

NASCOE NOW

April 22, 2011



National Association of FSA County Office Employees

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NASCOE Publicity Contest Announcement

Dear NASCOE Members,

A BIG thank you goes to all those who participated in the NASCOE Publicity Contest. Their dedication and the hard work they have put forth in the promotion of NASCOE through publicity is to the betterment of all members. It is a commitment of their time and talents that are greatly appreciated by the Officers, Area Executives and Committee Chairs.

The judging results are now in and I am proud to announce the winners for the 2010/2011 year. As with any contest, there can be only one winner in each category but let me make it clear that all submitted newsletters, feature story articles and websites were fantastic to see and review. The scoring and judging in all areas was extremely close, a testament of the quality of the items submitted. This is a compliment to each winner.

The Winners in the Publicity Contest are:

Best Overall Newsletter Renee Boykin, South Carolina
Best Single Issue New York June 2010 Issue Ted McKay Editor
Best Website Brian Beach Iowa
Best Feature Story Human Interest Laura Briggs New York "I Want My Mommy"
Best Feature Story Humor Lorrie Dandignac New York "Because It Makes Me Laugh"

Congratulations to all the winners! And a Big THANK YOU to all of this year's participants and judges. Your time committed to NASCOE Publicity is greatly appreciated.

I look forward to seeing you at the National Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas!

Tammy Eibey
NASCOE Publicity Chairperson

Legislative Update-

Not too long ago I told Legislative Co-Chair Terry Stehr that I liked to talk so much, I could find something to write an article out of a stick of chewing gum and an old hubcap. Not too long after that, the federal deficit came to blows, the government came uncomfortably close to a forced shutdown, and it seemed like anything that we proposed during the legislative visits in March paled in terms of priority by the time April's budget showdown arrived.

Not long after that, Terry tells me that it's my turn to write the legislative article for the NASCOE Now. I literally thought about writing an article solely about a stick of chewing gum and an old hubcap...

But to put things into perspective, I think if ever there was a time to be diligent with benefit issues and respond to CAPWIZ alerts, it's now. Our last CAPWIZ alert had a very low response when compared to the critical nature, perhaps not even 50%. Our benefits, which make up a major portion of the compensation for attracting and retaining high quality employees within federal service, will continue to unjustly come under attack as a means to curtail debt spending. Budget proposals from the House already have proposed a five-year pay freeze for cost of living adjustments for Federal employees, and changes to the retirement computation system have been talked about. We have fought hard for our benefits, which are not at all out of line when compared to the private sector. For example, studies have shown that when comparing "apples to apples," skilled government workers earn less than similarly skilled private sector workers.

There IS support for the Farm Service Agency in both House and Senate- but we as NASCOE members need to continue to work to cultivate that support. During times of greatly reduced spending, we need to not only strive to gain additional duties like those we suggested during the legislative visits, but also to remind Congress that agency stands ready for the unknown; the future weather disaster, the future disease outbreak, the future commodity price crash, or the future legislation that Congress adopts. There ARE volatile factors facing both the American consumer and agricultural producer, including record-high fuel and energy costs, significantly increased food costs, a great deal of political unrest in locations across the world, a cloudy picture for dairy prices, and a complicated world economy affecting crop commodity prices. Nobody can predict the future, but our government must remember that it is wise to have the established and reliable system in place that is the Farm Service Agency and its local offices ready to deliver the inevitable reactionary programs and services to continue to promote a safe, abundant and affordable food supply. This is, after all, a staple of capitalism and can be critical to sustained economic recovery.

This isn't the first time that FSA or ASCS has been through similar budgetary or program constraints, and all know that the federal debt must be controlled for the good of our nation. However, NASCOE will not lose sight of any of the above. As the 2012 Farm Bill negotiations progress, we will work to promote our agency and our abilities. As 2012 budget negotiations progress, we will monitor and react to any attacks on employee benefits.

I think that I've preached enough of the proverbial word to satisfy Terry, and I didn't even have to use the chewing gum or the old hubcap.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Gallinger, Northeast Area Legislative Chair

Spring??



This is what Spring looks like in Northern WI on April 20, 2011. When I looked out the window and saw what Mother Nature decided to give us on this supposed spring day, I was more than a little annoyed. However, within the last week, many states experienced devastating tornadoes, and as I thought about that, I decided that I would rather shovel snow than to have to deal with my house completely destroyed.

As soon as I got to work, I became involved in a leasing discussion. RC&D is “out of the budget” and since there are 3 employees of that agency in our building, it became relevant in a hurry. What to do with their space? If they are allowed to stay in the space, they cannot use the computers and phones. IF they have grant funding, they MAY be able to work for a while. These issues directly affect the lives of the 3 employees, but also the farmers they serve. Now, what are they to do for work in an area with >15% unemployment? Again, as I mulled all this over, I said a prayer of thanks that I still have my job.

