

The IASCOE Cultivator

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Your IASCOE Representation

Executive Officers

President: Jeff Pingsterhaus, Marion County

Vice President: Travis D. Eisele, Peoria County

2nd Vice President: Miranda Belcher, Macon County

Secretary: Charlene Neukomm, Ford County

Directors

D1: Abby Winter, Richland/Ashton Smith, Wayne/Edwards

D2: Brad Grotefendt, Madison/Pam Cremeens, Jefferson

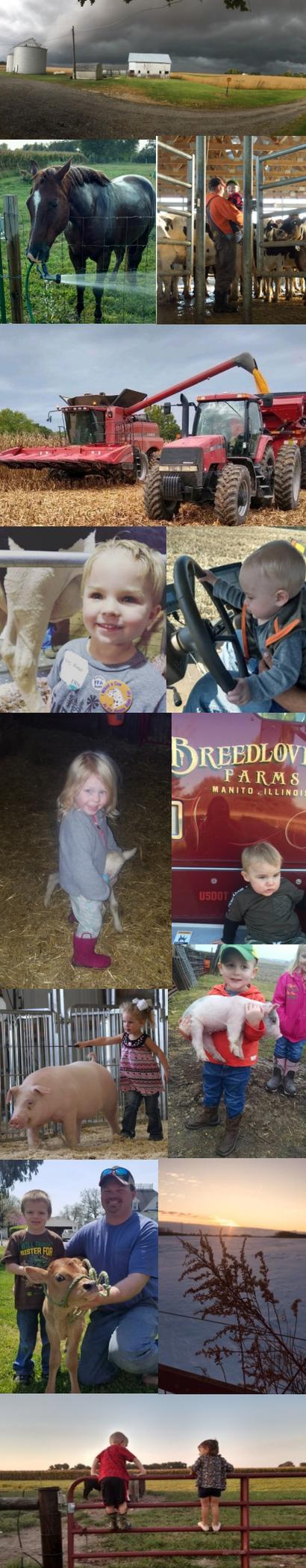
D3: John McKinney, Hamilton/Tammy Morrison, Clark

D4: Miranda Belcher, Macon/Chelsie Peddicord, Logan

D5: Rob Cline, Brown/Kim Niekamp, Brown

D6: Les Maierhofer, Kendall/ Karen Boehrnsen, Kankakee

D7: Justina Chlum, Bureau/Robin Arnold, Lee



An Interview with Our State Executive Director, William Graff

Tell us about how you got started in Agriculture, and what your farming operation looks like today.

When I was in 8th grade my father talked to my Great Uncle and he rented to me 34 acres of farmland for an FFA project. I used bean walking money to also purchase 2 bred Hampshire gilts from a neighboring purebred breeder. During High School I participated in a calf scramble, caught an Angus steer and that will come into play later.

The year I graduated from High School I picked up a little bit more ground. I decided that even though I wanted to farm full time that maybe I should further my education and attended Lincoln Land Community College. I built my first hog building. I hoped to build more but the 1980's agricultural economy stopped that. I remodeled several older buildings to help raise hogs, but I only ended up putting up the one big one. I remember paying 17 and ½ % interest on a loan. After graduating from LLCC, I decided maybe I should finish college and I enrolled at Illinois State University. That was a very wise decision.

During the 1980's we started having more hay ground on farms. We started feeding a few more cattle than we did in the 70's. Regarding the grain farming we just kind of slowly grew over the years but not to a real big size. I always thought back in high school I would farm 1000 acres and raise 10,000 head of hogs. My wife decided we either needed to get big in the hogs or get out. She did not want that many hired hands, so I said ok. She said she would tell Dad and so she drove down the road and was back in like 10 minutes. I figured it maybe did not go so well. I asked her "how did it go," her reply "he agrees with me." Soon all the hogs were gone and in 1996 we were selling corn that summer for \$4.26 to other hog producers. Did I say I married someone smarter than me?

Cattle has been a big part of your life. Can you tell us about how raising cattle has shaped who you are and who your family is today?

