

October, 2015



NEBRASCOE Newsletter

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF FSA COUNTY OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Officers:

President ~ Jessi Colgrove
Vice President ~ Ann Kurpgeweit
Secretary ~ Diane Hidy
Treasurer ~ Shanna Waterman

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District 1:
Jessi Colgrove
Amy Vitosh
District 2:
Joni Johnson
Sharon Blue
District 3:
Shanna Waterman
Lisa Wiese
District 4:
Tansy Sack
Niki Dittmer
District 5:
Linda Fegler
Diane Hidy
District 6:
Larry Steinbrecher
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



2015 NASCOE NATIONAL CONVENTION HELD IN MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



Back: Wendy Wait, Cindy Hall, Cindy Winterfeld, Jessi Colgrove, Linda Fegler Front: Greg Reisdorff, Jim Demsberger, and Greg Chewakin

The 56th National Association of FSA County Office Employees was held August 12-15 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Jessi Colgrove, Greg Chewakin, Linda Fegler, and Cindy Winterfeld represented NEBRASCOE while Wendy Wait and Cindy Hall represented Nebraska-RASCOE, Jim Demsberger, the Nebraska NAFEC director also attended along with Greg Reisdorff, NE STO. Also in attendance were Michael Kresin for NADD, Angie Biester for NASE, and Lisa Liska for NACS.

This convention boasted the largest number of DC representatives ever and provided employees with numerous opportunities to learn and voice their opinions. FSA Administrator **Val Dolcini**, stated that more farmers are participating now than in other Title I Program which is a direct result of outreach efforts. Our personal touch helps people feel less removed from government. **Chris Beyerhelm**, Associate Administrator, commented on budget, saying that the 2016 budget has been submitted but Congress has not yet acted. A Continuing Resolution means that 2016 would operate under the 2015 allocation, which is a good thing. FSA is acting aggressively in asking for a 2017 budget as well. He suggested having a 3rd party workload study conducted because after 3 years of ARS it does not go down to the county level and does not collect what is NOT being done. We must be willing to act on the results. If one state needs to gain employees based on the study, the other needs to be willing to give them up.

Greg Diephouse, DAFO, listed some of the wins that FSA employees have seen over the past year, including a decent budget, flexible hiring, KPTs, award money, new furniture, management training, face to face Farm Bill training, and the Aspiring Leader Program for PTs. He stressed the need to take performance ratings seriously.

Mike Schmidt, DAFP, summarized work completed in the last year and stressed the need to continue looking for ways to improve processes to free up the field for more important tasks. He stated that CRP cost share software needs improvement and suggested using a continuous certification process for CRP and pasture, instead of requiring an annual certification. He plans to continue working with NASCOE to improve operations.

Jonathan Albaum, USDA Chief Information Officer, knows how important IT is to offices and visited the Marysville, KS office to see how IT impacts both employees and producers. He is aware of current software problems and they are being worked on but they need real-time data and feedback. For example, turn in tickets timely, don't wait to report a problem. Also, if the ticket was closed and reported as resolved when it was not, forward the e-mail to Larry Gross. They need the information to track problems and if IT is closing tickets without resolution, Larry wants to know.

Tony Cossa is heading up the ACRSI system implementation which would allow producers to download their CLU and share it with a third party. There is also a USDA portal that will eventually include RMA. This software would allow producers to certify their acres at either FSA or RMA. A concern was raised that there are not enough systems in place to protect the integrity of the system. Offices reported that crop insurance agents asked them to change acres or prevented planted/failed acres so that the producer could get paid and the concern is that agents will not input data with the same integrity that FSA employees do. The program has been tested by FSA employees who also farm and they were pleased with the project. Look for Nebraska to be included in the second round of pilot testing.

Hunter Moorhead, FSA's Legislative Consultant gave a briefing on what's happening on the Hill. There is currently cyber security legislation in the House that enhances DHS's ability to work on the OPM data breach and would give them authority over the .gov domain. It would also extend lifetime ID theft protection for employees. If you would like to follow appropriations measures as they pass through the stages of government, Google "Library of Congress Thomas" and in the middle of the screen under Appropriations Measures, click on either report or bill. The report will list FSA salaries and expenses. Please visit www.NASCOE.org to read the report given by the National Committee Chairs.

Our national benefits provided, Dillard Financial has partnered with Lifelock to offer a discount to members. If you go to the website, www.lifelock.com, enter "dillard" as the promo code. There are 3 different plans to choose from. Dillard has donated \$35,000 to NASCOE and \$33,962 to state associations. They donated \$10,000 to the national convention and are currently working to expand their benefits options to include a guaranteed whole life policy where the only requirement is having a job.

