

IASCOE

The Iowa Association Of FSA County Office Employees

July 2012



2012/2013 IASCOE OFFICERS

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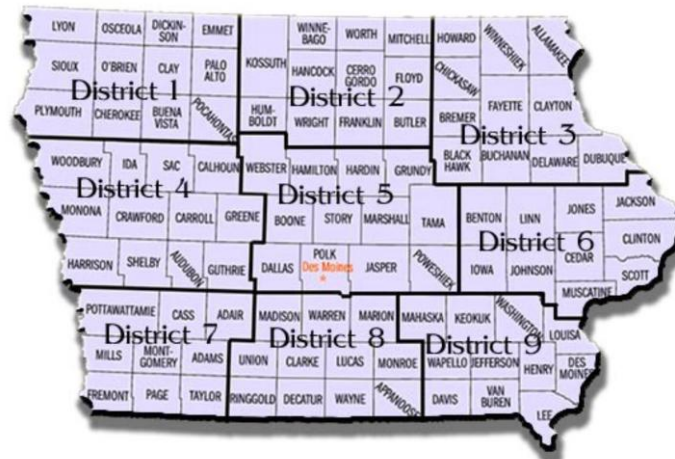
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DISTRICT NUMBER	PROGRAM ASSISTANT AND COUNTY	COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COUNTY
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3 Director Alternate	Karen McNeil, Winneshiek Joseph Huber, Clayton	Curt Goettsch, Howard Kevin Keegan, Buchanan
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6 Director Alternate	Jessica Yuska, Scott Joni Birkhofer, Muscatine	Devalyn Wilson, Cedar Randy Madsen, Muscatine/Scott
7 Director Alternate	Jennifer Comer, Page Monica Robinson, Cass	Lynette Gruchow, W Pottawattamie Justin Bahnsen, Montgomery
8 Director Alternate	Julie Derby, Marion	Kelly Cain, Madison Joyce Frost, Wayne
9 Director Alternate	Judy Dameron, Louisa Dawn Stewart, Henry	Dee Ann Lehn, Keokuk Gretchen McLain, Jefferson



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3	Karen McNeil	Winneshiek
4	Pat Warmbier	Harrison
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6	Joni Birkhofer	Muscatine
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7	Lynette Gruchow	W Pottawattamie
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8	Marla Morlan	Monroe
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2012 Awards & Scholarship Committee



2012 Publicity Committee



2012 Membership Committee



2012 Legislative and Benefits Committee

PAST IASCOE PRESIDENTS

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

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

A Message from our State Executive Director



Some weeks in our Agency are better than others, which is a nice way of saying that sometimes we have a bad week. The last week of May was a bad week. I truly believe that no one in USDA wanted to close any offices any more than they wanted to reduce the number of staff in the Department. But sometimes, hard decisions must be made, as happened in this case. We are now at the point where we will move forward in as organized manner as possible. We will take advice from other states which have gone through this before, and make this process as employee friendly as possible.

This fall, we will enter a new phase of our conversion to web based operations. We will train every county employee and many of our GS employees on MIDAS. We will host week long training at various sites around Iowa during the months of November, December, and January. It is my plan to have enough sites and trainers available to complete this task on time. When you consider that there are at least four weeks during those three months when due to federal holidays, we cannot have a week long training session, the logistics of this task become even more complex. This is a time of year when we normally use up “use or lose” leave and everyone does truly deserve a break!

I would like to leave you with this thought. As USDA celebrates its 150 year history, please remember what Secretary Vilsack has said about our department, “We are a secure nation in part because we are food secure and USDA plays a vital role in that food security.”



2012-2013 IASCOE President



Hello All,

I would just like to say hello to everyone and thanks to all the attendees to the IASCOE convention. It was a good time and was informative also. We had some people that made their first convention and we had some that I will just call veterans. We had information from people in the know from our state office and from the MWA about some of the things going on in FSA and NASCOE. It was good to see old friends and meet new ones. Thanks for making the 2012 IASCOE Convention a good one and I hope to see you next year at the 2013 IASCOE Convention.

There is a lot of unknown out there in the field at this time and that kind of goes with the territory. As we wait for the new Farm Bill we wonder just where we might fit in. Will we have a big or little part in the safety net for the farmers of today? No one really knows the answer to that until they actually pass the Farm Bill. Until that time you can be involved in reading everything possible to keep yourself educated as to what is going on and where we might end up in the future with the new Farm Bill. One thing to remember is that what you read could be totally different from the final outcome of the bill itself. Everyone wants their own fingerprint on the bill, but in this time of tight budgets and high prices direct payments to farmers seems to be on the way out. You have heard many things about FSA taking over parts of the crop insurance industry. That may happen and it may not, it all depends upon what Congress hears from its constituents and where money could be saved.

One big way to make sure that you are up on everything that is going on is to sign up for CapWiz from your home computer. You need a home email and home computer (or even a smart phone can do the trick). Our leadership follows the happenings of a bills that may be passed or things that may be happening with the Farm Bill and we may need to contact Congressmen or Senators to give them our point of view. Everyone has a stake in our future; whether you are just starting your career or just about ready to retire. You can receive alerts on many different things but the ones that come from CapWiz are the ones that our leadership feels are of great importance and they feel that you need to make some contacts. It is an easy process and if you have signed up for Capwiz all you need to do is send your first letters by email and after that it takes only a few seconds to send a letter. Easy to do and it is really something that you should do to help secure your future if you have a number of years left with the agency or if you are ready to retire. Some of the topics for the alerts deal with you and your retirement. It is time for you to get involved. The same can be said for some of the alerts coming from National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), because we have teamed up with them to get the word out. Please send out a letter if you get the alert. If you believe you never receive the alerts (and are signed up for CapWiz) check your junk-email because your computer may be set to trash anything with more than just a few email recipients. If you have any questions please give me a call.

