

May 2016



IASCOE NEWSLETTER

2015/2016 IASCOE OFFICERS

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Secretary

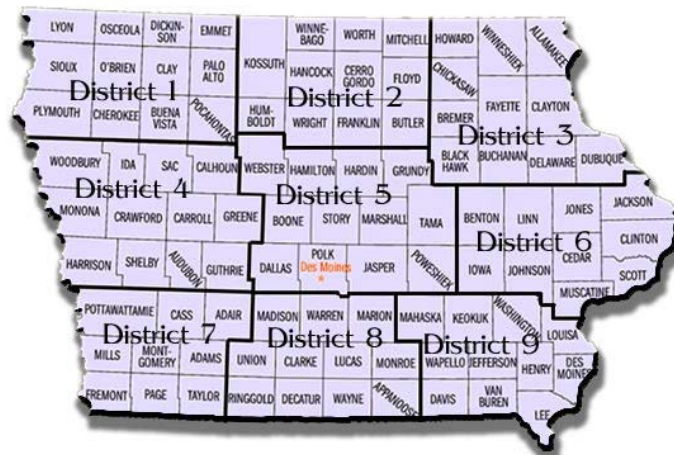
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**2015-2016
IASCOE DIRECTORS & ALTERNATE DIRECTORS**

District	Program Assistant and County	County Executive Director and County
1 Director Alternate	Karen LaCour, Dickinson Samantha Erie, Buena Vista	Jeff Davis, Plymouth Larry Lago, Dickinson
2 Director Alternate	Cindy Pistek, Hancock Danielle Sidles, Kossuth	Angie Christian, Kossuth Gary Yoch, Humboldt
3 Director Alternate	Kim Naber, Buchanan Candace Fette, Clayton	Adriana Foxen, Buchanan Jesse Wegner, Fayette
4 Director Alternate	Cathleen Simons, Carroll Donita Kenkel, Shelby	Steve Luke, Shelby Pat Warmbier, Harrison
5 Director Alternate	Karla Novotny, Tama Kitty Benda, Marshall	Katie Kramer, Jasper LeeAnn Davis, Boone
6 Director Alternate	Joni Birkhofer, Cedar Renee Schultz, Cedar	Kris Koth, Clinton Randy Madsen, Muscatine/Scott
7 Director Alternate	Jennifer Comer, Page Nancy Gress, E Pottawattamie	Cindy Bebout, Fremont/Mills Chris Irvin, Page
8 Director Alternate	Keith Wheeler, Madison Ronda Harrison, Lucas	Kathy Henely, Wayne
9 Director Alternate	Judy Dameron, Louisa Deanna Rood, Mahaska	Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk Wendi Denham, Mahaska





A Message from our State Executive Director

I would like to start this with a simple statement of fact; I am proud to work with each and every member of the Iowa FSA family. I am proud of the work you accomplish and hope that I am able to provide the tools that allow you to get your work done. I am proud of the work IASCOE is doing to host the NASCOE convention this year and am looking forward to seeing a large number of IASCOE members there. This convention will be an honor for Iowa FSA and I commit to you to do everything I can to make it great. I realize that it is your convention, but it is also a great showcase for agriculture in our state.

I have recently been looking over the number of CRP contracts and acres. In part to judge what you have accomplished, but also because other state SEDs mention that they would like to catch up with Iowa (which is not going to happen). Iowa leads the nation in total number of CRP contracts, 16% of all contracts; FWP contracts, 29%; Filter Strip contracts, 24%; Grassed Waterway contracts, 29%; Shallow Water Wetland contracts, 36%; and last but definitely not least, Pollinator contracts, 39.8%. The work you have done on CRP is truly amazing. The list I mentioned here is not the complete list of CRP types in which Iowa is #1 on. Thank you for your efforts!

