



*THE IASCOE NEWSLETTER*

*SEPTEMBER 2008*

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## FROM THE DESK OF DERRYL MCLAREN, SED

As Labor Day approaches, it feels like Fall, but appearances can be deceiving. Instead of yards and fields filled with combines and grain carts, my windshield view of Iowa shows me green fields, lots of knee-high soybeans, and USDA parking lots full of pick-ups.

This has been a strange year! It all started with the long Winter, which seemed to last forever. In fact, you could argue we never had a Spring. All of a sudden, it was raining everyday, our Spring planting season was over, and we were into Summer. That is when our senses lost contact with our biological clock. Our sense of “normal” changed. All of a sudden, it appeared reasonable to plant soybeans on July 4 and expect them to yield a “normal” crop. Maybe November 1 will be a “normal” frost date this year.

That “normalcy” has carried over into our workplace. All of a sudden, it is “normal” to implement a Farm Bill in the same year it is passed. The corn was in the ground before the June 19 effective date of the legislation, but at least it beat soybean planting and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of summer. It is only fitting to hold National Training for 2008 the same week Fall begins. The question is, “Will Farm Bill Training beat the first frost?”.

While our crop development may give us the false appearance of “normal”, FSA remains the stable force in agriculture by which farmers can calibrate their clock. That is why I appreciate this Agency so much!! Undaunted, we are signing-up producers for the 2008 crop year. What’s more, we will accomplish this feat by September 30, on-time. We will also ensure producers qualify for the permanent disaster provisions, SURE, by encouraging them to give us “buy-in” fees without knowledge of the program’s benefits. Oh, and we will inform producers to make sure they qualify for SURE in 2009 by purchasing coverage of their insurable crops by September 30, even though our NAP signing deadline for un-insurable crops is December 1. One of these days we may even get around to writing the software for ACRE. Does this all make sense? Of course it does, because our Agency, the Iowa Farm Service Agency, gets its work done on time.

This isn’t the first time we have implemented new programs in a Farm Bill. Tackling new programs with limited information IS normal in our course of business, especially when you consider CRP, ECP, PIK, PFC, LDP, CDP, AMTA, direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, deficiencies, and proven yields to be notches in our collective belts. These programs have all constituted our mission and purpose at one time or another. The only difference is the time allowed between legislation and implementation, but we don’t play in that arena and, therefore, have no influence.

What distinguishes this Agency from the rest of government is the fact we are an integral part of the foundation of agriculture in this country. We inherently recognize our position, and we bend over backwards to deliver the benefits of American agriculture policy to all eligible producers. On behalf of Iowa’s agriculture producers, “Thank you”.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derryl McLaren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.





GREETINGS FROM YOUR  
SECRETARY/TREASURER

Just cannot believe summer is practically over and school has started. Time sure flies when you are having fun!!! We have just been overwhelmed with certification, DCP sign-up, SURE, LCP, managed and emergency haying and grazing, base restoration, SAFE sign-up and whatever else might happen in a days time. We celebrate as each deadline passes and joyfully look forward to the next. It does not sound like the 2009 DCP sign-up will be any better, but I have been around long enough to know that FSA employees will accomplish the task in flying colors.

We have finally received all the transmittals from our membership drive. Glenda, our membership chairperson, will be finalizing the numbers and we are hoping our total percentage has increased. It is so important for all employees to join IASCOE, because we are working for everyone to increase their benefits. A big thank you to everyone who shows his or her support of IASCOE by paying their membership dues. For those of you who are not members, I would ask that you think about our yearly raises and other benefits you have received over the years and please consider joining. It is never too late to become a member.

Fall will soon be here with cooler temperatures, volleyball and football games, harvest, and hopefully some time for you to slow down a little and enjoy the beauty around you as the season progresses.

Enjoy the fall and have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Sue Beemer P.T.

Taylor County



## MIDWEST AREA EXECUTIVE REPORT

September 2008

Where the heck did summer go? For some reason I think I missed it because I didn't do half the things that were on my list. Maybe, I better make a shorter list for next year.

