

# NEBRASCOE



## NEWS

Nebraska Association of FSA County Office Employees

December 2017

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President-Jessi Colgrove  
Vice President-Lisa Wiese  
Secretary-Mona Fassler  
Treasurer-Shanna Waterman

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District 1: Jessi Colgrove  
Cindy Winterfeld

District 2: Joni Johnson  
Mona Fassler

District 3: Shanna Waterman  
Lisa Wiese

District 4: Mel Campbell  
Niki Dittmer

District 5: Linda Robb  
Anne Kelley

District 6: Sandy Orr  
Michelle Studnicka

District 7: Shawna Mitchell  
Ann Kurpgeqweit

<http://www.nebrascoe.com>  
<https://nascoe.org>

Email: [nebrascoe@yahoo.com](mailto:nebrascoe@yahoo.com)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

2018 Northwest Area Rally  
April 20-21, 2018  
Bellingham, WA

## The Significance of 50 Percent

### A Message From Your President-Jessi Colgrove

You have probably heard it said that if a state's membership drops below 50%, they are no longer recognized as an association. It's a rather arbitrary concept, but I saw the impacts of decreased membership firsthand at the National Convention in St. Charles this past August. This year, two candidates were running for the office of National Secretary. On Saturday morning, the sitting secretary took a roll call of delegates by state before the voting could commence. After she finished with Wyoming, the delegates from Washington stood and asked, "but what about us?" They were told that because their state's membership no longer met the 50% threshold, they were not eligible to vote. They lost their place at the table...and they lost their voice.

Nebraska ended the 2016-2017 dues year with 67% membership. That is still 18% away from losing our charter, but that number could be met easily enough. There are currently 296 COF employees in the state and 198 of them are NASCOE members. If only 52 of them drop their membership or retire and aren't replaced with new members, Nebraska will lose its charter. With so many of our employees eligible for retirement, this could become a reality.

Thank you to those of you who have been loyal members. I know that you do your best to help us maintain our numbers. We appreciate all of your efforts as you promote our association and do what you can to help us recruit new members so that Nebraska doesn't lose our place at the table...our voice.

## NEBRASCOE Mission

NEBRASCOE strives to maintain and improve the confidence, esteem and respect of the public for FSA Committee Employees. NEBRASCOE employees are dedicated to providing outstanding service to the farmers of this great state.

## Follow NEBRASCOE on Facebook and On-Line

By Joni Johnson,  
Membership Chairperson



Find us on:  
**facebook®**

NEBRASCOE has two ways for employees to catch up on association news and information.

Go to our website at:

[www.nebrascoe.com](http://www.nebrascoe.com) for information about scholarships, rallies and conventions. Order FSA apparel and cookbooks and read our member association meeting minutes and newsletters. And for reminders and updates, follow [NEBRASCOE](#) on Facebook. Both the website and Facebook pages are interactive and monitored, so questions and concerns will be received and addressed as soon as possible. For more information on the website or Facebook page, contact [joni.johnson@ne.usda.gov](mailto:joni.johnson@ne.usda.gov).



## NEBRASCOE Member Spotlight

### Mona Fassler, Program Technician, Kearney County

I was honored to be able to accept a detail to our Bartow, Florida FSA office in late October and through part of November. I experienced lots of long hours with interesting and sometimes testing challenges. Travel can be taxing along with getting to and home from your detail location but once in the location, you quickly become part of a team and lifelong friends are made.

I worked with the Livestock Forage Program, Farm Records, some TAP, ECP and whatever else was needed. It was a wonderful and rewarding experience! I came away from the Polk County, Florida office a little tired but with a renewed strength. I felt like I was appreciated and that I made a difference. It may only have been a small difference but the difference I made renewed me with a CAN DO attitude found through my fellow team members with that one goal to provide much needed benefits to our producers. I had an experience of a lifetime and would again love to return to that office or other offices that are in desperate need of assistance.

Are you sitting on the fence afraid to detail? Are you wondering if you could be of any assistance to an office that really needs the help? There is something you can do for that office! They need the help! They need your expertise! They need you!