I grew up with a pitchfork in my hand. I wanted my kids to grow up that way also. They are better at showing cattle than I ever was/am. They know a good one from a bad one. They all have judged livestock and part of that is learning how to talk to a room full of adults when giving reasons. They have a good cow herd. What I am most proud of is all the cow/calf champions they have had. Especially the aged performance cow/calf champions. All three have had the aged performance cow/calf champion at the Illinois State Fair. A Junior National cow/calf champion. Multiple state fair breed show champion cow/calf pairs. Simmental State Preview Show cow/calf champion. Multiple other cow/calf champions. They have a really, really, good cow herd. I said that once, before didn't I? We primarily have Simmental cattle.

Tell us about your first time as a young producer at the ASCS office in Logan County?

My first experience with ASCS besides reporting acreage, which my Father always stressed we needed to do, was with the PIK program. Gerald Gerhke was the CED in Logan County. I just did what Gerald told me to do. I bid 79.9% PIK so I would be just under the maximum 80%. We had a drought in 83 and I got more corn from the government than I would have if I had planted it. I also had ground in Menard County and when I went there Jess Hill asked me if I had been to Logan yet? I said, "yes I had." His response was "good you know what you are doing, we will do it the same here then?" That was a very good decision in 83 to be 100% in PIK.

Now that you have been on both sides of the "counter", do you have any advice to provide COFs to better serve our producers during these ever-changing, challenging times that they are facing?

The best way to serve your producers is to just stay on top of stuff. Plan ahead and act accordingly. The famous quote that no plan survives first contact with the enemy, but planning is everything is so true. You can be doing something every day. Just do it, is another famous line. Managers are just that managers. So, every day, every minute you should always be thinking on how to manage your stuff better. WDC and the State Office will always be there, and you just need to manage the things you can manage and let the rest of it go. This also applies all the way down to temporaries. Do what you can in a positive way on what you can change or make better. The devil is in the details.





Jeff Pingsterhaus, Your 2019 IASCOE President

Hello, IASCOE members. As your newly elected IASCOE President, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

My name is Jeff Pingsterhaus. I have worked for FSA for over 18 years. I wouldn't consider myself a newbie (although with the speed that programs change, I feel like one someday), but also wouldn't consider myself an old timer (even if I feel like one someday). While I am currently the CED in the Marion County FSA Office, I have had the pleasure of working as CED in 2 other county offices in Illinois. I spent the first 10 years of my career working in the Calhoun County FSA Office and then 6 years in the Richland County FSA Office.



At home, I enjoy being dad to 5-year-old twins, Emma and Nolan. Along with my wife Sarah, I am quickly realizing that a 5-year old's energy seems to be never ending. With that being said, Dad is still the best job I have ever had, and I look forward to what surprises each day brings. Currently, Nolan is enjoying catching every insect he can find, and saving them for when it is warm enough to go fishing. Emma loves animals; beware to any neighborhood pet that strays near our house, they may become Emma's newest buddy! If she had her way, we would have our own zoo.

I look forward to working with you as your new IASCOE President.

Travis D. Eisele, Your 2019 IASCOE Vice President

I take it as a great honor and privilege to serve you as the Vice President in IASCOE. I would like to take a moment to introduce myself to you and then discuss the vision I have for our association going forward.

I've been married to my wife Rebecca for just shy of 18 years and I have two young boys Gideon (7) and Abraham (5). I joined IASCOE shortly after I began my FSA career and have been an active member since 2017. I am currently the CED in Peoria County and I have worked for the FSA for almost 4 years. I previously worked as a CED in Hamilton County, a COT in Piatt County and as a PT in Champaign County. I've been very fortunate to be able to travel throughout the state and meet many of you during training events or meetings. For those of you I haven't met yet, I look forward to getting to know you.



Going forward, I want to make sure that we are meeting our member's expectations. To do this I will need your input. I encourage each and every one of you to take a more active role in the association. If you haven't been actively engaged, I challenge you to become more involved. If you aren't a member, I hope you'll be receptive and consider what the association has and will continue to do on your behalf.