If you ever have any questions about what the agency or association is doing please feel free to contact either myself or a director to get their point of view on the situation. One thing to remember is that IASCOE/NASCOE is looking out for all of the FSA employees from California to Maine and Washington to Florida. If you want to know something, just ask- there is no such thing as a dumb question.

There is no time like the present to get involved and with the dwindling number of employees every person counts. Get your co-worker or someone from your neighboring county involved. We all have to be involved to make our future brighter.

See you all later

Jeff Davis, IASCOE President

2012-2013 IASCOE Vice-President



Well, it appears that maybe warmer weather might be here to stay?? I absolutely love spring and summer, so bring it on! The past few months we have all seen changes and heard much about the challenges ahead. We are a resilient group of individuals and are used to the “moving target” as it were, but now we need to be fully informed and proactive. The IASCOE Convention was a great success and we were fortunate to hear from many of those individuals closely involved with NASCOE. We heard from Mark VanHoose (NASCOE Vice-President), Dan Root (National Legislative Co-Chair), Tony Augustine (MWA Legislative) and Charlene Neukomm (MWA Executive). We are very fortunate to have some good representation from the mid-west as we work through the budget crisis and the new Farm Bill. As you read through this newsletter, I think you will find some informative articles from some of these individuals.

Last summer I joined NARFE (National Active and Retired Federal Employees); it is not only for the retired it is for the employed as well. Each month I get a magazine keeping me posted on what is going on in DC and what will/could affect the federal employee. I also receive e-mail alerts, (much like Cap Wiz) so I get plenty of new information. The May issue’s cover said “Can We Stop the Congressional Steamroller?” That certainly got my attention and I opened it up for a very interesting read. Here are some VERY BRIEF notes about the “Steamroller” and what it could mean for us as employees.

- Retirement Security- Bills are proposed that would either reduce or eliminate the FERS annuity or require employees to pay more toward retirement, or both
- Health Care – Bills are proposed that would require Medicare enrollees to enroll in the FEHB Program and slowly phases out Medicare (a sure way to increase premiums). Another proposal would be to increase the share of health insurance premiums paid by the employee, retiree or survivor.
- Federal Pay – Proposals to extend the current two-year pay freeze for up to five years total (through 2015).
- Workforce Reduction – Place a greater workload on federal employees by arbitrarily reducing the size of the workforce, unattached to program cuts

So far this year, Congress has passed only one piece of legislation affecting the federal family-increasing retirement contributions for newly hired federal employees, says NARFE. I ask you-can we afford to take a “wait and see” attitude?? I believe that we all need our benefits and enjoy the security they provide for us and our families. I urge each of you (active and retired employees) to be diligent in paying attention to what is proposed in Congress and how it affects us all. A steamroller can’t be stopped by watching it head our direction and hope it doesn’t run us over! Things like Cap Wiz, NASCOE, NAFEC (National Association Farmer Elected Committee) and NARFE are just a few of the tools we have to stop this steamroller from hitting us head-on. Feel free to contact me or any IASCOE board member if you have any questions or concerns.

Cindy Pistek
IASCOE Vice-President

2012-2013 IASCOE Secretary



Greetings!!

I want to take a few moments to introduce myself. I am Jennifer Comer, PT in Page County. I will have the honor of serving as your IASCOE Secretary for the upcoming year. I have been with FSA for a little over six years working with Payment Limitations, Sodbusters, SURE, LIP, and ELAP. It has been an exciting ride for sure. I grew up on a farm in Mills County, graduated from Iowa State University, worked in the telecommunications industry for about 10 years, got married, moved to Taylor County to farm and raise cattle with my husband and the rest they say is history! I have a step-son that will be entering his junior year at Northwest Missouri State University next fall, a 6 year old son that is about to finish kindergarten and a 3 year old daughter that makes the daily challenges we face at FSA seem like a breeze!

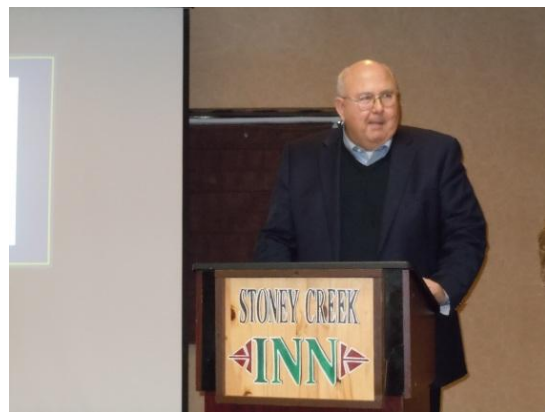
One of the first experiences I had as a new PT was a statewide Payment Limitation training in Altoona. At that meeting, I remember someone asking the group for anyone in attendance that would be eligible for retirement in the next 10 years to standup. OVER HALF THE ROOM STOOD UP!!!! I remember thinking to myself; there is no way I can learn what these people know in the next 10 years!!! What I didn't realize at the time is that I didn't have to learn it all, because the people at FSA are like a family, and family helps each other. So every time I have come across something I wasn't so sure about, I felt at ease to ask a co-worker, whether it was in my own county or across the state, we were a team and all in it together. That atmosphere is what prompted me to get involved with IASCOE. I attended my first convention in 2011 and in 2012 was elected Secretary. Whether you have been involved with IASCOE since the first day of your career or have been here for 25+ years and are not a member yet, I would encourage you to get involved; this is your voice in Washington, this is your opportunity to be involved with the changes that affect your daily work life! I am very excited to be a part of this team within our agency and work for **you**. If you feel there are changes that need to be made within our group, how we deliver information to you, at the convention etc. please don't hesitate to contact me. I still consider myself a 'newbie' so sometimes I don't see a change that needs to be made. As we face some pretty uncertain times with FSA, one thing remains; there will be change (good and bad) and we will weather the storm together, as a family.

