

NASCOE Now

September 10, 2009

Dear NASCOE Members and Friends,

In my first message to you as your NASCOE President, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to serve and represent you. We just recently celebrated the 50 year anniversary of this organization. Now is the time to look forward to the next 50 year journey. As you all know a journey begins one step at a time. This is the first step to the first year in that journey.

We will face many challenges as we move forward. The most common and reoccurring challenge is resources, adequate resources. Resources mean many different things, budget, staffing, IT system, software, etc. Budget dollars will continue to be limited and have a direct effect on most of those resources we need to perform our job.

Some of you have experienced a new training method this past week, web based training. And yes, there were some glitches that need to be addressed by the National Office. NASCOE communicated with the national office during this training session pointing out some issues needing addressed. I'm sure limited budget was a large factor in deciding to delivery training to the field using this method. Is it better than AgLearn, a telephone conference call, or an e-mail with a power point attached? Probably. Is it less effective than face-to-face training? Probably. Is it to soon to judge this new process? Probably.

As I said, there will be challenges as we move forward. But the main focus is to keep moving forward while we, NASCOE, address these challenges, keeping our mission in mind, "to improve the welfare of county office employees".

Bless you all for what you do.

Myron Stroup
NASCOE President



Dear NASCOE,

Thank you and NASCOE for your gracious hospitality at the celebration. I was so humbled to be invited to be a part of that occasion. And I was so heartened to see the family like atmosphere permeating the gathering. It was so like the beginning of my time as an employee of the USDA, the feeling, largely promoted by Clyde was that we were all part of a family with common interests and goals. I only wish that we could bottle that attitude and wash the employees and committee members with it as well.

It was great to meet you. I want to wish you continued success and a joyful retirement when that time comes.

Please express my appreciation to the rest of the leadership of NASCOE. It was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Thanks again

Harry McGhin



Harry and Peggy enjoying the dance.

Harry and Peggy with the Florida Delegation.



EMPLOYEE BENEFITS LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Reported by Tony Augustine

In January, our legislative team identified our priorities for the legislative year to be addressed with Congress. Among the items were the benefit issues of sick leave credit for FERS employees upon retirement; extending health insurance coverage for dependent children to age 25; eliminating the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO); increasing the government's contribution for health care; and preventing any change in retirement annuity calculation from a high 3 to high 5 years of salary.

NASCOE headed to WDC for the legislative conference in March, with a Benefits paper requesting FERS Sick Leave Credit (HR-958), eliminating the WEP and GPO (HR-235); extending health insurance coverage for dependents through age 25; requesting a self plus one option allowing employees to have affordable insurance without paying additional premiums for a family plan; and allowing retirees to use pretax dollars to pay health care premiums (HR-1203). All of the bills currently are in committee with no action except the FERS sick leave bill.

For many of our benefit issues, the best opportunity to get the issue passed into law is to get it included as an amendment into a viable bill that is likely to pass both the House and Senate and be signed into law. It seemed the FERS Sick Leave provisions might get through in this way.

The FERS Sick Leave provisions were incorporated into HR-1804 which was added as part of HR-1256, Family Smoking & Prevention & Tobacco Control Act. It passed the House but was subsequently stripped from the legislation in the Senate as not germane to the Tobacco bill. Shortly afterward, the Sick Leave provisions were included through (HR-2990) which was added to the Disabled Military Retiree Relief Act of 2009 (HR-2647). Again, the legislation passed the House, but the FERS Sick Leave provisions were not included in the final Senate version (S-1309) due to a filibuster by a Senator stating it would be too costly given current economic conditions. At this time, the only opportunity remaining is if the Sick Leave provisions could be included in the final version of the legislation from conference committee negotiations between the House and Senate bill versions. Conference committee members have not yet been chosen. It will be a challenge though to get the Sick Leave provisions included due to cost of the legislation.

If in the end, the Sick Leave provisions are not included in the final legislation, NASCOE will continue to look for other opportunities to advance this and other employee benefit issues.