When I started as SED almost seven years ago, I received a call from one of our former SEDs whom I deeply respect. He told me that everyone in FSA always looks up to the Iowa SED. I understand why. It is not the SED they are looking up to, it is the work of the dedicated Iowa FSA employees that the rest of FSA in the nation looks up to.

John Whitaker
SED





IASCOE President Jennifer Comer

National Convention, Training and Stuff....

Greetings from sunny (but soggy) Southwest Iowa, hopefully your neck of the woods is sunny and the farmers are planting, seems like all should be right in the world right now. Of course our county offices are a buzz getting geared up for crop reporting, CRP seeding and whatever else comes our way. Just remember, take it one day at a time, enjoy your visits at the counter with the producers, laugh with your co-workers, and appreciate the clock turning to 4:30!

There are exciting things happening right now. Your IASCOE Directors and National Convention Committee Chairs are busy planning a fantastic National Convention in August. I hope that you have all made your plans to attend. We have said it several times; this will be a great week in Cedar Rapids. If you have never been to a National Convention, you should go! National Convention gives you an opportunity to meet FSA employees from across the country to share stories, ideas and create friendships. It also gives you an opportunity to meet our folks from Washington DC. Administrator Val Dolcini has promised a full staff from WDC will attend, giving us an opportunity to visit candidly with them about the workings of FSA. SED John Whitaker will also be hosting a training meeting for our County Committee members, this is a very exciting opportunity for our COC, not only is this some much needed training, this will allow our COC members to see first-hand the accomplishments of both NASCOE and NAFEC. The COC members will also join the rest of the delegation for the Q&A session with Washington DC.

A full week of activities of course cannot happen with just a few people. We are still looking for volunteers to work the registration/information areas, serve as tour guides, shuttle drivers etc. If you are willing to volunteer, we will find a place for you! Along with volunteers, we also need your help in fundraising. Make sure you have bought your raffle ticket – there are some awesome prizes. If you have sold raffle tickets, please send your tickets and money to Judy Dameron as soon as possible. I would also ask that if you know of someone or a company that might be interested in sponsoring some of our activities please contact them, unfortunately the convention comes at a price so the more fundraising we can do, the more we can offer our attendees and volunteers. In addition, do not forget welcome bags, door prizes, and auction items. Each attendee will receive a “welcome bag” when they check in filled with all kinds of items from Iowa. If you know of a business that would like to donate a sampling of their product, please contact Candace Fette, Clayton County. Each county is asked to provide something toward a door prize or auction item. The silent and live auction will be held on Thursday night and IASCOE will receive 25% of the proceeds from this event. Our own Aaron Eads will serve as our Auctioneer for the evening; it will surely be a great time!

Now on to other items IASCOE has been working on.

On April 19, the IASCOE officers met with our State Committee members to sign the annual Labor Management Agreement. We had a nice visit with the members updating them on all the activities IASCOE is involved with. This also allows us time to visit with them to share any concerns, accomplishments, and information we have. We appreciate their time as well as the SED for allowing us to visit with them.

We are also in the beginning stages of a training program for new employees. As our workforce changes and or decreases in numbers, the need for training becomes more and more apparent. We are all so busy in our county offices that often times, we do not have adequate time for training or it has been so long since a new person has started in our counties, we forgot what we did not know as a new employee. Our State Office has done an excellent job over the last few years of providing program training, and implementing the Key PT positions and district trainers are all invaluable. However, “basic FSA knowledge” is left behind. We certainly do not want to inundate our staff with more requirements but more provide a reference tool for managers and PTs to refer to when hiring and training new staff. As I said, we are in the beginning stages of this so if you have any suggestions or ideas, I would love to hear from you.

Exciting times in IASCOE right now, thank you all for your hard work each and every day serving our agency and our producers. You should all be proud of the work you do; I know I am proud to say I work for Iowa FSA. As our kids get out of school for summer break, crops go in the ground, the spring baby calves run through the green pastures, remember to take time and enjoy our gifts each and every day!

See you soon!