Yours in Service,

Travis D. Eisele
traviseisele@gmail.com

Miranda Belcher, Your 2019 IASCOE 2nd Vice President



Hello all! I grew up in Athens, IL where my family farms. I earned an associate degree from Lincoln Land Community College before completing my bachelor's degree in Political Science at the University of Illinois at Springfield. My career with the FSA began in October 2014 as a temporary technician in Mason County, and I became full-time the following February. In June 2016, I was selected into the COT program and trained in Logan County. In September 2017, I was hired as the CED in Woodford County and most recently became the CED in Macon County this past September.

I have been a member of IASCOE since February 2015 and have been very thankful to receive the benefits and the protection of our jobs that past and current members continue to fight for. As an association, I believe we are here to support, encourage and embrace all employees in the state of Illinois. As your 2nd Vice President, I intend to do just that. I truly believe in this association and am going to dedicate time to growing membership and making sure IASCOE remains a dominate player in NASCOE. My time as a director has allowed me to see how much involvement we have as a state and how much our presence in each county in IL strengthens us as a whole. Please feel free to get in touch with any of us if something arises and we look forward to serving YOU this coming year!

Charlene Nuekomm, Your 2019 IASCOE Secretary/Treasurer



Hello, I am Charlene Neukomm. My ASCS/FSA career began in 1987 as a temporary Program Assistant in the Iroquois Co ASCS office while I was enrolled as a full-time college student. My position became permanent after 2 years and I spent 27 years as a PA/PT in the Iroquois Co office, with time invested as the Conservation Advisor and as a SURE/NAP district trainer. I transferred to Ford County in 2014 and became the PT in Charge. I feel very fortunate that in 2015 I was able to become the CED in Ford County, which is the position that I hold today.

My family includes my oldest daughter, Hannah, son-in-law Nathan, 3 grandsons Noah, Maverick, and Bryson, and daughters Natalie and Lyndsey.

It is truly an honor to serve as your IASCOE Secretary-Treasurer. I receive great joy assisting the FSA employees in Illinois and look forward to working with the 2019-2020 IASCOE board.



Midwest Area Rally 2019 Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Michigan | Minnesota | Missouri | Ohio | Wisconsin

The Midwest Area Rally was held at the iHotel in Champaign, IL March 14-16. Each year the rally is rotated throughout the Midwest Area to ensure that each state has a chance to host the event. Representatives from all states were in attendance. The rally began on Thursday with the IASCOE State Board Meeting.

Thursday night we put on a hillbilly-themed Murder Mystery Dinner to welcome everyone and to start the weekend off with some fun and mischief.



Friday was a full day packed with guest speakers, scholarship winners, talks of the farm bill and what the future of USDA has to hold. We started the day with our State Executive Director, Mr. Graff, and Jim Reed, IL State Committee Chairman, opening up for the rally. We had Congressman Rodney Davis who spoke about the changes he's seeing in Washington, and how he continues fighting for producers and the employees we have here in Illinois. Peggy Browne, Deputy Administrator of Field Operations, talked about staffing and how they continue trying to improve our day-to-day operations through software updates and making processes easier for us at the county level. Coming from the State Executive Director in Oregon, she understands the frustrations we deal with and is trying to come up with solutions so that we can better serve our producers at the county level.

Pictured: Peggy Browne

Steve Peterson, Acting Associate Administrator Operations and Management, took time out of his schedule to talk about the 2018 Farm Bill and how they are planning to get

Implementation throughout the states. He mentioned the money given to implement the bill was significantly less than the previous one, but that they are moving funds around and scraping money together to ensure that we get the training and help that we desperately need in county offices. Both Peggy and Steve fielded questions from the audience and brought clarity to some issues going on throughout the country. It was refreshing to see that they cared and understood what we all are going through and that they try their very best each day to make our jobs a little easier.

We heard from Dennis Ray, NASCOE President, and Brandon Wilson, NASCOE Vice President, on what has been going on in the association and what they are working on for the coming year. NAFEC also spoke about the importance of County Committee participation, and what effect that has for us on a political level. Blue Cross Blue Shield and Dillard Financial were at the Rally to provide updates to the members of changes in our insurance and answer questions about TSP and retirement plans to those considering that next journey.



