



NASCOE Now

April 10, 2009

The ASCS/FSA Story

by Chris Hare

Indiana

The clock read 4:45 as Sally fell back in her chair at her desk. What a day she thought. Everyone else had already left for the day, and it was just Sally left in the office. Due to Sally's retirement party, end-of-day was not started on time, and of course it is the night the SYS36 does its VTOC. Sally wasn't in any hurry to leave the office. She wanted some time alone in the office she had dedicated 40 years of her life to. Sally places the banker's box on her desk and starts to load her personal items into the box. As she starts to pack up her personal belongings, she hears a familiar song on the radio. "*Suite: Judy Blue Eyes*" by Crosby, Stills, and Nash. "NO WAY!" she exclaimed to herself. This was the song that was playing on the radio her first day of work back in 1969. This brought back many memories to Sally....

It was April 1, 1969. Sally had just moved back to her parents with her 2 young children after a bad divorce. Upon arrival at the farm she grew up on, her father informed her that she was to go to the ASCS office in town at 8:00 a.m. the next day. Sally wasn't too thrilled about moving back home, but there were limited job opportunities in her county. Her father had helped her get an interview with the local ASCS office. Sally was hired and reported for work promptly at 8:00, and met the CED, Chuck. The office had 3 other PA's that had been there for at least 10 years. Sally was put in charge of the Compliance program and was thrilled to be a grade 3-1. Chuck was an advocate for NASCOE, the employee association that had only been around for 10 years. Chuck informed Sally of the many things NASCOE had worked on over the past 10 years. Sally joined that day, but wasn't really sure what she was signing.

Sally stopped day dreaming for enough time to take a picture down off her shelf. It was a picture of her youngest son. She remembers how tight money was her first couple of years at her job. You see, back then, ASCS employees did not earn family sick leave. In fact, sick leave and annual leave were still fairly new to ASCS employees. So every day Sally needed off to care for her children, she had to use her annual leave for that time off. "We FSA employees are darn lucky to have all the great flexible schedules and WONDERFUL leave to earn and use now a days," Sally thought out loud.

The next picture Sally came across was a picture of her late CED Chuck. The picture was taken in the early 1980's. There were 6 PA's in this picture with Chuck. Sally reminisced about how she felt when her favorite co-worker was RIF'd. What a bad time in the office she thought. The feelings of guilt came across her though. She was one of the lucky ones who got to keep her job and the pay check that came with it. Sally enjoyed her job and thought that the annual pay raises she received were a huge benefit.

Sally was brought out of this day dream by a loud beeping noise from the ADP room. She walked in to answer the message on the SYS36. After she answered the message, she smiled thinking back to 1986. She will NEVER forget how worried she was about getting this "new" computer system. 1986 was a year

of change in the office. After Chuck had passed away in 1985, the two other PA's decided they did not want to deal with the new computer system and retired. Max, the new CED was hired. He was right out of college and very green to how the office worked. His first job was to hire 2 new employees. Max hired 2 young PA's, Sam and Marla. To this day, Sally will never admit it out loud, but she felt very intimidated by the new employees. She had never touched a computer before. The two new girls had attended some additional schooling after high school and were very proficient and caught on quick.

Sally swears she did not hold a grudge towards the "new" office. It was just different, new computers, new CED, and now new co-workers. Sally saw that she was becoming very protective of her program areas and did not want the others to know how to do her job. This did not last long though. She knew the only ones she would be hurting by doing this would be the farmers she had served for the past 16 years. Sally decided to have an open mind and worked well with the new employees. Sam and Marla taught Sally a lot. She would even tell you that she thought of them as her sisters, and Max as a son. She can remember thinking, "Boy these computers are making our jobs easier!" Sally worked hard through the next decade or so. Farm bills came and went. Program and job duties had changed. Then in 1996, Sally was diagnosed with breast cancer. If it weren't for the federal health insurance benefits that were obtained from NASCOE, there would be no way Sally could have afforded treatments. The medical bills alone would have bankrupted her.