Jennifer





IASCOE Vice-President
Dee Ann Lehn

The Vice President's Views

Submitted by Dee Ann Lehn

I have recently attended the Midwest Area Rally in Indianapolis along with 11 other Iowans. This rally proved to be another very successful event. Our days were filled with meetings and good information. Chris Beyerhelm, Associate Administrator for Operations and management, was especially enlightening. He has some definite ideas about changes which need happened with the walls of FSA. Following are just a few highlights from his speech:

- He touched on our hiring process and how we have seen some improvement. Chris discussed using re-employed annuitants as part time mentors instead of using the phased retirement option as that option is running into several roadblocks. He discussed budget and how WDC needs to get the allotment to the states sooner. Our budget for 2017 looks better than this year's budget, which is good news.
- Chris introduced the idea of forming teams consisting of IT, Programs and Budget personnel to work together on developing new programs and the software needed to implement those programs. Currently there is rather a disconnect between those 3 departments.
- He is making updating handbooks a priority. We must break the habit of issuing procedure in memos and notices and keep the handbooks up-to-date instead. The CO will get a timeframe of when to expect these updates and the CO needs to hold WDC accountable for those timeframes.
- WDC is considering using a fellowship approach for employees to work in WDC for a 60 to 90 day period, giving the employee an opportunity to rub elbows with the folks in the national office and to get a feel of how working and living in WDC would be. I hope that this would encourage more employees to seek employment at higher levels and gain opportunities for advancement.

We heard from other WDC program managers, our MWA executive, Curt Houk and the MWA Alternate, Dennis Ray. MWA Committee chairpersons also shared updates with the members. There were two excellent Q & A sessions: one with the WDC staffers and one with the MWA SED's.

As you can see, our days were filled. We started at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday and continued through the day until 5:00 p.m. at which time members would allow free time to network with other members from various states. It is also during the evening hours when members can have a one-on-one conversation with WDC staffers. I walked down the street on the way to dinner with Brad Pfaff, Deputy Administrator for DFAP discussing FSA business as well as getting to know about him and his background with the agency. Where else are we as CO employees afforded this kind of opportunity?

Friday's meetings started at 7:00 a.m. and concluded at 12:30 p.m. at which time we said our good-byes, loaded up the van and heading back to Iowa. It was a whirlwind trip but worth every minute of every hour we spent on the road in that van!

Now, just a plug to the National Convention. We want to make this state proud and it will take each and every one of you to do so. Please sign up to volunteer at the convention, buy and sell raffle tickets, and solicit sponsors for our event. This is a wonderful opportunity for Iowa to strut its stuff but it takes a lot of work and a lot of money! Help us out you will not regret it!



IASCOE Secretary

Cindy Pistek

The Midwest Area Rally was held in Indianapolis, IN on April 13-15th. Twelve IASCOE members traveled to Indiana to hear about NASCOE's current activities hear from Washington, DC personnel and participate in a Q & A Session with department heads from Washington, DC. We were also able to participate in a Q & A Session with the Midwest Area SED's. Those from Washington in attendance were; Chris Beyerhelm (Associate Admin for Operations & Management), Brad Pfaff (Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs), and Brent Orr (Program Manager).

Chris Beyerhelm gave the following points as he addressed the group

Human Resources:

- In 2015 we were 1000 below our ceiling and today we are 300 below our ceiling (CO and GS)
- It took an average of 156 days to put a new employee in place, today it takes about 73 days
- In hiring for routine position descriptions (PT, CED) there is an express lane for hiring
- The utilization of Phased Retirement does not allow you to bring a new person on board to replace the retiree. The Retired Annuitant option seems to be a better fit for the agency
- Will create a workforce profile to aid in planning for work-force needs

