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|  | *July, 2016* | | |  |  | | |
|  | ***NEBRASCOE Newsletter*** NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF FSA COUNTY OFFICE EMPLOYEES | | | | |
| Officers: President ~ Jessi Colgrove  Vice President ~ Ann Kurpgeweit  Secretary ~Lisa Wiese  Treasurer ~ Shanna Waterman  **Board Members:**  **District 1:**  Jessi Colgrove  Amy Vitosh  **District 2:**  Joni Johnson  Mona Fassler  **District 3:**  Shanna Waterman  Lisa Wiese  **District 4:**  Mel Campbell  Niki Dittmer  **District 5:**  Linda Fegler  Anne Kelley  **District 6:**  Sandy Orr  Heather Amateis  **District 7:**  Lorrie Robinson  Ann Kurpgeweit  **Websites:**  http://nebrascoe.com  <http://nascoe.org>  E-mail address: nebrascoe@yahoo.com  Upcoming events:  **2016 National Convention**  **Cedar Rapids, Iowa**  **August 2-6** |  | ***The Year in Review***  ***A Message From Your President***  ***Hey everyone! It’s been a busy year, from both a county office workload perspective and from a NASCOE perspective! Again, one of the most common questions I hear is “what has NASCOE done for me lately?” I want to take a few minutes to summarize the accomplishments and victories that NASCOE has achieved over the past 12 months.***   * ***22-PM was amended to provide COF employees the same grievance process rights as Federal employees.*** * ***NASCOE fought and won to keep GovDelivery at the county level, a valuable outreach resource that we almost lost!*** * ***We pushed for ways to bypass the MPS printers and were given the FSA code.*** * ***We fought to expand the awards program. In Nebraska we have seen this benefit over the past two years!*** * ***NASCOE challenged a decision by an OPM attorney who determined that temporary service history was only to be credited to Federal employees, not to County Office employees. The decision was overturned which marked a big win for our employees!*** * ***We shared our concerns on PL-271 and the AGI process. NASCOE raised our concerns to DC. As a result, the effective date to submit overpayments due to AGI was delayed.*** |  | * ***NASCOE’s legislative efforts helped to block the Central, Branch, and Satellite office restructuring plan.*** * ***For two straight years, our team has blocked proposed employee contribution increases related to retirement programs.*** * ***NEBRASCOE has provided FREE retirement training to members as part of an agreement with our official benefits provider Dillard Financial Solutions.*** * ***NEBRASCOE re-wrote and issued an updated version of our Constitution and By-Laws and issued a Position Handbook, a Director’s Handbook, and a Travel Handbook so that all members know the rules that must be followed by the Board of Directors.*** * ***As a State Association, we have revived the NASCOE Awards Program, giving out Honorary Lifetime*** * ***Membership Awards, Sick Leave Awards, and Continuous County Membership Awards. We negotiated with the STO to implement the use of a perpetual FSA-444, which means that your dues can be deducted automatically from your paycheck until you terminate it or retire. We also froze dues at a Step 5 for each grade in order to simplify this process.*** * ***We have been able to keep our membership numbers consistent through outreach efforts to recruit new members, in spite of multiple retirements across the state. We never discuss individual***   ***personnel issues, but over the past year have worked with two***  ***Nebraska COF employees who***  ***had concerns about their jobs and benefits. With the help of our NWA Executive, our National President and our National Vice President, we were able to resolve these issues.***  ***I am always here for our members and my contact information is available on the NEBRASCOE website. If you have suggestions, ideas, concerns, or problems, please feel free to contact me or a board member. That is what we are here for and we are happy to be able to provide this service to our members!***  ***Here’s to another successful year for Nebraska FSA, NEBRASCOE, and NASCOE!***  ***Jessi Colgrove*** | | |

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| **My First Rally Experience**  **My first thought about going to the All West Rally was “Whoo hoo! San Diego!” I like adventures and traveling so this opportunity was right up my alley. I started getting a little nervous as the flight time approached since I have never been to a NASCOE function before and I wasn’t quite sure what to expect. I wondered how a “newbie” would be treated, if everyone was going to be nice and welcoming, and if I would even understand what they were all talking about. I feel silly admitting these fears because there was nothing to be afraid of. I met people from all over the western half of the country and everyone was absolutely wonderful. Val Dolcini went out of his way to personally speak to and make a connection with every single person in attendance. It was such a pleasant surprise to me since he seems like such a busy guy. People went out of their way to welcome me and give me positive encouragement in my job and as a representative of NASCOE. The meetings were packed with so much information and knowledge that I kind of felt like my brain was going to explode, but in a good way (of course!). Everyone there was able to participate in some form or another which really solidified, in my mind, the sense of “team” and the fact that we are all working together toward the same goals. We voiced problems and found solutions. We celebrated the completion of projects. We developed plans and goals to work toward. We accomplished things, we didn’t just talk about them. I feel so blessed to be a part of an organization that is ready to go into action and I’m looking forward to attending many more events in the future.