The banquet dinner will be followed by our ever famous auction. All proceeds from the auction are used for scholarships, so bring your Packer suit and your checkbook!

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>TOUR</u></p> <p>There will be a tour of historic Lambeau Field starting at 11:00 am on Friday, April 20. This tour includes a buffet lunch and admission to the Packer Hall of Fame. All this for ONLY \$25. (this group rate saves you up to \$20!) We need at least 20 people for the tour, so please make your commitment <u>BEFORE March 23.</u> <i>(Money will be refunded if we don't get 20 people for the tour.)</i></p>	
--	--

Banquet fee (includes registration) is \$25 per person. If you attend the convention on Saturday, registration is \$5 per person. There will be an early bird drawing for registrations received by March 30.

.....

_____ No. of person(s) for Banquet/Registration X \$25.00 = \$ _____

_____ No. of person(s) for Saturday Meeting only X \$ 5.00 = \$ _____

_____ No. of person(s) for Lambeau Tour X \$25.00 = \$ _____

TOTAL = \$ _____

NAME	County (State)	Telephone number

If coming from another State, please let us know if you need a ride to and from the Green Bay Airport.

Make check payable to WASCOE. Mail check and registration to:
 Deb Ellingson, 223 5th St, Fond du Lac, WI 54935 920-923-6614

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Steve Phillips has filed his CCC-502 R (retirement) and as of COB Friday, March 30, 2007, will no longer be “Actively Engaged” in the Farm Service Agency.

A meeting has been called to appeal this decision. Please join us at one, or both of the following:

Open House at the Iowa State Office
Wednesday, March 21, 2007
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Hospitality at Stoney Creek Inn
Friday, March 30, 2007
5:00 pm to???

(In conjunction with the FSA employee Associations' convention)

This is a default determination, however if you would like to comment, your documentation must be received in the FSA State Office no later than Friday, March 30, 2007. Please submit to Steve Phillips % Iowa State FSA Office, 10500 Buena Vista Court, Des Moines, Iowa 50322.



A Tribute To An Advocate

Those of you that have kept up on the wide variety of ag issues through the media's various publications the past 16 years have come across the work of Farm Journal Editor, Sonja Hillgren. One of this Nation's most talented, dedicated and respected Editors, Sonja would study her subjects with a common sense objective. Then cut right to the core issues providing her readers with a simple, clear, black and white perspective of the facts to the degree that even those not familiar with agriculture could understand.

We, as County Office employees of the USDA's Farm Service Agency have benefited immensely from her work as she would draw National attention to the work we do for her readers. Her support of FSA is no more evident than it was back in March of 1997 when she addressed the USDA's Wal-Mart strategy for County Offices.

With permission from the Farm Journal we are re-printing that 1997 article along with an obituary from the January Farm Journal issue as we lost Sonja this past December.

A true advocate for agriculture..... God Bless you Sonja !

USDA's Wal-Mart strategy for county offices



To people off the farm, the justification for closing USDA offices is that farm programs no longer exist. Wrong

■ We never thought we'd see the day when USDA would model itself after Wal-Mart.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman is under orders to board up more USDA county offices. Privately, officials say they want USDA service centers to be near Wal-Marts, known euphemistically as "regional shopping centers," which have helped turn Main Streets into ghost towns across the land.

And watch for an assault on farmer-elected county committees, the original model for keeping the federal government close to the grass roots it is supposed to serve. It seems odd that USDA officials question paying nonfederal employees in county offices to approve expenditures of federal dollars. After all, Congress and President Clinton turned over money to the states to spend for welfare and other programs.

Under an original streamlining plan adopted in 1994, USDA planned to eliminate the jobs of 8% of county office employees serving farmers by the year 2002. In view of the dramatic farm policy changes since then, that was not bold enough.

But President Clinton's proposed fiscal 1998 budget, designed by his Office of Management and Budget, has gone too far. He proposes slashing nearly 2,000 jobs in USDA county offices this year. By 2002, a skeleton crew of 4,879 would be still in place, a 67% decline since 1993. It would be the smallest USDA staff on record.

These top-down decisions are being made without

sufficient input from farmers and ranchers, or strategic planning on the future role of the government in U.S. agriculture.

Office locations are to be based on proximity to farmers without taking workloads into account. That could produce poor service and inconvenience.

USDA will study new ways to deliver services to farmers and ranchers. But we fear offices will be boarded up before realistic alternatives are devised.

To people off the farm, the justification for closing USDA offices is that farm programs no longer exist. Wrong. Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices still have responsibility for \$8 billion in price support loans and \$5.7 billion in production flexibility contracts.

USDA may no longer micro manage production. But a large share of producers will have to make annual adjustments in their contracts to reflect changes in business arrangements with multiple landlords.

Add to FSA duties \$2.3 billion in conservation programs and \$2.8 billion in production and real estate loans and loan guarantees to producers who cannot otherwise get credit. And no one can predict the frequency or cost of natural disaster assistance handed out by FSA.

Both FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) handle intricacies of the refashioned Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the new Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

In public appearances, Glickman has refused to say if he believes environmental

duties should be stripped from FSA and handed exclusively to the conservation agency, but rumors abound. Skeptics fear that farmer concerns would be lost and NRCS would become the green police.

Even if conservation programs were moved, FSA would be left with major responsibilities for the farm program, farm lending and disaster aid.

Before FSA offices are closed, it might be useful to consider if they can handle new tasks, maybe providing farmers and ranchers information on international marketing opportunities or risk management.

In past years, a dramatic retrenchment proposal might have been laughed off as unrealistic. Now, if members of Congress want to block the closings, they have the added burden of robbing Peter to pay Paul—finding other programs to cut.

Not only budget pressures but also civil rights offer cover for Glickman. He could use USDA's dismal history in dealing with minority farmers as a reason to "reform" the county committee system.

One alternative might be regional committees with some members appointed by the federal government.

This process reminds us of giant corporations which laid off United States employees in recent years and then, only lately, rediscovered a need for strategic planning for the future. Sounds like the Clinton administration wants to cut first and plan later. In business and government, why not do both together? *FJ*

An Editor for Her Times

The FARM JOURNAL family lost a cherished member and farmers lost a champion when Sonja Hillgren died from a brain tumor on Dec. 19, 2006, at age 58. From her first day as FARM JOURNAL Washington Editor to her last day as Senior Vice President of editorial, Sonja brought a rare combination of native talent, vision and political acumen to our magazine.