Executive Budget & Goals

- Get allotments out sooner
- Spend all of the allocated dollars. At the end of the 2nd quarter, we are at 50% spending.
- In 2016-2017- Maintain or increase employees, add emphasis groups (veterans, new farmers etc.) and maintain or increase operations. Budget allocations were increased from 2015 to 2016, with the 2017 budget expected to increase as well. This is a testimony that Congress believes in the importance of what we do.
- ARS – Contractors are looking at our system for accuracy. The one we currently have is a “one size fits all” system and we are creating a task force to look at areas of difference. In an ARS system we count approximately 85-90% of how much we do (programs etc.), it does not count the things we don't get done.
- Audit: FSA audit was okay, but the CCC audit got a disclaimer. The auditors could not confirm or deny any problems with the CCC audit. The auditors want to see actual contracts so be ready for a data call at a later date.

Chris talked about IT issues. He described it as a “whack a mole” process at this time. When a problem occurs, we attack the problem at that time only to have another problem pop up. Currently, there is no way to “completely” fix anything because of the time it takes to get it done. It will take \$150 million to hire someone to get long-term fixes. His suggestion at this time, send in remedy tickets all the time.

Chris' goal when we have a new program to implement is to engage a team to create the workings of the program process. The team would include budget, IT and program people to get the best product for the county office people to work with.

One of the things that Chris is dedicated to remedying is updating the Handbooks. Currently, we receive emails, info bulletins, directives etc. and it's impossible for us to keep track of what's what. His goal is to get the handbook updated timely so we have the correct information easily accessible all of the time! Chris said, “if we get non-handbook directives, call them out on it”. This was also addressed by Brad Pfaff during his time speaking with the group.

Receipt for Service is mandated by the last Farm Bill. The next step is Phase II and will concentrate on Farm Programs. Phase I was more directed towards farm loan programs. The receipt will be a benefit to workload counts.

These are only a few of Chris' comments. He was informative, well aware of our frustrations and is seeking ways to help us do our jobs.

2016 IASCOE Scholarship Recipients

The 2016 IASCOE Scholarship recipients have been selected. This year, two high school seniors received a \$400 “Traditional” Scholarship and one college student received a \$400 “Continuing Education” Scholarship.



Rachel Berg, daughter of Program Technician, Lynet Berg, is a High School Senior at Central Community High School in Elkader. Rachel will attend Grandview University in Des Moines to study Nursing. Rachel has been active in 4-H, Luther League, Student Government, National Honor Society, participated in softball, track, basketball, cross country manager, speech/drama, and numerous community activities.



Isabel Derdzinski, daughter of County Executive Director, Patrick Derdzinski, is a High School Senior at North Butler High School in Greene. Isabel plans to attend Iowa State University studying Occupational Therapy. Isabel is involved in National Honor Society, Student Council, cross-country, track, cheerleading, speech/drama, choir, band, jazz band, 4-H, Girl Scouts, and numerous community activities.



Brittany White, daughter of Program Technician, Becky White, is finishing her second year at Iowa State University. Brittany is majoring in Microbiology with a minor in Food Safety. Brittany's career goal is to work in a medical laboratory as a clinical microbiologist. Throughout college, Brittany worked at Lucas County Extension assisting with camps/fair, was an AmeriCorp intern, and worked for St. Paul Lutheran Church. Brittany graduated from Chariton High School in 2014.

Scholarships can only be awarded one time, so we encourage those that did not get a scholarship this year to consider applying for a "Continuing Education" Scholarship next year.

The Scholarship committee would like to thank all scholarship applicants.

AWARDS, NOT JUST FOR BREAKFAST ANYMORE!

Remember to reward with an AWARD. Simple acknowledgement of a job well done can make the difference!