Mona Fassler worked along side South Carolina PT Amy Blum (Left) and Polk County, Florida CED Marcinda Kester (Right) while on her detail in Florida. Here they were working at a local Cattleman's meeting in Bartow, FL for FSA Outreach.

## Scholarship & Distinguished Award Deadline

By Cindy Winterfeld,  
Scholarship Chair

In the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, I wanted to take a few minutes to remind everyone of the January 1, 2018 submission deadline for all scholarship deadline and DSA nominations.

**All scholarship applications** must be submitted online no later than January 1. Applications must be submitted using the official application on the NASCOE website. Letters of recommendation and the most recent posted transcript shall be required to be submitted with the application no later than January 1. Applications submitted without these documents will be disqualified.

**All nominations for Distinguished Service Awards** shall be electronically submitted no later than January 1 on the official nomination format provided on [www.NASCOE.org](http://www.NASCOE.org).

State winners are eligible to be considered for area winners. Area winners are eligible to be considered for the National winner in each category. Associate members are not eligible for DSAs. Any member of the Association may make a nomination.

## Grace Niemeyer Wins NAFEC and JM Marketing 2017 Scholarship

On August 3, 2017 I had the pleasure to announce Grace Niemeyer as this year's NAFEC & JM Marketing scholarship winner. Grace is the daughter of John and Lorri Niemeyer of Cortland, Nebraska. John serves as Vice Chairman of the Gage County FSA Committee.

Grace is currently a sophomore at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri. Grace grew up on a family farm raising corn, soybeans, and cattle. She has been involved with Special Olympics as a gymnastics coach, 4-H, and her High School Student Council where she served as Secretary. She received the ELKS Lodge No. 80 leadership award and volunteers her time at vacation bible school, Mercy Meals, the YWCA and Lincoln People's City Mission. Grace also works as a Coordinator for Event Design in Lincoln and Creekside Wedding Barn in Roca.

Grace hopes to obtain a degree in Communication with an emphasis in Public Relations and a minor in Business. After graduation, she plans to travel and pursue a career in the Event Planning business.

Craig Turner, NAFEC President



## 2018 NEBRASCOE Elections



**Nominations for District 4, 5, 6 and 7 will be held in March and the election of NEBRASCOE Board Members will be held in April.**

**If you would like to represent your District on the NEBRASCOE Board please consider being nominated for either a CED or PT Board Member position.**

# 2017 NASCOE Convention was Historically Awesome

By Mona Fassler, Cindy Winterfeld and Anne Kelley



The 2017 NASCOE National Convention was held in St. Charles, MO from August 2-5, 2017 and it was Historically Awesome! There were 18 people from Washington DC in attendance and this was a record number! Keep reading to see what all they had to say.

## **Bob Stevenson – Acting Chief of Staff**

The Farm Bill, Conservation, Credit and research are working to improve service. Maintaining local staff in communities is important. In the reorganization with 7 missions in the USDA we are the ones on the ground. There are 23,000 employees (FSA, NRCS, & RMA) and we have a responsibility to leave the planet better than we found it. FSA has paid out 13 million in ARC/PLC payments and 4 million in CRP payments. Nothing will really change – there is just a new look for Washington DC.

We have smoother operations with less cost. It takes a full team effort and a unified team. We have an online portal for FSA. NRCS and RMA are working to streamline the programs. We will maximize resources to work with greater efficiency to improve customer service and to increase efficiencies. Stated that Secretary Perdue is an outcome based leader and is very proud of all employees and the work they do. Also stated “honest” data needs to be used to evaluate the work being done.

## **Chris Beyerhelm - Acting Deputy Administrator**

We are seven months into the transition. We help the producer but we also do economic development and create jobs and wealth. Investing in communities is important. We have been dealing with fires and drought. Clean water and air are important and people need to be educated on why USDA-FSA invests money into water and air. Educating people will make a difference in their lives.

How important is our Agency? We need to tell people our story. Twenty two billion dollars is being invested in Ag Development. Rural Development is very important. The new SED's are starting to come in. Our staffing was at 98% before the freeze. We are facing an uncertain budget with a 22% cut in the proposed Ag Budget. FSA is a “boots on the ground agency” and can't afford to take anymore cuts.