It has been said of journalists that they aren't so much taught their craft as they are born with it. Sonja not only came into this world imbued with the gene for writing, she also came hardwired with the ability to part the waters among those whom she would write about—the politically powerful—throughout her career.

She was born into a family from pioneer stock in Sioux Falls, S.D., where her father was a prominent legislator and farm owner. Between the family's politically steeped dinner conversations and their farms, the young Sonja was drawn to agriculture and the role it plays in the fabric of our nation.

Her comet first ignited when, armed with a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri, she went to Washington, D.C., as a correspondent, landing a job reporting on agriculture at United Press International. Seldom have a young woman and her mission been so propitiously matched. For more than a decade, it was Sonja's stories on all things agriculture traveling over the newswires that Americans read in their newspapers each day.

Of course, it was inevitable that FARM JOURNAL would turn to Sonja to head our political coverage. During her job interview, our executives were surprised, albeit pleasantly, to discover she was interviewing us as much as we were her! That was our first glimpse of what we would come to call "trademark Sonja"—her ability to martial a keen intellect while leveling the playing field between her and those she interviewed. This she applied equally to presidents, senators and the titans of farming.

At the magazine, her comet burned brighter. After serving as Washington Editor, she mounted the national stage as the seventh person to serve as FARM JOURNAL's chief editor in what was then the company's 118-year history. She was also the first-ever female Editor of a national farm magazine.

No sooner did Sonja take over as Editor than she posted another first by becoming the first journalist from a farm publication to serve as president of the National Press Club. From her podium at nationally televised press club luncheons, she brought heightened visibility to the non-farm public of agriculture and the industry's issues. She was equally articulate on camera as on the printed page—traits that would prepare her for our multimedia era.

There was never any doubt that as Editor, Sonja was well suited to her podium as architect of our editorial page. She combined an unmatched network of influential sources in and out of Washington with an ability to divine the implications for farmers of bills and proposals. All the while, she led the editorial team during a period when the writers earned a remarkable number of awards.

When she relinquished the editorship and moved up the corporate ladder to shape our modern company, she posted another first—welding together an effective and more or less peaceable editorial kingdom in which television, magazine, newsletter and Internet journalists work together. In her spare time, she served as a director of the think tank Winrock International.

In 1998, Sonja received the coveted Oscar in Agriculture for Distinguished Service. Recommending her



Sonja Hillgren

A. HENNINGSON/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Sonja brought a rare combination of native talent, vision and political acumen to our magazine

was Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar, who remains one of her admirers. Lugar went to the heart of the person that was Sonja Hillgren when he recounted the marathon 1996 Farm Bill conference committee session. He noted that discussions were still droning on at 2 a.m. when most thought the press had gone home. "Then," Lugar said, "I looked up to the press gallery and Sonja was still there."

We wish it were so today. The news of her death is impossible to digest. When it arrived, we who knew her thought less about the accomplished professional that was Sonja Hillgren and more about the person we were privileged to know. She wore beautiful clothes and had a disarmingly perfect smile. She was the life of the party. She was part of a group of singing staffers called "The Punctuations" who serenaded retiring editors. If only we could, we would bring back the group to serenade Sonja. We'd probably start with our version of "Thanks for the Memories."

Written by Earl Ainsworth

Earl Ainsworth, the sixth editor of FARM JOURNAL and former publisher of the magazine, was responsible for hiring Sonja Hillgren in 1990.

Reprinted with permission from Farm Journal Media, January 2007

“A Bit of Humor Amidst An Inconvenient Ice Storm”

By Kevin Keegan, CED Buchanan County

So I'm sitting in an ice tent on a 63000 acre lake with 15 other buddies in Northern Minnesota fishing through a 6" hole bored through 34" of ice waiting for the big one to bite, when I get a phone call from my wife to let me know that the electricity back home was out. The date was Saturday, February 24th 2007 and the time was 10:00 a.m. She went on to say that it was raining hard and beginning to freeze. At the time, I didn't think a great deal about it, as we were having the best luck fishing that we had in 4 years and the weather was just fine where I was at. I brushed it off and told her to call me back when the power came back on.

At 6:00 she did call back, but it was to tell me that the power was still out and that now there was 2 to 3" of ice covering everything and she didn't think she'd even be able to get out of the house. Now, keep in mind, I didn't think that was such a bad deal, because if she couldn't shop over the internet and she couldn't go to the mall either I figured I was money ahead. Plus, I wasn't sure if her 2" was using the fisherman's ruler or the carpenter's ruler. At that point I decided that I should call my brother that was doing my hog chores for me while I was gone. His story wasn't any better than hers. He also said 2" of ice and that we were likely to be without power for a week. It was at this point that my attention went from enticing fish to packing up and heading for home. We decided that we would wait until morning to leave as the snow was starting to fall quite heavily and the wind was picking up. I guess I could mention there might have been a few guys that would not have been considered "road worthy" at the time either.

The next morning we hit the road before 6:00 a.m. We were driving through 8-10" of snow on unplowed roads until we reached Deer River. The roads between there and the Twin Cities were at least plowed, but we were getting reports from back home that the Iowa DOT was considering closing I-35. Luckily we were able to make it back home at 4:00 p.m. at which time I started to realize that things were much worse than I had thought. Some of the ice had actually melted but there was indeed 2+" of ice covering every bit of driveway, yard, and field I saw. I left the unpacking to my buddies while I helped 2 of my brothers and my father get a generator wired and going. It was a comedy of errors and bad luck, but we were finally able to run water and the feed systems. I was able to take a freezing shower and make it to sleep next to the gas fireplace by 11:00. It is simply amazing how fast a person is able to take a shower when there is no hot water.