Best wishes to all of you for a healthy, happy spring and summer, a successful certification, and to our producers on a safe and successful planting and growing season! I look forward to serving you as your IASCOE Secretary.

Jennifer

2012 IASCOE Convention Photos







Join the 2nd Annual RAGBRAI \ FSA Family and Friends Tour!!!
This year's ride will take place on Wednesday, July 25; starting in Webster City and ending in Marshalltown. It will be a relatively flat ride of "only" 77 miles. Even better, Webster City's elevation is 1122 ft. while Marshalltown's is 974, so it is all downhill! Anyone interested in participating in this year's ride should contact Steve Kennedy by emailing skennedys00@gmail.com for more information. For those who don't wish to ride, we will need support persons to transport riders from Marshalltown back to Webster City to retrieve their vehicles." Join the team!!! Have some fun!!!

Comments From the NASCOE Vice President

This is one of our most challenging times in the history of NASCOE. We have hit the perfect storm of extreme high commodity prices and severe Congressional budget restraints. So our highest priority has been making sure that FSA has a prominent role in the new Farm Bill being considered in Congress. Since we announced the results of the Informa study and the savings available by involving FSA in crop insurance processes, we have been criticized by the crop insurance industry and others at every turn. But it is interesting that no one has questioned the savings projected in the report. After the initial negative backlash I think the response continues to turn more positive and I commend the leadership that initiated this study over a year ago.

I have a good feeling concerning our legislative approach but it takes all of us to get it done. It is very important to participate in our CAPWIZ alerts and also the PAC. Build relationships with your Congressional folks as well so they have a good understanding of the importance of FSA as part of the Farm Safety Net. Also take time to build strong relationships with leaders in your state farm organizations. This can result in benefits as we work to remain a vital agency.

Some points I made in my speech to those attending the Midwest Area Rally:

- Food is a national security issue. And FSA is part of the equation for maintaining a safe, cheap food supply.
- Get your state's NAFEC group stronger by building membership. Find a way to bring a NAFEC member from your state to national convention. NAFEC is an important part of communicating the FSA story of service to agriculture!
- NASCOE offers one free hour to members with the NASCOE attorney when an unfair personnel issue arises.
- County committee meeting time is a big issue for us. Returning leasing to the county office is a big issue. PT classification is a big issue. Measurement service money not coming back to the county office is a big issue. Difficult to work on all these issues when we are fighting to save FSA and our jobs.
- Every Secretary wants to centralize services and reduce the number of county offices. Producers doing business on line will always be a priority of every administration. But we know that producers will not embrace this process and so we continue to educate Congress on this issue.
- We are striving to make sure reasonable office closure language is enacted to make sure county offices stay open to service the public.
- Make sure you are signed up to receive NARFE alerts on issues that affect your benefits. Employee benefits are under attack like never before.

Remember that NASCOE is your organization and doesn't work unless you are involved! Your participation is especially important in the legislative arena. Take time to look at the tools available to you on the website. This organization can accomplish anything it sets out to do when membership is engaged and working!

Thank you for the support of the Iowa delegation and it is an honor to serve as your NASCOE Vice President.

Sincerely,

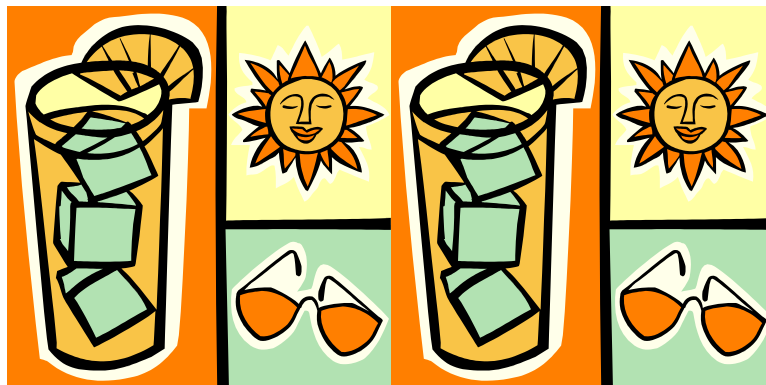
Mark VanHoose
NASCOE Vice President

IASCOE Membership

Well summer is upon us, which brings up July 1st, a new year for IASCOE. Your membership is vitally important to not just IASCOE as a whole, but to yourself as a member. With the times of continued budget cuts, office closures, threats of increasing employee retirement contributions to help offset extending the current interest rate on federally guaranteed student loans, along with COLA freezes possibly being extended, and uncertain things to come, we need a voice to speak up for our jobs and benefits. If you have not joined IASCOE, I would highly encourage you to reconsider and look at what could be at stake by not joining the fight! We, a small minority of the job force, are on the verge of being forced to take more out of our paychecks to cover other deficits for a majority. If you still aren't convinced please remember there are perks to being an IASCOE member that include cell phone and park discounts, SAMS club memberships, travel discounts, and so on. Check out the IASCOE website for more information on the benefits for being an IASCOE member that could easily cover the IASCOE membership fees for the entire year. An easy payroll deduction for a minimal amount is available and not really noticeable. Still not convinced then please contact me personally to discuss your concerns about becoming an IASCOE member so that I can take those concerns forward and alleviate your concerns.

Again, IASCOE membership IS IMPORTANT, for all of us! If you are an IASCOE member, THANK YOU, for your membership and if you are not a member, please consider what's at stake and what you can benefit from becoming a member!