IASCOE provides some of those opportunities that you can take advantage of. Please be sure to request, submit, or nominate those that are deserving of recognition for the categories below:

The Anytime Anyone Extra Mile Award

This is one of the nicest certificates NASCOE offers to its members! The beauty of this particular certificate program is that you can request an Extra Mile Award certificate for virtually ANYONE, not just IASCOE members that has gone the "Extra Mile"! Do you know a young person that donated hair for the Locks for Love program? Or how about a USDA Service Center that went all out for Breast Cancer Awareness day? Or how about an elderly neighbor that raked your leaves while you were at work? Bottom line is that with this certificate, you can show your appreciation to anyone, NASCOE Member or not to say "Thank you!" for what you have done. The certificate does not come wrapped with ribbons or bows, nor is it framed, it is a professionally prepared certificate to honor the deserving recipient. Guaranteed to put a smile on the giver and the receiver every time! Just fill out the online form under the Awards tab on the NASCOE web-site (www.nascoe.org) and the certificate will be mailed to you within days!

Distinguished Service Awards

The three Distinguished Service Awards honor fellow NASCOE Members that have gone over and above in their:

Communities Service to NASCOE Service to FSA- Agriculture

To nominate a fellow NASCOE Member please complete the online form that can be found under the Awards link on the NASCOE website at www.nascoe.org and send it to your State Awards Chairperson no later than February 1st. The nominations do not have to be lengthy; just point the facts/highlights for the Judges. For help in preparing the nomination, please see the section under the Awards link on the NASCOE website.

Sick Leave Certificates

The NASCOE Awards program offers sick leave certificates to persons that have reached a new sick leave milestone during their career with FSA. Sick leave certificates are a great way for a state to recognize dedicated NASCOE Members whom have reached 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, or 2,500 hours of unused sick leave. Normally the deadline is February 1st each year. But you may submit your names, county, and hours at any time. The certificates are issued at the State and/or National Convention as applicable. NASCOE also provides a plaque for NASCOE Members whom have achieved 3,000 hours of unused sick leave and is awarded at the National Convention. Simply send the name, county, and # of hours reached to your State Awards Chairperson no later than February 1st each year.

If you have any questions on any of these awards, please do not hesitate to contact your IASCOE District Committee person as listed on the IASCOE.org website or myself at any time with questions.

IASCOE State Awards Chairperson
Karen LaCour , 2320 110th Ave., Lake Park, IA 51347
Phone: 712-330-1347 Email: cmego@evertek.net



Newsletter Change

As you are reading this newsletter you might notice some slightly different things than the normal newsletters that have been out. 1 major change is the Newsletter is going to come out more often but in shorter lengths. We used to publish 4 newsletters with the committee members submitting articles to be published. We now will have 4 smaller newsletters with just information from the directors and 2 larger issues that will be normally published after the IASCOE convention and NASCOE convention. With this change we hope that we can get the information out to our members more timely than in the past. If you have any suggestions that could make the newsletter better please don't hesitate to email me at kris.koth@ia.usda.gov

2016 IASCOE CONVENTION

NIGHTLY EVENTS

August 3-6, 2016

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLPARK

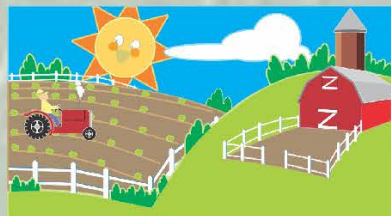
WEDNESDAY AUGUST 3, 2016

7- MIDNIGHT

Dress in your favorite team colors

Light Dinner

DJ



DOWN ON THE FARM

THURSDAY AUGUST 4, 2016

7-MIDNIGHT

Scholarship Auction with Magician-
Adult Only

DJ

BLOOMSBURY FARM NIGHT

FRIDAY AUGUST 5, 2016

7- MIDNIGHT

Nashville Recording Artist Jason Brown

Games — DJ

Fee: \$20 or Convention T-Shirt



NASCOE AWARD BANQUET

SATURDAY AUGUST 6, 2016

7-MIDNIGHT

Performance by Dueling Pianos after
award presentations

Fee: \$45

To register for the IASCOE Nightly
Events, please fill out the registration
form on the IASCOE or NASCOE Web-
site