I spent most of Monday picking up, delivering, and wiring 5 generators for family and friends. I've heard it said that in the land of the blind, the one eyed man is king. I guess I could say the same for when there are no qualified electricians around the dude with the screwdriver, a wire stripper, and a little bit of electrical knowledge will suffice. The last generator for the day was for my brother who did my chores. Looking back, that should have been the first one that I did, but he does not have livestock and he, his wife, and daughter were able to stay at her parents, so he drew the short straw. When we started his generator up and switched it on-line, his house lit up like the Griswold's house in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (a classic I might add). When I asked him if every light in the house was on, he said there was a good chance of it and rolled his eyes. I am not sure if, when their power went out, they went to each room, flipped on the switch and said "Nope, these ain't workin' neither." or what, but I'm not kidding. That house was glowing. I informed him that just because he had a generator that would power his whole house, didn't mean that he had to prove it and rub it in the neighbors faces. We went through the house and started turning things off, and had a good laugh about it.

continued...

Tuesday was relatively calm and uneventful. Different areas were reported to be getting their power restored. Convoys of boom trucks, service trucks, supply trucks, and support vehicles were everywhere.

All had been going relatively well and I was in a relatively good mood...considering. That was until Wednesday night, when I got home from work to find I had a feed system not working (turned out to be the overload breaker on the motor), and 2 frozen waters. I have outside hogs, and was just damn lucky to get a group in on Tuesday the 27th. I've said many times "There's a reason we eat em'." This particular group did not feel it necessary to venture outside the building onto the sheet of ice still remaining to get a drink of water. Evidently licking and biting the ice was satisfying their thirst. I chased them out on Tuesday night, figuring they'd get the hang of it eventually, but obviously Wednesday morning's routine didn't learn them so their water was froze (I had turned off all the heating elements to conserve energy). Never under estimate the power of stupid animals (or people for that matter) in large groups!!

My wife, Michelle, was getting kind of growly as she and my 2 year old son, Christian, were staying at her parents and I hadn't seen either of them since a week before except for about 10 minutes on Monday. She wanted me to come to her parents for supper tonight so that Chris could see his "Daddy". Trying to be the understanding husband/father figure that I am, I decided to shut off the electricity to the house, turn on the waterer's heaters and cross my fingers that would take care of it by the time I got back, but I knew that would only be if my luck changed. So I made the 10 mile trip to her parents, through freezing rain I might add, and walked in the door at 7:15 just in time to sit down to... a frozen pizza. Of course it was cooked, but it was still frozen pizza. We are still laughing about that. I had at least 2 headaches waiting for me at home, and I chose to delay those for a frozen pizza. Well, Ok, actually it was to see the family, but the pizza part was funny. 45 minutes later I was heading



home and hoping like crazy those waterers were thawed. They were just about completely thawed...whew. My electricity was restored at 8:27 p.m. on Wednesday. I know the time because I was getting ready to gas up the generator for the night and noticed the neighbors' night lights begin to turn on. Total time without power was about 4 ½ days. That was long enough for me. Of the generators that I set up on Monday, the last had electricity restored on Sunday, March 4. A full 8 days after it went out.

I would expect that in about 9 months there will be a rash of "ice-stom" babies, and possibly a few divorces in varying stages as a result of the power outage. All things considered, it was a character building experience and it could have been much worse had it turned bitterly cold or someone been hurt.

Supposedly this is the last set of poles standing for about a 25 mile stretch between La Porte City and Keystone Iowa. This picture is from 1 mile west of my farm at La Porte City and was taken on February 28th. No wonder the power was out.

Wisconsin Whispers

Notes from the Military Mom in WI

3-12-07

Winter certainly came back with a vengeance in the Midwest, but now the snow is melting and people are smiling again. I heard the birds singing merrily yesterday and it reminded me that no matter how bad things may seem, tomorrow is another day and you must start each day with renewed hope. These are easy words to say, but very hard advice to follow if you have family in a war. For a military family, every day seems to have an impending black cloud; however, you cannot allow yourself to feel that way.

When my boys were in Iraq, I could not watch the news anymore because I would get terribly upset. I was so afraid that I would see one of them on the news that I couldn't bear to even hear about casualties. Eventually I decided in order to be able to cope with their tour of duty in Iraq, I had to get a grip on my emotions. Another "easier said than done" thing to do, but I forced myself to try and cope. Did I still cry at the drop of a hat? You bet, but at least I could deal with it. So what did I do to cope?

I got busy and started the military website: www.usdamilitaryfamilies.org. I became very involved in promoting the site and trying to help our military and their families. I also started the Wisconsin High School Challenge. I went to our local high school and worked with them to do a display in honor of the alumni in the service. Two other local schools have taken up the challenge so far because other military moms went to the schools and got involved. I have talked about the boys being gone to groups at conventions and the emotions that go along with deployment. This allowed others to open up and at least admit they felt the same. Everyone with family in the war is worried and concerned about their loved ones. No one is an island and no one needs to try and bear the burden of living with deployment alone. There are more military families out there than you realize and hopefully they get together and support each other. That is what my website is all about. Bringing the USDA family together to help each other deal with family in a war time.

Your IASCOE officers are doing a wonderful job of helping Iowa families work together to help each other. I hope that you will be willing to share stories about your soldiers in the Iowa newsletter. Everyone is proud as a peacock of their soldiers and should brag a bit! The bottom line here is: this will help you and others by sharing your stories and talking about it. Don't worry about how "good" your story is: they are all good.

Always remember to refer to www.usdamilitaryfamilies.org for information on many things and keep our soldiers in your prayers.

Respectfully Submitted

Deb Esselman

Military Mom-WI

Are You Up For.....

"The Challenge" ?

Can you solve a simple puzzle like this?

**MAN
BOARD**

Whose advertising slogan is: "The toughest job you'll ever love"?

Is your brain full of useless knowledge?

Match wits with other teams across Iowa!

**For a one-time entry fee of \$20.00 per team,
you can play all year!!
(Proceeds go to IASCOE)**

So, get your team together or, if you're brave
enough, go it alone!

Play for your pride
Play for the fun

Play for the prize (?)

But Play!!!!

Complete the attached entry form and send it in!

(All decisions of the judge [that's me] are final!)

