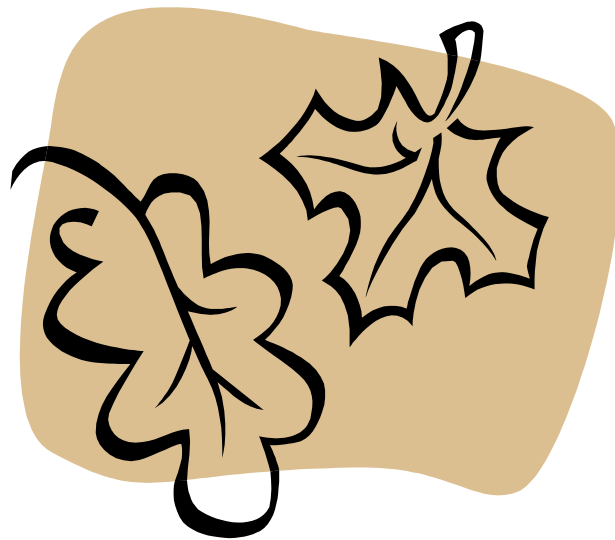


**Wisconsin**

**Association of**

**FSA County Office**

**Employees**



**Member Newsletter**  
**October, 2008**

## WASCOE OFFICERS 2008-2009

<b>President</b>	<b>V. President</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
Tom Oasen Walworth Co. FSA 225 O'Connor Dr Elkhorn, WI 53121	Deb Esselman Taylor-Price Co. FSA 925 Donald St, Rm 101 Medford, WI 54451	Linda Feldkamp Racine/Kenosha/Milwaukee FSA 1012 Vine St Union Grove, WI 53182	Mary Behm Dunn Co. FSA 390 Red Cedar St Menomonie, WI 54751

## WASCOE DIRECTORS 2008 - 2009

(1) Year left in term

(2) Years left in term

(3) Years left in term

Sally Torgerson \*  
St Croix County  
1960 8<sup>th</sup> Ave, Suite 121  
Baldwin WI 54002-0036

### AREA I

Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

Mary Behm  
Dunn County FSA  
390 Red Cedar St  
Menomonie, WI 54751

John Baird  
Crawford County  
37500 US Hwy 18, Suite 2  
Prairie du Chien, WI 53821

### AREA II

James Sullivan \*  
Richland County  
26136 Executive Ln, Suite C  
Richland Center, WI 53581

Marion Koca\*  
Juneau County  
220 La Crosse St  
Mauston, WI 53948

Tom Schneider \*  
Manitowoc County  
4319 Expo Dr  
Manitowoc WI 54221-1840

### AREA III

Randy Kunsman  
Fond du Lac County  
W6529 Forest Ave  
Fond du Lac, WI 54937-9403

Richard Johnson  
Dodge County  
451 W North St  
Juneau, WI 53039-1120

Bev Osenga  
Wood County  
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Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

### AREA IV

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Wausau, WI 54403-5451

Kim Iczkowski  
Racine/Kenosha/Milwaukee Co.  
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Union Grove WI 53182

### AREA V

Kathy Morton\*  
Rock County  
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Janesville, WI 53546 9708

Deb Schut  
Jefferson County  
134 W Rockwell St  
Jefferson, WI 53549-2089

\*Denotes Second Consecutive Term

\*\*First Full Term, Originally filled Unexpired Term

## STATE OF WISCONSIN – COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Fax: 608-329-4894  
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**Benefits:** Diana Pernsteiner  
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**Publicity:** Lynn Ann Clausing  
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**CAPWIZ** Jon Williams  
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Mauston, WI 53948  
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# WASCOE President's Report

Hello everyone!

Where has the summer gone? It seems like it was just a couple of weeks ago that Lynn Clausung was requesting that I send in my report for the WASCOE newsletter. As I'm sure it happens with all of you as it does for me, tomorrow turns into next week, and next week turns into next month! The economy is spiraling downward, but the demands on our time continues to spike at the least opportune times (for most of us this is a daily occurrence!)

Over the past year we have witnessed many changes within FSA and NASCOE/WASCOE. A new Farm Bill with many unanswered policies has been put in place and we have been charged with delivering the new programs with limited knowledge or the resources to meet the deadlines (a task I might add that we are very familiar with and we eagerly accept).