FSA has 200 approved hires and possibly another 200 external positions coming.

It is important when listing the open positions that no changes are made to the job description and opening. Any (even small) change that is made and the position will have to be re-classified – delaying the posting and hiring of the position. By not changing the position description this will create an express lane for hiring. It has been noted that succession planning is something that needs to happen so offices aren't left with a gap in service and learning when someone retires or leaves the agency. It is important to make people feel good about what we do and make them feel valued.

A Leadership Training 201-301 course is coming for COT's and FLOTS. There is also Counter Skills training for PT's coming and the Train the Trainers phase for that course is happening now.

In the first year of the Workforce Engagement survey FSA was rated 154<sup>th</sup> in top places to work. In the second year FSA was 74<sup>th</sup>, then we were 54<sup>th</sup> and now we are rated 2<sup>nd</sup> in top places to work behind NASA. Eight thousand employees took the survey.

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# 2017 NASCOE Convention was Historically Awesome

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Your opinions are important. If you see mistakes in the handbooks – let Chris Beyerhelm know. They are committed to improving and updating the handbooks. Do you like the newsletter? Speak up and let them know your likes and dislikes.

“Blazing to Rio” was a huge success and now we are “On Our Way To The Moon”!

Web-TA is now getting closer to getting the data to be used for our staffing needs. There are too many “Common Programs” entries. It needs to be more specific to tell our story and tell what we do. We should all be more disciplined in Web T&A and ALL overtime should be reported. COFs are always a priority when it comes to the budget.

And for beginning farmers – the biggest problem is getting land access. Non-operating Land Owners (NOLO) were mailed 20,000 postcards to contact the NOLOs about working with beginning farmers and ranchers. Sixty of the cards were returned and twelve are matched in the Nationwide program. They are also looking for mentors nationwide – local people or retired producers – to help mentor a producer that is struggling whether it be with financial advice or crop/livestock knowledge.

As for the new Farm Bill – Programs will be tweaked and there will be some new programs. If anyone has ideas for the next Farm Bill those can be submitted through NASCOE. BTO has three phases and length of service awards will now be coins.

## **Brad Karmen - Acting Administrator for Farm Programs**

Political Business doesn't stop our jobs – we must keep the ball rolling. Secretary Perdue has been a breath of fresh air and makes quick decisions.

The first decision was on the wildfires. Emergency Haying and Grazing was opened and then the 150 mile zone was added.

Farm Programs: Much going on with Price Support, Commodity Loans, and Dairy. Production and Compliance has had the ARC/PLC program. We have done a great job making payments on time.

ARC-CO yields have been a problem. If you have disagreed with the yields – let them know. Producers have more faith in the RMA yields. NASS yields are used first – RMA yields second. Switching to the RMA yields first would not make that much difference. There will always be differences between counties whether NASS or RMA yields are used. And even a small difference between counties can make a large difference in the payments.

Four disaster programs will go on forever – LFP, LIP, ELAP, and TAP. Some grazing dates may change.

Appropriations Bill – 2018 – Cotton will fall into ARC/PLC.

MPP (dairy) Program will change for 2019. LFP extending certification.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE WEIGH IN ON THE NEXT FARM BILL!!

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# Having Program Problems?

By Ann Kurpgeweit, Programs Chair

Do you have any program issues that cause you grief? Do you have any ideas to improve the program? NASCOE has a Program Committee that will submit your ideas for program improvements to management. The submission form can be found on the NEBRASCOE website under Programs. The link is called "Program Efficiency Form". After you complete the form, submit it to your state Program Chair.

## 2017 NASCOE Convention was Historically Awesome

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### John Chott - Acting Deputy Administrator for Field Operations

Our staff has changed:	<u>2001</u>	<u>Now</u>
County Offices	2500 (approx.)	2124
County Office employees	9017	7100
Federal Employees	3956	2900
	65% were 12's	90% are 12's

PT's are now a "7" and we have a "Key" PT in each district.

There are 60 people training to lead the County Skills training. Hopefully PT's can be trained in groups of 25 but this is up to the individual states how it is carried out.