"The Challenge" Entry Form

This sounds like great fun!
Count us in! Enclosed is \$20.00.
(Make checks payable to IASCOE)

Team Name _____

Contact Person _____

E-mail _____

2nd Contact _____

(Not necessary if you never plan to take a vacation)

E-mail _____

Mail to Glenda Von Arb
% Sioux County FSA
714 8th St SE
Orange City, IA 51041

Entry forms must be post marked by April 12, 2007



SWEATSHIRT PROMOTION!!! NEW ITEM!!!

Thanks to all of you who were patient with us during our recent Sweatshirt Clearance! If you don't know what we're talking about, here's what happened: Lee discontinued the ever popular 50/50 sweatshirt that we have had on the NASCOE Online Store from the beginning, and to get rid of the inventory of around 50-60 sweatshirts, beginning February 1, we put them on sale through an email promotion to persons in our database of registrants at thenascoestore.com for an unheard of price of \$12.00. To complicate things, we had a computer "glitz" that priced them at \$9.60 for the first few hours of February 1. Well, at \$12.00, we were losing money, and at \$9.60, we were really losing money. We quickly fixed the computer "glitz" and emailed everyone who had ordered at the \$9.60 price. Most understood and were just happy to get the sweatshirts at \$12.00.

Well, to make a long story short, in a 2 week period, we received 83 orders for sweatshirts - some orders for 20 or more shirts. Never expecting this flood of orders, we went to work trying to locate some more Lee sweatshirts and were able to find some, but not in all the colors and sizes we needed. We did a lot of substitutions of colors, and again most had remembered that we said we could substitute colors if the color they ordered was not available, and understood when they got a Red shirt when they had ordered a Black. Still needing sweatshirts, we emailed some of the large and last orders received before we pulled the Sweatshirt from the website, and asked them if it was okay to substitute a Jerzees Sweatshirt in the same color at the same price. Again, most understood, and was happy to get the shirt at \$12.00.

We will put another sweatshirt on the website; we have to sell sweatshirts!!! But, we want to choose a good quality sweatshirt with several different colors that we can find in both men's and women's sizes at a reasonable price. Watch for the new sweatshirt in the next few weeks.

We're working on some new items - Duffle Bags, Insulated Travel Mugs, new Polos, Luggage Spotters, etc.

We're discontinuing a lot of products also. We will probably be offering the discontinued items through an email promotion, like we recently did with the men's and ladies polar fleece jackets - FIRST COME, FIRST SERVE. This seems like a good way to sell items that we only have a few of.

Any suggestions for new products are appreciated. Visit www.thenascoestore.com often to keep up with what's going on.

Era Jarrard
www.thenascoestore.com

Heart Attack, Stroke and Cardiac Arrest Warning Signs

Submitted by Tammy Eibey, FLO Delaware Co.

Arthur, age 42, Keith age 52, Betty age 67, Garry age 40 and Mary age 66. This is my Grandfather, Father, Mother, Brother and Aunt and their ages when they died from a massive heart attack. February 2nd was National Wear Red Day. It was to bring attention more to Women's awareness to heart disease issues but it is a good time to remind all of us the importance of being aware of heart issues and living a healthy lifestyle. With that in mind, I researched some information regarding heart attack, stroke and cardiac arrest warning signs. I hope this information at some time proves beneficial to you or one of your loved ones.

Act in Time

The American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute have launched a new "Act in Time" campaign to increase people's awareness of heart attack and the importance of calling 9-1-1 immediately at the onset of heart attack symptoms.



Dial 9-1-1 Fast

Heart attack and stroke are life-and-death emergencies -- every second counts. If you see or have any of the listed symptoms, immediately call 9-1-1. Not all these signs occur in every heart attack or stroke. Sometimes they go away and return. If some occur, get help fast! Today heart attack and stroke victims can benefit from new medications and treatments unavailable to patients in years past. For example, clot-busting drugs can stop some heart attacks and strokes in progress, reducing disability and saving lives. But to be effective, these drugs must be given relatively quickly after heart attack or stroke symptoms first appear. So again, don't delay -- get help right away!

Statistics

Coronary heart disease is America's No. 1 killer. Stroke is No. 3 and a leading cause of serious disability. That's why it's so important to reduce your risk factors, know the warning signs, and know how to respond quickly and properly if warning signs occur.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense — the "movie heart attack," where no one doubts what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:



- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

If you or someone you're with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than a few minutes (no more than 5) before calling for help. Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital right away.

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. Emergency medical services staff can begin treatment when they arrive -- up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. The staff are also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too.

If you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. If you're the one having symptoms, don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

continued...

Stroke Warning Signs

The American Stroke Association says these are the warning signs of stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause



If you or someone with you has one or more of these signs, don't delay!

Immediately call 9-1-1 or the emergency medical services (EMS) number so an ambulance (ideally with advanced life support) can be sent for you. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

Cardiac arrest strikes immediately and without warning. Here are the signs:

- Sudden loss of responsiveness (no response to tapping on shoulders).
- No normal breathing (the victim does not take a normal breath when you tilt the head up and check for at least five seconds).

If these signs of cardiac arrest are present, tell someone to call 9-1-1 and get an AED (if one is available) and *you begin CPR immediately.*

If you are alone with an adult who has these signs of cardiac arrest, call 9-1-1 and get an AED (if one is available) before you begin CPR.

Information and knowledge are valuable tools. Remember to **ACT IN TIME!** For more information regarding a healthy heart and more details on a healthy lifestyle, please go to www.americanheart.org or www.strokeassociation.org I wish you all the luck in your pursuit of a healthy heart!

Tammy

Hey Guys,

Got a quick favor to ask. Can you take **2** seconds out of your day to vote for the Children's Hospital of Iowa? They are competing for a fun center. The link below takes you directly to the vote page. Select Iowa and submit.



The Children's Hospital of Iowa is competing for a Fun Center (mobile entertainment unit equipped with flat screen monitor, DVD player and Nintendo Game System) through the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation and Colgate-Palmolive. If you would like to vote for CHI, click on the link below and vote by March 31. Please feel free to pass this along to anyone who may be interested.

<http://www.colgate.com/app/Colgate/US/Corp/CommunityPrograms/Starlight/HomePage/Midwest.cvsp>

Glenda Von Arb

Program Technician

Sioux County, IA

FREEDOM QUILTS

Made with Love

www.freedomquilts.net



September 2001

Our country was shocked by the news and numbed by the images of 9-11.