Karen LaCour
IASCOE Membership Chair



MWA CONVENTION NOTES

Several of us traveled to the MWA Rally in St. Louis, MO. The convention was a two day event with Friday being the Missouri Convention and Saturday being the MWA Rally. We heard from several individuals including Mike Wooden (Deputy Admin Field Operations). Normally, when you have a guest speaker they stand at the podium and give you their “speech”. Mr. Wooden grabbed a chair, pulled it towards us and sat down to have a chat, including giving us an opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions – what a refreshing change in format! He proceeded to tell us that he is an original FSA employee who went through the ranks (COT, CED, DD, and SED) and has been in DC for the last 3 years. Periodically, Mr. Wooden travels to an area FSA Office (at his own expense) so he can keep in touch with what’s going on at the local level. Mr. Wooden gave us some information about MIDAS and that January 2013 is the target for the deployment of acreage reporting. The next deployment is slated for April 2013 (Marketing Loans)-all of this will call for training. The plan is to prepare approximately 450 national trainers who will then train the states and counties.

Mr. Wooden also told us that in the period of March/April 38,000 new e-mails have been brought into the system. I know that in our county, much of that is our way of trying to do as much business as is practical by e-mail due to budget concerns. Fortunately, Mike understands that we need to find creative ways to reach out to those who do not have access to e-mail. Mr. Wooden also addressed; extending the Key PT positions another year and evaluating the potential for this to be a permanent position, COT training must include both FP and FLP, Gov-Delivery, VTC System (each STO has one, one SED has even conducted interviews by this system) and cross-training.

When it came our turn to ask him questions...

- FSA Offices slated to close yet the NRCS office in same location remains open? We have no control over what NRCS does, but NRCS is asking for a plan by September so they are having to deal with issues as well
- COC system where does that fall in the scheme of things? The system is alive and well according to DC. The administrator believes in the COC process and it has his support
- ARS System? Wooden worked under our old workload system and understands our frustration with this new method. The belief is that the ARS system will become more effective in time.
- CRP letters from KCMO, can we stop those coming from KCMO and put it back to the county office? At the least, could we review the list of those to be sent out? Those letters go out based on an old mailing list and many times get returned to the county office with a postage cost for an address change. Mr. Wooden was going to take this suggestion back with him and see if anything could be done.

It was a very good discussion and I was pleasantly surprised by his candor and genuine concern for the employees and the customers we serve.

Of course, that was only a very small portion of the meetings. In order to see a full review of the MWA Convention, go to the MWA Web-site and read the complete notes (www.nascoemwa.org).

Submitted by Cindy Pistek

ROAD TRIP!!!

A ROAD TRIP is defined as; Eight (8) FSA employees + 1 retired FSA Employee + one rented van + MWA Rally = Unbelievable adventures!

Cindy headed to Kevin's @ 5:00am, threw her bag in Kevin's car (we weren't allowed a carry on AND a checked bag) and we were off to Cedar Rapids to pick up Tammy and a 15 passenger van – on a tight schedule you know. While Jeremiah (Weed as Kevin referred to him) the Enterprise guy, was doing the paperwork for the “Harem Hauler” he asked Kevin what the trip was for. He told him it was for an employee convention. When asked who we worked for Kevin proudly reported “The USDA”. Jeremiah said, “Oh yeah, I worked for the government too-I was in the army. “Weed” asked what do you guys do and Kevin quickly replied “We are food tasters”! Evidently, it was an acceptable answer as Jeremiah replied, “Neat, do you like it?” Go figure.... Next destination; Ainsworth truck stop to pick up Dee, Judy, Joni, Deb and Jeff. Hmmmm, no room for the luggage with 4 bench seats, IMPROVISE! Take out the back bench seat, chuck it into the back of Dee's vehicle, load up our stuff and we are off to pick up Gretchen. Kevin handed out his rules for the trip-he's in charge at all times, WHATEVER.... We met Gretchen out in the middle of nowhere along the way. Oddly enough her hubby was happy to drop her off into a van of strangers! Gretchen threw her bag and cowboy boots in the back (guess boots don't count as a carry-on) and off we went to St. Louis, MO and the MWA Convention. Not to forget a friend's special day, we speaker dialed Tom Lane and sang Happy Birthday-do you believe it TOM WAS SPEECHLESS! After only one pit-stop at a park with (thankfully) a flushing out-house we landed in St. Louis about 12:30pm

Lunch-time! We were all very hungry of course so the hotel restaurant was treated to our presence. Of course, photos are a must. Cindy took a photo of Kevin, Deb and Gretchen, but she takes lousy photos so Judy took over and we got our first photo!



The Missouri convention started and we enjoyed hearing their speakers. One problem-the room was extremely COLD. Cindy realized she had gloves in her coat pocket, put them on and continued to take notes. Jeff and Deb were both freezing too (both are usually too warm), but Cindy surely didn't want to share her gloves.

At 4:00pm the meetings were over and we headed to Missouri's hospitality room to see old friends, make new ones and enjoy some appetizers and a beverage or two. Imagine our surprise when we caught up with Steve Kennedy-guess when you retire you can go anywhere you darn please, no worries. The evening activities included either a comedy club (The Funny Bone) or the baseball game. Wisely, we chose the comedy club-the baseball game was cold and damp. The show was warm and full of laughs (both on stage and of course at our tables).

The morning brought meetings starting at 8:00am and ending at 4:00pm. Awards were presented at the noon luncheon. Iowa hit the jackpot with 2 wins: Cindy Mensen (Service to NASCOE) and Christine Krager (Outstanding Service to Community). Dee Lehn won the 50/50 prize of \$110-guess who's buying tonight!



At 4:00pm the business was over and we needed a “group” photo. We all stood together as several cameras flashed. Now, this hotel had several things going on over the weekend; a dog show, youth soccer tournaments and the Shriners. As we all stood there, a lady pushing a stroller waited to pass in front of the group. As she did so, she stopped and announced that she was a “model” and had a tip for us all-if you touch your tongue to the top of your mouth when you smile your eyes will “pop”!! Naturally, (as good FSA employees) we were all trying it and our eyes did “pop”, especially when we saw that a baby wasn't in the stroller but 2 very small dogs. The model gave us what must have been her “signature” smile (obviously enhanced with a little collagen) and walked on.

