

The First Flower of Spring



IASCOE Newsletter
March 2009

From The Acting SED



As your Acting State Executive Director (SED), I am pleased to have this opportunity to work on your behalf and for the farmers in the great State of Iowa. Over my thirty years of service with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with many of you and I look forward to continuing that relationship.

There is no doubt that we have witnessed many changes over the years. The challenges however before FSA and the country today have never been greater but neither have the opportunities it brings with it.

The Obama Administration is actively putting together their administration. In USDA, former Iowa Governor, Tom Vilsack has been appointed Secretary of Agriculture which is a big honor for our State. It is not sure how long it will take to fill other USDA positions. This includes the SED and State Committee positions here in Iowa.

During this interim period, I am very fortunate to have a great State Office (STO) staff to work with. They are committed to providing you the best service possible. Should you have suggestions or ideas on how we may better serve your needs, I encourage you to give me a call or drop me an e-mail.

FSA has a lot on our plate as we begin this new year. Last years historic flooding and other disasters caused unprecedented levels of damage throughout the State resulting in heavy ECP workload. We anticipate additional training for ACRE, SURE and other Farm Bill programs and changes. We just completed statewide training on FLP, and the CDP sign-up has just finished. Many counties have held producer meetings and successful Outreach activities like: Women Land and Legacy, Mobile Computer Lab sessions and Farm Safety 4 Just Kids. Outreach planning and activities are becoming a major initiative for the Agency. Such is reflected in the designation of a State, Farm Loan Program Marketing Coordinator.

The IPIA reviews have become a vital process to evaluate our program administration and assures we will continue to provide timely, cost efficient, and effective service to our customers. The COR's are just finishing another round of 14 IPIA reviews.

Spring is just around the corner and after this long hard winter it is a welcomed sight! It also brings the 2009 annual IASCOE/IACS/IASE convention schedule for April 3rd and 4th in Des Moines, Iowa. I along with other STO staff look forward to attending your convention and visiting with you.

Your employee Associations have been working with the STO on the 2009 Employee Awards program. Prior to your State convention in April, we will have finalized the details of the Awards program and implemented it. We are pleased to see the Agencies continued commitment to recognizing the accomplishments of its employees.

One thing that is for certain, FSA employees are hard working, conscientious and the backbone of what makes our Agency strong. I want to thank each and every one of you for all the things you do on a daily basis for your producers, your coworkers and FSA. It is greatly appreciated. You are making a difference and can be proud of your accomplishments.

See you at the convention!

Dennis Olson

Time for Spring!!!

Another long, long winter. I think we are all ready for spring!!!

I hope many of you are making plans for the IASCOE Convention to be held on April 3-4 in Johnston. This year we will also host the Midwest Area Rally. Guests from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Missouri will be visiting our great state. Let's do everything we can to show them a good time and make them feel welcomed!

One of the items we will vote on will be an increase in membership dues. As I mentioned in our last newsletter, an increase in dues Nationally has caused us to look at our own dues structure. The current proposal for an increase is (starting July 1, 2009):

Grades 6 and below will increase \$20 to \$70.00 per year

Grades 7 thru 9 will increase \$25 to \$90.00 per year

Grades 10 and above will increase \$40 to \$140.00 per year

It is never pleasant to talk about a dues increase; especially in economic times like we are currently experiencing. However, I firmly believe that precisely because of these tough economic times, we need to make sure that our employee association remains strong.....**Now more than ever.** If you have an opinion about this subject, please share it with your IASCOE Director.

I also want you to know that IASCOE will be sending a team out to Washington DC to attend the 2009 Legislative Conference March 17 –19. Aaron Moore, Devlyn Wilson, Trice Smith, Jeff Davis, Cindy Mensen, Tammy Eibey, and I will be meeting with our Representatives and Senators to discuss issues important to our membership. This includes:

1. USDA Reorganization talk - Representative Colin Peterson has mentioned that this is a priority of his.
2. FERS / Sick Leave - We would like to see some kind of incentive given to those who do not use their sick leave. As a manager in a county office, I can tell you that the current system is not working well.
3. Program Technician Classification - Administering Farm Programs has become quite complex and adequate compensation is needed to hire and retain good employees.
4. Separate salary line item for Salary, Expenses, IT, and Staffing
5. Health Insurance for Dependent children age increase - Currently ends at age 22. With many children still attending college, providing adequate health insurance becomes critical.