Publicity Contest Updates

Time flies by, doesn't it? It certainly has this past year. Seems like yesterday we were talking about the publicity contests and here we are again...talking about it now.

NASCOE is blessed with many talented folks and it is evident when you read some of the fantastic articles published in the state newsletters. Also, the state publicity people who put together your newsletters need to submit their hard work. Collecting information and publishing it for the state takes a great deal of time and dedication. So be sure to submit deserving items for the NASCOE publicity contest.

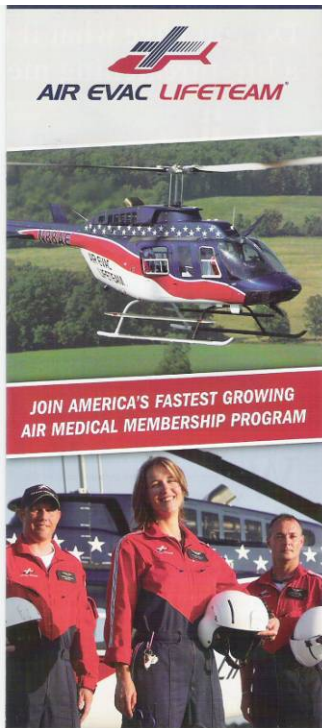
Publicity award categories are: Best Newsletter; Best Website; Best Single Issue; Best Feature Story – Humor; and Best Feature Story – Human Interest.

Here is a summary of some of the publicity contest rules:

- Contest year is January 1 through December 31.
- Website entries must be in existence on January 1 of the contest year.
- The state must publish at least three (3) issues of their newsletter during the contest year for eligibility in the Best Newsletter category. Best Single Issue, Best Feature Story – Humor and Best Feature Story – Human Interest participants are **NOT** subject to this requirement. Articles published on websites are eligible to compete. Since websites may change prior to the date of judging, website articles must be submitted in printed form to judges for consideration.
- Area Judges must receive contest entries by **January 21-this will be here before you know it!**
- Contest participants must be serving, or have served, under the permanent appointment in a county office and must be members, either regular or associate, in good standing, in NASCOE. Employees serving under a temporary appointment are eligible to participate in the contests providing they meet the membership requirements.
- Feature articles must show identification of author (name and county) and position held in the county office.
- Webmasters are reminded to keep their websites current. **Old news is not necessarily good news!**

Be sure to get your newsletters and articles to the judges. The Midwest Area judges will be posted to the Midwest Area Website at www.nascoemidwestarea.org

*Respectfully submitted,
Deb Esselman
Midwest Area Chairperson*



NASCOE MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS!

The latest benefit to assist our members better their lives and the lives of their loved ones is a discount to membership for AirEvac Lifeteam, the leading air medical membership program. AirEvac was founded to assist people living in rural communities to lessen the amount of time to reach an advanced medical facility after a traumatic injury. Time is of the essence after a heart attack, stroke, head injury, spinal injury

Annual membership fees for NASCOE Members

- \$40 per single member household
- \$45 per two member household
- \$50 per three or more member household

Air Evac is not insurance and does not cover costs of other air ambulance providers. Air Evac will work on your behalf with your benefits provider to secure payment for your flight. Whatever your benefits provider pays will be considered payment-in-full for your flight no matter how many times a year you use the service for a critical medical emergency. To enroll, call 1-800-793-0010 to obtain an application. Contact Jenni Blandford, Benefits Chair for the discount coupon prior to submitting your application.



Recently, I have received calls from members asking about a one time fee being charged by AT&T for discounts. I contacted an AT&T representative who informed me that AT&T started this practice about 2 months ago. If the NASCOE discount is requested within 30 days of enrolling or updating a plan, the fee will not be charged. If the discount is requested after that 30 period of time, the fee will be billed to your account. This applies to all discounts offered to AT&T customers not just NASCOE membership.

NASCOE Awards, Scholarships and Emblems News You Can Use!