The NASCOE Convention kicked off the NASCOE year and I think it was a very successful convention. The management group from Washington DC was there and met with each area during their area meetings as well as addressed the general session. Their willingness to discuss issues openly was greatly appreciated. Nebraska did an excellent job as host. I encourage everyone to try to get to Gatlinburg for NASCOE's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

There were not any contested elections or real controversial issues prior to the convention but the NASCOE budget and membership dues became the main topic. A review of the financial state of NASCOE was shared with the members in attendance. The fact that we have lost over 1000 members in the last four years and experienced significant cost increases has led to the current situation. NASCOE has not raised its dues in 10 years and if we continue to spend at our current rate we could be broke in three years. The NASCOE Committees reviewed their expenses and submitted items that could help reduce costs and the Exec Committee will be acting on those recommendations. The members in attendance were also asked to tell the Executive Committee what things were important to them and should be priorities when looking at cost cutting items. The membership indicated that legislative activities and member benefits should be our priorities and that we should not make significant cuts in those areas. After significant discussion in the area meetings, the delegation voted to increase annual membership dues \$15 and associate dues \$5 beginning July 1, 2009. Each state association will have to determine how this will be passed on to their individual members. Annual membership dues will be \$55 per person and associate dues will now be \$30 beginning July 1, 2009.

The dues increase won't happen until next July but there will be plenty of things going on during the next year. A field review of the PT positions will take place during the next few months which could lead to potential upgrades for some PTs. We will need to deal with potential USDA reorganization after the first of the year.

Some other good news is that there is legislation that has been passed by the House that will give FERS retirees credit for their unused sick leave. The Senate will consider the bill when they return from break. There is also legislation that will increase the age for dependents covered by FEHB from 22 to 25. I would anticipate some Cap Wiz alerts on this legislation as well as Reorganization issues. I also feel there will be a full legislative conference this spring because of these issues and the potential changes in the administration.

We will also be looking for negotiation items this fall. With the implementation of the new farm bill, changes in the performance management system, and other issues there should be a lot of items to consider.

I was very honored to be reelected as your Area Executive for another year. I look forward to the upcoming year and the challenges NASCOE will be facing. If you have any concerns please contact me and I will do my best to see that they are addressed. With the support and input from the membership, I feel the NASCOE leadership will have another successful year.



Wisdom of Will Rogers

When you're throwing your weight around, be ready to have it thrown around by someone else.

Moment of ZEN – It is far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help.

Take care,

Jon Williams

MWA Executive

## PROGRAMS Report by: Jessica Yuska, PT Scott County FSA Office

Prior to becoming your Programs Chair I asked myself - what is the Programs Committee? Then I learned " *the function of the Programs Committee is to accept your program submissions that offer ideas and solutions to address these inefficiencies and issues; then to research both the expressed concern and the proposed solution and if appropriate, present the issue to our Administrative staff in Washington for resolution and response.* "

IASCOE members this is your opportunity to speak up and offer your suggestions to make FSA programs better. Since we are faced with many changes in our programs due to the new farm bill, I am sure there are problems we have come across either in procedure or software that could use some fixing! Please take the time to complete the Negotiations/Consultation Submission Form enclosed and mail it to me before December 15<sup>th</sup>. Remember, through our organization your individual voice can be heard!

Anyone and everyone can make a program suggestion from any office. Once I receive a recommendation I 'send it up the ladder' to our NASCOE Team. They consolidate, review, and then present NASCOE member's ideas to FSA Administration the following spring. In the past they have been able to receive an immediate response to some of your recommendations. Your ideas have resulted in change!

To view prior ideas discussed with Management please refer to the NASCOE website, and click on "Negotiations" on the left hand side of the page, then in the center of the next page click "2007 FSA-NASCOE NEGOTIATION/CONSULTATION ITEMS." I invite you to read through the previous submissions. I was impressed by not only how many recommendations came in from across the nation, but also at how many of those ideas received a positive response from the Administration!

Again please use the form in the newsletter or check out the NASCOE website. When your submissions are presented to the Administration your name, county & state are removed, therefore you remain anonymous. Let your ideas be heard! Please forward your recommendations/suggestions on the Negotiations/Consultation Submission Form to my e-mail address: [jesshovie@hotmail.com](mailto:jesshovie@hotmail.com) or online on the NASCOE website prior to December 15<sup>th</sup>!!