We were on our own for entertainment the remainder of the night so we headed to Kevin and Jeff's room to relax and plan our evening activities. It had turned rainy so we decided to just walk to a pizza place close by in the plaza. It was a nice little place with typical pizza, sandwiches and beer. As we ordered our food and beverage the TV showed severe weather somewhere; since we had no idea where it was we just ignored the warnings. All of a sudden it sounded like the roof was being pelted with very large rocks- hail stones about the size of a baseball were hitting the slate shingles. It was raining shingles and hail stones onto the sidewalk outside, breaking up the cement and breaking off pieces of the tables meant for outside seating. Now the TV indicated "tornado warning" and the bar tender said we "may have to go to the basement".

ARE YOU KIDDING??? When the news says "warning" it means hit the deck it's out there somewhere close to you! We filed out the backdoor of the building (beverages in hand) to find ourselves above a parking garage listening to sirens blaring. The real attraction was watching all of the cars below drive into the garage with broken windows, sun roofs and



major body damage. Naturally, we are calling home, taking photos, drinking our beverages and wondering if we will ever get our pizza! Our cold pizza arrived, but who cares-we ate and watched the damages on TV-we were in the thick of it all. The walk back to the hotel was sobering-tree limbs and broken patio chairs/tables. The worst site was the car damage-did the van survive??? NOPE, but it fared better than most. It looked like the traveling garden gnomes had been working on our van with small sledge-hammers, leaving dimples on the top and sides giving it the appearance of the surface of a golf ball! We all went back to the room to watch the

chaos below which included a local news van interviewing someone-maybe we could get on the news??? The cameraman chuckled as he glanced up at 9 people on a balcony screaming "We saw the whole darn thing" (you may use your imagination as to the colorful nature of that statement). FOX NEWS picked up the story and the next morning we watched the interview and listened to some rather noisy yelling in the background-we made National News!!

Sunday morning we loaded up and headed to the nearest McDonald's. Have you ever tried to take a passenger van through drive-through and make 9 different orders? We didn't have the option of ordering inside since all the windows were broken from the hail, so we moved on to McDonald's #2. Oops, missed the turn-pulled into a gas station, drove in a circle, made a "curb check" and went back to get food. Dee generously bought breakfast and we were on our way with Egg McMuffins and caramel lattes in hand.

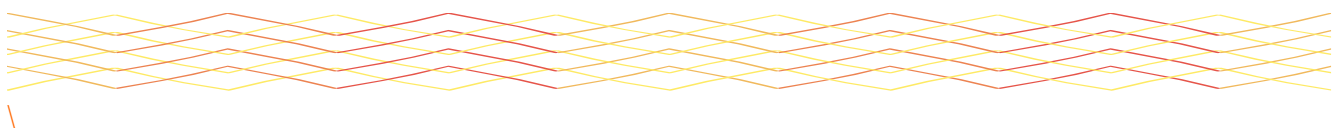
Kevin's rules came in to play as we pulled out of the parking lot. Keep an eye on the window cracks, don't slam the doors shut, don't push on the glass "just to see if air is coming in" and keep an eye on the side mirror-we don't want to lose it on the way. Kevin felt he needed to give Enterprise a heads-up so he gave them a call. The guy who rented us the van recognized us right away- The Harem Hauler. Kevin says; Hey you know that van you rented to travel to St. Louis? Did you see the news about the storm in St. Louis?? That's where we were parked! We have more dents than you can count and a windshield that's still intact-a real miracle considering the number of cracks it sports right now! The guy said-okay, no problem bring it on in. REALLY, does this sort of thing happen frequently??? Oh happy day-we don't have to cough up any additional cash for the damages.

By the time we dropped off the van, Kevin's vision was so messed up from looking through the cracked windshield we couldn't find his car. Who would steel such a classic car?? After 5 times around a very small parking lot, the lost was found. We unloaded the last of our possessions and drove the damaged van to the rental lot, dropped the keys and took off before Enterprise could catch up with us.

Even with all of the excitement we came home with a couple of trophies (a piece of slate shingle and part of the rearview mirror that fell off on the way home). The next "road trip" will be the 2013 MWA Convention in Wisconsin. Our goal - increase the harem so we can take a BUS next time!!!



Submitted
by: Kevin,
Judy, Dee,
Tammy, Deb,
Gretchen,
Jeff, Joni and
Cindy





Country Boy's Trip to the Windy City

By Paul Berte, Pocahontas CED

Each year my family plans a summer trip. Mom, dad, Katie age 11, Molly age 9, and Ben age 7 at the time. We won't mention mom and dad's ages as time passes by too quickly and we're still hanging on to the belief that we're in our 20's. It's March and we're thinking of ideas. We finally settle on Chicago.

Hmmm....Chicago so similar to Pocahontas, NOT! Population: Chicago over 4 million, Pocahontas approximately 1,800, restaurants: Chicago too many to estimate, Pocahontas (4) if you count the Subway located conveniently in a gas station. Crime: Chicago again too many to estimate, Pocahontas if I receive a speeding ticket the farmers drinking coffee at Dynos the next day probably already heard about it.

June is here we are off to Chicago. As we are backing out of the drive I tell my wife, "I feel a bit like the Clampetts from the Beverly Hill Billies." No it's not the first time we've left the confines of Pocahontas County, we've both been overseas, California several times to see in-laws, Saint Louis, Twin Cities, Colorado, South Dakota, East Coast, Washington DC, etc.. BUT this is the first time we've ventured out independently with all three kids just waiting for mischief. Hmmm....better mention to Ben he can't pee outside and that a restroom urinal would be more advisable.