Pictured: Steve Peterson

Friday night we provided a Social Mixer for everyone attending the convention at Houlihan's Restaurant in the hotel. We had over 82 in attendance and it was a great time for people to meet up and discuss what was going on throughout their states. We don't often get to meet with the other association presidents so hearing the challenges they are facing and what they have been implementing was eye opening for us. It makes us very appreciative for the support we have in Illinois from our State Office and gives us hope that we will continue to grow and strengthen our association in Illinois. Following the Mixer was the Big 10 tailgate party.

We wrapped things up on Saturday with the Midwest Area reports, president's reports, and the upcoming National Convention. The National Convention is being held in Manhattan, Kansas July 31-August 3rd. If you are interested in going as a first time NASCOE convention attendee, there is a scholarship being awarded. You can find out more at www.kascoe.org At the end of the presentations from the Midwest Area Chairs we had time for general questions from the room. It was a great time to converse about different concerns from the States, and how NASCOE was working towards addressing these concerns. Overall, it was a very successful Rally with lots of information gathered from NASCOE, Washington DC, and IASCOE.





Left to right: Avery Plote, Lindsey Neukomm, Gavin Coombe. Not pictured: Colby Phipps

IASCOE received a total of seven scholarship applications for 2019. The IASCOE scholarship committee awarded three annual scholarships in the amount of \$500 each, as well as an additional memorial scholarship.

The recipients of the annual 2019 IASCOE Scholarship awards are as follows: Gavin Coombe, Lindsey Neukomm, and Colby Phipps.

Gavin Coombe is the son of Charla Coombe and Aaron Coombe of Douglas County. Charla is a Program Technician in the Douglas County FSA office.

Lindsey Neukomm is the daughter of Walt Neukomm and Charlene Neukomm of Iroquois County. Charlene is the CED at the Ford County FSA office.

Colby Phipps is the son of Corey and Sara Phipps of Edgar County. Sara is a Program Technician at the Douglas County FSA office.

This year, a very special scholarship was funded by generous donations in honor of Karen Russell. The award amount for this exciting scholarship totaled \$1900! Karen was a retired FSA employee who dedicated her time and talent to IASCOE as Secretary for 14 years (1991-2005). Avery Plote of LaSalle County is the recipient of the 2019 Karen Russell Memorial Scholarship. Avery is the son of Roy and Janet Plote.

To the right is a photograph of Jim Reed, IL STC Chairman, Debbie Staley, (former) IASCOE President, and Mr. William Graff, IL SED, all signing the Labor-Management Relations Agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, and the Illinois Association of FSA County Office Employees during the MWA Rally.

Background: In June 12, 1962, NASCOE was granted exclusive recognition under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to act on behalf of FSA county office employees to ensure similar rights provided to Federal employees. Under this agreement, NASCOE represents all county employees in consultations and negotiations with management of FSA and USDA. To obtain recognition at the State level, a NASCOE affiliate (IASCOE) must have membership of at least 51 percent of the county employees serving in the state.

Impact: We may not see changes every day, or be aware of what NASCOE does behind the scenes for us in Washington D.C., but they work tirelessly to continue fighting for the benefits we have and the positions we hold. In order to support NASCOE and their endeavors we must do everything we can in unity, starting at the state level. Being a member of IASCOE is not only providing support for your fellow IL FSA co-workers but it's benefiting the agency as a whole by supporting the employees at a national level. For those of you new to the agency, please ask around and see how you can become involved in IASCOE and make a change here at home and in the nation.



For additional information on the Labor-Management of Relations Agreement, please see 22-PM Exhibit 22.

Attendance, Winners, and a Special Thank You

We had 152 that registered for the convention, with 19 first time attendees. The raffle winners were \$500: Jon Williams, WI, \$250: Lorrie Wilson, Piatt County, \$100: Julie Skiles, Carroll County. Early Bird Registration \$25 Winner: Darlene Johnson, MN, 1st Timer Attendee at the Convention \$50 Winner: Raquel Walker, IN. Convention Attendee Staying Overnight Drawing for a Free Room: Mark VanHoose - OH, 50-50 Winners: \$75 Jennifer Micheau, MI and \$50 Jon Williams, WI.