Again, if you have any concerns or issues that you want to have brought up, contact me or one of the Legislative Conference Team members. An update of our progress will be given at the IASCOE Convention.

Lastly, this will be my last message to you as President of IASCOE, since a new president will be chosen at this year's IASCOE Convention. When I was initially asked to run for the position of IASCOE President, I will admit that I was more than a bit apprehensive. I considered the time, effort, and responsibility required for the job. I can honestly say that after 2 years as President, it has been a pleasure and an experience that I have truly enjoyed. The reason I can say this is because of you ---**The Members!!!** Regularly I would have members ask me if there was anything they could do to help out. I will never cease to be amazed at the wonderful people I have encountered in this great organization. Thanks to you all and keep up the good work.



Steve Kennedy
IASCOE President

NASCOE is Celebrating 50 Years and Going Strong!

We welcome all new IASCOE members to our organization! Are you wondering what your membership means? You are now part of a wonderful group of co-workers that voluntarily participate and represent the county office level employees of the Farm Service Agency. Being a member in IASCOE also includes automatic membership in the national level of FSA employees called NASCOE. NASCOE was chartered in 1959—it is an exciting year for us because NASCOE is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2009! Since 1962, NASCOE has been granted exclusive recognition to represent county committee employees in negotiation with management on terms of employment and working conditions. The objectives of NASCOE (and IASCOE) include:

- (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 of our workers.*

IASCOE and NASCOE have many ways for our members to be involved. There are nine IASCOE districts in Iowa. Each of those districts elect two directors—one from a CED role and one from a PT role. Both CO and GS are invited to be full members and hold offices. These directors generally meet quarterly to conduct any necessary IASCOE business. They also invite (coerce?) fellow members to serve on committees. These committees include: Legislation, Benefits, Membership, Publicity, Scholarship, Emblems and Programs

Committees are formed within each IASCOE district, at the IASCOE state level, Midwest Area level (multiple states include Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio), and also at the National NASCOE level. We are fortunate to have very dedicated members who have given generously of their own time and own money to serve all employees—at the local IASCOE district level and beyond!

A special thanks to the long term members who are good examples and show we are IOWA STRONG in membership! Make sure to welcome all new employees and tell them how you value your membership and encourage them to participate as well. Consider this a special invitation to learn all about IASCOE –come to the 2009 Annual Convention to be held at the Stoney Creek Inn on April 3-4, 2009. Registration forms are included in this newsletter. Hope to see you there!



Cindy Mensen, IASCOE Vice-President

GREETINGS FROM SOUTHWEST IOWA

I am hoping spring is right around the corner. Winter has passed fairly fast and the weather hasn't been too bad. After last year, we decided to start calving in March instead of February. Wouldn't you know that this year February, for the most part, would have been a good month to start calving. Guess that shows you cannot second-guess the weather.

This year, our annual convention will be combined with the Midwest Area Rally. The dates are April 3-4, 2009. We hope the events we have planned will be interesting and enjoyable for you. We will have reports on the Legislative Conference that was held in Washington D.C. in March. There will be a speaker on identity theft, a hospitality room, a dance, award presentations, committee meetings and a chance to visit with co-workers across the state. The convention gives you the opportunity to learn more about IASCOE and what we are doing for you as a member.

I know we are going to be extremely busy at work the next several months with DCP sign-up, taking CCC-902's and CCC-926's, ACRE sign-up, certification and the usual daily tasks. When you go home from the office, try to leave work problems at the door and take time to enjoy the beauty of spring with your family. There are so many opportunities to enjoy life if we just take the time to look for them.

Hope to see everyone at our convention.



Sue Beemer
Secretary/Treasurer
Program Technician
Taylor County

MWA EXECUTIVE REPORT

You Can Make a Difference

Spring is getting closer. At least it is according to the calendar anyway. The weather will start warming up, the days will get longer, and we will anxiously wait for the snow to melt away and the grass to start turning green. It will happen someday.

This year, spring is bringing a NASCOE legislative conference. Despite the cost of this event, members at the National convention in Omaha identified Legislative Conferences as a primary purpose of NASCOE and that they should be held on a regular basis. When NASCOE has a full legislative conference it has significant impact in several different arenas.

First of all, there usually is a primary position that NASCOE wants to present to Senators and Representatives. The NASCOE Legislative committee develops position papers on one or two issues that the attendees deliver to congressmen and discuss with them in detail. Subjects range from employee benefits to program delivery. This year IT issues and the agency's role in future program delivery could be the primary topics. We usually don't know what the position papers will say until just before the conference.