Betty Nielsen of Fonda, Iowa hoped to reach out to those who were grieving, to comfort in some way, each of the 9-11 victims' families. She created five "Freedom Quilts" to give to families who lost loved ones that day, and asked others to do the same. Betty also wanted the families of our soldiers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq to receive these quilts that come with prayers and love. Freedom quilts have been made by school children, clubs, service groups, and quilters all over the world. "This project continues" Betty says, "because there are families that still need comfort. These quilts are a symbol of what we can do when we join together to help one another. Freedom Quilts are made and given to the victims' families as a reminder to all that if we unite together we can do anything. It is a reminder why this country is so great. We will never forget what happened on Sept. 11, 2001. We will never forget the soldiers that have bravely given up their lives for the rest of us to enjoy our freedom."

Since 2001 over 5,500 handmade quilts have been created and distributed by Freedom Quilts. Their 2007 goal is to erect a permanent home where they can continue their work. Visit their website, www.freedomquilts.net to find pictures of quilts and the quilters who made them, and learn about their newest project. If you make a donation, your name will be entered in a July 4, 2007 drawing for a beautiful handmade quilt.

If you know a military family who has lost a loved one in service to our country and you would like to honor that family with a Freedom Quilt, please contact Betty Nielsen via this website.

Submitted by Sandy Johnson, Washington County

Daylight Savings Time

Just as sunflowers turn their heads to catch every sunbeam, so too have we discovered a simple way to get more from our sun.

Daylight Saving Time gives us the opportunity to enjoy sunny summer evenings by moving our clocks an hour forward in the spring.

Yet, the implementation of Daylight Saving Time has been fraught with controversy since Benjamin Franklin first conceived of the idea. Even today, regions and countries routinely change their approaches to Daylight Saving Time.

Here, you can learn about the history of daylight saving (or as some may say, daylight shifting), the standardization of time, and when regions around the globe spring ahead and fall back. Enjoy!

When we change our clocks

Beginning in 2007, most of the **United States** begins Daylight Saving Time at 2:00 a.m. on the second Sunday in March and reverts to standard time on the first Sunday in November. In the U.S., each time zone switches at a different time.

In the **European Union**, Summer Time begins and ends at 1:00 a.m. Universal Time (Greenwich Mean Time). It begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October. In the EU, all time zones change at the same moment.

Spring forward, Fall back

During DST, clocks are turned forward an hour, effectively moving an hour of daylight from the morning to the evening.

Year	United States		European Union	
	DST Begins at 2 a.m.	DST Ends at 2 a.m.	Summertime period begins at 1 a.m. UT	Summertime period ends at 1 a.m. UT
2003	April 6	October 26	March 30	October 26
2004	April 4	October 31	March 28	October 31
2005	April 3	October 30	March 27	October 30
2006	April 2	October 29	March 26	October 29
2007	March 11	November 4	March 25	October 28
2008	March 9	November 2	March 30	October 26
2009	March 8	November 1	March 29	October 25
2010	March 14	November 7	March 28	October 31

continued...

Date change in 2007

On August 8, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the *Energy Policy Act of 2005*. This Act changed the time change dates for Daylight Saving Time in the U.S. Beginning in 2007, DST will begin on the second Sunday in March and end the first Sunday in November. The Secretary of Energy will report the impact of this change to Congress. Congress retains the right to resume the 2005 Daylight Saving Time schedule once the Department of Energy study is complete.



Some U.S. areas

For the U.S. and its territories, Daylight Saving Time is **NOT** observed in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Arizona. The Navajo Nation participates in the Daylight Saving Time policy, even in Arizona, due to its large size and location in three states.

A safety reminder

Many fire departments encourage people to change the batteries in their smoke detectors when they change their clocks because Daylight Saving Time provides a convenient reminder. "A working smoke detector more than doubles a person's chances of surviving a home fire," says William McNabb of the Troy Fire Department in Michigan. More than 90 percent of homes in the United States have smoke detectors, but one-third are estimated to have dead or missing batteries.

Rationale and original idea

The main purpose of Daylight Saving Time (called "Summer Time" in many places in the world) is to make better use of daylight. We change our clocks during the summer months to move an hour of daylight from the morning to the evening. Countries have different change dates.

If you live near the equator, day and night are nearly the same length (12 hours). But elsewhere on Earth, there is much more daylight in the summer than in the winter. The closer you live to the North or South Pole, the longer the period of daylight in the summer. Thus, Daylight Saving Time (Summer Time) is usually not helpful in the tropics, and countries near the equator generally do not change their clocks.

A poll conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation indicated that Americans liked Daylight Saving Time because "there is more light in the evenings / can do more in the evenings." A 1976 survey of 2.7 million citizens in New South Wales, Australia, found 68% liked daylight saving. Indeed, some say that the primary reason that Daylight Saving Time is a part of many societies is simply because people like to enjoy long summer evenings, and that reasons such as energy conservation are merely rationalizations.

However, Daylight Saving Time does save energy. Studies done by the U.S. Department of Transportation show that Daylight Saving Time trims the entire country's electricity usage by a small but significant amount, about one percent each day, because less electricity is used for lighting and appliances. Similarly, in New Zealand, power companies have found that power usage decreases 3.5 percent when daylight saving starts. In the first week, peak evening consumption commonly drops around five percent.

Energy use and the demand for electricity for lighting homes is directly related to the times when people go to bed at night and rise in the morning. In the average home, 25 percent of electricity is used for lighting and small appliances, such as TVs, VCRs, and stereos. A good percentage of energy consumed by lighting and appliances occurs in the evening when families are home. By moving the clock ahead one hour, the amount of electricity consumed each day decreases.

continued...

In the summer, people who rise before the sun rises use more energy in the morning than if DST was not in effect. However, although 70 percent of Americans rise before 7:00 a.m., this waste of energy from having less sunlight in the morning is more than offset by the savings of energy that results from more sunlight in the evening.