Submitted by Jessi Colgrove



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

We propose moving the September meeting to Washington, D.C. We view this as an opportunity to conduct organizational meetings, visit with FSA management and conduct Capitol Hill visits. In general, the cost benefit would increase significantly by moving the meeting to Washington, D.C. In addition, the month of September is just before the end of the federal fiscal year which means the appropriations process will be the focus of the Congress. This was approved by the National Board.

Our committee considered all options and want to propose a more local approach. In general, we recommend inviting members of Congress to visit our county offices. The visits would be scheduled based on Congressional Committee assignments and NASCOE's priorities. Our Legislative Committee went this direction because previous fly-ins has resulted in mostly Congressional staff meetings that are sandwiched between various Committee hearings and other events. The County Office visit would give us the Member's full attention and expose the office to NASCOE's legislative activities. In addition, some Legislative Committee members were concerned about the overall cost of any Washington, D.C, event. Our committee has successfully increased PAC contributions and enrolled new contributions. Following this year's convention, we are 18 contributors short of reaching the all-time high of 613 PAC contributors. I intend to surpass that number and have the most ever members contributing to the PAC by the end of the next national convention. To reach this goal, we propose shifting away from raffle ticket sales. We recommend awarding new enrollees with \$25 Visa gift cards. The net return will be very positive for our PAC and help us continue to build both enrollees and total dollars.

The legislative committee priorities include annual appropriations for salaries and expenses, protecting salaries expense from temporary transfers, office closure language, employee relocation language, avoiding being harmed by future budget negotiations, protect Farm Bill programs, monitor Agricultural Policy, monitor long-term budget negotiations. Under USDA Initiatives we would like to see 2014 Farm Bill language, new hires, MIDAS and computer software initiatives, more consistency in performance evaluations, expansion of the key program technician positions and lead program technician positions placed in shared management offices.

*Respectfully submitted by Linda Fegler, NW Area
Legislative Representative*



NEBRASKA FSA STATE COMMITTEE SUPPORTS NASCOE

Please review the attached memo from the Nebraska FSA State Committee supporting NASCOE.



NASCOE is for YOU!

We all know that NASCOE has worked tirelessly to represent the best interests of County Office employees but one of the most common questions we hear is "but what has NASCOE done for me lately?" In the last year, NASCOE has worked to introduce and expand the Key PT program in all states to provide upward mobility to PTs. We are currently working to develop an Aspiring Leader Program for PTs in order to provide them with the training and resources needed to advance. Were you aware that the County Office almost lost the ability to issues newsletters and bulletins via GovDelivery? NASCOE fought this aggressively and won the right to keep GovDelivery at the county level. Due to a NASCOE effort spanning several years, the 22-PM has been amended to provide COF employees the same grievance process rights as Federal employees. We have pushed for ways to bypass the MPS printers and expand the awards program.

Outgoing NASCOE President Mark VanHoose likes to list 3 main reasons that all employees should be members:

- 1. NASCOE is the ONLY association that has an official, formal labor agreement with WDC and is recognized to negotiate on our behalf**
- 2. NASCOE pays a legislative consultant to fight for our best interest in Congress. These funds do not come from dues, but from separate, voluntary donations to our PAC.**
- 3. If you ever get sideways with management, NASCOE members have 1 hour of free access to the NASCOE attorney, which is a \$300 value.**

Finally, the Nebraska State Committee encourages and supports all employees to retain active membership in their employee associations, stating "NASCOE is the voice of all County Office employees. This organization works hard to support FSA and you as a County Office employee. We support the efforts of NASCOE and encourage all of you to consider being a member.



Farm Service Agency Shirts and Jackets For Sale

Due to the success of the shirt order, NEBRASCOE has elected to place another order. This time, you will have the choice of either the same polo shirts or a button down, long sleeved shirt. They come in both men's and women's styles and in multiple colors. Order forms for both styles will be mailed out soon and will be posted on the FSA sharepoint website. Please note that if you are a member of your employee association, you receive a \$2 discount per shirt! Sizing information can be found below and measurements are taken across with the shirt lying flat. The chest information is taken from armpit to armpit.

Measurement (inches)	Chest	Length
Men's Polo		
M	20.0	30.0
L	22.5	30.0
XL	24.5	30.5
Ladies Polo		
M	19.0	25.5
L	22.0	27.0
XL	23.5	28.5
Men's Button		
M	22.0	29.0
L	24.0	30.0
XL	25.5	32.0
XXL	27.0	33.0
Ladies Button		
M	20.5	27.5
L	23.0	27.5
XL	24.5	29.0
XXL	27.0	30.5

Please submit your orders and payment are due to Heather by **November 15, 2015**.