Secondly, these visits are used to educate congress as to who NASCOE is and who the CO employees are. Many of these folks don't understand the CO employee system or how it works and this gives us a great opportunity to educate them. We are also able to open the eyes of many people when we bring up the problems with staff shortages, office closures, program implementation, and our IT issues.

Finally, this is where many NASCOE members get their first taste of NASCOE in action. The excitement of taking a unified message to the hill is really unique and quite addicting. Being a part of the political process is like nothing else. When you see the work and effort the NASCOE legislative committee puts in and how NASCOE members from across the country come together, it really makes you proud to be a member.

Even if you don't go to the legislative conference you can be surprisingly effective from home. One way is by making contact and building relationships with the local staffers of your Representative and Senators. These staffers are used by the people in Washington to find out what is happening in the districts and states first hand. If you build a relationship locally, you can provide information directly to the people who write the laws and pass policy that affects all of us. You may even be asked to provide information on a regular basis. I also encourage you to attend the town meetings that Congressman and Senators hold "back home". I recently attended such a meeting for one of my Senators and asked about funding for our computers. He knew there was a problem and wants to make sure I discuss it with his staff. Remember when you do this you do it as "Joe Citizen" and on your own time, not as an FSA employee on government time,

We still do have Cap Wiz that we can all use as well.. This is incredibly easy and believe it or not very effective. I encourage everyone to take the 5 minutes to sign up for Cap Wiz by going to www.nascoe.org and clicking on the Cap Wiz link. When you receive an action alert in your email please take another 5 minutes to read the letter that has been written for you and then send the letter to your Congressman or Senators. You can even tell a friend to send the letter as well.

Whether you are the type of person that likes to get really involved or more of a background type of person, you can make a significant contribution to the legislative efforts of NASCOE. I hope everyone does their part to help delivery NASCOE's message.



Thank you.
Jon Williams, MWA Executive

NEGOTIATION TIME!

The NASCOE Negotiation team, which consists of the NASCOE officers, Area Execs, and a negotiation consultant from each area, met on January 17-18, 2009 in Charlotte, NC, in conjunction with the NASCOE Exec board meeting. The team discussed each negotiation item that was submitted and decided whether the item should be negotiated, consulted, referred to a committee, or tabled until a later time. Each NASCOE member that submitted an item will receive a letter from their area Exec or consultant telling them what action will be done with their item. The Midwest Area submitted about a quarter of the items this year. This process is very important to the success of our agency, as this allows us to let FSA Management know how we can be more effective and efficient in our daily duties, while serving America's farmers and ranchers.

Each item has been assigned to two or three team members to research and write up NASCOE's position. These items will then be presented to FSA Management at our spring meeting in Washington DC.

I would like to thank all of the members who submitted items this year.

Respectfully submitted,



Charlene Neukomm
MWA Negotiation Consultant
MWA Alternate Executive

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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.

In Loving Memory

This is a follow-up article to “My Mother’s Journey” by Susan Jacobson, PT Union County, in the June 2008 issue. Susan’s mother died of colon cancer in January. Susan and her two daughters organized a cancer walk in her mother’s memory to make information available to others.

The first annual Jane Jensen Colon Cancer Awareness Walk was on September 20th, 2008, in Bridgewater, Iowa. The walk was held at the Bridgewater Elementary School Walking Trail. Over 90 people came to learn more about the prevention and treatment of colon cancer.



We made posters with information about colon cancer and posted them along the walking trail so that people could read them and learn more about this type of cancer. At the end of the trail, participants were given a “quiz” and everyone received pens, blue ribbon magnets, and packets full of information about colon cancer. The Hospice nurse that helped my mother and the rest of our family at the end of the fight also attended the walk. She was a wonderful addition to the event to talk with people and give them information and guidance about prevention.

It was an important day for me and my family. It was a day to remember the horrible disease that took my mother from us, but it was also a day of hope. Everyone that came took home valuable information. Since the walk, I have had many people tell me they learned something about colon cancer and have shared it with others.

Before my mother died, she told me, . . .”if I had just gone to the doctor when I first thought something was wrong, I wouldn’t be putting all of you through this. Now that you know it’s in the family, please take care of yourself. . .”

My two daughters and I are planning the 2nd annual walk, and this time the 4H club wants to help. We are taking care of ourselves, and making sure our community does, too!