National Leadership training has trained 1900 Office Managers. There are 417 left to complete the training. The Aspiring Leader Program is working on contract issues with the developer so this can continue. GS & CO employees can apply or be nominated.

### Rahda Sekar - Chief Financial Officer

She has been with the Agency for two years and three months and has FSA's interest in her heart. Wes Daniels expressed his appreciation on how Rahda has been open to our concerns regarding staffing. She visited a county office to get to know what we do. You need to know your farmers to get money for our mission. We put food on the table – it is a story – not a numbers game.

Customer Service doesn't come cheap and it can't be automated. They must know we need help! For 2018 the president's bill will die – but it was only really a baseline. Congress will help us – we need good conversations going around the hill. We should be ok with the budget – we will get most of what we asked for. But we must capture what needs to be done and assess what we are doing and what we are not doing. We need to indicate what we can't get done and put numbers to it so we can get the staff we need. Jump teams, temporary pool and an increase for a Permanent Temporary – in the 2019 budget.

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## From the NEBRASCOE Cookbook

### Christmas Crack Crunch

- 1 c. Butter
- 3/4 c. Brown Sugar
- 1 bag Chocolate Chips
- 1 sleeve of Saltine Crackers
- Any toppings you would like (pretzel pieces, nuts, M&Ms, candy canes etc.)

Heat oven to 400°. Line 9x13 pan with aluminum foil and put saltines on top of foil. Heat butter and sugar in a pan to boil, stirring constantly until sugar is melted and toffee starts to leave the sides of the pan (5 minutes). Pour toffee over top of the crackers. Using a fork, straighten any crackers that move; spread out evenly. Bake for 5 minutes. Remove from oven and spread chocolate chips on top, as chocolate chips melt, carefully spread evenly. Add any toppings you might like (pretzels are my favorite). Cool completely and break into pieces. Enjoy!

Submitted by  
Mona Fassler  
Kearney County



If you would like to purchase a NEBRASCOE Cookbook please contact your District NEBRASCOE Rep!

NEBRASCOE is now selling high quality, absorbent, stone coasters with a cork backing. They are 4 3/8" diameter x 5/16". We have two design options. Coasters sell for \$5. Buy a set of 4 for \$20! These can be sold to ANYONE and would also make great gifts!

The logo of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency is displayed. It features the letters "USDA" in a bold, serif font, with a stylized graphic of three horizontal lines below it. Below the graphic, the words "Farm Service Agency" are written in a smaller, sans-serif font. The entire logo is centered within a white circular area.

County/Office \_\_\_\_\_ District # \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail order form and check to:**  
NEBRASCOE  
c/o Shanna Waterman  
210 E Main, Suite 3  
Pierce 68767-1346

# NEBRASCOE Recognizes Member Support

Joni Johnson, NEBRASCOE Membership Chair

It's a given that NEBRASCOE membership numbers will fluctuate from year to year, as FSA employees are promoted (and move to GS positions) or retire from FSA and as new employees are hired to fill those positions. One thing that hasn't changed over the years is the strong, continuing support Nebraska's county office employees give to the employee association with their NASCOE/NEBRASCOE membership. I've been reviewing our membership records/history and am truly amazed at the years of support many of our co-workers across the state have given to ensure that our voices are heard in Washington. With that said, the NEBRASCOE board would like to recognize and thank our friends and co-workers who have supported NASCOE for 20 or more years.

\*Current Member

\*\*Current Member with Continuous Membership

--Not a Current Member (all membership in prior years)

