



NASCOE Now

July 22, 2011

The NASCOE convention is just around the corner. As we approach the convention, there seems to be numerous issues needing discussion time during this meeting. Of course the debate on the debt ceiling should be decided by the time we meet in Corpus Christi, TX. The outcome of this debate will affect federal workers as well as the funding available to the Agriculture Committees to negotiate the next farm bill as well as the timing of when it will be done.

It appears the funding for FY12 will be less than FY11 funding level. And we have all felt the restrictions caused by reduced funding during FY11 in our field office operations. The House has passed a FY12 funding bill but the Senate still has to complete their version. The National Office has made some pre planning decisions for FY12 by considering a 10% staff reduction. The number of persons accepted for FY11 VERA and normal attrition will reduce the reduction needed for FY12. Announcement of FY12 VERA and FY12 VSIP will be made in the near future.

This summer a task force has been working on reduction planning for FY12. The work of this group has been expanded to review the affect on field offices after staff reductions are completed. A discussion is needed during the convention about possible field office consolidations. It would be a proactive approach by this delegation to provide the NASCOE Executive Committee some general guidelines as this organization moves into the future.

The NASCOE Executive Committee has approved a study group to be used as a resource to the Executive Committee in addressing the issues ahead of this organization. This group is working at the direction of the Executive Committee to provide information to help them make the best decisions. More importantly, the upcoming convention provides the best venue for discussion and to provide direction to the Executive Committee.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Corpus Christi, TX.

Myron Stoup

NASCOE President

Legislative Ramblings

NASCOE and FSA have many challenges facing us in the FY 12 budget and the upcoming farm bill development. Your legislative team has been working on numerous topics including benefits, Jackson Lewis report and farm bill. The upcoming National Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas is going to be pivotal in laying out not only the legislative agenda but the road map for the future of NASCOE. If you are in any way considering attending the convention I would like to encourage you to do so because your input in the direction of NASCOE is sorely needed and wanted.

During the committee meetings we will be asking the delegates and members in attendance for direction on how to proceed during the next year on the following topics. If you will not be able to attend the convention please share your positions and opinions with your state delegates.

Discussion topics and issues currently facing NASCOE:

- 1) A task force of SED's is already working on a structural and organizational plan for FSA considering the budget cuts expected in FY12. All counties have already been identified as Tier 1, 2 or 3 counties. How would you suggest that NASCOE moves to address the coming plan for organization and structure? Please consider all levels of FSA not just the county office level.
- 2) We must set our priorities to pursue in the farm bill development. We would like to have your opinions of what are the most important items for the legislative team to pursue and secure for the membership of NASCOE.
- 3) Employees are the life blood of FSA and NASCOE. We have some response from areas that certain levels of employee cuts are acceptable. What is your opinion as it relates to the reduction in the number of FSA employees? Should we be pushing for more early outs and buy outs or trying to maintain as many mission critical county office employees as possible?
- 4) I don't have to tell you that federal employee benefits are under legislative attack from all angles. What are the highest priorities to protect as we try to fight the continued onslaught of bills introduced to slash our benefits?
- 5) The County Committee System has long been the bedrock on which FSA has been founded. The authorities of the county committee system are continually trying to be eroded away. How is the best way to continue to support the county committee structure and the NAFEC organization?
- 6) The reputation of an agency and its employees is of the utmost importance. Recently our agency has been accused of numerous issues through Jackson Lewis Report and improper payment reports. How would you suggest NASCOE respond to these accusations and provide better public relations to tell the true story about Farm Service Agency?

Submitted by Mike Mayfield and Terry Stehr

Final Reminder before the NASCOE Convention!