Talk to your doctor about colon cancer prevention. Find out if it is in your family – ask questions and be pro-active with your own health! Colon Cancer is:

TREATABLE, BEATABLE, and PREVENTABLE!!

Reflection on Farming By: Joseph L. Parcell

If you were not aware, Julia and I decided in December 2008 to move out of production agriculture. There were many personal and business reasons for our departure. For those that were not aware of our farming activity, we chose to farm in southeast IA near our family. We owned 200 row-crop acres, and we rented another 200 row-crop acres. We did not have any livestock. My family removed itself from production agriculture in 1989, and Julia's family had not been in production agriculture since the mid 1980s. Julia and I essentially started with nothing for the farm, expect for good off-farm employment and a strong work ethic. We were fortunate that my father retired in 2003 and began working as a hired hand on the farm, which helped the farm grow. (Note, the dynamics of a father working for a son is a story in itself). We farmed during very fortunate times in agriculture. Yet, we faced many challenges.

I considered myself unbiased and impartial, and thus I'm sending some thoughts to a broad group of persons. While my economics training points me toward allowing for economies of size as the lead driver for the future of agriculture, I also have a strong desire to see future generations have the chance to succeed. I do not approach my thoughts only from that of new farmer starting from scratch, but I'm also thinking of the new farmer that joined the existing family farming operation. Either new farmer situation faces the same issues I outline below, only to a different degree. In summary, I have tried to toss out emotion from my academic thinking in developing the information I share with you below.

From my experience in production agriculture, I developed a list of 10 items that could benefit beginning farmers. I would like to broadly share this list, and I feel that as a responsible servant of Missouri and the US I owe it to my stakeholders to provide you with my learning experiences from eight years of what I have come to think of as one large and (time) costly "academic experiment." I appreciate any feedback and thoughts you can provide me, and I invite you to share my thoughts with others. Below is my list, which has not be ordered. To the audience I'm sending my thoughts – mainly those with ties to crop and oilseed production and those involved with policy - you will each understand the issue behind my thought. I have not assessed the cost to any of my ideas, and my hope is to put a bug in your ear as you each look to advocate for the future of agriculture and young farmers.

1) Input companies would waive 50% of technology fees, for the first five years of operation for the beginning farmer. This would only apply to the beginning farmer's acreage for the first 5 years. A cap on the number of acres qualifying would be established.

2) Currently, a beginning farmer receives a crop insurance break on the first piece of ground they farm. Crop insurance programs now allow for the beginning farmer to use the county historical yield, without penalty, to establish a yield history for the land. For subsequent land owned or rented, a % of the T-yield is used, which is common to all uses of crop insurance. I advocate for admonishing the penalty on T-yield for the first 10 years of operation for the beginning farmer. Place a cap on the number of acres qualifying would be established.

3) A loan repayment schedule for purchasing used farm equipment is typically between 3 and 5 years. The repayment schedule, for a relatively small number of acres, significantly increases

the “machinery” cost per acre. I advocate for allowing beginning farmers, in their first 10 years of operation, to obtain a 7-year repayment schedule for machinery. I do not have a suggestion for best implementation or oversight.

4) All commodity associations, relevant to the beginning farmer, would provide 5 years of free membership.

5) USDA FSA and NRCS would prioritize allocation of conservation enhancement monies to beginning farmers, within their first 10 years of operation. Maintaining land quality is paramount, but beginning farmers lack the access to capital to upgrade the land. Cost-share prioritize payment on a first come, first pay basis that can require the applicant to wait years before qualifying. A cap on the number of acres qualifying would be established. (note: 5a) USDA would develop a training program for beginning farmers to walk them through the paperwork).

6) Persons selling land, on contract or direct sale, to a beginning farmer (as define as someone in their first 10 years of operation) would qualify for a capital gains exemption on the sale of that land. NO cap on the number of acres qualifying.

7) Establishing a line of tools and various necessary repair equipment is essential for a beginning farmer. However, most of these costs do not qualify for “loan” status. I advocate USDA establishing a beginning farmer “start-up” loan of no more than \$20,000 to buy tools and repair equipment. The life of the loan would be from 7 to 10 years. Note, I see this as a different issue from existing beginning farmer operating loans.

8) The county and state would provide for a property tax abatement of 50%, on land owned, for the first 10 years as a beginning farmer. A cap on the number of acres qualifying would be established.