## 20+ Years

Sharon Blue, Adams Co\*

Tom Chohon, Ainsworth FSA\*

Joe Havlovic, Saunders Co--

Dan Nannen, Cass Co--

Connie Schmidt, Harlan Co\*

Sherry Steinke, Lincoln/Logan/McPherson Co--

Nancy Stutzman, Seward Co--

Kim Borer, Keith/Arthur Co\*

Teresa Cole, Phelps Co\*

Chris Hoffman, Platte Co\*

Barbara Quinn, Keith/Arthur Co\*

Karen Sims, Ord FSA\*

Sherry Stephens, Johnson Co\*

Linda Walsh, Dixon/Dakota Co\*

## 25+ Years

Ellen Adkisson, Dawson Co--

Tammy Buchli, Jefferson Co\*

Carma Hartman, Chase Co\*

Marianne Hellbusch, Nance Co\*\*

Annie Kehler, Red Willow/Frontier Co\*

Barbara Machacek, Stanton Co\*\*

Cheryl Mohler, Kearney Co\*\*

Leann Nelson, York Co\*

Tami Nielsen, Johnson Co\*\*

Jeff Peterson, Seward Co--

Lorrie Robinson, Merrick Co\*

Cynthia Schuster, York Co\*

David Studnicka, Clay Co\*

Stephanie Williams, Dundy Co\*

Susan Brown, Nemaha Co\*\*

Teresa Chramosta, Phelps Co\*

Susan Healy, Butler Co\*\*

Kathy Jennings, Hamilton Co--

Janice Lotter, Richardson Co\*

Jeff Maly, Saunders Co--

Lori Muller, Saline Co\*

Rodney Nicolay, Stanton Co--

Sandy Orr, Sheridan Co\*

Shelley Preston, Wayne Co\*\*

Janeen Rosno, Hayes/Hitchcock Co\*

Bruce Solko, Lincoln/Logan/McPherson Co\*

Ann TenEyck, Cuming Co\*\*

## 30+ Years

Carol Babcock, Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas Co\*\*

Bruce Coffey, Colfax Co\*

Ken Carriker, Red Willow/Frontier\*\*

Jann Derby, Pawnee Co\*\*

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### 30+ Years Continued

Connie Doffin, Burt Co\*  
Deb Doty, Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas Co\*\*  
Annette Ebel, Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas Co\*\*  
Kelly Fischer, Dawson Co--  
Margaret Gregg, Dixon/Dakota\*\*  
Tammy Hays, Otoe Co\*\*  
Debra Hutsell, Perkins Co\*\*  
Sherry Kellner, Saunders Co\*\*  
Ann Kurpgeweit, Holt/Boyd Co\*\*  
Carolyn McManigal, Knox Co\*\*  
Teri Moss, Perkins Co\*\*  
Julie Novacek, Butler Co\*  
Julee Patzel, Pawnee Co\*\*  
Bryan Ralston, Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas Co\*\*  
Rod Repenning, Knox Co\*  
Melissa Rugge, Thurston Co\*\*  
Eileen Semerad, Colfax Co\*\*  
Sue Sovereign, Madison Co\*\*  
Deb Springgate, Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas Co\*\*  
Marci Teten, Otoe Co\*\*  
Joan Tietjen, Saline Co\*\*  
Lilly Ulrich, Cuming Co\*\*  
Penny Veprovsky, Lancaster Co\*  
Rita Weise, Jefferson Co\*

Marci Dooley, Cedar Co\*\*  
Marlys Dworak, Ord FSA\*  
Mary Fiala, Seward Co--  
Cheryl Folkerts, Gage Co\*  
Susan Hansen, Burt Co\*  
Janene Heyen, Otoe Co\*  
Deb Johnson, Pierce Co\*\*  
Teresa Kretz, Colfax Co\*\*  
Julie Lueshen, Cuming Co\*\*  
Tracey Merchen, Cuming Co\*\*  
Barb Nelson, Madison Co\*\*  
Diane O'Neel, Saline Co\*  
Cynthia Post, Lancaster Co\*  
Deana Reichmuth, Otoe Co\*\*  
Linda Robb, Chase & Dundy Co\*  
Jodi Schaefer, Seward Co--  
Diane Smith, Dixon/Dakota Co\*\*  
Lorie Spier, Lancaster Co\*\*  
Jody Sykora, Nuckolls Co\*  
Carol Thayer, Pierce Co\*\*  
Chuck Topil, Butler Co\*  
Lorrie Ulrich, Cuming Co\*\*  
Karla Wait, York Co\*  
Cindy Winterfeld, Lancaster Co\*\*

### 35+ Years

Barb Campbell, Lancaster Co\*

Ann Keller, Saunders Co\*\*

And at this time, as we (the board) thank ALL of our members, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to invite all non-members to join NASCOE/NEBRASCOE. Whether you've been a member in the past and have let that membership lapse, or you've never been a member, I challenge you to find out all you can about NASCOE. Contact me or another board member or another NASCOE member--get informed about what NASCOE does for you. Then, AN INFORMED YOU can make a decision about your membership. I'm confident that if you do this, like many of our lifetime NASCOE members, you'll find it well worth your while to join!