Hello everyone!

I hope you are enjoying this edition of NASCOE Now! In this edition, I want to remind you of the most pressing Awards and Scholarship deadlines. All of this information and the application forms are available on the NASCOE web site (www.nascoe.org). If you need help with any of the forms, please feel free to contact your State Chairperson or NASCOE Area Chairperson. They are highly trained, and ready to assist you in any way possible!

School has started! Not only for our children, but for those of you that are busting your tails at work, home and taking adult education classes to further your career, do we have a deal for you! This year marks the third year of the ***NASCOE Members Scholarship Program***. This scholarship program is set up specifically for NASCOE Members who are enrolled in adult education courses to further enhance their careers with FSA. ***JM Marketing*** has generously donated \$800.00 towards this scholarship awards program! NASCOE will award one deserving individual in each Area with a \$200.00 scholarship award! Please consider taking a few minutes from your studies and complete the nomination form to compete for the award! The deadline to submit the scholarship application to your Area Chairperson is January 15, 2010. ***Important!*** If you are currently enrolled in the 2009 Fall semester and may not go back until next Fall, you can still submit your nomination form and be eligible to win!

NASCOE MEMBERS SCHOLARSHIP

January 15	Deadline for applications to reach the Area Chairperson
February 1	Deadline for Area selections to be completed.
February 5	Deadline for Area Chairs to notify the Area winners

The following awards have no deadlines to adhere to! These awards are NASCOE's way of celebrating in the achievements of the persons nominated! Please make sure and nominate deserving individuals so that they may be recognized. All of the information you need is at your finger tips on the NASCOE web site under the Awards page (www.nascoe.org) .

PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AWARDS

These Awards can be submitted throughout the year to the respective State Awards Chair. THERE ARE NO DEADLINES!!!!

SICK LEAVE AWARDS

These Awards shall be submitted at the various levels of recognition. THERE ARE NO DEADLINES!!!!

EXTRA MILE AWARD

These Awards can be submitted throughout the year to the respective State Awards Chair, then to the Area Awards Chair, then to the National Chair who will issue the certificates.

THERE ARE NO DEADLINES!!!! THERE IS NO JUDGING!!!!

Take care everyone, and remember to always make sure and share your reasons for becoming a NASCOE Member with your fellow FSA employees! They will for ever thank you for it!

Tom Oasen, NASCOE Awards, Scholarship and Emblems Committee Chairperson

Ps: Keep an eye on the Emblems (www.nascoeemblemsonline.com) for fantastic deals! If we have any of the special edition tee shirts left after the Missouri convention, I will ask Era to put them back on the web site for sale. Also, do not forget to get your orders in for the special Swiss Army knives! I am the worlds greatest deal shopper, and for \$6.00, I have never been happier with the product and the price (steal!) I paid! Happy shopping!



Northeast Area

Patsy L. Wiles, NEA Executive

To My NE Area Family,

“Change is difficult but often essential to survival.”

I was chosen as your NE Area Executive and have been very busy since the National Convention getting oriented to NASCOE procedures and working to fill all the NEA committee and judging assignments needed for our area. I truly appreciate everyone’s eager willingness to help by volunteering and filling these positions.

Communication with folks is very limited at present for me without a personal computer, but I will be taking care of the situation soon. Then I will be doing a better job of communicating with everyone. I have scheduled a Teleconference Call near the end of September to talk and get familiar with everyone. I will be letting everyone know of the date and the tentative agenda soon.

Some of my goals as your NEA Exec are:

- Act as your liaison between the NEA states and NASCOE.
- Strive to be the best at communicating and sharing information to everyone in all ways.
- Hope to be successful at solving members concerns.
- To increase all members’ awareness to opportunities such as membership, benefits, program & negotiation submissions, helping protect FSA’s best administration of its programs, and to the awards programs.
- Hope to continue the wonderful teamwork that has been developed within the NE Area.