9) For a crop commodity, FSA would provide commodity loan certificates, to beginning farmers, of up to 2x the county loan rate for certified bushels in storage. Should the USDA projected annual price be below 2x the county loan rate then FSA will provide the beginning farmer with a loan equal to the projected annual price for certified bushels in storage. The thought here is that a beginning farmer lacks equity needed to store grain to take advantage of the ‘typical’ marketing season price rally. Having access to a low-cost loan program to pay off a LOC or other debt obligations is key in the current commodity environment.

10) Establishment of a mentor program to match up a beginning farmer with a non-family member peer farmer from within the vicinity of the beginning farmer. Both the mentor and mentored would receive funding to attend together professional development opportunities (risk management, association meetings, USDA information meetings, leadership, etc.). The program would be available for annual renewal for the first 10 years of the beginning farmer operating.

2009 COT PROGRAM

One morning I woke up in the motel, jumped out of bed, and started across the room. Was it just my imagination or was the carpet in the room damp? I turned around and retraced my steps across the room. Yes, definitely damp, but there was no water on the tile floor. I decided I'd better call the motel office. Long story short . . . there had been a water main break! Luckily, the motel had another building unaffected by the break so they provided me a keycard to another room where I could shower and prepare to go to work. It was a Friday so I had most items packed and ready to put in the car, but by the time I finished carrying it out the water was squelching out of the carpet at each step. It was my last week in that county so I don't know if they had to replace carpets, etc.; hopefully they didn't incur permanent damage.



Rosalie L. Carlson
County Operations Trainee

I was training in Winneshiek County during the month of January. The third week I was there, I had forgot to make reservations for my motel room the previous week. When I went to make the reservations on that Monday, I found out that all of the motels had been booked due to an event going on at the college in Decorah. The only motel I could find was in another town 40 miles away. On my way to the motel, the weather turned wintery and it had begun to sleet, and then turned in a huge snowstorm. This storm prevented me from going anywhere and getting any supper. The only thing I had with me to eat was a can of soup and a bag of the lipton microwavable rice. I could live off of that for a night so no big deal. When I got to my room, there wasn't a microwave. And not even one in the lobby or break room. So using a little imagination, I used the coffeepot to cook supper that night. I had to strain the chunks out of the soup so it would run through the coffeemaker like water, then I added the chunks back in. After I was finished with the soup, I ran water back through the coffeemaker and mixed my rice in the coffeepot. It wasn't that bad of a supper that night. It could have been worse; I could have been in my car!



Brandon M. Sowers
COT
Marshall County FSA

I was asked to write about a memorable experience as a COT and unlike my cohorts I don't really have any funny stories. So I wrote a summary of my life as a COT.

My first training county was Winneshiek and it was great. Vicki had us on the move going on many farm visits. It was interesting seeing the diversity in agriculture in the NE part of the state. We made some youth loan visits, visited some dairy stanchions and it was exciting to see a brand new dairy parlor. I also came home using new words I had learned from the staff like "uffdah, eh?, yah and ya betcha.

My second county was Decatur. Although they talked a little slower down there, Vince and the staff impressed me with their knowledge. It was there that I learned about the importance of workplace morale. I was impressed by their attitude of teamwork AND as you can imagine, I laughed a lot. They are an entertaining bunch.

Then I went to Lucas County. I learned all about being organized from Dave. I was impressed with his knowledge and energy and the respect they have for each other there. Sherri baked and brought goodies frequently and on my last day they each made something and we had a potluck. I'm talking home made food. It was great.

Then I went east to Louisa County. My first week there I spilled coffee on John B's calendar and it wasn't just a small spill. Great! I was trying to make a good impression. He called me Lanie. Apparently this had happened before? Anyway, it was there that I learned more about payment limitations even though it was one of my programs as a PT. Do you ever know all there is to know about PL? He is a fun, yet kind person and I was blessed to have been given Louisa as a training county.

My next stop is west to Shelby County with a guy named Steve and as always, you never know what to expect but it always turns out to be a really good experience. This has been my life as a COT. You go into a new county, get to know them and get comfortable, and then it's time to leave. But it's all good and it has been great meeting so many new people. I have been quite a few places in my training and I have to say, FSA employees are good people!



Mary Pierschblacher
County Office Trainee

WARNINGS TO A COT FROM A COT

Without giving out too many secrets of the multiple offices I have trained in, I will do my best to be selective in divulging the secret information that I have been privy to within the past few months.