I have been explaining to Congress for over 9 years to look into the "FERS Flu", and the devastating effect it has on the rest of us that have to cover the office. A Cap Wiz alert was issued and Wisconsin WASCOE Members responded in fairly decent numbers, but we can and must do much better! I have seen the sick leave balances of many of our recent FERS retirees, and many are leaving the Federal Government with a significant number of hours of unused sick leave on the books. I have family and friends in other government agencies that tell me that sick leave is another vehicle to use to get a few more days off per year. The vast majority of FSA employees have not and never will look at sick leave as an entitlement, and will only use it if it is absolutely necessary! With that in mind, that is why I have been fighting for so many years to get some form of acknowledgement for FSA employees who are fortunate enough to have good health into retirement receive some form of benefit for their unused sick leave. I am very hopeful that the proposed bill that will provide such benefits will be signed into law in the very near future. As I learn more, I will provide updates.

Over the past year I have received many emails at home from WASCOE members and future WASCOE members that have very personal issues that they want advice with, and request help with. Most, but not all issues can be dealt with through WASCOE. I am happy to say that in most cases, the issue is resolved in a relatively short time period. However, there are certain cases that are outside of WASCOE's authority, and cannot be resolved through the Association. Fear not, as we may not always be able to resolve a situation, we can give guidance and contact information to help in almost every case. If you feel that you have tried every avenue to resolve a situation and have not received a positive resolution, please let me or any WASCOE Officer or Director know. We will do our best to help you out.

As I am sure by now most of you have heard that many FEHB plans are announcing staggering increases to our health insurance costs. This may be the best year to evaluate your current health insurance coverage, and take time to review all FEHB plans and consider switching to a plan that not only fits into your budget, but also offers you similar benefits. There are many new Consumer Driven Options available that seem scary at first. I'm not an expert by any means, but these are certainly worth looking into if you and your family are relatively healthy, and generally only go in for routine physical exams (most plans now cover one full exam per year per member).

Most build cash value, and after approximately two years in the program, you have enough money built up to cover the family deductible. It is a very lonely process researching each and every available plan. Consult with your co-workers in the USDA service center. Here is a thought that may help you through this process. If each person could take one or two FEHB policies to study and research, a group meeting could then be held to have each of you inform the others about the plans you reviewed including the costs, benefits, risks and short comings you learned about..

I currently have 38 WASCOE members on my WASCOE Members Email List. These are strictly held by me and contain only home email addresses. As issues are sent to me, I make sure and forward to the group to keep them updated on the current issues. As more and more of you connect to the internet from your new computer at home, please send me your home email address to [oasen@charter.net](mailto:oasen@charter.net) and I will get you added to the list. Communication is key to ensuring our continued success with FSA management and Congress. As many of us have heard others say over the years, "knowledge is power, and the first one to the trough always comes away fulfilled and completely satisfied!"

Also, please don't forget to take the time to read each edition of NASCOE Now. Along with that take the time to visit the NASCOE and WASCOE web sites ([www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org) and [www.wiwascoe.org](http://www.wiwascoe.org)) there is so much information available for you, from benefits, to discounts on travel, scholarship programs, award programs, special offers on NASCOE and FSA/USDA clothing items and fun accessories, just to name a few. Check the web sites out over you next lunch break and see what all is available to you as a WASCOE/NASCOE Member!

PT reclassification remains at the fore front of NASCOE. HRD has informed NASCOE that they intend to send personnel out to a wide variety of field offices throughout the country to complete desk audits to determine the complexity of the work involved in the day to day operations of Program Technicians. NASCOE has requested to be a part of a PT re-classification task force, but that request has not been granted as of today. Based on the complexity of the knowledge required to perform the technical aspects required today as a Program Technician, I am confident that the HRD representatives will be astonished at the high level of expertise and professionalism it takes to perform in today's environment as a Program Technician!

In closing, I want to thank all of the WASCOE Officers, Directors and Committee Chairpersons for their unselfish use of their personal time to ensure all of us receive each and every benefit we now have or seek in the future!

Sincerely submitted,

Tom Oasen, WASCOE President



# Awards

It is time again to start thinking about recognizing individuals who have reached accomplishments through their hard work and dedication. The following are the three award categories available through NASCOE.

***DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD*** - This program encourages recognition of NASCOE-WASCOE members who make outstanding contributions in one of three areas NASCOE; FSA-Agriculture; or Community Service.

***PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT AWARD***- There is no competition for a PI Award. These awards are to recognize eligible NASCOE members who take sufficient advantage of educational opportunities available to them. The activity must be outside the usual job requirements but have a definite relationship to our profession. Accomplishments can be through short courses, correspondence courses, seminars, group research, reading, etc. A minimum of 20 hours of instruction with an investment of personal funds (tuition, books, annual leave, transportation, etc.) are required to qualify.