I am a PT in the Carroll County MD Office and have completed fourteen and one half years with the Agency. I have been a member of DMASCOE/NASCOE since day one of employment. I can not imagine not being a part of your very own employees association. It’s like a good horse without a rider.

Here are just a few notes about me. I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Frederick County, MD. My husband, Tom, and I owned and operated a Holstein dairy operation in Frederick and Carroll Counties from 1968 until just recently. The accidental death of our son, Alan, our only child, was a terrible blow to us for he was so involved in our family dairy operation. We remember Alan each year by awarding dairy scholarships in his memory to local 4-Hers. We have had lots of fun over the years collecting thousands of John Deere toys, and have made friends from all over the world from this hobby. Tom and I live on the outer limits of Thurmont, MD which is located very near to Camp David. We see the Presidents flying to and from there all the time. I am very active in my church, local homemaker group, and other community affairs.

I truly believe in NASCOE’s objectives in representing the county office employees, and hope to be a great benefit to NASCOE by the responsibilities that lie ahead of me.



Patsy Wiles
NEA Executive

NASCOE NOW
By Kevin Dale, SW Area Exec.



I was honored in Gatlinburg to be elected as the NASCOE Southwest Area Executive Committee member. For the past 21 years I have been a member of NASCOE, joining my first day of work as a COT. Since that time I have held numerous positions in my state, and in the SW area. I have been the CED in Bryan County Oklahoma for the past 15 years. My wife of almost 25 years Dianna is a PE coach at one of our elementary schools here in Durant, a fairly large rural town of about 17,000. Our two kids, Jenna and Joshua are both students at Oklahoma State University (the Ag University in Oklahoma).

We live on a small farm (beef cattle) just south of Durant, Oklahoma. Durant is the headquarters for the Choctaw Nation a very progressive and wealthy Indian tribe which was one of the original Five Civilized Tribes removed from the east to Oklahoma in the early 1800's.

Bryan County has a large number of beef cattle and is one of the top hay producing counties in the nation. We also have a variety of crops (corn, soybeans, wheat, sod grass), grown primarily along the Red River and a large number of native pecans scattered throughout the county.

As for my thoughts on life, agriculture and NASCOE, first and foremost I believe in God the creator and Jesus our redeemer, who made everything and gives each of us a little opportunity here on earth to make a difference. My family is next in line of my order of commitment. They are a true blessing. After my family, I am thankful for my career and the opportunity to serve American agriculture. Everyday I am reminded of the great benefits we so many times take for granted, and for the opportunity each of us will have to someday retire.

That brings me to NASCOE and the opportunity to serve each of you. When I began my ASCS some 21 years ago there were a lot of grade 9 and grade 10 CED's here in Oklahoma. At that time we only had about five grade 12 CED's. It was unheard of to have a PT graded higher than a grade 6 and most was grade 5's. We often look at the things NASCOE did back in the 60's and overlook what has been done more recently. In comparing just these past 21 years you will find that today, the Oklahoma FSA has no grade 9 or grade 10 CED's. In fact there are only a few grade 11 CED's and the majority are grade 12 CED's. Many PT's are now grade 7's and a few are even grade 8's. WOW, what progress NASCOE has made for each of us! These changes did not take place automatically. They came about after a tremendous amount of discussing, negotiating, and just plain old hard work by many NASCOE folks that came before me. What will the future hold? I don't know, but I sure am looking forward to being part of it and making a difference!

Kevin Dale
SWA Executive



My first time was on Rocky Top!

By Phillip Morton
Program Technician
Lane County, Oregon

Just to let you know, I'm no Hemingway, but I will try to describe my first NASCOE National Convention.

For me, the convention started when I was leaving the men's restroom in the Denver airport. As I rounded a corner I met former Oregon FSA employee Tim Gray. As I tried to say hello to Tim, I could see he had a look of pre-occupation in his eyes. I thought maybe I would wait and talk with him later. If you have had the pleasure of meeting Tim, you know that there was going to be at least one good laugh during this trip.