While training in Jasper County I learned that Steve Kennedy likes to issue demerits to COTs that show up on the dreaded "aglearn slacker list". I don't think I will ever scan one of those 'naughty list' emails again without cringing in anticipation of a "ha ha there's another demerit" email from Steve. If it is the last thing you do, stay off those lists! I also learned that writing a news release for the Pork Referendum can be a dangerous situation when the local newspaper improvises on your document. I think that was demerit number 2.

In Wright County, Tammy and the staff instructed me on the "Wright" way to do things. Be wary of the "Wright" way!! Apparently, the "Wright" way is taking the pregnant COT out for margaritas and proceeding to drink five or ten of them in-front her just for torture!

If you are pregnant, don't mention the possibility of having your baby while training in Bremer County. It is a fast way to make Larry panic. Better yet, do so, it was fun to see his eyes go wide!
In my first conversation with Gary Larson in Jones County I was informed that they don't deliver babies, but I informed him I thought for sure that was, or should be, written into the COT training manual. If you need it, there may be "new" instructions in his manual you won't find in any other office.

These are my secrets I give freely, as for the real juicy stuff, I am sworn to secrecy. (I don't want any more demerits!)



By Heidi Nickol

The COT training program has been a great experience and I have had the chance to meet many great people along the way. Each county that I have trained in has been great. There are memories that I will take from each. The memory that sticks in my mind the most while I have been in training has been from Floyd County. It is amazing how many different names I became known by. The last I knew, my name was Cody but there I was Cody, Cory, Chris, John, and Flash. Several times farmers thought I was John Bahnsen, CED of Floyd Co. That's not such a bad thing to be mistaken as the CED. Flash was the nickname given to me by the PT's. That's a story for another time. As for the other names, I have not idea where they came from.



Cody Wedeking
County Operations Trainee

I am going to borrow Mary's saying, "I am too blessed to be stressed" because that can accurately describe my life and the COT Program too. Some days I feel like I am taking 2 steps forward and others 1 step back but over all I am going forward. I have had met a lot of new people, and learned so many different ways to accomplish tasks that I have been accustomed too. I am comfortable asking questions and finding the answers in writing. Because Mom says so, just don't fly in this job! I look forward to each day and the blessings it brings. Thanks everyone for all your kindness.



Lisa Forburger
County Operations Trainee

The best part of being a COT has been the opportunity to travel to different counties and work with the different groups of people at the county offices. I have worked with some really good folks who have taught me a great deal over the past few months. Having the opportunity to visit producers and work through different situations is an experience which will benefit all of us greatly in the future. Thank you to all of the training counties who make this experience possible.



Dustin
COT

Well, I really don't have that much in the way of humorous stories, experiences, advice, or anything on that order to contribute. The only pearls of wisdom that I have gained from my COT experience that really stick out in my mind so far are:

- 1) The smoke alarms at the Super 8 in Onawa are in excellent working order.
- 2) Do not even think about "dining and dashing" at the Trackside in Peosta. You will be found!
- 3) Casually mentioning that Cyclone Crunch is your favorite breakfast cereal would not be advisable if you happen to be in the Plymouth County Office.



Keith Lupkes, COT

The things I remember the most as a COT:

- * 1. All the nice people I have had the opportunity to meet as I train and travel across the state.
- * 2. All the country I get to see in my travels.
- * 3. THE MOTELS.
- * 4. Watching the sun come up every morning as I head to work.
- * 5. Having the power go off in my motel in Lamoni for 2 hours in January.
- * 6. Farm Bill Training.
- *7. All the questions in the COT training manual, and....
- *8. THE MOTELS.



Max Dirks
COT

I was asked to write a paragraph about the most memorable experience as a COT. The first thing that pops into my mind is training in Plymouth County with Jeff Davis, spot checking Facility Loans, and LEVEL B roads on one of the warmest/muddiest days in December while being in a 4 wheel drive truck. No need to say anymore except for.....GO CYCLONES!! :-)

I do recommend if any of you get a chance to visit the Ringgold office you must do so. The office is a delight and they sure know how to spoil COT's with having pot lucks. Taking a ride in Greg Jobe's car that is "not for sale and has over 300,000 miles on it" is worth the trip as well. If the dust in the car or turning the air conditioning off prior to stopping at a stop sign doesn't make you laugh, perhaps driving through a CRP field that was recently bailed wondering if the car was going to bottom out would.

Then there was training in Jasper County with Steve Kennedy. Training in Jasper was an exciting time with lots of work and a few good laughs. Hello, Steve? Steve, Hello? HELLO, STEVE??? Is that the cell phone with bad reception? Though I didn't end up with any demerits like some others, Steve made sure I knew what to do and what not to do. That is the advantage to being the third COT in an office after three months.