Sally then picked up a picture of the GIS specialist and Sally at the State Office. "Who would have thought we would have become such good friends" she muttered. Sally can remember how Compliance was done in 1970, and then in 2003, the new GIS software was introduced. Sally, again, was very scared of the new system and spent many hours cursing at the small pointer she could barely see. She worked very close with the GIS specialist and they became very good friends over the years.

Sally had been a "silent" member of NASCOE for 34 years now. She had paid her dues the entire time. Over 34 years had passed from when she signed up. Sally thought it would be time to go to her first national convention. In 2004, Sally traveled to Baltimore, Maryland and attended her first national NASCOE Convention. Like a flu virus, she caught the bug. She came back motivated and explained to her co-workers how important it is to join NASCOE. Sally then shared with her co-workers what it was like back in the days of little or no benefits.

Sally has finished packing up her items, and walks out the door one last time. Sally was very emotional at this point. She walked out and piled her items into her new Cadillac. This was a treat for herself. "There is no way I could have afforded this on a CO 3-1 salary." she thought. Sally was retiring at a CO 7-10, another benefit that NASCOE has gotten us.

As Sally started her car, she sat back in her seat. She thought there are two thank you's she never got to make. The first one was to Chuck. He took a chance on a girl, hired her, and gave her and her family a wonderful opportunity and life. The other was to NASCOE. Without all of the hard work NASCOE does for its members, Sally would not have had the life she had. If only others were as lucky as she.

THE MORAL:

We FSA employees cannot forget all the hard work our NASCOE pioneers did for us 50 years ago. Even though the character Sally may not exist in real life, all of the above stories are true. I have learned many of these stories from people across the nation. Every office can relate to at least one of these stories. The employees of tomorrow must remember, we ASCS/FSA employees have not always been this lucky. We MUST cherish our benefits and support NASCOE! Although times and programs have changed, NASCOE fights for more programs for job security.

NASCOE IS NOT A UNION! NASCOE is a membership that provides County Office employees with benefits.

Ask yourself these questions:

Can you imagine having to take a day off and not getting paid?

Can you imagine being a CO-3-1 PT? How about never getting annual pay raises or promotions?

Can you imagine yourself trying to pay off medical bills in today's society?

Can you imagine not having life insurance benefits for you and your loved ones?

Why is it I say that I won't join NASCOE? Because I don't believe in unions?

Look at the benefits you get for \$6.00 a month (PT's), \$13.00 a month (CED's). These benefits cannot even compare to a \$20 a month gym membership, or a \$100 fee to be a Sam's Club member. We are talking \$0.20 a day for PT's and \$.43 a day for CED's.

Count your blessings you are an FSA employee and you have the opportunity to be a NASCOE member!



Members can now get discounts for Kings Island Amusement Park, thanks to the hard work of Dee Ann Lehn, Midwest Area Benefits Chairperson. If a member wants to take advantage of the discount, contact your state benefits chairperson. The State Chair will verify membership and put in the request for the tickets! See the information below on what discounts are available.



You can now save big on admission to Kings Island! Plus, your tickets give you the option to visit the night before your full day's visit after 5pm for an additional \$10. Simply bring your ticket to any of the ticket windows at the front gate to purchase the additional "Night Before" ticket.

Please allow 24 hrs to process any "Hold at Gate" orders, 7-10 days for "Standard Mail" and next business day for "Express Mail" (if ordered before 4:00pm Monday - Friday). Why wait! Print out your tickets from home by using the E-Ticket option!

NASCOE Adult Admission

Buy This Item



Ages 3-61; 48 inches tall and taller. Valid any one day the park is open to the general public during the 2009 season.

Price: \$26.99

Qty:

ADD TO CART

NASCOE Jr/Sr Admission

Buy This Item



Ages 3 & up; under 48" tall / Ages 62 & up. Valid for any one day the park is open to the general public during the 2009 season.

Price: \$21.99

Qty:

ADD TO CART

NASCOE Two Day Admission

Buy This Item



Ages 3 and up. Valid any 2 days the park is open to the public during the 2009 season. These days do not have to be consecutive.

Ticket must be used by the same person on both visits.

Price: \$46.99

Qty:

ADD TO CART

NASCOE Parking

Buy This Item



Valid any one day the park is open to the general public during the 2009 season.