I never would have imagined that the icebreaker for my first NASCOE National Convention would occur at a boarding terminal in an airport. As I was preparing to board a flight to Knoxville I recognized a couple of people I met at the rally in Reno. As I said hello to them it became apparent that there were nearly a dozen NASCOE members heading to the convention on this flight. Although I have just met most of these folks for the first time, it did not take long to get the feeling that I was amongst family.

Once we landed in Knoxville Tennessee we were greeted by members of TASCOS. After we retrieved our luggage they directed us to our shuttle (air-conditioned tour bus) for the trip to Gatlinburg. During the trip to Gatlinburg I truly enjoyed the scenery. It reminded me a lot of my time spent in southern Illinois. They have these cute little mountains covered with hardwood trees, and no clear-cut's! Our shuttle delivered us to our hotel which rest atop a ridge on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains, overlooking Gatlinburg. Check in went smoothly, and I had a fantastic view from my room. I could see quite a ways up two different 'hollers'.

That evening I was privileged to meet many more NASCOE family members at several gatherings occurring in the hotel. I really must hand it to the Tennessee folks. They really go the extra mile to make a person feel welcome. Why they even had beverages in cans sporting the Oregon State Beavers team colors. Now that is hospitality at its finest! I could tell that this was going to be a special time for gathering knowledge regarding the history of both the FSA and NASCOE, and making new friends.

The next day was the start of registration and a chance to visit some of the local attractions. The Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge area is loaded with family friendly attractions. There you will find the Dollywood Amusement Park, Hillbilly Miniature Golf, a wax museum, Bubba Gump Shrimp Company, a NASCAR theme park, a Harley-Davidson shop that does not sell bikes, Fannie Farkles, and much much more. Did you know Gatlinburg even has an Aerial Tram to take you to the top of a nearby ridge, where you can look down on their version of the "Space Needle". Yep, a Space Needle, equipped with stairs all the way to the top! And pancake houses, did I tell you about the pancake houses? I may be mistaken, but I think every fifth building was a pancake restaurant; no kidding! I am not positive, but I would bet there is more maple syrup consumed in Sevier County than any other in the county in the country!

What with all of the choices, I chose to take the Great Smoky Mountain Guided Tour, on a bus. One thing I have noticed is that NASCOE folks sure like their buses.

The tour began at our wonderful Park Plaza Hotel. We boarded our bus and headed for the National Park. The entrance was only a quarter of a mile from the hotel. And did you know that the Great Smoky Mountain National Park is the only park in the National Park system which does not charge admission?

Our first stop was at the Sugarlands Visitor Center, where you get your official Smoky Mountain souvenirs. While there we viewed a short film about the park. What I learned most from that film is that the GSMNP (you work with acronyms, you can figure that one out) is the Salamander capitol of the world. Said so right there in film. There are more varieties of Salamanders in the Smokies than any place else on the planet.

After leaving the visitor center our bus took us along the Newfound Gap Road towards our final destination of the Newfound Gap. At the Newfound Gap you can stand with one foot in Tennessee and the other in North Carolina. All the while our guide provided a brief history of how the park was named as well as info on the flora and fauna of the area. From several stops we were shown why the "revenuers" had such a hard time keeping up with the bootleggers. Southeastern Tennessee, the GSMNP, and western North Carolina are extremely rugged pieces of land.

After returning to the hotel at noon, I spent the remainder of the afternoon visiting with the many NASCOE members who had arrived. And they were still coming. On Wednesday evening there was a short informational meeting for all of the Officers and Delegates followed by a Red, White, and Bluegrass cookout which was indoors due to forecasted rain and the fear of bears.

Thursday was the first day of full sessions. We met at 8:30 am with Bonnie Heinzman calling the meeting to order followed by the Invocation, Presentation of Colors by an Honor Guard, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the National Anthem. Roll call was then taken, and I'll tell you what. There were over 600 members, friends, and family in attendance for our convention. I thought that I would get here and see maybe 200 people in attendance. The place was packed!