Next it was off to O'Brien county and closer to home. Ron and his staff have been great to work with and offer a lot of knowledge to any COT. I highly recommend sitting in on any COC or Staff meeting you possibly can in the O'Brien office. You are sure to get an education or learn a tid bit or two. Funny how things really work "out in the sticks!".

I have enjoyed my time as a COT so far and even though this little bit seems to sound more like fun than work, that really has not been the case. Each office I have had the opportunity to train in has taught me something new about myself and this training. I look forward to the next few months of training and meeting new faces throughout FSA.



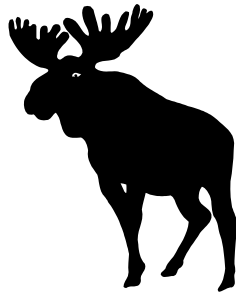
Angie Christian
County Operations Trainee



Brandon Sowers displays his cast. While being a COT can be tough, his broken ankle wasn't the result of COT training."

Welcome to Iowa!!
Mark your calendars and
Save these dates for the:

Midwest Area Rally
April 3 - 4, 2009
Stoney Creek Inn



REMINDER! Anyone attending the IASCOE Convention/MWA Rally on April 3-4 should please bring a door prize and/or a silent auction item. Also, the raffle tickets should have been distributed to each county office by now, so if you have not received them please contact Jeff Davis in Plymouth County. All monies and leftover raffle tickets should be brought to the convention. Hope to see you all there!!



National Association of FSA County Office Employees
*Celebrating 50 Years of Serving American
Agriculture*
1959-2009

**Welcome to Iowa
IASCOE / IACS / IASE
2009 Annual Convention
and the
2009 Midwest Area Rally**

The joint 2009 IASCOE/IACS/IASE Convention and MWA Rally will be held April 3-4, 2009, at the Stoney Creek Inn located in Johnston, Iowa.

Stoney Creek Inn is conveniently located just off I-80/35 and only a few miles from Des Moines. Numerous restaurants, shopping malls, and other activities are just moments away. The Stoney Creek Inn offers a cozy lodge atmosphere where you can experience the great Outdoors.....Indoors!! Relax by the fireplace or take a dip in Iowa's only year round indoor-outdoor swim through pool.

Friday's activities include committee meetings, a general session, speaker Susan Kerr from the Iowa Attorney General's office will discuss the topic of ID Theft, followed by a hospitality room and dance. A 14-member band called "Eight Track Band" featuring hits from the 60's, 70's, & 80's will be sure to entertain us!

Saturday morning will include a complimentary breakfast for guests of Stoney Creek Inn, an awards ceremony, raffle and silent auction winners, followed by a short Iowa general session. Door Prizes will be awarded throughout the 2 day event.

The Midwest Area Rally will begin Saturday morning and continue into the afternoon. Saturday evening activities will also include plenty of hospitality!

Featured Speakers:

Washington DC & Iowa STO personnel
Jonathan Williams, Midwest Area Executive
Susan Kerr, US Attorney General's Office, speaking on "ID Theft"
Jim Mace, J& M Marketing
Joshua Katcher – EJ Brown and Associates
Deb Esselman, CED WI, Military Tribute

For Reservations call:

Stoney Creek Inn at 1 800 659 2220

Ask for Group Rate "Midwest Rally"

Special Room Rate: \$78.00 (plus tax) per night

March 19, 2009—cut-off date for special Room Rates



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**IASCOE/IACS/IASE
MWA RALLY
PRE-REGISTRATION FORM
APRIL 3 – 4, 2009**

NAME: _____

COUNTY: _____ POSITION: _____

NUMBER OF PERSONS ATTENDING _____

Pre-registration: \$25.00 EA _____

Registration at Door: \$30.00 EA _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

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

Please check one of the Following:

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

Mail completed form and payment to:

Judy Dameron
718 Mill St.
Wapello, IA 52653

All pre-registration forms should be received by March 30, 2009
PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO IASCOE



**CHECK OUT
TASCOE.COM FOR ALL
THE DETAILS ON EVENTS
HOSTED BY TN DURING
THE 2009 NATIONAL
CONVENTION. DON'T
MISS OUT ON ANY OF THE
FUN!**

**MAKE YOUR PLANS
EARLY TO GET YOUR
"DOLLY" AND
"HOLLYWOOD"
COSTUMES READY!**

Come help NASCOE celebrate its 50th year of serving American Agriculture. 1959-2009