Price: \$10.00

Qty:

[ADD TO CART](#)

Jeanne Monday, NASCOE Membership Chair

2008/2009 NASCOE Membership Report												4/10/2009 0:00
STATE	Total CO employee 08-09	Total GS employee 08-09	TOTAL	TOTAL CO Members	No GS Members	CO Members % To date	07-08 %	06-07 %	Associate Members	Allow GS as Members	Current Transmittal # & date submitted	
										YES	NO	
NORTHEAST												
CT/RI	17	5	22	17	0	100%	100%	100%	7	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
DE/MD	67	8	74	61		91%	91%	97%	5	1	3rd qrt 4-6-09	
ME	27		27	22		81%	79%	81%		1	2nd qrt 1-6-09	
MA	16		16	9		56%	67%	71%		1	1st qrt 9-25-08	
NH	12	5	17			0%	67%	70%		1		
NJ	20	7	27	13	0	65%	70%	80%	3		1	3rd qrt 4-8-09
NY	130	67	197	107	1	82%	86%	89%	12	1	3rd qrt 4-6-09	
PA	135	45	180	80		59%	80%	78%	0	1	2nd qrt 02-04-09	
VT	20	20	40	19		95%	85%	75%	7	1	3rd qrt 4-8-09	
WV	50		50	44	0	88%	86%	82%	86	1	1st qrt and final, 11-21-08	
TOTAL	494	157	651	372	1	75%	83%	84%	120	8	2	
SOUTHEAST												
AL	171	25	196	162	9	95%	98%	100%	13	1	1st qt 11-10-08	
AR	196		196	184	7	94%	95%	96%	39	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
FL	81	24	105	74	2	91%	86%	91%	12	1	2nd qrt 1-12-09	
GA	283	72	355	239	0	84%	86%	92%	37	1	1st qrt and final , 12-8-08	
KY	277	120	397	190	4	69%	72%	77%	10	1	2nd qrt 1-20-09	
LA	137	95	232	129		94%	93%	92%	16	1	2nd qrt 1-27-09	
MS	221	71	292	197	2	89%	95%	97%	47	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
NC	302	89	391	241	2	80%	81%	84%	119	1	2nd qrt 1-20-09	
SC	115		115	93		81%	81%	80%	44	1	2nd qrt 1-12-09	
TN	236		236	216		92%	92%	93%	25		1	3rd and FINAL 4-6-09
VA	158		158	112		71%	75%	75%	8		1	3rd qrt 4-3-09
TOTAL	2177	496	2673	1837	26	84%	86%	89%	370	9	2	
MIDWEST												
IL	477		477	441	2	92%	92%	90%	42	1	3rd qrt & Final 4-10-09	
IN	330		330	236		72%	74%	79%	9		1	2nd qrt 1-27-09
IA	569	150	719	507	9	89%	88%	90%	51	1	2nd qrt 1-12-09	
MI	207	78	285	121		58%	65%	70%	4	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
MN	384	80	464	356	4	93%	97%	95%	27	1	3rd qrt 01/30/09	
MO	376	123	499	293	6	78%	77%	91%	17	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
OH	319		319	279		87%	94%	95%	36		1	2nd qrt 01/30/09
WI	284	72	356	234		82%	84%	82%	6	1	3rd qrt 4-3-09	
TOTAL	2946	503	3449	2467	21	84%	85%	88%	192	6	2	
NORTHWEST												
ID	100	32	132	79	3	79%	83%	80%	2	1	2nd qrt 3-4-09	
MT	182	37	219	126		69%	62%	68%	4		1	2nd qrt 1-12-09
NE	374	75	449	242	4	65%	71%	73%	18	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
ND	249	117	366	228	3	92%	94%	94%	37	1	2nd qrt 4-6-09	
OR	68	26	94	37	2	54%	62%	57%	10	1	2nd qrt & final 1-27-09	
SD	275	81	356	270	11	98%	98%	98%	67	1	3rd qrt 4-10-09	
WA/AK	86	53	139	62		72%	66%	66%	5	1	2nd qrt 12-4-08	
WY	46		46	32		70%	67%	62%	9		1	2nd qrt 1-12-09
TOTAL	1380	421	1801	1076	23	78%	80%	80%	152	6	2	
SOUTHWEST												
AZ	34	23	57	20	0	59%	59%	53%	0		1	1st & 2nd qrt 12-10-08
CA/HI	119	41	160	73		61%	61%	61%		1		1st qrt and final 12-24-08
CO	128	22	150	77		60%	61%	66%	29	1	2nd qrt 1-20-09	
KS	452		454	409		90%	90%	90%	47		1	2nd qrt 1-12-09
NV	15	4	19	8		53%	29%	38%	0	1	3rd qrt 3-4-09	
NM	52		52	40		77%	78%	78%	4	1	3rd qrt 4-6-09	
OK	232	135	367	206		89%	91%	90%	53		1	3rd qrt 4-10-09
TX	596		596	483		81%	81%	79%	107		1	3rd qrt 4-10-09
UT	50	22	72	43	0	86%	94%	90%	1	1	3rd qrt 3-31-09	
TOTAL	1678	247	1925	1359	0	81%	81%	81%	241	5	4	
GRAND TOTALS	8675	1824	10499	7111	71	82%	84%	85%	1075	34	12	