I am not trying to be the “gloom and doom” person here, but I wanted to point out that no matter what is going on in our lives, there are others who are dealing with MAJOR problems and we need to step back and be thankful. Thankful for what we DO have. And one of those things is NASCOE. What do I mean by that? Simple, NASCOE is watch-dogging all the things that Washington DC is planning for our benefits. NASCOE will be there fighting for ALL of us so that we can keep our jobs and hopefully, most of our benefits. NASCOE will be unrelenting in their efforts on our behalf. And this is something to be thankful for. So again, I ask myself, why are there employees out there that won’t join NASCOE? Why would you NOT join an association that is there to protect MY JOB????? Seems like a very logical thing to do, doesn’t it?

I have attended many conventions around our area and have seen a steady decline in participation at the state, area and national levels. What is problem? Don’t people care about their jobs? Don’t they want to protect what they have? Do you want to be on the unemployment line because you didn’t take the time to get involved or at the very least become a member of an association that would fight to protect your rights?

So, if you are not a member of NASCOE, this would be a very good time to join. If you are a member, it would also be a very good time to become more involved. After all, this association is there to protect YOUR JOB and YOUR BENEFITS, so why not stand up and work for your own job??????? We all need to be thankful that we have NASCOE to look out for us.

Be sure to check out the NASCOE website for all that is going on with YOUR ASSOCIATION at www.nascoe.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Esselman

NASOE webmaster



February



March



April



Awards, Scholarships & Emblems

www.nascoeemblemsonline.com

The NASCOE Scholarship Area Winners have been determined and have been sent on for National Judging. Due to the large volume of applications, I apologize that we cannot send letters to all of the applicants letting them know that they were not selected as the Area winners. In my heart, I wish we could award each and every one of them the NASCOE Scholarship as they are all so deserving! On behalf of the entire Scholarship committee, we wish all of our future leaders the best in their sought after careers!

Your 2011 NASCOE Scholarship Area winners are:

Kevin Holck, son of David Holck, Regional Director in NY is our \$1,500 winner from the Northeast Area.

Amber Reynolds, daughter of Joanne Reynolds, PT in WI is our \$1,500 winner from the Midwest Area.

Renita Goetz, daughter of Eleanor Goetz, Lead PT in SD is our \$1,500 winner from the Northwest Area.

Seth Toft, son of Brenda Toft, PT in CO is our \$1,500 winner from the Southwest Area.

Elizabeth A. Quick, daughter of DeLaine Quick, PT in GA is our \$1,500 winner from the Southeast Area.

Each of the Area winners have been directed to provide a 5 X 7 photo that will be displayed in Corpus Christy during the NASCOE Convention.

One of these over achievers will be announced as our national winner as soon as the judges complete their scoring. We wish them the best of luck!

Emblems Notes:

Attention SED's, CED's and DD's!

Administrative Professionals Day is April 27th! Not sure what to do to show your appreciation for the people that give 100% of themselves each and every day to make you a shining star? Here is the perfect gift and you can get it NOW! Just visit www.nascoeemblemsonline.com and purchase gift cards for your Administrative Professionals. Print off your confirmation and they will be ready to go shopping and buy the much deserved gift they will love (and thank you for your generosity every time they use it)! But wait there's more! With your generosity, you are also helping support the NASCOE Scholarship program as 100% of the commissions go to fund the \$10,000 we award in Scholarships each year!

Awards notes:

I have Certificate of Appreciation and Extra Mile Certificates signed our NASCOE President and Secretary so I can get these to you as soon as you need them. If you have an upcoming event, and need them as soon as possible please let me know (oasen@charter.net).

Sick Leave Certificates: I have the official copies with me and all I need is for you to complete the spreadsheet on the NASCOE web site (www.nascoe.org) and let me know where you want me to mail them to. Your State President and Secretary/Treasurer will need to sign these. Email me if you have any questions.

DSA Awards:

Soon you will know who all of our 2011 Distinguished Service Award winners are! I cannot wait to officially notify our winners and invite them to Corpus Christy, TX to enjoy each and every moment of the NASCOE Convention!

Tom Oasen, NASCOE ASE Chairperson

NASCOE CONVENTION AUGUST 11-13, 2011 CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

As some of you may know, there has been some confusion pertaining to people making reservations and receiving the correct room rate at the Omni. Hopefully better communication will avoid any further concerns.

