



September 2005

DMASCOE DISPATCH

Volume I, Issue 5

DMASCOE 1004 Littlestown Pike Suite C Westminster, MD 21157 410-848-2780 Extension 2

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The DMASCOE Dispatch is published quarterly, around the 15th of the month. Submissions for each publication must be presented to either of the Co-Editors by the 1st of that month.

Publication Dates:

- September
- December
- March
- June

Carole Hill, Editor
Patsy Wiles, Co-Editor



FROM THE PRESIDENT, PATSY WILES...



Hi Everyone,

I heard from Richard and Liz several weeks ago that *ALL FSA* employees in the Gulf stricken area are accounted for. I was so glad to hear this news. May all our thoughts and prayers be with these folks! Hopefully you can help our FSA co-workers affected by this devastating disaster. USDA has launched initiatives, and NASCOE has a relief fund to which you can make donations to help. DMASCOE has decided to send relief funds also. I just cannot imagine what these people are going through!

My husband and I attended the National Convention in South Dakota, and South Dakota folks really brought forward a wonderful time for all of us again this year. Seeing Mount Rushmore and the beautiful country out there was awesome. There was plenty of work to do during General Sessions, delegate meetings, committee meetings, and Area meetings. I need to stress again some of the main items that were addressed...

- FSA's Reputation continues to be of high quality service and

the "face" of USDA. We delivered 45+ USDA Programs and have provided for farmers well being. We are the intersection of government policy and agriculture. NASCOE is working very hard for you to keep things for FSA employees this way.

- The "FSA Tomorrow Strategy" was out the window, but is being addressed right now again in planning for the '06 office closure strategy, of while we are still being told there is no plan.
- If proposed Staff Reductions with possible buyouts happen at this point, it is a budget driven process. Service will suffer without structural change. Proposed staffing changes will bring losing states down to ceiling, but will provide no increases for gaining states.
- Changes in the Agency are evident with agriculture evolvments and automation improvements.
- Employee Performance Evaluations, or the existing "Pass or Fail" will change to a new 5 tiered system.
- All States need to learn about and support the HR 2209 Bill or "Working for America Act", and ask for your

Congressman to support this bill.

- Secretary of Agriculture Johanns has held and is holding listening sessions for the new Farm Bill across the country. It is a great way for farmers and employees to get some input.
- A full Legislative Conference will be held again in 2006 with all the issues in Congress at this time. Hopefully MD/DE will have delegate participation this year.
- The Northeast Area has New Officers; John Lohr from PA is the Northeast Area Exec, and Keith Richmond from WV is the Alternate. Many thanks go out to Frank Bender for his outstanding service to the NE Area.
- Streamlining Program delivery processes have started again. DAFP is reviewing all the recommendations for streamlining that were submitted by states.
- Please continue to sign up with CAPWIZ, so you can quickly communicate with members of Congress. Remember to only use CAPWIZ from a non-government computer or sign up can be made through the NASCOE website at www.nascoe.org/.
- The Q & A's from DMASCOE were not presented during the floor session at the National Convention, due to not enough time for a tremendous flooding of questions. I presented them in writing to the Execs to be answered for us. I have not seen where the Q & A's of the Convention have been posted for everyone. Per a request about them to John Lohr, Area

Exec, the Q & A's are still being transcribed. He will notify us as soon as they are available.

Recently NASCOE created a Program Committee that proved to be very successful last year. To help facilitate the functioning of this committee, DMASCOE needs to form one. I would like to know if someone would like to volunteer for this committee. This person would receive, research, and respond to program questions submitted from MD & DE folks. For the most part, you would deal with local issues related to FSA programs that could be resolved outside of management. If answers can not be found, then you would submit the issue to Area Program Chair to review, or submit to NASCOE as a Program Inefficiency item. More information about the Program Committee can be found at www.nascoe.org/.

I want to thank everyone for being a member of DMASCOE, and let's continue to be as strong as possible. From the top of NASCOE on down through our state association, your officers, execs, and committee chairs are working hard for us all. The more of us there are to stand together, the harder it is for management to resist the changes that we need. Last year our county office employee membership was 93%, and we were beyond the National level. MD/DE needs to be 100% this year, to show your support of all county

office employees, and the job we do for our farmers.

Thank you Susan and Kathy, for the articles about membership dues increase. [Editor's Note: See CONCERNS & UPDATE] Staff reductions result in membership reductions, so NASCOE dues will most likely increase within the next several years. DMASCOE dues will need to increase for this reason as well.

The time is coming for election of new officers for DMASCOE. This election will be held at the State Meeting in March 2006. Be thinking of whom you would like to elect for officers for the July 2006-2008 term.

John Burtman has so efficiently put together information for the DMASCOE Scholarship Program. I hope all our qualified students will take advantage of this opportunity and apply.

MD/DE folks are very hard working employees. There are many awards that our folks can be nominated for. Hopefully this year someone can be nominated for every award, for I know that we have folks that would qualify for all of them.

I am ending by saying that I hope to see you at the Annual Picnic on October 9th in Rock Hall, MD. It should be a fun time for all of us.

