



# National Association of FSA County Office Employees Southeast Area

Southeast Area Executive: Donny Green, Tennessee  
Southeast Area Alternate Executive: Neil Burnette, North Carolina

Programs/Negotiations: Sarah Houin, Alabama  
Legislative: Lindsey New, Kentucky  
Publicity: Sammie Jo Lawless, Georgia  
Membership: Sarah Smith, Tennessee

Benefits/Emblems: Nancy Chlapecka, Arkansas  
Scholarship/Awards: Amy Blum, South Carolina  
COAC: Charla Brannon, Tennessee

## Southeast Area Executive 2023 NASCOE Convention Exit Report August 5, 2023

As I close out my last few weeks in my position as the Southeast Area Executive, I want to thank the Southeast Area (SEA) states for giving me the opportunity to serve and represent. It is so humbling to look back at all the work prior leaders have done to get NASCOE to the point it is today. It renewed my spirit to come across a vital piece of NASCOE History- "History of NASCOE 1959-1984" written by Mrs. Mildred Enyart Scarborough (retired KY Program Assistant and CED) in 1984. Mrs. Mildred was the first ever female SEA Executive and was among the elite group of NASCOE pioneers who blazed a trail promoting the welfare of county office employees. As I read through the years of NASCOE history, it reminded me why we do what we do. It's all about service to something larger than ourselves. I hope I have been a small part of leaving NASCOE better than I found it.

Neil and I want to express our sincere thanks to our awesome team of SEA committee chairpersons and judges:

Programs/Negotiations: Sarah Houin, Alabama  
Benefits/Emblems: Nancy Chlapecka, Arkansas  
Legislative: Lindsey New, Kentucky  
Scholarships/Awards: Amy Blum, South Carolina  
Publicity: Sammie Jo Lawless, Georgia  
County Office Advocacy: Charla Brannon, Tennessee  
Membership: Sarah Smith, Tennessee

Awards Judges: Denise Otto, Georgia      Tia Brock, Arkansas      Katelyn Bailey, Mississippi  
Scholarship Judges: Leigh Fuson, Tennessee      Beth Farmer, Alabama      Andrea Stafford, Tennessee

Our Texas Association did a fantastic job hosting the 2023 NASCOE Convention in College Station! The Southeast Area had 74 attendees present. During our Southeast Area breakout sessions, we engaged in discussions and reach decisions on several topics including:

- Membership recruitment/retention strategies and tactics,
- NASCOE benefits provider,
- Proposed amendment to NASCOE Constitution/By-Laws,
- NASCOE financial/budget status
- Promoting the county committee system while educating membership on county committee authorities; including the 2023 SEA COC System/Authorities Resolution,
- Hosting 2024 SEA Rally, and
- Area committee reports and recommendations for Awards and Scholarships Committee action.

Minutes from our Southeast Area breakout sessions are attached to this report.

If you read my Convention Entrance Report, you know expectations and accountability were the themes of my report. I believe NASCOE's leadership had a very productive week having meaningful discussions on how NASCOE must move forward to responsibly address our budget and operational challenges, making sure we can independently provide necessary services to our members. I am particularly enthused to hear discussions on how we go about adapting some of our business processes to reduce operation costs. Our farmer-elected county

committees are the foundation of NASCOE's existence and relevance. Without county committees and their authorities, there would be no county office employees. Without county office employees, there is no NASCOE. It's no secret our farmer-elected county committee system has been under attack by those who do not value grassroots level control. If you review the NASCOE Responsibilities Handbook, you will see that every person holding an area or national position is charged with *"to the greatest extent possible, ensure the county committee system is promoted; and be aware of reductions in COC authority, in procedure or in practice. All erosions in COC authority shall be elevated to the NASCOE President, Vice-president and County Office Advocacy committee chair as soon as they become apparent. All officers and committee chairs are encouraged to become NAFEC associate members and promote NAFEC membership when possible."* If we complacently stand by and watch, county committees and county office employees will soon be a thing of the past. I hope our future NASCOE leaders, along with support from our members and partners, understand that nothing about the farmer-elected county committees' role and authority is negotiable. It's our duty to do everything in our power to never let this happen on our watch.

We have several other pending issues that must continue to be on NASCOE's priority list, including: 1) county office employee pay, 2) recruitment and retention of members, 3) commitment for state association leadership development to support state membership success, 3) making sure whistleblower protection for county office (Title VII) employees is provided, 4) address the omission of FSA/NASCOE Shared Management Agreement, and all associated handbook references, in Revision 2 of Handbook 27-PM, 3) pursue engaging FPAC (Undersecretary) to be a party to the Labor-Management Agreement, 5) revamping the NASCOE Convention schedule to provide a more attendee-friendly schedule, especially for members who are newer employees and have young children, 6) conducting at least one annual state treasurer training to help acclimate new state treasurers to NASCOE's financial processes, 7) pursuing the formation of the COC SDA Voting Member Task Force, as directed by the 2021 NASCOE Resolution, and 8) making every effort to transparently communicate down to the membership grassroots level. How we respond to these challenges is up to us. The fruits of our labor will be evident.

Neil Burnette (North Carolina) was elected to serve as the Southeast Area's Executive. Dawn Ovesen (Kentucky) was elected to serve as the Southeast Area's Alternate Executive. I am excited to watch Neil and Dawn, as well as their new area team, lead the Southeast Area forward. They both are very knowledgeable, committed and driven. The Southeast Area is in good hands!

Respectfully submitted,  
Donny Green, Executive  
Southeast Area  
NASCOE