Deadline for Submission is December 15th

**NASCOE**  
**Negotiation/Consultation Submission Form**

Please select the category that best represents your concern:

\_\_\_\_\_ Staffing/Personnel \_\_\_\_\_ Benefits \_\_\_\_\_ Program  
Policy/Procedure \_\_\_\_\_ Workload

ISSUE (Background and Facts) :

POSITION :

RECOMMENDATION FOR RESOLUTION :



HANDBOOK / NOTICE REFERENCE(S) :

---

Name of Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

County/State/Area \_\_\_\_\_

*MAIL TO YOUR AREA NASCOE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PERSON OR YOUR AREA NEGOTIATION CONSULTANT  
THE DECEMBER 15TH DEADLINE.*

*ALSO, PLEASE MAIL AN ORIGINAL TO THE SECRETARY OF NASCOE. THANK YOU!*

*DARLENE SCHOUTEN  
1008 WEST LINCOLN AVE  
OLIVIA MN 56277*

(Please visit [www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org) to see the up to date procedures or changes on how to file programs/negotiation items online. Look under the programs and negotiating categories)

Publicity Information:

Iowa had a National Publicity Award Winner recognized at the 2008 National NASCOE Convention. Vicky Rechkemmer won for Best Feature Story- Human Interest with her article "My Big Surprise". Pictures and her article will be in the Fall issue of the National Newsletter. Congratulations Vicky!

Tammy Eibey





Greetings fellow IASCOE members!!

This year I had the distinct honor of representing you as a delegate to the NASCOE National Convention in Omaha, Nebraska. What a GREAT experience, one I would recommend to anyone with an interest in our great organization. The meetings with the NASCOE leadership, Washington DC personnel and fellow members from all over the country reminded me of all the things this organization works towards providing for it's members. I wanted to share just a few thoughts on my trip so that you might be inspired to work together with other members for those precious benefits we all enjoy.

Our trip began on Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup>- a great weather day for traveling. We arrived at the Double Tree Hotel in downtown Omaha around 12:30 pm. We had some free time prior to the evening festivities so Dee Lehn, Joni Birkhofer, Judy Dameron and I went to the Omaha Zoo. We had a great time, except maybe for the "bats" in the nighttime display! In the evening we enjoyed a pasta buffet, watching a "Dancing with the Stars" contest between some very talented members, listening to "Elvis" and dancing later with a live band.

On Thursday our days began promptly at 8:30am and were welcomed by Bonnie Heinzman (NASCOE President), the Governor of Nebraska and many other individuals representing Nebraska's organization. Teresa Lasseter, FSA Administrator and Steven Connelly (Deputy Administrator Field Operations) also addressed the members. It was great to have faces to those names that we see so frequently on our correspondence from Washington DC. We also heard from the Tennessee delegation, they would host the 2009 convention. In the afternoon the Iowa attendees each attended a different NASCOE committee meeting so that we could get as much information as possible from all meetings. After those committee meetings concluded we went to our Midwest Area Meeting (MWA) to share what we heard at the National committee meetings. During our area meeting several of the Washington personnel attended and we were able to ask them questions about our concerns. Some issues addressed were the new Disaster Assistance Program (SURE) and our inability to give the producer sufficient information, leasing issues and the difficulty of putting on new hires. It was nice to be able to express our concerns directly to those individuals who might be best equipped to assist us, even though we know that immediate solutions aren't possible. In the evening the NASCOE Scholarship Auction was held and was able to raise around \$4340!

On Friday the meetings once again began @ 8:30am with comments from Bob Redding **and** several other individuals from Washington, DC. Later in the morning all DC personnel were seated for a Question and Answer Panel that allowed the membership to directly ask questions to those individuals in charge. It was noted that DC personnel would be coming out to targeted states and county offices to review the issue of the program technician classification. It is their feeling that they can get a better sense of what the PT is doing by visiting some offices in order to review whether there is justification for a Grade 8 position for some PT's. The grade classification might be applicable for the District Trainer, for example. Of course this will be a long process, but this is a step in the right direction. In the afternoon we once again attended the NASCOE committee meetings and our Area meeting. In the evening the Iowa delegation took the Nebraska challenge and presented our own version of Hee Haw in the

competition. Junior Samples (Steve Kennedy), Grandpa Jones (Aaron Eads), Minnie Pearl (Cindy Pistek) and the gang (Cindy Mensen, Tammy Eibey, Joni Birkhofer, Dee Lehn, Judy Dameron) did Iowa proud!