Thank You to the following:

IASCOE Members for their attendance, IL State Office for their attendance, silent auction items and administration leave, IL State Committee for their attendance, IL District Directors for their attendance, County Offices for door prizes & IL items in the registration bags, Each District for a silent auction item, Blue Cross Blue Shield of IL for tote bags & door prizes, Dillard Financial Solutions, Inc. for raffle items and the \$2000 donation, Emblems by Superior silent auction item, MWA States donating items for the silent auction, Brent Orr, WDC, silent auction item, and Prairie Farms for milk and milk snacks.

A Bittersweet Farewell from Debbie Staley, IASCOE President 2015-2019

Recently, we held our Annual Board of Directors Meeting and elected new Officers. I now move into the "Past President's" role with a wealth of knowledge that I have learned as your President and will always treasure.

Working for IASCOE Membership has been a fantastic learning experience, and I am thankful for the skills I've acquired. I feel this experience has made me a more complete and well-rounded person.

I've learned how to take direction, criticism, compliments, and on several occasions exercise and hone my writing skills in a more thoughtful manner for a reply and/or response. I've also learned to be more open-minded, value other people's opinions, consider other ideas, and then see that the final result turned out to be so much better than expected.

I've come to realize that being a part of a group is more than just sharing credit. A team effort takes compromise. When you are on a team you have to sometimes lead, sometimes follow, and more often than not, meet in the middle.

My wish for IASCOE is that it continues to experience success, increase membership, and see that the decisions and ideas made through the Board of Directors have nothing but positive results as the years roll on!

It's been a pleasure serving the IL Membership, and I will genuinely miss the personal contact it provided with the members, the texts, phone calls, planning days, and the meetings. However, I take with me fond memories, valuable skills, and the hope that the footprint I left in this organization



County Office Highlight

Livingston County FSA employees, along with RD, NRCS, and SWCD, enjoyed a lunch and learn on USDA history on March 20. A movie created by Brian Bend, Rural Development Area Specialist, was shown in conjunction with facts and trivia. The Resettlement Administration was established in 1935 as an agency in the Department of Agriculture and renamed FSA (Farm Security Administration) in 1937. The mission for FSA was to relocate entire farm communities to areas where farming could hopefully be more profitable. The film included photos from influential photographers of the era, including Russell Lee, from Ottawa, Illinois, along with a short clip from the movie *Country* and several facts and timelines. Employees enjoyed learning the roots of FSA and the incredible influence of our agency during tumultuous times.



If your County Office hosts a learning session, retirement party, or any outreach event, please feel free to send a brief summary and picture to iascoenewsletter@gmail.com We would like to feature more County Office's in future newsletters.

A Letter from the Editor, Abby Winter...

Welcome to the 2019 first edition of the **IASCOE Cultivator**. I am Abby Winter, CED in Richland County, and I just recently started Publicity Chair. I would like to take a few moments to talk about the goals of the newsletter. The two main goals of the newsletter are **communication** and **service**. In every newsletter, I hope you leave learning more about IASCOE accomplishments, what our county offices are doing, and why this community is an amazing and worthy one to be involved in. When talking about service, I want our members to know that IASCOE is truly an association that is successful because of all our members, and your involvement matters. The Publicity Committee is just a small part of IASCOE, so not only do I want your opinions, suggestions and comments; I need them to provide a newsletter that best serves our membership. As I said before, your involvement matters. Please feel free to share what is going on in your offices and districts, voice your concerns, praise those around you and let us know how we can help you get more out of your membership.

A special feature in this issue are pictures from Illinois FSA employees featured throughout the newsletter. A huge thank you to everyone that participated! It never ceases to amaze me how special agriculture is to all the employees of FSA not only at work but in our personal lives.

If you have a story or a picture you would like to share please email iascoenewsletter@gmail.com.



Additional Information

Check out the IASCOE Website at <http://illinois.midwestnascoe.org>

IASCOE is currently in the planning stages of a Southern Illinois Family Event. If you would like to be on the committee please contact Ashton Smith or Abby Winter

Save the Date

- Next IASCOE Board Meeting June 1st 2019
- 2019 NASCOE National Convention July 31-August 3
- Illinois State Fair BBQ August 13th
- 2020 IASCOE Convention March 13-14th