Legislative Update

As most members are aware, the 2009 NASCOE Legislative Conference occurred March 17th and 18th in Washington. Through much discussion with the NASCOE Executive Board, our Washington inside-man Bob Redding, and the Legislative Committee, the focus became two-fold for conducting the visits. House and Senate members who serve on the Ag Committees or Ag Appropriations sub-committees were targeted with position papers that discussed USDA modernization, the administration of conservation programs, FSA as a single source for crop records data collection with respect to crop insurance, and the administration of the Animal ID program. It was felt that these positions were proactive in terms of looking at administrative cost savings during a difficult budgetary period and thus seemed well received on Capitol Hill. There were several sub-committee hearings scheduled during the subsequent weeks following our visits which made the above topics very timely as well.

For members of Congress not serving on one of the Ag Committees, many visits were still conducted which focused on employee benefit issues. Specifically, FERS unused sick leave for retirement benefits, Government pension offset/windfall elimination, the extension of eligible age of dependent healthcare, prevention of retirement calculation from changing to a “high five” instead of a “high three” and County Office Whistleblower protection were all discussed. There has been legislation introduced that includes our FERS sick-leave language, but as part of a larger Bill that NASCOE did not necessarily support. More will follow on this topic.

All NASCOE members are encouraged to review the position papers from this year’s Legislative Conference. They are available on the NASCOE web page under the “Legislative” link.

During the conference, the NASCOE PAC continued to be promoted. Employees can find out more on the importance of the PAC on the NASCOE web page. Even an allotment of a dollar or two per pay period goes a long way in building the effectiveness of our PAC.

Finally, the NASCOE Legislative Committee would like to thank all the participants who used their annual leave to travel to Washington this year. We had upwards of 175 attendees this year, including many first-time attendees. It was an interesting time to be in Washington, thanks in part to the AIG Bonus scandal breaking on the day that we were making visits on the Hill. In an ever-changing political and financial environment, one thing remains constant: the importance of NASCOE’s voice being heard on legislative matters is critical to the well being of our members and our nation’s farmers alike.

-Rob Gallinger (NY)

Northeast Area Legislative Chair

Report - Meetings with Management and other Updates

March 16 - 17, 2009

Prior to the Legislative Conference Vice President Myron and I spent March 18-19, 2009 visiting with management in WDC. This report is a compilation of our notes and updates since the meetings.

On March 17, 2009, we visited with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The meeting lasted about 25 minutes. Secretary Vilsack shared with us a few of his goals as Secretary which include energy, technology, and conservation relating to agriculture. He briefly shared some ideas for modernizing USDA. Secretary Vilsack is very interested in resolving the information technology (computer) issues. He indicated his objectives for improving information technology included budgeting on a multi-year plan. His plan would allow for the necessary upgrades and improvements required to have a long term, viable system for the delivery of programs.

We provided the Secretary with an introduction of NASCOE and we explained our desire to deliver programs efficiently, effectively and fairly to ALL producers. Civil rights and our commitment to working with the Secretary to eradicate any problems we may have with civil rights in the delivery of our programs was also discussed. A common goal of both the Secretary and NASCOE is the desire to deliver All programs to ALL producers efficiently, effectively and fairly for the benefit of American Agriculture.