Saturday morning we selected the 2010-convention site- Hot Springs, Arkansas! We received all reports from the Executive Board and all committee reports. Later we elected the NASCOE officers and concluded the meetings. Saturday evening was the awards banquet. All National awards were presented as well as some special recognition to individuals who contribute to the organization. The dinner was wonderful, a chance to dress up in our evening attire and enjoy the company of good friends (new and old). Later, we danced to the live band one more time.

When I agreed to attend the convention as your delegate, everyone said that you would want to go again, they were right! It's the most wonderful experience to spend 3 days with individuals from all over the United States with the same common goal-to serve our farmers the very best we can. In order to do that successfully, the employees need to be supported and that is where NASCOE comes into the picture. Thank-you once again for the opportunity to serve you, both as a Director for Iowa and as a most recent State Delegate at the National Convention. See you all in Tennessee!!!



## LOUISA COUNTY FLOOD OF 2008

Submitted by: Judy Dameron, PT Louisa County

Louisa County was hit very hard by the Flood of 2008. Approximately 30,000 acres was flooded. The town of Columbus Jct. tried diligently to keep the water from coming into their city. Their temporary levee on Hwy 92 was breached on June 14 at 7:00 p.m. The town lost their Casey's, grocery store, doctor's office, dentist office, bowling alley and senior citizen center. The county fairground was flooded there too, but with many volunteers the county fair was still able to go on as scheduled the week of July 21<sup>st</sup>.



East side of downtown Columbus Jct.



Louisa County Fairgrounds – June 15



Louisa County Fairgrounds the week of July 21<sup>st</sup>.

The town of Oakville was told they had until Monday, June 16 at 8:00 a.m. to evacuate. However, the levee had a mind of its own. The levee broke on June 14 at 7:55 p.m. The town was immediately flooded with 5-8 feet of water. The rural areas were flooded with 14-21 feet of water, depending on where you were located. A major elevator was located in the city; Tri-Oak Foods. As of this writing, the elevator is back in business and the town has both power and water. However, they are under a boil order for their water. Cleanup is being done and several residents are fixing up their homes in hopes of moving back to the community. Some residents are hoping for a FEMA buyout, but may not know anything for at least a year.



The town of Oakville on June 15.

A retired Louisa County FSA employee lost her home to the flood. Lola Yotter's house was taken off of the foundation and floated 400 yards into the east fence line, leaving the garage standing alone.



During the flood, Lola's house in the fence line



After the flood, Lola's house in background, the garage and foundation in the foreground.

Flood pictures

Here are 6 pictures from the flooding at the Iowa and Des Moines River.

Two of them are when the COC and DD visited the area a month after the levee broke. They are at Highway 99 and Pumping station, 4 Road Junction and the third is the area as it appeared Aug 18. This was the primary area the Iowa River continued into Des Moines County after 2/3 of the water was drained out and before the temporary Iowa Levee was closed.

Another is a picture looking north into the 14 sections of Des Moines County that were under water with a brand new grain bin showing. The water was down about 10 feet at that time. Water had been to the second ring down from the top at peak flooding. Another picture is of that same bin as it is today. The other picture is where the Mississippi River levee was breached to let the water back into the Mississippi. At the time it breached the levee it is estimated that some areas were 25 to 27 foot under water. The Corp of Engineers is hoping to have a temporary levee built before winter or the water will re-enter the area when the river level comes back up within 3 to 4 foot of the old flood stage level.

Submitted by,

Don Fry





## A Great Story... "A Carrot, An Egg and a Cup of Coffee"

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil, without saying a word.

After 20 minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl.

Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, 'Tell me, what you see?'

'Carrots, eggs, and coffee,' she replied. Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, 'What does it mean, mother?'

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. Each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened.

The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water. 'Which are you?' she asked her daughter.

'When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?'

Think of this: Which am I? Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength? Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hard hearted?

Or am I like the coffee bean? Actually changing hot water, or circumstances that bring pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, do you elevate yourself to another level? How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?



Submitted by:

Jane Trauger, PT Humboldt County



It was not a tough decision as to whether we would go to Greensburg, Kansas or not. We were going on this mission trip! We asked our families who all wanted to go with us and Barb's son, Doug and his wife, Kim said yes and both of Jane's girls (Adrienne and Elizabeth) piped up right away that they wanted to go. All settled then, we had six of us going along with two other couples, Dean and Carol Coleman and John and Denise Hartford all heading to the land of OZ. Well not quite, but it was in Kansas. Greensburg, Kansas was 95% destroyed by a tornado in May of 2007 and are working on rebuilding their town.