Day One:

The Trip starts out well. We check into our hotel in Deerfield, Illinois strategically planned by dad as to avoid high hotel fees and city driving. Check-in goes just fine....then we walk into our hotel room to soaking wet carpet. No big deal they gave us another room. It's late enough we decide not to venture into Chicago that day but rather eat at a restaurant and do some sight-seeing in Deerfield. We venture East to Lake Michigan. Ah... what a beautiful site...my wife and I had been to Lake Superior in Duluth and really marveled at the beauty of that Great Lake. Prettier than the ocean in our eyes and Lake Michigan was just as beautiful. We venture around the beach and take pictures of the kids on an unoccupied life guard chair only to hear a faint scream from a distance "Get off of there!" Day ends with a relaxing swim in the hotel pool.

Day Two:

Early in the morning the five of us hop on the "L" train in Deerfield. We had spotted the depot the nite before after a little cussing because it was difficult for us "country folk" to locate AND terribly marked by signs amongst lots of road construction. GRRRRRR! The train ride is all good with exception to something I got a kick out of watching. The train is pretty full when the Clampetts (AKA Bertes) board the train, so packed we have to separate Mom, Katie and Ben by a few rows from Dad and Molly. Mom a school teacher never stops teaching and is talking from the moment we get on the train. Dad and Molly....a few rows behind, notice the sign which says something to the effect of...."this is the quiet train keep your mouths shut as people are sleeping!" Nevertheless, Ms. Clampett doesn't notice the sign and talks and talks and talks. Molly and I notice people

trying to sleep and giving her mean looks. Finally the ticket taker comes by, punches our tickets and nicely tells Ms. Clampett to quiet down as we selected the quiet train.

Forty-five minutes from boarding the train we get off the train into a much larger depot in downtown Chicago. A bit different than the main street area in Pocahtonas, which by the way, used to have a stop light. At the time it was one of two stoplights in the county but due to inability to buy parts... it was replaced with a plain old stop sign. We start walking after the depot. We walk and we walk and we look at our map and we walk! We decide to buy a "GO CHICAGO CARD. It's a pass you buy at a discounted price to see any (5) of the (25) major attractions in Chicago. The bad thing is shelling out \$320.00 on the spot but in the long-run we were happy we purchased the passes. Finally, we decide to board a bus to the Field Museum. Before going to the museum I notice Soldier Field and want to take a peak. My wife gives me the evil eye but gives in. We walk around and get in building from one of the unlocked doors. Someone spots us and asks if they could help us. "I say yes we would like a tour of stadium sir." He nicely explains the next tour begins at 1:00. I'm thinking this will be a great "guy thing" to do only to be disappointed three days later because we never did take a tour.

A bit later we enter the Field Museum. A very neat place! Lots of animals of all types mounted in different sections of a massive building. The kids really enjoy the bears, dinosaurs, snakes, and my wife enjoys the place even more than the kids. Eventually everyone is ready to go except for mom, so we end up out-staying our patience. Later we venture into the Shed Aquarium. Another awesome place with really good water shows involving seals, dolphins, and some pretty well-trained workers. The kids, mom, and yes even dad have a great time.

Next we tour the Sears tower which is now named the Willis Tower. Wow... what a spectacular view! A newer feature they've added is what I would describe as a three large glass boxes on the side of the building which you can step inside. It's basically like walking off the side of the building near the top and looking down to the streets. It's now approaching 5 PM so we decide to board the train back to Deerfield and the confines of our hotel.

Day Three:

The Clampetts get back on the train at the depot in the early morning hours. We are now seasoned train riders... we don't even talk loud on the quiet train! We venture back to the Soldier Field area and into the Adler Planetarium. The planetarium is a good place to learn about space, NASA, and other important facts about planets. We don't find it very interesting, but don't let that keep you from stopping there as everyone has different interests. After leaving we stroll around and take some neat pictures with the great Chicago skyline in the background.

We decide to board a bus to the Museum of Science and Industry. The excitement begins. Let's just say I didn't plan very well. We had no idea how far away we were from this museum! We view the city bus maps and pickup times. We decide to board the blue route bus. We get to the bus stop and begin waiting and waiting. Finally we ask a local (Just a side note... we were completely impressed with the people of Chicago...always a friendly face and smile and most of them more than willing to help with bus schedules and questions you may have) who advises us to take the subway part of the way to the Museum of Science and Industry. We begin walking to the subway station and go down the stairs to what I would call "THE LAND DOWN UNDER". It's really not too clean!! We are all tired by now after a couple hours of walking. We receive approach the ticket

desk for some additional assistance on getting to the museum from a very friendly face behind ticket counter. I'm a bit nervous by now after being screamed at by my wife and kids for not planning our route so well. I walk up to the ticket counter and say "We'd like to buy tickets to board the submarine." I stop and thinkwow that really didn't come out very well. She laughs and notices we are a bit travel weary and tired. She explains in detail how to board the subway and at which point to get off to board a bus to the Museum and Science and Industry. My embarrassing antics haven't yet subsided. My wife and kids go ahead of me and put their tickets into the automated subway ticket taker. By this time it's getting close to boarding time so we need to hurry. It's my turn to put my pass into the automated ticket taker. I try it and it makes a loud GRINDING noise! I try it again and it does the same thing. My wife turns around and looks at me angrily. I try it a third or fourth time but who's keeping track by now. I finally figure it out....DON'T PUT THE CARD IN AT AN ANGLE. THE MACHINE DOESN'T LIKE THIS!! We still manage to board the subway car on time and travel thru some really run-down portions of Chicago with bars on most windows, past White Sox Stadium and finally to the Museum of Science and Industry. By now it's around 2:00. WOW ...what a great place for a family to spend the afternoon!! The museum is so big they've taken a large German Submarine the US captured during WWII and placed it inside the building basement! My son and I take a tour of the submarine and love it. We also tour the agriculture area and feel a bit at home surrounded by big John Deere farm machinery and even chickens hatching out of eggs at an exhibit. In summary, this is the best museum we've ever seen! It has a little of everything... US History, war history, aeronautics history, locomotive history, tornado exhibits, and basically everything in between.