We pressed onwards through the business of the day, breaking into our respective committees and area meetings. I won't go into the details of what was discussed, which you can find in the minutes and reports submitted from the meetings. In due time, they will be placed on the website.

On Thursday evening there was a Scholarship Auction to raise funds for the Scholarship Program. Following the auction, there was a "Night at the Oscars" contest. Attendees were encouraged to dress as their favorite Hollywood idol. I am sure that you will see some of the photos in a copy of the NASCOE Now. There were some really good entrants. Why there was a CED from Indiana who went so far as to actually cut off all of his hair just for this one evening. I won't mention his name but I did hear someone calling him "Big Daddy!"

On Friday we met for presentations from various speakers followed by a Q & A session with a group of our esteemed DC Staff. These are the folks who put their names and signatures on all of those info bulletins and notices that trickle through our lives. And they are every bit as human as the rest of us. Questions were delivered with a lot of emotion. You may not believe it, but some of our fellow FSA employees take their jobs and the service they provide very, very seriously. That afternoon was spent in our respective area and committee meetings. That is where I was "presented with the opportunity" to write this article on my first NASCOE National Convention. Thanks "Big Daddy".

Friday evening we were treated to a “Smokey Mountain Sunset” picnic in the park sponsored by Texas and North Carolina. Guess how we got to the park? Yep, buses. Only these were the short type used for small school sports teams and senior citizens. The picnic was followed by entertainment performed by the “Benny Wilson Band” in the Tennessee Ballroom where a large group proceeded to burn off some of the barbecue they had for dinner.

Saturday morning began with announcements and a Power Point presentation titled “In Memoriam”, a tribute to FSA employees and NASCOE members who have passed away during the past year. The remainder of the day was spent receiving reports from Officers, Executives, and Committees. After recess was called State and Area photos were taken on the lawn of the hotel where a wedding was to be held later that afternoon.

Saturday evening was the “NASCOE Gold Anniversary Celebration”. During the celebration several awards were presented for Publicity, Scholarships, Distinguished Service and more. Our newly elected Officers, Executives, and National Committee Chairs were introduced. Once again live entertainment was provided in the ballroom for all who wished to work on their wellness.

On Sunday morning following another light “southern breakfast”, I boarded another bus for the return trip to Knoxville and then my flight home. This trip featured a much more subdued group of passengers. I am sure I heard snoring! My flight was rather uneventful. Unless you count being stuck on a plane in Charlotte, NC for two hours, unable to leave, because of lightning in the area eventful. Or if you count being stuck on a plane in Denver, for just over an hour, due to lightning in the area eventful. Other than that, it was a peaceful trip home. I arrived home only thirty minutes later than scheduled, and with my luggage. I personally consider that a successful trip.

As I sit here writing this, lots of memories from the convention trickle through my mind. There is no way I can tell you everything I experienced. Not because I don’t want to tell you, but because I met so many wonderful people and had so many great conversations that I can’t remember them all. I can tell you that I met Gene Vognild who is currently the President of RASCOE. Gene is the only person who has attended each and every NASCOE National Convention since the formation of NASCOE! That’s 50 of them folks!! Having the opportunity to spend some time in his presence (he is not a God) provided me the chance to learn a great deal regarding how the FSA has evolved since the time he started his career. I had the chance to speak face-to-face with our Administrator, Jonathan Coppess; our DAFP, Brandon Willis (he used to be a Snow Cone salesman!), and several others from our National Office.

For my first convention I must admit that it was a doozy. I would like to say that I enjoyed myself but that would be an understatement. I feel more connected to the work I do back in the CO because now I have first hand information to help me better understand the information sent to us in the form of Notices and Info Bulletins. I have heard some of what the future holds for the FSA. Now I can’t wait for our next convention. I have so many conversations to continue and so many more friends to meet!



National Association of FSA County Office Employees

*Celebrating 50 Years of Serving American Agriculture
1959-2009*