In the winter, the afternoon Daylight Saving Time advantage is offset for many people and businesses by the morning's need for more lighting. In spring and fall, the advantage is generally less than one hour. So, Daylight Saving Time saves energy for lighting in all seasons of the year, but it saves least during the four darkest months of winter (November, December, January, and February), when the afternoon advantage is offset by the need for lighting because of late sunrise.

In addition, less electricity is used because people are home fewer hours during the "longer" days of spring and summer. Most people plan outdoor activities in the extra daylight hours. When people are not at home, they don't turn on the appliances and lights.

There is a public health benefit to Daylight Saving Time, as it decreases traffic accidents. Several studies in the U.S. and Great Britain have found that the DST daylight shift reduces net traffic accidents and fatalities by close to one percent. An increase in accidents in the dark mornings is more than offset by the evening decrease in accidents.

Opposition to Daylight Saving

Many people intensely dislike Daylight Saving Time. Frequent complaints are the inconvenience of changing many clocks and adjusting to a new sleep schedule. For most people, this is a mere nuisance, but some people with sleep disorders find this transition very difficult. Indeed, there is evidence that the severity of auto accidents increases and work productivity decreases as people adjust to the time change.

Some argue that the energy savings touted by DST is offset by the energy used by those living in warm climates to cool their homes during summer afternoons and evenings. Similarly, the argument can be made that more evening hours of light encourage people to run errands and visit friends, thus consuming more gasoline.

Halloween Trick-or-Treaters

Through 2006, Daylight Saving Time in the U.S. ended a few days before Halloween (October 31). A new law to extend DST to the first Sunday in November will take effect in 2007, with the purpose of providing trick-or-treaters more light and therefore more safety from traffic accidents. Children's pedestrian deaths are four times higher on Halloween than on any other night of the year. For decades, candy manufacturers lobbied for a Daylight Saving Time extension to Halloween, as many of the young trick-or-treaters gathering candy are not allowed out after dark, and thus an added hour of light means a big holiday treat for the candy industry.

Oil Conservation

Following the 1973 oil embargo, the U.S. Congress extended Daylight Saving Time to 8 months, rather than the normal six months. During that time, the U.S. Department of Transportation found that observing Daylight Saving Time in March and April saved the equivalent in energy of 10,000 barrels of oil each day - a total of 600,000 barrels in each of those two years.

Likewise, in 1986, Daylight Saving Time moved from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in April. No change was made to the ending date of the last Sunday in October. Adding the entire month of April to Daylight Saving Time is estimated to save the U.S. about 300,000 barrels of oil each year.

Beginning in 2007, Daylight Saving Time commences on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November, thereby saving even more energy.

I hope that you will consider all of these facts before I hear you complain on the new schedule for Daylight Savings Time.

AL SCHMIDT FEATURED IN IOWA FARMER TODAY

Recently retired CED, Al Schmidt, from Washington Co was featured in the January 31st issue of the Iowa Farmer Today rural living section. The headline was “He’s got game!” – “Venison staple in retiree’s kitchen”. Anyone who has ever been at one of Al’s feeds can attest to what a good cook he is. Al’s hobbies include hunting, fishing, raising fish, and gardening. Al uses the meat from his hunting, fish, and garden produce in his cooking. He does his own butchering, processing, and smoking. His daughter Lisa, who is in the Peace Corps in Mozambique, took some of his Venison Jerky back to Africa when she went back after Christmas. Featured in the article were four of his Venison recipes. Venison is a main staple in the Schmidt household year round. A couple of Al’s feature recipes in the article were the Venison Bacon Cheeseburger and Poor Boys.

Venison Bacon Cheeseburger

- Ground Venison
- Ground Bacon Ends
- Cheese Slices

Mix ground venison and ground bacon ends, 80 percent venison and 20 percent bacon ends. Form into patties and cook until done. Add cheese before removing from heat. Serve with favorite condiments.

Poor Boys

- Venison (loin or the sirloin tip) cut into 1/4 –inch strips
- Italian Dressing
- Seasoning Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- Garlic powder to taste
- Bacon Strips
- Sliced green pepper or onion

Marinate venison pieces in Italian dressing for 12-24 hours. Lay flat and season with seasonings. Place a slice of green pepper or onion on venison and roll up. Wrap venison with a strip of bacon held together with toothpicks. Cook on grill or open campfire in a basket until done.

Al is spending some of the winter relaxing in Florida. Recently one of the PT’s from Washington called Al on his cell phone in Florida to find him three miles off shore fishing.

Submitted by Kathy White



IOWA COOKS---IASCOE COOKBOOK REVISITED

How many of you are still using your 1993 edition of the Iowa Cooks—IASCOE cookbook? Mine is getting old and crusty...many good years of use and wanted to share some of the favorites yet today:

PUMPKIN PIE SQUARES *Page 259*

1 c. flour	2 eggs
$\frac{1}{2}$ c. oatmeal	$\frac{3}{4}$ c. sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ t. salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ c. butter	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 c. pumpkin (1 can)	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ginger
1 can evaporated milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cloves

Topping:

$\frac{1}{2}$ c. chopped nuts	2 Tbsp. butter
$\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown sugar	

Combine flour, rolled oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ c. butter in a large mixing bowl. Mix until crumbly. Press into ungreased 13 X 9 inch pan. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes. Combine pumpkin, milk, eggs, sugar, salt and spices in bowl. Beat well. Pour onto crust and bake 350 for 20 minutes. Combine nuts, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown sugar and 2 T. butter. Sprinkle over pumpkin filling. Return to oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. Cool in pan and cut into 2 inch squares. Serve with whipped cream.

Submitted by Linda Krukow, Franklin Co.

YUCCA FLATS *Page 380*

1 vodka or gin
1 sack of ice cubes
5 lemons, sliced
1 jar maraschino cherries (juice and all)

Place all ingredients in a big bowl and stir. Serve immediately.
A GREAT THIRST QUENCHER!

Submitted by Jim Book, State Office

I have used this recipe to sooth the crowd on the deck on a hot day—this really is a good one. Quick, easy, loved by all!

continued...

The following is a recipe that I submitted and even though it sounds too easy or not that impressive, I have been asked for this recipe as much as any other one...