*"It always seems impossible until it's done."*

*- Nelson Mandela*

# 2017 NASCOE Convention was Historically Awesome

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## **Darren Ash - FSA – CIO**

We need to remain grounded – IT is not perfect. IT can make your job easier or harder. There will always be some problems. CTS & NITC all together and what has changed? Communication is key. NPS – copiers and printers. They know we must replace these and this is being accelerated. Computers need to be replaced and will be done in a replacement cycle.

The AS 400 is now done and in retirement.

You can always email him and let him know problems or even the good stuff. Feedback is so important.

## **Fransico Salguero - OCIO (IT)**

IT OCIO – MPS, IT instructed Network modernization, pro-active steps and ethernet upgrade. Field offices are at 50% and in 2018 all offices should be done.

Office 365 is coming – will be better and use the web more – should be complete in May of 2018.

There are space limitations now with SharePoint but with the cloud it will be unlimited. Coming could be net access to email anywhere with your LincPass.

## **Thomas Mulhern - HRD**

Hiring freeze focus in 2018 will be lifted. Hiring will go much faster now with using EXPRESS LANE! Use it!

25% of the federal employees and 20% of the county office workforce is eligible to retire now. That will jump to 40% for federal and 44% of COF employees by 2022. In 2022, 70% of DDs will be eligible to retire. Nobody wants to lose a new employee – the challenge is in succession planning – focus on investing in the workforce. We must focus on the talent and the long term of knowledge transfer and succession planning.

Dearest NEBRASCOE Members,

The 2017 NASCOE Convention was amazing! I learned so many things and met so many amazing people! This FSA Family that we are a part of is truly amazing! I attended the convention as a delegate for Nebraska and I was also a first timer so I participated in the First Timer's Contest where I was able to meet even more people from all over the United States! Texas, Arizona, Washington, Florida, Tennessee are just a few of the states with attendees. In addition to meeting all of these great people I was able to meet everyone who attended from Washington DC. I was able to talk to many of them and found they truly care about what happens out here in the field but there are so many barriers (ie. Laws) and their hands are tied on a lot of things. Everything takes time...lots of time...but they are aware of our needs and are working toward developing a workload tool that truly reflects what we do with the hope that it will tell the picture to Congress what is happening in the field and the resources we are lacking to get the job done. I encourage you all to maintain your NASCOE membership and get involved in attending an area rally or national convention. The next NWA Rally will be in Bellingham, WA and the 2018 National Convention will be in South Dakota...really close for all of us Nebraska people! I hope to see more of you there!!!

Sincerely,

Anne Kelley

District 5 NEBRASCOE Board Member...and No Longer a First Timer

# 2017 NASCOE National Convention

St. Charles, MO~August 3-5, 2017



**2017-2018 NASCOE Officers  
and Area Executives**



**Northwest Area**



**South Dakota**



**Montana & Wyoming**



**Idaho & Oregon**



**Washington**



**North Dakota**



**Nebraska**



**RASCOE**





2017-2018 NASCOE Officers: Dennis Ray, President; Brandon Wilson, Vice President; Marcinda Kester, Secretary; Curt Houk, Treasurer



Left to Right: Chris Beyerhelm, Former Acting FSA Administrator; John Chott-Acting Deputy Administrator for Field Operations; Hunter Moorhead, NASCOE Legislative Consultant; Jenae Prescott, Outgoing NWA Exec



Left to Right: Wes Daniels and Chris Beyerhelm signing the Labor Management Agreement; Anne Kelley, NE, 2017 Winner of the Herb Sorley First Timers Award; Q&A Panel; Val Dolcini, Former FSA Administrator



Left to Right: Jessi Colgrove and Jenae Prescott, 2016-2017 NWA Execs; Pam Metz, WY, 2nd Place for the First Timer's Award, Q&A Panel; Lewis & Clark Memorial