We venture back to our hotel by train. The next morning we are exhausted from two days in Chicago and train rides back and forth. We start our journey closer to home by staying overnight in the little quiet town of Galena Illinois. What a nice change of pace. This country has so much to offer and explore not that far from our doorsteps!!

In summary, we had a great time in Chicago and will surely return. A trip filled with interesting sites and countless learning experiences for our young family. As I think back and reflect on our trip I am very thankful for a quality (4) days with my family. The memories are priceless in my opinion. I think back to my days growing up in the 70's and early 80's near Algona Iowa. One our biggest vacations was a trip to Mason City! YES this trip was just 45 minutes by car. I constantly remind my kids how much more they have seen than I did at their age. If you have never taken a trip to Chicago I would highly recommend. Even if you are not fond of city driving you can always stay in a suburb and take a train downtown.



2012 Destination: The Iowa State Fair!

There is No Better Time than 2012 to Visit the Iowa State Fair as it's also USDA's 150th Anniversary Celebration!!!

The Iowa State Fair is one of the top and single largest events in the country. The Iowa State Fair is included in the travel book, "1000 Places to See Before You Die"! The fair grounds are 445 acres of which 160 of those acres hold 30,000 campers. There are 700 exhibitors and concessionaires nearly 200 of them are food stands, 300 exhibitors and 200 merchandise booths.

The fair educates, informs and entertains people from all walks of life. Whatever your interests are you are sure to find it at the Iowa State Fair whether it be agriculture (the fair has one of the world's largest livestock shows), the arts, entertainment, people mingling and watching, food (more than 50 of them on a stick), rides and on and on. In 2011 there were 1,080,959 fairgoers.

The Iowa State Fair is located in Des Moines at East 30th and East University Ave, where it has been located since 1886. The Iowa State Fair was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, as most of the buildings pre-date World War I. The Iowa State Fair has only been cancelled five times in history and that was in 1898 when Omaha hosted the World's Fair along with the Spanish American War and also in 1942 – 1945, the years of WWII. The first Butter Cow was sculpted in 1911, Bill Riley's talent search debuted in 1959 and the 1st State Fair Queen Pageant was held in 1964. The famous novel "State Fair" written by Iowan Phil Stong was about the Iowa State Fair. Phil Stong was Norma "Duffy" Lyon's uncle. Duffy resided in Toledo, Iowa, and began sculpting butter in 1960 at the Iowa State Fair as the first woman and fourth sculptor.

The Iowa State Fair dates for 2012 are Thursday Aug. 9th – Sunday Aug. 19th. The Parade is held on Wednesday August 8th at 6:15pm downtown Des Moines, West on Grand to 13th Street with approximately 200 entries. The hours for the grounds are 7am to 1am, the buildings are 9am to 9pm and the midway is 10am to midnight. Admission costs are \$10 (adult), \$4 (children 6 - 11) and children 5 and under are free. You can purchase discounted admission tickets from July 1st – August 8th at Hy-Vee, Hy-Vee Drugstore, Dahl's Foods and Fareway Stores \$7 (adults) and \$3 (children 6 – 11). Grandstand entertainment costs, parking and horse shows are in addition to the gate admission costs. The Grandstand Concerts and Events are from a variety of venues (they are listed online now). In addition there are many free stage lineups which will be announced in late May. The daily programs will be posted in early July. The Des Moines Register will have an insert on Sunday August 5th of the daily events or you can visit www.iowastatefair.org for the details.

Submitted by: Kitty Benda, Marshall County





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NASCOE Publicity Contest Announcement

Dear Contestants,

Thank you for participating in the NASCOE Publicity Contest. Your dedication and the hard work you have put forth in the promotion of NASCOE through publicity is to the betterment of all members. It is a commitment of your time and talents that are greatly appreciated by the Officers, Area Executives and Committee Chairs.

The judging results are now in and I am proud to announce the winners for the 2011/2012 year. As with any contest, there can be only one winner in each category but let me make it clear that all submitted newsletters, feature story articles and websites were fantastic to see and review. The scoring and judging in all areas was extremely close, a testament of the quality of the items submitted. This is a compliment to each winner.

The Winners in the Publicity Contest are:

Best Newsletter Renee Boykin, South Carolina

Best Single Issue South Carolina Spring and Summer Issues, Renee Boykin, Editor

Best Website Aaron Moore, Wisconsin

Best Feature Story Human Interest Don Henry, Ohio-”My Trip to Africa”

Best Feature Story Humor David Stromer, Iowa-“Wedding: A Fathers Point of View”

Congratulations to all the winners! And a Big THANK YOU to all of this years participants and judges. Your time committed to NASCOE Publicity is greatly appreciated.

I look forward to seeing you at the National Convention in Boise, Idaho!

Tammy Eibey
NASCOE Publicity Chairperson

Congratulations!

Drive for RASCOE Membership

By Deb Krusemark and Steve Kennedy

Greetings FSA/IASCOE Friends!

After working for ASCS/FSA for almost 34 years (I started young!) I was very fortunate to be able to retire December 2, 2011. That same day I flew back to Iowa to start the next journey in my life! It is great to be back in Iowa with my family and friends!!

I started my career with FSA (ASCS at the time) in Mahaska County as a Program Assistant (now PT) in 1978. We did not have a CED when I started but I was informed by the ladies in the office that "we" belong to an association called NASCOE and this is what you owe. I never thought twice about it and was happy to pay my dues. It was the beginning of many great opportunities to meet and become friends with other FSA employees throughout the nation. Since then I have been an IASCOE/NASCOE member while I was CO and then an associate member when I became GS.

Before I retired I became a member of RASCOE. For those of you that are not familiar with RASCOE, it is the retired person's NASCOE. In 1994 a group of retired county office FSA employees organized the national Association of RASCOE. To entice retirees to become members, RASCOE is offering FREE MEMBERSHIP the first year of retirement. After the first year national RASCOE dues are \$20.00 a year.