**  ***Lisa M Wiese***  **Scholarship Winners Announced**  **Hayes Chohon is the son of Tom and Lisa Chohon (Tom is the CED at Brown-Keya Paha-Rock County FSA). Hayes plans to attend Black Hills State University majoring in K-12 Music Education.**  **Coleman Forst is the son of Jerry and Theresa Forst (Jerry is a Program Technician in the Gage County FSA Office). Coleman is studying Ag Business and Finance at Kansas State University.**  **Chessney Friehe is the daughter of Brad and Jennifer Friehe of Culbertson. (Jennifer is a Program Technician in the Hayes/Hitchcock County FSA Office). Chessney will attend Eastern Wyoming College in Torrington, Wy, studying for an Associate’s degree in Applied Science-Cosmetology.**  **Wildlife Professional of the Year**  ***Diane Hidy, conservation program technician in the Red Willow-Frontier county FSA office accepts the Wildlife Professional of the Year award from Andy Houser, wildlife biologist, at the State Habitat Meeting in Kearney, Nebraska in February.***  **Each year, Pheasants Forever has the honor of selecting individuals that go above and beyond the call of duty during their normal day to day activities. These individuals not only support Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, but help the organization accomplish our mission by spreading the word of conservation, volunteering with a local PF or QF chapter, exemplifying a partnership attitude of working together to achieve more, and/or helping with our youth. We will showcase the recipients of these awards throughout the week to honor, recognize, and say “Thank You” for all their work on and off the clock to promote conservation and wildlife habitat efforts around the state.**  **Our first award to recognize is the “Wildlife Professional of the Year” Award. This award goes to Diane Hidy from McCook, Nebraska. Diane is the Program Technician for the Farm Service Agency. She works with landowners to explain the Conservation Reserve Program and help guide them through the sign up process. She also played a pivotal role in starting the new Quail Forever chapter (Southwest Prairie QF) in Hitchcock and Dundy County last year. She was nominated by Andy Houser, PF Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, who shared these words:**    **It’s NASCOE DUES TIME**  By Joni Johnson, Membership Chairperson  It’s a busy time in our county offices and we probably all have a growing list of things we want to accomplish in the upcoming weeks. What better time to reflect on our jobs, not just our workloads. Think about the positive changes in our work environments over the years as well as the benefits we receive. In this ever-changing world, it’s good to know that we have a group of hard-working people who diligently act as a voice for county office employees and strive for our best interests at the national level.  With that in mind, this is my gentle reminder that the NASCOE fiscal year 2017 begins July 1, 2016; which means it’s time to pay 2017 NASCOE dues. Thanks to those who have paid your 2017 dues already. It’s great to see how many of you appreciate the importance of having that voice in WDC to work toward the objectives of our membership. NEBRASCOE has many objectives some of which include:   * Striving to preserve and improve the present county committee system * Promoting the professional improvement of its membership * Cooperating with the Nebraska State Committee, the State Executive Director and staff to improve the FSA in Nebraska * Promoting the welfare of Nebraska farmers * Being considered as Federal Employees and be placed on an equal basis for privileges with other Federal Employees * Cooperating with the National Association of FSA County Committee employees in their goals and aims |  | Election Results  **NEBRASCOE Board Member elections were held in Districts 4, 5, 6, and 7 and the results are as follows:**  **District 4:  Mel Campbell, CED – Boone County**  **Niki Dittmer, PT – Merrick/Nance County**  **District 5:  Linda Fegler, CED – Chase/Dundy County**  **Anne Kelley, PT – Chase County**  **District 6:  Sandy Orr, CED – Sheridan County**  **Heather Amateis, PT – Morrill County**  **District 7:  Lorrie Robinson, CED – Antelope County**  **Ann Kurpgeweit, PT – Holt/Boyd County**  **Mona Fassler will serve as the NEBRASCOE Awards Chair.  Officers for the 2016-2017 year were elected at the State Convention.  Jessi Colgrove will serve another year as President, Ann Kurpgeweit will serve another year as Vice-President, and Shanna Waterman will serve another year as Treasurer.  We welcome Lisa Wiese as our new Secretary. Congratulations, ladies.**  **TABLET WINNERS ANNOUNCED**  **Jana Ingwerson, Cass County PT was the lucky winner of the new member Samsung Galaxy Tablet and Pierce County PT, Debbi Johnson (pictured), was also a lucky winner of a Samsung Galaxy Tablet!  NEBRASCOE purchased the tablets with fundraiser money.  All 2016 paid NEBRASCOE members were entered into a drawing with the winner being randomly drawn at the 2016 State Convention.  It is fitting that Debbi won the tablet as she has been a continuous NEBRASCOE member since being hired in 1987!  In addition, Debbi works in Pierce County which has had continuous NEBRASCOE membership for 33 years.  Debbi is excited to use her new tablet.  