CHIVE BREAD *Page 196*

2 c. butter or margarine
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. snipped chives (fresh or freeze dried)
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. course ground black pepper

Mix thoroughly to blend ingredients. Slice French bread and spread mixture on slices. (Store leftover butter mixture in fridge for other uses) Warm bread in oven or on grill like you would garlic bread.

For extra treat, add bacon bits and slice of Mozzarella cheese between slices. This seasoned butter is also good for melting on cooked veggies, brush over broiled fish or steak, etc.

Submitted by Connie Straw

A New one:

TORTILLA CRISPS

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup margarine or butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup parmesan cheese
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sesame seeds
2 tsp. parsley flakes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried whole oregano
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. onion powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. garlic powder

12 6 inch flour tortillas

Combine 1st 7 ingredients in bowl.

Divide and spread thick layer of Parmesan cheese mixture on each tortilla. It will seem like too much but once cooked it will be just right. Cut each tortilla into 8 wedges. Arrange in single layer on ungreased baking sheets. Bake in 350 degree oven for 12 to 15 minutes until crisp and golden. Makes 96 crisps.

Carmelita Bars

1 1/2 stick margarine 2 c. oatmeal
1 1/2 c. brown sugar 2 c. flour
1 tsp. baking soda 1/2 salt



Mix together reserving one cup for topping.

Pat in bottom of greased 9 X 13 cake pan. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes.

Mix 3 TBSP flour and 3/4 c. Carmel ice cream topping together and pour over baked crust. Sprinkle 1 cup chopped nuts and 6 oz chocolate chips. And remainder of crust by dropping small portions on crust.

Bake at 350 for another 15 minutes.

Lisa Forburger - PT Kossuth County FSA

Greetings from Muscatine County

Hello from Muscatine County, we are located in Southeastern Iowa. Our FSA family consists of Program Technician's Joni Birkhofer, Mary Smith, Betty Williams and Angie Barnes and CED Randy Madsen.

Our staff works together as a family. We hold each other together and listen when we each need our turn to vent. We have laughed together and cried together and we always come back to our FSA family.

I know with all the weather problems we have had with ice storms, snow storms and power outages, we are all looking forward to spring and summer. We all have some cabin fever. What are your plans for getting away this summer? Do you need to leave home to feel like you've had a vacation? Or, do you enjoy being home without the schedule of work involved on your daily agenda?

What to do in Muscatine County on vacation. Fish, hunt, go camping at our many parks, if you enjoy the outdoors, the Great River Road runs through Muscatine County for a scenic drive.

We are blessed by all the industry and recreational opportunities that appear in our county.

Myself, I could take a ride on the four-wheeler and I enjoy mushroom hunting, taking a fishing pole and a can of worms and let the fish entertain me for hours.

Think Spring!!

I'm running for a reason!

This year I've decided to run the Chicago Marathon to prove to myself that even the seemingly impossible just might be possible!

In order to add meaning to my miles, I've also chosen to be a Charity Runner for the American Cancer Society.

As you may know the Charity Runner program gives me the opportunity to do what I love - run, while at the same time, I am raising money to support The American Cancer Society - the very institution that has made some major headway in coming to a cure. The American Cancer Society fights this disease through research, education, advocacy, and service.

Please help me to honor those people who have been touched by cancer, and to bring hope to those who are patiently awaiting a cure!

Join me in the fight against Cancer, together we will win this fight!

Please click on the red 'Click here to donate' button to sponsor me.

Any support you can give to me or to the American Cancer Society is greatly appreciated. All donations are tax deductible.

Thank you so much for your support. Be thinking of me on my 22nd birthday when I will be running 26.2 miles for the first time! Visit my website for more information or to make donations:

http://register.charityrunner.org/site/TR?px=1281145&pg=personal&fr_id=1060

-Kelly Wood

I will be running in honor of the following:

Grandpa Wood (Bud)
Carleen Kahle
Adelaide Jiras
Gerald Lane
May Fields
Mary Sue Jiras
Mary Tandy
Joy Blair
Judy Nye
Joel Havel
Jonathon Natvig
Vonie Donohoe
Vivian Strauss

(as you donate, you can add names for who Kelly will be running in honor of)



Kelly Wood, Daughter of Ann Wood, PT Iowa County

Sudoku Craze

FSA Offices across the state have been working overtime after hours in a new puzzle craze, Sudoku! These number puzzles are turning up in new papers, on the internet, in bookstores, and even in classrooms. These puzzles are challenging and addictive.

At a first glance, Sudoku puzzles look easy. A basic Sudoku has a grid of nine squares, called regions. Each region is divided into nine cells, for a total of 81 cells. Numbers appear in some of the cells. These are "givens." To solve the puzzle, your job is to put numbers in the other squares. The rules are simple. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 9. Each region must also contain numbers 1 through 9. The numbers can be in any order, but each can appear just once in each row, column, and region.

Solving Sudoku isn't as easy as it looks. You don't have to know math or any other subject, but you do have to think. That's why Sudoku puzzles are turning up in classrooms. Teachers are using Sudoku as a way to teach logical thinking. It also keeps our FSA brains active, for our daily challenges.

People use different methods to solve Sudoku. One way is to lightly pencil possible numbers in the blank squares. For example if the numeral 1 is given, you know that 1 can't appear in a blank cell in that row, column or region. But numbers 2 through 9 can appear. As you work, gradually cross off penciled number until only one is left in each square.

The fewer "givens" a puzzle contains, the greater the challenge. The challenge also increases with the number of squares and cells in a puzzle. For beginners, there are simple grids of four squares, each with four cells. And for the expert Sudoku solvers who find the nine-square grid too easy (like Jane and JoAnn in Humboldt County) there are complicated versions with as many as 25 squares. And letters shapes or symbols can be used instead of numbers. Puzzle makers have even come up with circular Sudoku in addition to other variations.

Although the Sudoku craze is new, these puzzles have been around for many years. The first one, called the Number Place, appeared in a US magazine in 1979. It was inspired by the Latin square, a pattern developed by the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler in the 1780's. In a Latin square, symbols are arranged in a grid so that each appears once and only once in every row and in every column.

Number Place puzzles didn't really catch on in the United States at first. But in the mid 1980's these number grid puzzles were introduced in Japan, where they became hugely popular. It was there that they picked up the name Sudoku. The name, which comes from words that mean "single number", refers to the fact that numbers are used once.