IMPORTANT: NASCOE's \$10,000 in Traditional Scholarships and \$1,000 for the NASCOE Members Continuing Education Scholarships are funded solely by your contributions to the NASCOE Scholarship Auction (and the generosity of the bidders!), Donations from Jim and Teresa Mace and all of the wonderful folks at JM Marketing, commissions from Emblems sales, and from donations to the NASCOE Memorial Scholarship Fund:

Your contributions are so important, so please get your scholarship auction item(s) ready to ship or bring with you from your State (i.e Something Special from Wisconsin could be cheese or the famous "Chocolate Cow Pie"!, from Vermont it could be Maple Syrup, from Arizona could be pottery, etc – Toy tractors, pictures, non-taxed beverages, sports items, quilts, decorative shelves, crystal, collectables, etc, are also very popular with the crowd for the auction to be held on Thursday night of the convention. From what I have been told, we will have a fantastic auctioneer and staff to make the auction a blast and hopefully break last years records in sales for the Scholarship program! We have a secure room at the hotel for you to ship your items to if you will be flying in and cannot carry your items with you (or if you will not be able to attend the convention and would like to donate auction items). We will also have computers available for you to use to arrange to ship your new keepsakes home. The shipping address for the hotel is:

Omni Bayfront Hotel

Attention: Tom Oasen – NASCOE Scholarship Auction Item

900 N Shoreline Boulevard

Corpus Christi, TX 78401

The next page has the Auction Item sheet that you can send/bring with your NASCOE Scholarship items.

Thank you all so much for your generosity and I hope to see you in Corpus Christi, Texas in August!

Take care everyone and I hope you get through with crop reporting without a long register!

Tom Oasen

Tom Oasen, NASCOE Awards, Scholarship, and Emblems Committee Chairperson



NASCOE – 2011 SCHOLARSHIP AUCTION

Corpus Christi, Texas

August 2011

DONATED ITEM INFORMATION

Item donated by: (Business or individual) _____

Item collected by: (State & Area) _____

Description of the item: (If handmade, please note) _____

Value of the item: _____

PLEASE SUBMIT IN DUPLICATE WITH ANY ITEM!!!!!!!

Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA State and County Offices

**By: Juliet McBride, HRD
National Worklife Program Manager**

Worklife balance contributes to good health and well-being for employees and results promotes a more productive workforce. FSA supports worklife balance by providing and encouraging employees to participate in worklife programs such as wellness, employee assistance, and eldercare. Additionally, eligible employees may request use of leave programs (leave transfer and leave bank), and use of flexible work schedules to support accessing the worklife programs.

This article provides ideas for *field offices* on how to determine wellness needs in addition to suggestions on what actions to take to meet those needs. Use these suggestions to promote a rewarding worklife balance for all employees.

First and foremost, determine what each employees needs are by developing and conducting a worklife survey. Utilize responses to develop, organize, and advertise activities that meet those needs.

One way to advertise activities resulting from the survey is through an activities calendar. Develop a calendar of events and e-mail it to the employees in your field office. Ask them to get involved and make suggestions. Additionally, display the calendar on the website and in prominent locations at the workplace. The list of “wellness activities” suggestions below can be re-formatted into all inclusive questions, placing them on the survey to garner interest, utilizing them to take action. Moreover, do not wait on survey results; utilize any of these ideas right away to show your support for wellness within your state or county office.

❖ Schedule monthly or quarterly 1-hour Lunch and Learn Sessions. This is a great way to get employees together and motivated as a group. Individuals tend to be successful when participating in group activities. Invite a representative (nurse, doctor, professor, EAP counselor) to speak on hot topics (nutrition, fitness, stress management, prevention and awareness (cancer, diabetes, heart), balancing work and family, change management, and workplace conflicts. An alternative to a live presentation can be facilitated through lunch-time video presentations.

❖ For preventive health consider holding onsite health screenings such as flu vaccination, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose, bone density, etc. Employees may incur some out of pocket expenses and some of the cost may be deflected through their health benefits plan, health spending account, or flexible spending account.

Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA and RMA Field Office Employees (continued)