She had been considering purchasing one, but was too busy getting ready for her son's high school graduation to make the purchase.  Now she will have a way to stay organized being a mother of three on the go.  Congratulations Jana and Debbi!!**  **NASCOE National Convention**  **Have you ever wanted to feel more connected to your job and your employee association?  Consider joining us in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on August 2-6 for the NASCOE National Convention!  This year our convention is close to home and NEBRASCOE plans to rent at least one van to carpool.  Cedar Rapids is only about a 4.5 hour drive from Lincoln and with room sharing and van rental, the cost to attend is kept to a minimum.  This year we expect to see another stellar line-up of representatives from DC for the Q & A panel.  The folks from IASCOE have invited Iowa State Senator Chuck Grassley, who currently serves as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.  As Iowa is his home state, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has also been invited to attend!  This is a wonderful opportunity to meet other FSA employees from across the country, and to hear what is in store for FSA from the very top levels of management.  Please contact NEBRASCOE President Jessi Colgrove if you are interested in attending.  More information can be found at** [**https://nascoe.org/convention-information/**](https://nascoe.org/convention-information/)    **IASCAOE Raffle Tickets Available**  The 2016 NASCOE National Convention will be held in Cedar Rapids IA this year. You can purchase IASCOE Raffle tickets for $20 each. The Grand Prize  is a $4000 travel voucher to the destination of your choice or $2500 cash. Other prizes include a Remington Model 870 Wingmaster 12-Gauge, Browning A-Bolt Hunter 270 Win Glock 42 in. 380 Auto, PSE Surge Hunting Bow Package and $500 cash. The winner is responsible for all applicable taxes, licenses and fees. The drawing will be held August 6, 2016 and you need not be present to win. **Please contact you district representative for tickets.**    **“Diane is the anchor of the Southwest when it comes to putting CRP into the area. Her passion for wildlife, conservation and working with producers truly makes her second to none. Diane has been a major contributing factor to all the new and existing acres in Red Willow and Frontier counties. Diane can consistently be found attending habitat tours, burn workshops, and pollinator presentations. She has attended the State Habitat Meeting and takes all of her knowledge straight to the office where she is** **consistently** **getting me in touch with landowners who are interested in doing wildlife habitat. Diane’s great relationships with producers and passion for wildlife are so apparent that it brings spark to any producer sitting across the table. Diane truly is inspiring.”**  **Do you have a story to share about your talent or hobbies that we can print in the newsletter? We would love to have you share it on the member profile page. Please send an e-mail to your district representative. Thank you for sharing your amazing story.**  ***FSA Leadership Pledge***  ***I pledge to act as a role model who treats you with honesty and respect, to create an environment that promotes diversity, empowers you, and fosters fair and equitable treatment. I will solicit your ideas and views, and recognize your important contributions. I will listen. I will have regular and open communication with you, and aim to give you the resources you need.***  ***Please, do not hesitate to contact a board member if you have any concerns or questions. That’s what we are here for, to represent and serve you.***  If you haven’t paid your 2017 dues yet, I encourage you to visit the NEBRASCOE website ([www.nebrascoe.com](http://www.nebrascoe.com)) and download the FSA-444 (Request for Voluntary Allotment of Pay for USDA FSA Recognized Associations) and e-mail it to the State Office ([FSA-NE-HRPROCESSING@ne.usda.gov](mailto:FSA-NE-HRPROCESSING@ne.usda.gov)). Please CC me on the e-mail, at [joni.johnson@ne.usda.gov](mailto:joni.johnson@ne.usda.gov), so that I can update membership records and get membership cards and pins to you. Using the  FSA-444 is the recommended method to pay dues, but you can also send a check for membership to Shanna Waterman, NEBRASCOE Secretary, at the Pierce County FSA office. Shanna will contact me when she gets your check and I will update membership records.  Member dues are paid based on your grade and step as of July 1 of each year and for 2017 fiscal year will be as follows:  **Grade**  **Dues per PP**  Grade 4 $2.52  Grade 5 $2.82  Grade 6 $3.14  Grade 7 $3.49  Grade 8 $3.86  Grade 9 $4.27  Grade10 $4.65  Grade 11 $5.17  Grade 12 $6.19  **NOTE:** Please remember to enter the allotment amount per pay period on the FSA-444 when sending it to the STO. It will be returned, if that information is not entered on the form.  If you know of any non-county office employees (i.e.: GS employees, NRCS, retired FSA employees) who would like to be Associate Members of NASCOE, dues are $25.00 per year and checks can be sent to Shanna Waterman.  Member Employee list and member reports; NEBRASCOE new member packets and current 2017 membership cards and pins will be in the mail soon to all county offices. And for those paying 2017 dues by August 31, you will be entered in the Early Bird Drawing for $50.  Anyone with questions about NEBRASCOE membership can give me a call at the Jefferson County FSA office or send me an e-mail. |