Meeting with FSA Management – Monday and Tuesday March 16 & 17, 2009

Those we met with (in no particular order) included our new OCIO Jim Gwinn; CEPD -Sandy Bryant; Budget –Owen Jones, Vicki Lawson, Bob McGrath; DAFO - Linda Treese, Bob Stephenson, John Chott, Pat Spalding, Ken Nagel, and Trina Brake; DAFP - Candace Thompson, Brad Karmen, and Lynn Tjeerdsma; Acting Under Secretaries - Carolyn Cooksie and Linda Treese; Acting Administrator - Dennis Taitano and Acting Associate Administrator Jim Meidinger; Performance Management - Stephen Crisp and Lolla Smith; HRD - Barbara Boyd and Mike Rafferty; DAM - Philip Short and Pat Farmer; and MIDAS Director Patrick Hanley. Thanks to each of these folks for taking time out of their busy schedule to meet and visit with us.

Computer System – The Jan 07 IT meltdown will not likely occur again. It was caused by phantom loops being created and clogging the network. Volume of network traffic helps to identify weaknesses. Volume will not cause the meltdown like we saw in 07. Certain selected field offices have been completing a daily reporting of IT problems. This will continue. By 2013 field offices have to be off the AS400. This is when maintenance contracts expire. Plans for future of IT include a central application server which a county office user will access using a thin client. This will make the system easier to manage and upgrade. Data will be stored on a central database.

Last 4 digits of TIN removed from forms - The last four digits of ID number have been removed from the DCP contracts and will not appear on the combined DCP/ACRE contracts. The last 4 will eventually be removed from the 578 and replaced with the producer name. There are no plans for removing from all forms at this time.

New Acreage Reporting System - The new acreage reporting system (CARS) will be tied into MIDAS. This will replace the Land Use tool some states are using now.

ACRE - ACRE signup will begin late April and the contract will combine DCP/ACRE. If a producer has elected to enroll in DCP and now wants to enroll in ACRE, all of the data will be on the new contract. National Farm bill training will cover several topics (including ACRE) and will be conducted the week of June 9th.

Eligibility – Direct Attribution will require the fiduciary file be included in Web Eligibility. The 902 forms have been revised and simplified. Landowner will complete a 902 “short form”. The unnecessary questions have been removed. We will only need to capture the capital information with regards to a person or entity that has an interest in the operation. Also the acres column has been clarified to refer to ‘leased or owned acres’.

Disaster Programs - LIP, LFP, and TAP applications process expected out in July.

2008 SURE – SURE probably won’t be out this calendar year. A 2008 SURE payment cannot be made until after the end of the crop marketing year which is fall of 2009 for many crops. The stimulus bill SURE signup will be after ACRE signup. The stimulus bill made changes to 2008 SURE. These changes will be easier for producers to meet and will make more producers eligible for a loss payment.

2009 Budget - FSA asked for \$91 mil and received \$52.8 mil with \$22 mil specifically for IT. Carryover is lower than previous years. The ‘09 budget is comparable to ‘06 as far as being difficult to live within. The ‘09 Budget is better for us than having a yearlong continuing resolution.

WebTA and ARS – The WebTA will start in PP10. The goal for the Activity Reporting System will start to be implemented PP12 with everyone on ARS by 10-01-09. A new central data warehouse will be completed by 2010. We need data on where work is being performed and how much work is being performed to align employees with work.

County Office Position Review – HRD has completed their report on the field reviews of county office positions. Their report and recommendations have been submitted to management. Management will provide decisions on the recommendations to NASCOE by the NASCOE/FSA Negotiating session April 21-22. PT’s in general still classify as a grade 7. Program differences have changed the knowledge required. FSA may look to expand the Lead PT position beyond shared management situations. Chief PT position mostly correct as is.

~ Assistant to CED – Issues with duplication of Mgmt. Consensus among CED’s interviewed is that this is not needed. They would rather have Chief PT.