- ❖ Organize an Annual Health and Wellness Conference. Invite speakers and vendors. Include topics that interest employees and those that bring awareness to everyone. Focus on the leading diseases (heart, diabetes, cancer) and action steps to help prevent them.
- ❖ Order informational materials from health organizations and make information available to all employees.
- ❖ Motivate employees toward physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. Encourage them to participate in Agency fitness activities such as Federal Fitness Day and the Healthierfeds Campaign.
- ❖ Form a walking group and encourage employees to walk during lunch or another authorized time. Walk with them. Provide employees pedometers so they can keep track of their steps. Pedometers may remind all of the importance of including at least 30 minutes of physical activity into their day.
- ❖ Encourage employees to tour and obtain a membership to a fitness center. Some fitness centers, including those outside of USDA, may offer discounts rates to Government employees who pay their membership fee through payroll deduction.
- ❖ Healthy snacks and foods are essential. At staff meetings replace the chips and dips and cookies with fruit and vegetables. Ensure that the vending machine in the snack room consists of healthy snacks.
- ❖ Help employees who want to stop smoking. Coordinate with an organization such as the American Heart Association onsite Smoking Cessation Program. Allow employees time away from the office to participate in the class.
- ❖ Weight Watchers provides onsite weight management programs. This could be a great lunch period activity for employees. Lunch-period activities allow employees to fit helpful activities into their schedule when it is difficult to do so after work.
- ❖ Recognize employees who put forth great efforts in the area of health and wellness. Recognitions (examples: time off award, certificate, reimbursement) are motivators and employees appreciates this supervisory recognition.
- ❖ Form a support group for employees who are caregivers of elderly family members. This gives employees support through networking; they learn from others, and it ensures they are not alone. Ask a volunteer to facilitate a monthly meeting. Invite outside speakers to share a topic of interest. In addition, provide them elder care resources such as the Eldercare Locator (<http://www.n4a.org/programs/eldercare-locator/>) and the FFAS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 800-222-0364, TTY 888-262-7848, www.foh4you.com.

Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA and RMA Field Office Employees (continued)

❖ The EAP provides counseling and website information for parents with issues and concerns. The EAP is available 24/7 and it is free and confidential according to the law. Promote the EAP throughout the year. Information about EAP may be found in Handbook 34-PM at ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/34-pm_r00_a02.pdf

❖ Remind eligible employees about flexible options such as the leave programs (leave transfer, leave bank), and the Telework Program. These programs have proven to help employees balance work, personal, and family responsibilities. For example, an employee is scheduled to have surgery. Rather than taking leave for the entire time of recovery, the employees can telework at least part time and full time before returning to work. This provides a balance for the employee and the supervisor. Refer to Handbook 17-PM handbook for more information about these programs at ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/17-pm_r02_a06.pdf

These are just some ways to provide a rewarding balance for employees. We care about our employees and we want our Leaders to support us in encouraging and promoting worklife balance programs for our entire workforce.

As your Worklife Program Manager I am available to assist you with promoting worklife plans for your employees. Please contact me with questions, comments, or suggestions at juliet.mcbride@wdc.usda.gov or call 202-401-0683, TTY 202-205-9057.

Note: This article provides information for **Promoting Worklife Balance for FSA and RMA Field Office Employees**. Worklife balance is important and promoted for all offices. FSA County Executive Directors shall cascade their questions or comments through the State Office.

REMINDER!

Please make sure your convention registrations are sent and received prior to August 1st! The Texas Convention Committee needs to let the catering services know a number to plan for the food at the evening events!

Sea, Sun & Fun in Texas

2011 NASCOE CONVENTION

The 2011 NASCOE Convention is just a little over 2 weeks away and Texas is looking forward to treating ya'll to "Boot Scootin" good time.

If you are flying in you will be greeted at the airport by some of the finest folks around. Then you will get to experience the way Texans drive (yee haw) by the shuttle service provide by TASCOC to the hotel! From there you will find a room that you can relax your weary bones for just a little while cause that is all the time you will have. You are not going to want to miss a thang that is in store for you while in the beautiful city of Corpus Christi!

Let me mention that there will be limited number of T-shirts and if you have not pre-registered you still have a few days so don't let this slip by. It is very important to do this because we have to turn in numbers to food people, hotel staff, etc by Aug 1st.

To attend any event, whether there is a charge or not, you must pay registration fee. Only exceptions are children under 13 yrs of age and Honorary Life members. An Honorary Life member must register but does not pay registration fee; just note on form "Honorary Life Member".

TASCOC is making this convention one that you will never forget and show you some TEXAS hospitality and look forward to seeing each of you there.

For information regarding reservation availability you may call 1-800-843-6664 (1-800-The-Omni). Mention you are with NASCOE. Be sure to sign up for the Select Guest Program, BEFORE you make your reservations. Membership is complimentary and benefits are more than worth it. You can sign up for this by phone, at check-in, or online at www.omnihotels.com (Click tab "Loyalty Program")