IOWA GAMES

TEAM STANDINGS AFTER 6 GAMES

Team Names	Total Points
Jasper CyHawks	3060
Lyonettes	2765
Woodbury Wise Acres	2490
Flirtinis	2470
The Whiz Bangs	2450
Gamblers Anonymous	2380
Ditsy Chicks	2300
Buchanan Brainiacs	2280
River Rats	2280
State Office Brainstormers	2260
www.waywoostwomen.com	2260
Duh	2230
Team Knowledge	2030
Cifoxers	1890
Franklin Brainiacs	1800
Hancock County Chicks	1780
Brain-e-ax	1775
5:00 Somewhere	1770
Cotton Sisters	1700
Beautiful Clayton Co	1670
Team Winneshiek	1560
DC Dollies	1530
The Dear's	1460
The Five Amigos	1190
Poky Prodigies	0990
Poweshiek Mavericks	0350

PERILS OF POLLY P.T.
PART 28
Written by Roseanne Woerner
Created by Dee Ann Lehn

Fred Burke is a wheeler, dealer and nothing he does is easy. Since prices went down, he's been buying and selling a lot of ground and it seems like most of his fourteen farms are in a state of flux.

When Fred visits our office; all five of us leap to the counter at breakneck speed to wait on him. Not because we like a challenge. Not because Fred is a pretty decent guy. It's because Fred brings food. Good food too. Today, for instance, the scent of homemade cinnamon rolls wafts through the air when Fred walks through the door. Did I mention that the rolls are still warm? I'm about to hyperventilate as I gratefully accept the box and carry it from counter to break room.

Back at the counter, Kadie and Myra are pulling Fred's farm folders, the ones they can find anyway. Fred asks Darnel Finch to measure some ground that he's going to swap. He tells me that he lost two landlords this year and when he blurts out that he's now a Trust, I hear Keely Spiva groan. She does Payment Limitations, and she'd be waiting on him too, but she's already waiting on someone else.

With everything he has going, the decent thing to do would be to bring Fred back to our inner sanctum, set him down at the extra desk in the back and work through all his issues. One of us will, eventually, but right now, we're waiting each other out.

Finally, Darnel mutters under his breath and tells Fred to follow him to the GIS room. We love to wait on Fred as long as he stays on his side of the counter, but when we let him on our side, the conversation always veers toward his surgeries. For some inexplicable reason, he feels compelled to show us his scars. This past year, alone, we've seen two toes, his left palm, and a snippet of his right ankle.

By now, the whole office smells like cinnamon and it motivates me. I can almost taste my roll, the ooey-goey inner layers and the buttery icing on top, as I pull Fred's eligibility folder. I start heading up forms, while Kadie and Myra run his DCP contracts. It's kind of a race between us, which they easily win, since most of Fred's folders are tagged for recons. Myra takes the DCP folders to Fred. She stands over his shoulder and points to the signature block while Darnel pulls up the right section map.

"I'll give you half my roll, if you help him with this 902," I say to Kadie.

"No way," she tells me. "He's all yours."

When Darnel is finished, he moves Fred to the extra desk and gets him all settled in. “You take care of yourself, Fred,” Darnel says as I approach. To me, Darnel says, “Fred just got out of the hospital a couple of weeks ago.”

“Oh no,” I say. I turn toward Fred to inquire about his health when Tessa Starr bolts from his office.

“Polly, you have a phone call. Can I do something here?”

“You can help Fred fill out his Eligibility forms, if you want,” I say.

“Okay.” She smiles at Fred and says, “And how is Mr. Burke today?”

“Doing better,” Fred says. “I just got out of the hospital though.”

“Really,” Tessa says.

“Yeah, I had an operation and it was kind of rough.”

“Oh really,” Tessa says. “What sort of surgery did you have?”

“Gall Bladder,” Fred tells her as he jerks the tail of his shirt up, way past his tummy, before any of us have the sense to look away. “Look where they cut me. Did you ever see the like?”

TO BE CONTINUED...



IMPORTANT NASCOE INFORMATION

May be found by going to the www.iascoe.org website
And then click on the NASCOE home page icon
Or directly at: www.nascoe.org

IMPORTANT IASCOE and MWA INFORMATION

May be found by going to the www.iascoe.org website
click on the Midwest Area Site icon to reach the MWA site
or directly at: <http://www.nascoemidwestarea.org> for the Midwest Area website