Our mission trip started Sunday evening with the 10 of us; 7 from Faith United Methodist Church in Humboldt and 3 from The United Methodist Church in Livermore (in January, our churches were blended as one) uniting in Pratt, Kansas for our first supper together as a family and some of us meeting new friends for the first time. We were there for the same reason; we were going to Greensburg, Kansas to do what God had called upon us to do. After supper we headed to our new home for the next three days.

Monday morning, bright and early, we were all awoken by the crow of a rooster that it was time to get up and start our work, but it would not happen until the 10 of us had breakfast and devotions. Two of the gals in our group were in charge of the meals; four breakfast meals; three dinners and three suppers. Thank you Barb and Kim Adams. While they were in charge of meals, the others were in charge of setting the table; clean up or preparing our sack lunches for dinner. Great team work by all!

After being welcomed to Greensburg our group plus several other volunteers were sent to the lumber yard. A lumber yard with no building yet. The ladders were in this small metal shed; the extension cords were in that metal shed etc. At the lumber yard we were divided into work groups.

Two members of our group (Doug and Kim Adams) was going to stay and help at the lumber yard; where they were in charged of taking supplies to various homes; taking truck full's of junk to a dump site and unloading trucks when new supplies arrived.

Two members (Carol Coleman and Denise Hartford) were going to clean homes, and we don't mean vacuum and dusting, it was cleaning up after the construction workers. Picking up and sweeping the homes, so the home would be ready for the next set of workers.

Two of the men (Dean Coleman and John Hartford) were going to help with carpentry. Their work was to fix and repair anything and everything that needed to be done.

The last four of us (Barb Adams, Jane, Adrienne and Elizabeth Trauger) were going to be painters, painters of the outside trim of homes. The key word is outside, where on Monday, it was 106 degrees in the shade. Thank goodness they were ranch style homes where those of us that trimmed the peaks were not that far from the ground.

Would we do it again? Yes, in a heart beat! It was a wonderful experience that we will never forget. It felt great helping someone in need, not meeting all of them, but knowing they all appreciated every bit of what we were doing for them. After all, isn't that what life should be all about?

Barb Adams and Jane Trauger

Humboldt County FSA Office





Liz Trauger (front row in black top); Adrienne Trauger (front row in grey top); Barb Adams (front row in purple top) and Jane Trauger in blue behind Barb.

This was the paint crew along with, Brad our Boss.

This sign said it all!

Thank you from Greensburg, KS



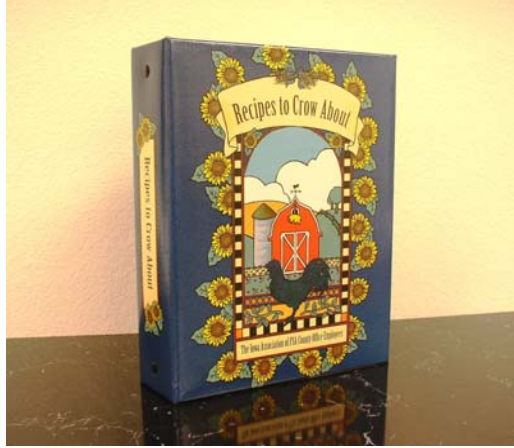
# IOWA GAMES

## TEAM STANDINGS AFTER 2 GAMES

Team Names	Total Points
Lyonettes	1455
Flirtinis	1270
Ditsy Chicks	1050
Buchanan Brainiacs	1020
Duh	1000
State Office Brainstormers	980
The Whiz Bangs	880
Beautiful Clayton Co	780
Team Knowledge	760
Gamblers Anonymous	730
Woodbury Wise Acres	680
Jasper CyHawks	650
Cifoxers	610
The Dear's	570
Cotton Sisters	560
River Rats	530
Hancock County Chicks	510
Team Winneshiek	510
Franklin Brainiacs	500
5:00 Somewhere	490
<a href="http://www.waywoostwomen.com">www.waywoostwomen.com</a>	440
Brain-e-ax	425
Poweshiek Mavericks	350
DC Dollies	340
The Five Amigos	300
Poky Prodigies	280

## Our cookbooks have arrived!!!

We want to thank everyone that contributed recipes, proofread recipes, and ordered cookbooks. It was truly a group effort and a good fundraiser for the association!