Several states have organized a state Association of RASCOE. At this time Iowa does not have a state Association for RASCOE. Steve Kennedy (retiree) and I spoke at the IASCOE convention in March and we are in the process of establishing an Iowa Association for RASCOE. This is where we need your help!

There have been many retirements in the past few years and we need to get the word out to those retirees so they may have the opportunity to become members of RASCOE and charter members of Iowa RASCOE! Could you please contact all the retirees from your office and tell them about RASCOE. Since the first year is free all they need to do is submit the following information to Deb Krusemark at dkruser@msn.com and Steve Kennedy at skennedys00@gmail.com:

- Name
- Address
- Email address and or phone number.

The information above will be forwarded to Lynda Steichen, RASCOE Secretary-Treasurer to establish membership for National RASCOE. Steve and I will then contact the retirees to see if they would like to be involved in the process of establishing Iowa RASCOE. The RASCOE pamphlet has also been provided in this newsletter.

With all the proposed legislation we, as FSA employees and retirees, must stick together and fight for our jobs and benefits. One way to do this is to show a united front by joining NASCOE and RASCOE. As a retiree I want to make sure I retain my retirement benefits and I want to be sure those same benefits are available when all my FSA friends are ready to retire. Hint - For \$10 FSA employees may become associate members of RASCOE.

Thank you in advance for all your efforts!!!
Steve and Deb

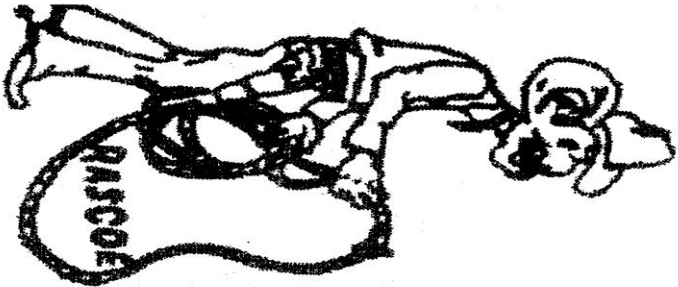
RASCOE
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF RETIRED ASCS/FSA
OFFICE EMPLOYEES

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R A S C O E

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF RETIRED ASCS/FSA
EMPLOYEES

WHAT IS RASCOE?

In 1994, a group of retired ASCS Employees organized the national Association of Retired ASCS Employees.

THE PURPOSE

TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF THE ASSOCIATION'S MEMBERS BY ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVELY LOBBYING TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF RETIREE BENEFITS

MEMBERSHIP

An ASCS/FSA retiree become a member by paying association dues.

+ Any member of a state retiree organization which is affiliated with the national organization shall be a member of the national organization.

+ Anyone wishing to show support for RASCOE may be an Associate member by paying association dues.

RASCOE MEETINGS

The annual meeting is held in conjunction with the annual NASCOE Convention

RASCOE OBJECTIVES

COLA's without delay and being treated the same as other retirees receiving Government supported retirement benefits.

+ Continuation of health insurance as not available

+ Amend the IRS Code to allow Federal retirees to pay health insurance premiums on pre-tax basis

+ Continuation of Medicare substantially in the manner as now authorized

+ Seek legislation to amend the GPO/WEP Social Security Law Provisions to enable retirees to receive full benefits earned

BENEFITS

Thru J.M.MARKETING, INC

- Critical Illness
- Long-Term Care
- Accident Insurance
- Cancer Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Life Insurance

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

State from which you retired

NAME

PO BOX OR STREET ADDRESS

CITY SD ZIP CODE

Email Address

+++++
 State Dues (if applicable).....\$
 National Dues.....\$20.00
 Associate Dues.....\$10.00
 Multi-years X 5 years.....\$
 Total Dues.....\$

Lynda Stelchen Phone/Fax:
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 67385 6300 Email: lynjastelc@hotmail.co

WATERLOO IRISH FESTIVAL

By Rose Woerner, Black Hawk County

If you're interested in Irish music or if you have a yen for a bit of Irish culture, plan a visit to Waterloo! The Cedar Valley Irish Cultural Association puts on a heck of an Irish Festival and this is the largest major event that celebrates Irish Culture in Iowa. This year the festival runs from August 3rd to August 5th and will be located in and around Lincoln Park in the downtown area.

In addition to the wide array of Irish music, there will be Highland games, a 5K run and an 'Anything Irish' photography contest. There will also be a host of food vendors that cater to every taste.

There will be a Family Center with special games and activities for the kiddies. So keep watching the website for more updates:

http://www.iowairishfest.com/wordpress/?page_id=291

If you like to ride bike, we happen to have awesome trails...some of the best in Iowa. There is an awesome Military Museum, lots of area festivals and a water park that packs folks in from all over the state. The Cedar Valley area is a lot of fun and a great place to visit!

TOP TEN PRODUCER QUOTES DURING CERTIFICATION SEASON

SHELBY COUNTY FSA

1. IT'S JUST A FLIP FROM LAST YEAR.
2. IS THIS THE HOME PLACE?
3. I CAN'T FIND MY FARM.
4. I USED TO KNOW MY FARM NUMBER, BUT YOU GUYS KEEP CHANGING IT.
5. DO I HAVE TO CERTIFY EACH YEAR?
6. I NEED TO CERTIFY MY CPR.
7. DO I NEED TO TAKE THIS TO MY CROP INSURANCE AGENT?
8. YOU MEAN I HAVE TO COME IN AGAIN BEFORE DECEMBER 15TH TO CERTIFY MY HEADLANDS FOR 2013?
9. I KNOW IT'S ONLY JANUARY, BUT CAN I CERTIFY MY ACRES BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO PLANT.
10. DID YOU GET ANY RAIN? HOW MUCH RAIN DID YOU GET?