When you 1st call to make reservations:

- * **MAKE SURE** you let them know you are with the "NASCOE" group
- * Then, ask to be signed into the **Select Guest Program** (if not already signed into that program).
- * Then, make your reservation

This way, if your roommate is your spouse, you will receive the \$87 room rate. A booking note has been added to the reservation system to ask if they are traveling with a spouse, so this should cover that situation. If you do not tell Reservations that you are Select Guest Program member or you do not say the 2nd person is a spouse, then you will receive the \$129 rate.

Should they NOT honor this, go ahead and make your reservation and notify either Herb Sorley @herb.sorley@tx.usda.gov OR Penny Kelton @penny.kelton@tx.usda.gov and we will contact our contact person at the Omni Bayfront in Corpus to take care of the situation.

If you have not sent in your Registration forms yet PLEASE get those in! The registration fees start at \$30 before June 15, 2011 - then they go up to \$35 after July 1, 2011 and then \$40 after July 15, 2011!

For those of you who are flying into **Corpus Christi International Airport** - on the Registration form there is a place for you to fill out your flight information. Please include this because there will be **FREE SHUTTLE SERVICE** provided by TASCOC and Omni Bayfront Hotel.

TASCOC is excited about being host for the 2011 NASCOE Convention! Get ready for a GREAT BIG TEXAS TIME in beautiful Corpus Christi Texas.



Benefits Watch

Stick to Your Plan: **Ways to Save**

April is Financial Literacy Month, which means that now might be a good time to think about your TSP savings. Saving for retirement sounds daunting, but finding the money might be easier than you think. It's important to remember that even small contributions can add up to big savings thanks to [compound interest](#).

Here are some simple ways to save a few dollars every day – and an idea of how that money can grow over the years.

If Every Day, You Saved the Cost of...	You'd Contribute...	in 10 Years	in 20 Years	in 30 Years
		You'd Have*	You'd Have*	You'd Have*
5 text messages (\$1)	\$365 per year	\$4,997	\$14,089	\$30,631
1 bottled water (\$1.50)	\$547 per year	\$7,489	\$21,114	\$45,904
1 lottery ticket (\$2)	\$730 per year	\$9,994	\$28,178	\$61,261
1 fancy coffee (\$3.50)	\$1,277 per year	\$17,483	\$49,292	\$107,164
1 dry-cleaned shirt (\$4)	\$1,460 per year	\$19,989	\$56,356	\$122,522
1 short taxi ride (\$5)	\$1,825 per year	\$24,986	\$70,444	\$153,152
1 take-out lunch (\$7)	\$2,555 per year	\$34,980	\$98,622	\$214,413

**All figures assume a 6% annual rate of return, compounded monthly.*

CANDIDACY ANNOUNCEMENTS

It is that time of year again. Announcements of persons desiring to run for any NASCOE office are due **May 15th** to the NASCOE Secretary. Please email all announcements to Annette Hyman at ahymana@aol.com. All announcements are to go to the NASCOE Secretary first. All announcements will then be posted at the same time as soon after June 1 as practical. In no way is this to be construed that announcements must be publicized in this manner as candidates may, if they so desire, initiate their own mailing. The NASCOE newsletter will not to be used for announcements of candidates. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the announcement has been correctly posted. All announcements will be forwarded to the Publicity Chair and posted at the same time. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

NASCOE's PT Career Opportunity Group Begins Work

After only getting a pilot key PT position out of all the work and time NASCOE has put into PT upgrades, the NASCOE leadership felt it was necessary to take a fresh approach and formed a 9-member PT opportunity work group. The group consists of PTs representing each of NASCOE's five areas along with two at-large representatives (see the enclosed picture) and the NASCOE President and Vice President.



The group met the weekend of April 9, 2011, in Kansas City to begin the task of addressing PT career opportunity. Even before the kick-off meeting, the newly-formed group began networking with other PTs to gather ideas and feedback.

One of the group's immediate efforts will center on stabilizing and enhancing the opportunities in the key PT pilot.

This group has been tasked with keeping the PT opportunity issue in front of both FSA management and the NASCOE leadership. Next month, the group plans to present their ideas to Carolyn Cooksie and Mike Wooden who have agreed to help NASCOE with this effort. These ideas will include expanding the key PT position, improving a PT's COT opportunities, and providing PT promotion opportunity remotely through telework.

We have some very unsettled times ahead with agency funding and the challenge of maintaining the county office employee's role in administering the 2012 farm bill. Having this PT work group established and prepared to take advantage of career opportunities that develop as our agency adapts to a new farm bill will be critical.

The PT career opportunity group welcomes your suggestions.

Prepared by

John R. Lohr,

NASCOE VP

April 21, 2011

PT Opportunity Work Group



Seated L to R : Tina Labbe, ME, Star Elliott, SC, Maryann Webster, OR
Standing L to R: Tami Keller, TX, Diane O'Shea, KS, Trish Gehlhar, ND, Dawn Crum, OH