By Heather Amateis

Wednesday evening, convention attendees were treated to a "Taste of Wisconsin" night and were encouraged to dress up for a 50's themed sock hop.



NAFEC News

As the NWA NASCOE NAFEC Chair I would like to thank all of you who have supported NAFEC by becoming a member (associate or regular) and also for passing on information sent out by NAFEC.

It is extremely important that your COC members know about NAFEC and all that they do for this unique system we have within FSA. NAFEC has been the voice of the COC system for many years and is willing to help any COC when they need it. You can find more information about NAFEC at the above web link or by visiting the "NAFEC Committee" link in you NASCOE's web site.

NASCOE and NAFEC are working on information that will soon be sent to all NASCOE members to distribute to the local COC members. Please help us get this information to the COC members either during the election or reorganizational meetings!

Currently Jim Densberger (Lancaster COC) is serving as our NAFEC Director. Jim and NAFEC would like an additional Director to help distribute important information in a timely manner. If you know of someone that is interested feel free to contact me.

Submitted by: Greg Chewakin, NWA NASCOE NAFEC Chairman



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RASCOE NEWS

Hello NEBRASCOE friends. I bring greetings from your friends at NE RASCOE. RASCOE's objectives are: 1) Seek legislation to abolish or amend the GPO & WEP Provisions of the Social Security Law to allow retirees to receive full benefits earned. 2) Continuation of the FEHBP as now available and obtain the right to pay FEHBP Premiums with pre-tax dollars. 3) Continuation of Medicare substantially in the manner as now authorized.

2015/2016 officers for NE RASCOE are Wendy Wait, President, Norm Hall, Vice President and Cindy Hall, Secretary/Treasurer. Recognize any of these names? All were faithful NASCOE members when they were working and are continuing their efforts into retirement. Our Nebraska group is proud to announce that Cindy Hall was recently elected at the National Convention in Milwaukee as the National RASCOE Treasurer.

We at NE RASCOE would like to invite NEBRASCOE members to become Associate members of RASCOE. The annual associate dues are \$15 and can be sent to: NEBRASCOE, %Cindy Hall, 3025 Snead Drive, Fremont NE 68025. As with NEBRASCOE, the larger our organization, the larger our impact concerning benefits. Did you know that once you retire, you may be eligible to become an Honorary Life Member in RASCOE? *Submitted by Cindy Hall and Wendy Wait*



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-Boly 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 your district representative for tickets.**



\$50 Membership Drawing Winners

A drawing for \$50 took place on September 19, 2015 at the State NEBRASCOE Board Meeting. Sandra Hoback and Windy Ingram were the winners. Congratulations!!!!



NEBRASCOE Sick Leave Awards

We all know that one employee...the one who is never gone, who comes to work with the sniffles and other various ailments that would put anyone else out of commission for a week. Their dedication to their producers and FSA keeps them coming in no matter what and it's sometimes difficult to let them know just how much we appreciate what they do. Fortunately, NASCOE has an award for that! Managers and timekeepers, is there an employee in your office who has 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, 2,500, 3,000 or more hours of accumulated sick leave? Take a moment to check the leave balances for your office and then forward the name of anyone you want to recognize to NEBRASCOE Awards Chair Sharon Blue. Their name, county, and milestone hours will be submitted to the National Awards Chair Micki Crider and they will receive a certificate to honor this momentous achievement! Please help NEBRASCOE in congratulating the following employees who have achieved sick leave milestones:

3,000 Hours

Ann Keller – Saunders County
David Safty – Stanton County
Bryan Ralston – Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas County

2,500 Hours

Peg Wolzen – Furnas County
Cheryl Folkerts – Gage County
Sharon Blue – Buffalo-Sherman County
Kenneth Carriker – Red Willow-Frontier County
Selena Govlik – Nance County
Tammy Hays – Otoe County

2,000 Hours

Kathryn Jennings – Hamilton County
Rodney Nicolay – Stanton County

1,500 Hours

Cindy Schuster – York County
Jann Derby – Pawnee County
Karla Wait – York County
Larry Evans – Kearney County
Annie Kehler – Red Willow-Frontier County
Rita Weise – Jefferson County

1,000 Hours

Carol Thayer – Pierce County
Starla Remmenga – Gosper County
Debbie Springgate – Dodge/Sarpy/Douglas County
Tammy Buchli – Jefferson County
Diane Hidy – Red Willow-Frontier County
Cheryl Mohler – Kearney County
Karen Nielsen – Buffalo-Sherman county

YOUR NEBRASCOE BOARD MEMBERS



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