The cookbooks will be distributed to the IASCOE directors at our meeting in Des Moines on Sept. 15th. The directors will then be in charge of getting the cookbooks to their respective county offices. We hope most of them will be "delivered" after our training sessions so you should be seeing them soon!

We have additional cookbooks for sale at this time. So if you didn't get in on the first order (or maybe you didn't order enough the first time around) contact your IASCOE director or Tammy Pruin in Wright county and we will be happy to help you!

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### PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

#### PART 27

Written by Roseanne Woerner

Created by Dee Ann Lehn

I'm all-involved with one of those query-mail merge things and it isn't going so well. I can't make my columns line up, which means that only about half of the data I need transmits over from the System 36 side. I've done and redone, but it's still not working. Suffice to say, I'm in a zone. So much so, that while I feel a tap on my shoulder, I don't really recognize it right away. Not until it becomes urgent, nonstop, and pretty obnoxious.

When I finally look up, I see Tessa Starr hovering over me. She is waving a notice through the air and talking in those rapid-fire sentences that usually make me seek out higher ground. "Why didn't you send in this report?" she asks. "Didn't we just talk about this Tuesday at staff meeting? Didn't you give me every assurance that you'd take care of it?"

Admittedly, I'm a bit foggy and maybe the fact that I don't answer right away adds to my guilt, in her eyes. But I have no idea what she's talking about and since she won't hold the notice still for two seconds, I can't get up to speed.

I finally grab her hand and hold it so that I can read the notice. As soon as I see the number, I can feel my most superior-looking scowl spread across my face. "I sent this in last week," I say.

“Well, *if you did*, they didn’t get it,” she says. “I just got an email from the DD and we’re on the STO list.”

*If I did*. That kills me. I just told her I did, so why should there be any doubt. It was an odd report about cropland acres and farm bases. I specifically remember doing it because there was no pdf. Format. I had to type it and send it through the mail.

“I did do it and I can prove it,” I say.

Tessa peers over my shoulder as I pull up Outlook and check my tasks. “See, I tell her. I marked it off, which means I did it.”

“Okay, if you did it, where’s your copy?” she asks.

I sort of go blank. “Copy?” I ask. “Why would I keep a copy? Nothing in that report was a resource for me.”

Even as I say this, I recognize my own folly. The report took three hours to collate. Three hours that I don’t have for a redo. “Crap,” I add. “Are you sure we’re on the bad list. I mean, maybe it was an email with counties that did send in the report and we were just being recognized for our effort.

“Have you ever seen that happen?” Tessa asks.

“Point taken,” I say and I breathe a heavy sigh.

I skip lunch, work through break time and I don’t leave the building until shortly after six o’clock. Which means I miss my favorite Keeping Up With The Kardashens’ rerun, where everybody but Kim jumps in the pool. The good news is, by the time I go home, I’ve pretty well duplicated the report, but I come to work thirty minutes early, the next day, so that I can check it over with fresh eyes, before I send it in. Kadie Vaughn comes in just after me.

Kadie isn’t exactly a morning person. I don’t speak until she’s started her third cup of coffee and since she chug-a-lugged the other two, it’s less than forty five minutes that I have to be quiet. When I finally do speak, she’s her usual cheerful self. She holds up about five paint chips, all light gray in color with an almost undetectable difference.

“Look at these,” she says. “I’m painting my bedroom this weekend. Help me decide which color would look best.”

Even if I really scrunch my eyes, I can’t see much variation, but I don’t want to say so until she’s either had two more cups of coffee or it’s after nine o’clock. “I have to fax this report to the STO,” I tell her. “I’ll look at them when I come back.”

“Oh,” she says. “Speaking of the STO. Did I tell you yesterday that I resent your letter yesterday?”

“What letter?” I ask.

“The one you sent last week sometime. It came back without postage, so I mailed it again.”

She beams at me.

“That was probably my report,” I say.

She shrugs. “Could be.”

“The same report I just redid.”

“That’s kind of what we do,” she says. “Do, do and redo.” She opens a folder and starts to hum.

I fax my report, just to make sure one copy arrives safely and then I go to the break room and get a cup of coffee. Hopefully, it will make me hum too.

TO BE CONTINUED...

NO STRESS!