~ District Level PT – More people interviewed seem to want this (especially DD’s, but was explained to them that this was not to be an assistant to the DD). The primary concern is Supervision. They are considering attaching this position to the state office because of the ‘program’ responsibilities. HRD is recommending a work group be brought in on how to handle this situation.

~ Operations Coordinator – HRD did not recommend this position, instead considering expanding the “Lead PT” description. That position is already relied upon by the CED; can be viewed at team leader with big sign ups.

In smaller offices PT’s are more ‘generalists’ a little bit of everything. Lead and Chief PT’s are still relevant and suit the needs, but could also use some updates. These would be for larger offices.

****Baselines and Skill Sets have changed across the board in Government work; not necessarily a classification issue for PT’s.***

Performance Rating Changes – One state reported 24 Performance Ratings being changed after they were considered final by the rater, reviewer, and employee. Ratings were changed by the outgoing SED. The 24 individuals were given an opportunity to provide documentation to support the original rating. WDC reviewed the original information and additional information provided and rated the individuals accordingly. Some received the original rating while others were rated one step lower than the original rating. The next step for any individual that was not satisfied with the WDC review would be to file a grievance 22-PM, Part 10.5. It is against the written policy for a rating to be changed after it is finalized. Everyone agreed that this is the most egregious example of policy not being followed. Bonnie’s opinion –This is one instance of policy not being followed or enforced which makes the Performance Plan Rating/Awards system difficult to support from an employee standpoint.

HRD and Performance Management – HRD handles performance work for FSA, FAS, and RMA. The performance and award handbook has been written and is in clearance. It should be out later this year. As of now the only requirement built into EmPowHR is to notify an employee when the performance plan is established. Any changes to the plan after established should be communicated to employee by the supervisor. The task working group on performance and awards is viewed as a permanent group and has been helpful in identifying problems and improvement needs. A notice has been sent which puts a deadline on getting 2008 awards out to recipients. This notice also encourages states to announce a list (names only) of those employees earning awards.

Staffing – Temps - Enough additional money has been found to fund 200 Temp FTE’s. Since half the year is over this computes to 400 FTE’s for second half of FY. About 190’s FTE’s are needed to cover COC’s time.

WDC Attendance at State Conventions - The Acting Administrator and Acting DAFO have given a great deal of consideration to the requests from the field for attendance at various association meetings and the Agency’s current budget situation. It has been decided that headquarter representatives will attend this year’s NASCOE Rallies, but not individual State Conventions. Brad Karmen and Bob Stephenson will be attending the Midwest Rally and Dennis Taitano and Candy Thompson recently returned from the Far West Rally. HQ representatives will also attend the upcoming NE Rally.

WDC Appointments – Under Secretaries and some other nominations have been announced. Once the undersecretaries have been confirmed the other appointments may go quickly. Some think the SED's will be announced by mid-April.

Deputy Administrator for Management – We will be getting VTC (video teleconferencing) for all STO's; this will increase face to face communications and reduce travel budget. Currently all STO's with an RD also in the building, have this located in the RD conference room (30). The remaining 21 STO's without RD will be getting there own VTC also. This is a way to "Work Smarter". This is a transformation of better quality of support; breaking down geography barriers, etc.

Human Capital Council – Knowledge Bank is running the recruiting for 'new leadership'

New HRD – support Human Capitol Council and also new 'HR team'

~with NASCOE engagement through an adjunct of some sort would again be able to create better communication and involvement in solutions.

Configuration Control Board – FSA is the lead.

MIDAS - Stimulus money of \$50 million with \$19 million for MIDAS and balance for stabilization of our computer system. Price Support will be first area to be worked on within MIDAS. Laura Schlotte will be working in this area. Employees from the field will be used to help develop different pieces of MIDAS. Those with vision and open to change! NASCOE will assist with identifying those employees. The new acreage reporting system CARS will also be developed within MIDAS.

Requirements/Development/Acquisition (next 6 months the hope is for MIDAS to progress from identifying Requirements to Acquisition.

Lots of misperception of what MIDAS actually is; need to focus more on improved Communication and team building, so the project is supported by the field.