Sudoku didn't take off worldwide until Wayne Gould, a retired judge and puzzle fan from New Zealand, developed a computer program to create the puzzles quickly and easily. Gould began to sell his puzzles to the British newspaper *The Times* in late 2004. Sudoku turned out to be an instant hit with the British, who already loved crosswords and other puzzles. Within months, other British newspaper had started to print Sudoku of their own as a way to attract and keep readers.

In 2005, Sudoku hopped the Atlantic Ocean and returned to the United States. Before long, the puzzles were everywhere. In 2006, 50 percent of U.S. newspapers featured daily Sudoku. Books of Sudoku were on the best-seller lists, with millions of copies in print. There were versions for computers and handheld devices, too. Nearly all the puzzles are generated by computer programs today.

If you haven't tested your wits with Sudoku yet, try it! Solving these puzzles takes time and patience. But chances are that you, too, just like Humboldt County will soon be hooked.

MY FARM

Submitted By Lisa Forburger - Kossuth County

My farm, to me is not just land
Where bare unpainted buildings stand –

To me, my farm is nothing less
Than all created loveliness.

My farm is not where I must soil
My hands in endless dreary toil,
But where through seed and swelling pod
I've learned to walk and talk with God.

My farm, to me is not a place
Outmoded by the modern race.
For here, I think I just see less
Of evil, greed and selfishness.

My farm's not lonely...for all day
I hear my children shout at play.
And here, when age comes free from fears
I'll live again, long joyous years.

My farm's a haven – here dwells rest,
Security and happiness...
Whate'er befalls the world outside
Here faith, and hope, and love abide.

And so my farm is not just land
Where bare, unpainted buildings stand.
To me, my farm is nothing less
Than all God's hoarded loveliness.



- Two antennas met on a roof, fell in love and got married. The ceremony wasn't much, but the reception was excellent.
- *A jumper cable walks into a bar. The bartender says, "I'll serve you, but don't start anything."*
- Two peanuts walk into a bar, and one was a salted.
- *A dyslexic man walks into a bra.*
- A man walks into a bar with a slab of asphalt under his arm and says: "A beer please, and one for the road."
- *Two cannibals are eating a clown. One says to the other: "Does this taste funny to you?"*
- "Doc, I can't stop singing 'The Green, Green Grass of Home."
"That sounds like Tom Jones Syndrome."
"Is it common?"
Well, "It's Not Unusual."
- *Two cows are standing next to each other in a field.
Daisy says to Dolly, "I was artificially inseminated this morning."
"I don't believe you," says Dolly.
No bull!" exclaims Daisy.*
- An invisible man marries an invisible woman. The kids were nothing to look at either.
- *Déjà Moo: The feeling that you've heard this bull before.*
- I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day but I couldn't find any.
- *I went to a seafood disco last week...and pulled a mussel.*
- What do you call a fish with no eyes? A fish.
- *Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.*
- A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse. "But why" they asked, as they moved off.
"Because", he said, "I can't stand chess-nuts boasting in an open foyer."
- *A woman has twins and gives them up for adoption. One of them goes to a family in Egypt and is named "Ahmal." The other goes to a family in Spain; they name him "Juan." Years later, Juan sends a picture of himself to his birth mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. Her husband responds, "They're twins! If you've seen Juan, you've seen Ahmal."*
- Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him (Oh, man, this is so bad, it's good)...A super calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.
- *And finally, there was the person who sent twenty different puns to his friends, with the hope that at least ten of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did*

THE PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

Part Twenty One

*Written By Roseanne Woerner, CED Blackhawk 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"

Kadie Vaughn and I are working on eligibility reviews in the conference room. She is popping her gum...snap, snap, snap and marking her check sheet just as fast. It's getting on my nerves, the noise and the constant check, check, check. She quit reading the questions two months ago. "This is nuts," she mutters. Check, check, check.

I am so engrossed in all the other noises that she's making, her actual voice startles me. "What? Sorry. Did you say something?"

"Yeah," she says. Check, check, check. "Explain this to me. I don't fill in every single blank on a form, so they give me eleven more blanks to worry about. How does that make sense?"

Whatever I say here is only going to get me in trouble, so I keep my opinion to myself...for almost one full minute and then it's too much. She does that snap, snap, snap, thing again and I think I'm going to bust. I finally speak my mind. I tell her to stop grumping and lose the gum. Only, she doesn't take my suggestions well.

So...I am headed out in the country to do some FSFL spot checks. I was pretty certain that I knew where I was going, but now I'm thinking that I am not where I am supposed to be. Did I mention we have nine inches of snow on the ground? Did I say that all roads look alike to me when they are covered in snow? Did I point out that the thermometer hasn't risen to ten degrees for eight days in a row and that my heater isn't working as well as it should be, or that this ride is brisk to say the least? Worst of all, I was so steamed when I left I forgot to bring a plat book.

Myra Stromberg answers when I call the office. I try to disguise my voice when I ask for Darnel Finch, but it doesn't work. She knows it's me first thing. "Darnel," I hear her yell across the whole, entire room. "Polly's on the phone. No, she didn't say that she was lost again, but I bet she is...Well, hurry up. You know she's always running out of gas." And then to me, Myra says, "He'll be right with you Hon. Just hang on."

I try to reason this out in my head. Forty minutes ago, I was checking CCC-770's in a nice, warm place and doing the best job that I possibly could. Shortly after my spat with Kadie, Tessa Starr told me to help Myra update eligibility folders. Then the web went down, just when Tessa happened by.

"Is the web not working," Tessa asks. "Is that why are you staring at your computer screen?"

"It may look like I'm doing nothing," I tell her. "But really, I'm mentally tabulating our contest results."

"What contest?"

"The contest whereby everybody thinks of some, new creative way to say 'Page Cannot Be Displayed'. Whoever is picked gets to report the problem to state office and say the winning phrase." I give her a cheesy smile because I think I'm pretty clever.

If Tessa shared my opinion of me, I probably wouldn't be driving around in the country right now. I guess some days are just like that. Nothing works and nobody loves me.

TO BE CONTINUED...