***EXTRA MILE AWARD***- Members or their children who have “gone the extra mile” for their community, their church, their school, or their state, area, or national association may be nominated at anytime during the year. Any member of the Association may make a nomination. Parents may submit their children, IF they are NASCOE members. Nominations may be made at any time during the year. Members of the association who are in good standing or children of the members are eligible to receive this award.

Submitting Nominations: Additional information is available at NASCOE’s website ([www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org)) or by contacting Teresa Zimmer P. O. Box 423 Monroe WI 53566. All Award nominations are due by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009



## WASCOE Nice Job Nominations:

If you know of an individual or a group of people, such as an entire County Office, doing something a little more out of the ordinary or special, please feel free to write up just a short narration on their activities. All of these nominations get put into a special drawing to be held at our annual convention. These nominations can be submitted by e-mail directly to Teresa Zimmer.

# WASCOE DIRECTOR NEWS

Greetings from Dodge County

I am Rick Johnson, a new WASCOE director, and I work as a program technician with the Dodge County FSA Office. Our office is located in Juneau, a small Midwest town sporting a population nearing 2500 people. There are 20 more men than women residing in Juneau. That fact may explain why all my co-workers are ladies.

I'm fortunate enough to work with 5 other PT's (Anne, Fay, Janene, Nancy and Pat), along with our chipper skipper Susan, field reporter Heidi and COT Carrie. The Dodge County Office building is also the proud home to a Farm Loan Program staff, NRCS, DATCP and some down-to-earth soil scientists.

Dodge County is geographically large and diverse. Our producer's main crops are: corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa, but can vary from bluegills to gladiolas.

My FSA co-workers and I work diligently to assist Dodge County producers with the farm programs while looking out for Uncle Sam. With an overwhelming workload and looming deadlines; it requires extreme teamwork to get the job done. Because of our close working relationships and time spent together, Nancy refers to us as her "daytime family", as generally we spend more time with our-co-workers than we are able to spend with our families. Most of us have children of whom we enjoy sharing stories. They collectively range in age from teenagers to early forties. They are working and/or studying in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Georgia and the District of Columbia. They are also parents to our 15 grandchildren.

As we embark on learning and implementing a new farm bill; please have a safe, enjoyable fall and take some time to appreciate your families (real and daytime).



## **2009 SCHOLARSHIP “STUFF”**

Susan Blachowiak

### **WASCOE**

The WASCOE scholarship program is solely funded by the proceeds of our auction which is held at our spring convention. All auction items are donated by the members and their county office.

THANK YOU to the members, for taking the time to think about the scholarship process each and every year and offering a contribution. While the attendance at the 2008 banquet in Wausau was small, the money raised was enormous - \$2880.00 - a record amount for our scholarship program.

Therefore, the directors at the October meeting decided for 2009 to increase the number and amount of scholarships to be awarded. WASCOE will issue THREE scholarships, \$1500.00, \$1000.00, and \$500.00.

The application process consists of a one-page, on-line and fillable application, supporting documentation (official grade transcripts, letters of recommendation from guidance counselor/advisor), and a one page essay. The application, essay topic, and all other related information will be posted to the WASCOE website soon ([www.wiwascoe.org](http://www.wiwascoe.org)). The application deadline is February 20, 2009. Both new and previous non-winning applicants are encouraged to apply.

### **NASCOE STUDENTS**

NASCOE also awards five scholarships annually - one scholarship of \$1500.00 to each area winner. Each winner is then qualified for the national scholarship of \$2500.00. The NASCOE scholarship process is separate and unrelated to the WASCOE scholarship. Information about NASCOE can be found on their website ([www.nascoe.org](http://www.nascoe.org)) or click on the link from the WASCOE website. This deadline is also February 20, 2009. The NASCOE application requires a signature from the State Secretary (Deb Esselman-Baird) prior to submission. Completed applications for both programs should be sent to Susan Blachowiak at the Dodge County FSA office.

### **NASCOE MEMBERS**

This is the second 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 within FSA. JM Marketing has generously donated \$600.00 towards this scholarship award program. NASCOE will award one deserving individual in each area with a \$200.00 scholarship. 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 our Area Chairperson (Les Maierhofer - Illinois) is January 15, 2009. The application can be found on the NASCOE website.



## **2008 Scholarship Winners**

Kari Jo Olson - \$750.00 winner  
Tom Schambow - \$1000.00 winner