NASCOE Now; Awards, Scholarships and Emblems, April 9, 2009

*** I am so close to being able to tell you who your Distinguished Service Award Winners and Scholarship Winners are for each Area, but I have to hold off until everyone has been properly notified!**

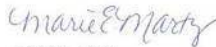
- Speaking about the NASCOE Scholarships, here is a wonderful “Thank you” note from one of your NASCOE Member Scholarship winners this year! Enjoy!**

March 17, 2009

Dear NASCOE:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for selecting me as the 2009 NASCOE/JM Marketing Midwest Area Scholarship recipient. I graciously accept this award and appreciate the support of NASCOE and JM Marketing in my quest to obtain my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,



Marie E. Marty
Wayne County, Ohio



*** State Awards Chairpersons: Just another reminder to please ask your County Offices to get you the list of names of persons that have reached one of the Sick Leave milestones (1,000, 1,500, 2,000, 2,500 3,000, 3,500 or more hours) and get their names and hours of sick leave to your Area Awards Chairperson. I**

realize that most States will be holding their conventions this spring, so plan ahead, as it may take a week or so to get the certificates to you. Thank you to all of you that responded to my request in the last edition of NASCOE Now! Over 50 Sick Leave Certificates and four plaques for the 3,000 plus club were ordered and have been sent out over the past two weeks! Keep those requests coming, as every interval is a great accomplishment when reached!

**** Here is some great news from the NASCOE Store! You can get great discounts on the remaining USDA-FSA logo items, and shop for your new convention attire with the new logo! New Items and deals are being added all the time. Keep clicking and shopping for the best in FSA/NASCOE apparel!***

Be the first in your State to adorn the new FSA Logo! You'll look like a million bucks at a fraction of the cost! Also, please remember that each time you purchase items from the NASCOE Store, a generous commission is paid directly to the NASCOE Scholarship fund! Happy shopping!

New Category for you ladies. BUY ONE! GET ONE FREE! Check it out at www.nascoeemblemsonline.com . Limited Inventory on these items.

Take care everyone, and please let me or your Area Chairpersons know if you have any questions about the NASCOE Awards, Scholarships or Emblems programs!

Tom Oasen, NASCOE Awards, Scholarship and Emblems Chairperson

***Happy
Easter***

Southwest Area Report

By Kevin Dale SWA Alternate Exec

The 2009 Far West Rally was held in Reno Nevada on March 26th – 28th, 2009 at the Grand Sierra Casino & Hotel. The Rally was hosted by the Southwest Area with the Northwest Area also in attendance. On Thursday afternoon the group embarked on a tour of Virginia City. A tour bus loaded down with over 50 NASCOE members visited the historic city of “the famous Bonanza Western program”, and the city where the Comstock Load Gold Mine was discovered. A great time was reported by all in attendance.

Friday was the day of general session. Approximately 75 persons attended the conference including spouses, speakers, and members. The Wooster High School all female Color Guard opened the conference with the posting of the flags. Keith Whiteneck led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance; Paula Reed sang the National Anthem and Kevin Dale provided the Invocation.

Cindy Peterson, Northwest Exec. provided a welcome to everyone attending. Reno Mayor Cashell, along with Betty Hodick our Nevada President and Lesalee Miles our California President also provided opening comments. Nevada Acting SED Gus Wegren then provided a lot of agriculture information on the state of Nevada and the Nevada FSA.

Jim Mace, CEO of J.M. Marketing then gave a presentation on the benefits available to NASCOE thru J.M. Marketing. Mr. Mace also provided an open season for a new life insurance product being offered for those attending the conference. After Mr. Mace concluded a break sponsored by the California Association was enjoyed by all.

Dennis Taitano, Acting Administrator then spoke after the break. Mr. Taitano began his comments by telling us that FSA is still viewed in Washington D.C. as the “Can Do” Agency. Mr. Taitano reported that the 2009 budget was 28.38 Billion for FSA with 1.58 million in S & E and the remainder in program payments, loans etc. A total of 1.7 million producers participate in our annual programs. Mr. Taitano indicated 2.6% more funds were provided in 2009 as compared to 2008. However, with COLA’s and the increased cost of doing business the budget will be tight. The budget did provide for 650 base temporary employees and 400 Farm Bill temporary employees. Finally, Mr. Taitano discussed the recent Under Secretary Nominee for FAS, Jim Miller formerly active in the National Farmers Union and Wheat Growers Association.

Candace Thompson, the Acting Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs followed Mr. Taitano. Ms. Thompson discussed a host of Farm Bill related topics as described below.

#1 – 902’s have been revised

#2 – ACRE signup is expected to begin the end of April

#3 – Both the DCP and ACRE signup will be extended

#4 – LFP & LIP signup should begin in mid July

#5 – FSFL programs will begin in mid summer.

#6 – CRP extensions are very unlikely or at least very little will be extended. No General signup will be held in FY 2009.

#7 – The IRS form for AGI compliance is an issue from “The White House” and we have no control over requiring the IRS form. This is being required by the IRS and OMB.

#8 – BCAP (Biomass Crop Assistance Program) will begin in 2010 if the environmental assessment Impact study is completed.

Bonnie Heinzman, NASCOE President followed Ms. Thompson. Bonnie discussed the recent Legislative Conference and the items that were addressed with Congress: Modernization, Animal ID, Benefits. Bonnie reported that the new Activity reporting system is scheduled to be released on October 1st and that 21 states will soon be getting video conferencing equipment for training purposes. Bonnie discussed the review of PT’s for potential PT upgrades and indicated a final decision should be announced by the National office by the end of April.

Paul Lehman, the Public Affairs officer for the Far West states then concluded the morning session. Mr. Lehman discussed operation within FSA to promote our brand and our jobs. A total of 5 new public affairs regional directors are located throughout the U.S. with Mr. Lehman and Brenda Carlton who is in Texas serving the Southwest Area.

During the Afternoon session a Q & A Session was held. The following participants were included in the panel: Dennis Taitano, Candace Thompson, Paul Lehman, Bonnie Heinzman, and Stephen Crisp.

Following the Q & A Session Stephen Crisp made a presentation on Performance Management and Awards. During this presentation and during the Q & A Session Mr. Crisp made the following points.

#1 – The performance review process must have good communication for it to be successful.

#2 – Both the reviewer and the person being reviewed have responsibilities for making the program a success.

#3 – The final review should be a formality if proper evaluation and feedback occur throughout the year.

#4 – The cookie cutter approach should not be used. Each performance plan should be unique to the individual and include attainable goals.

#5 – If a plan has goals that are impossible to be met at the Outstanding or Superior level, the plan is not a viable plan. Every person should have a plan in place that would enable them to obtain an Outstanding or Superior evaluation if they perform at that level.

#6 – Plans should never be changed by the employee’s supervisor without the person being notified of the change.

#7 – The final reviewer should very, very rarely change a plan as approved except in unique circumstances where documentation is provided that would override the final review.

Listed below were two very contentious questions that were addressed by Mr. Crisp.

- Q) Can an SED or the DD change the COC's review rating? Yes in rare circumstance where written documentation would suggest the rating to be in error the plan could be changed. However, the person being reviewed as well as the COC should always be notified of the change and the reasons for the change.

- Q) If a county has very little if any minority population would it be acceptable for a DD to never allow a Superior rating on the outreach component of the plan? Absolutely not! Every plan must have components that can be met. In the case mentioned a Superior rating on outreach might be reached if the person was very involved in community activities and went over and above the normal job requirements to showcase the FSA.

The day was wrapped up and dismissed at 3:30 P.M. for a Wine & Cheese Social Hour and Awards Banquet which followed.

On Saturday morning the Area's had breakout sessions and then returned to general session at 10:30 A.M.

Paula Reed provided an update on the legislative conference. This update included discussion on the three main topics of the conference: Modernization, Animal ID & Benefits. Ms. Reed reported that the PAC has approximately \$14,000 per year of payroll withholdings coming in.

Finally, Dennis Kuhlengel, NAFEC President spoke to conclude the meeting. Mr. Kuhlengel discussed the legislative conference and their meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture. NAFEC identified the following items as priority:

#1 – IT Issues

#2 – FSA & Crop Insurance duplication

#3 – The need for One Stop Shopping

#4 – FSA Administration of Conservation

The 2009 Far West Rally concluded at 11:30 A.M.