Patsy Wiles
DMASCOE President

OFFICER & COMMITTEE REPORTS

2004-2006

DMASCOE OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS & DIRECTORS

Officers

<i>President</i>	Patsy Wiles
<i>Vice-President</i>	Susan Mackey-Taylor
<i>2nd Vice-President</i>	Barbara Large
<i>Secretary/ Treasurer</i>	Susan Hardinger

Committee Chairs

<i>Awards & Scholarship</i>	John Burtman
<i>Benefits</i>	Eva Delp-Cole
<i>Emblems</i>	Lynn Manges
<i>Legislative</i>	Kelly Hereth
<i>Membership</i>	<i>CHANGE</i> – Susan Hardinger
<i>Publicity</i>	Carole Hill

Directors

<i>Delaware</i>	Greg Hudson Leolga Wright <i>Alternates</i> – Lynn Manges MaryAnn Reed
<i>Maryland</i>	
<i>District 1</i>	Eva Delp-Cole Jean Knight <i>Alternate</i> – Melissa Donnelly Rebecca Clark
<i>District 2</i>	John Burtman Kathy Whitby <i>Alternate</i> – Amy Farrell Elizabeth Ridgely

DMASCOE TREASURER'S REPORT - September 1, 2005

Checking Account Beginning Balance - March 19, 2005 5,322.30

Income + 4,321.64

Dues	2,807.99
2005 DMASCOE mtg. registration	75.00
2005 DMASCOE Silent Auction	369.00
B'more in 2004 refunds not cashed	75.00
Cookbook sales	130.00
NASCOE National Convention aid	727.00
Donations	97.65
DMASCOE picnic	40.00

Expenses - 7,409.15

NASCOE dues	140.00
NASCOE Scholarship Fund	100.00
2005 NEA Rally Delegate	290.27
2005 DMASCOE mtg.	598.45
NEA Exec travel to DMASCOE mtg.	154.70
Postage	37.00
NEA Rally Auction donation	34.93
NAFEC donation	100.00
To Money Market account	564.00
To DMASCOE Scholarship Fund	2,769.00
NASCOE Convention auction donation	165.48
NASCOE Convention delegates' expenses	2,455.32

Checking Account Balance - September 1, 2005 2,234.79

Money Market Account Balance - September 1, 2005 2,602.61

Total Cash - Checking & Money Market - Sept. 1, 2005 4,837.40
.....

DMASCOE Scholarship Fund Balance - Sept., 2005 2,769.00

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Hardinger, Secretary/Treasurer



AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIP

In the past few issues of the DMASCOE Dispatch, I provided information on the various awards and scholarship programs available to our employees and their families. I want to remind everyone that nominations for awards can be made at any time, but there are deadlines that you must be aware of. The various awards are:

- Distinguished Service Awards (For NASCOE work; Service to FSA-Agriculture; or Service to Community)
- Professional Improvement Awards
- Sick Leave
- Extra Mile Award (new for 2005)
- First Timer Award (new for 2005)
- 40 Year Membership Award
- Scholarship

Instead of trying to include every deadline, detail, or justification for any of these awards, I would suggest that each one of you access the NASCOE website to get the most up-to-date information on any of the awards. The web address is: nascoe.com and the navigation to the awards and scholarship sites are very easy to follow. The Extra Mile Award is for anyone who has gone the “extra distance” for the benefit of NASCOE and the First Timer Award is for anyone attending the NASCOE National Convention for their very first time.

Beginning in 2006, DMASCOE will award a scholarship to a qualified student. DMASCOE has modeled their scholarship program after the NASCOE program and will be using the deadline for submission of all documents by February 1st. The local Scholarship Committee consisting of the DMASCOE President, Scholarship Chairperson, and a DMASCOE Director from each of Maryland’s two DD Districts, and a DMASCOE Director from Delaware will review all applications and select one for the DMASCOE scholarship. All applications received by the selection committee will be submitted to NASCOE for the National Scholarship Award judging.

The application criteria are available from the NASCOE website as well as the fillable application form itself. Please take the time to review the application process and have your college-bound student apply for this deserving award.

John Burtman
Awards and Scholarship Chairman





DMASCOE Scholarship Program

DMASCOE will award a \$500.00 scholarship annually to the selected individual based on the following criteria:

Eligibility:

- The applicant must be a DMASCOE member, member's spouse, member's child, or member's legal dependent. The DMASCOE member must be a permanent County Office employee with dues paid. The DMASCOE membership must be current for the past 5 years or since becoming a permanent FSA employee.
- The applicant may be either a high school senior or a full-time college student, up to the Master's Degree level. Full-time is defined as a minimum of 12 credit hours. A minimum of a "C" average (using the 4.0 system) in both their junior or senior years of high school or as a college student is required.
- The awardee must satisfactorily complete at least one semester of schooling before the award is issued. Proof of this eligibility requirement must be submitted to the State Awards and Scholarship Chairperson after the semester and prior to issuing the award.

Use of the Award:

- This award must be used to defray expenses incidental to the student's attendance at a four-year college, university, community college, or commercial or trade school which is accredited by the Department of Education of that State.

Evaluation Criteria:

- All sources of information concerning each applicant will be considered: school records, employment, work experience; and reference letters. All applicants will be evaluated on the basis of:
 1. **ABILITY:** This shall include both mental and physical factors which might affect the applicant's ability to benefit from further education. This will be judged by available school and health records and any other information which may reflect on the student's ability.

2. **INCENTIVE ASSISTANCE:** All pertinent information relative to the student's desire to continue his/her education and to the other financial resources available to meet the student's desire will be considered.
3. **OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Any other personal characteristics such as initiative, industry, persistence, leadership ability, personal and social adjustment which might affect student success will be considered.

Judging Process:

- All Applications must be forwarded to the State Awards and Scholarship Chairperson by February 15th of each year. All complete applications will be reviewed by the State Awards Chairperson and forwarded to the Area Awards and Scholarship Chairperson by March 1st for area award judging. An original and 10 copies must be provided. (The original and 5 copies will be forwarded to the area Awards Chairperson as required).
- The DMASCOE Scholarship Review Committee will consist of the DMASCOE President, Awards Chairperson, and a DMASCOE Director from each of the Maryland Districts and the Delaware District. All complete applications will be reviewed and the yearly award winner will be announced at the State DMASCOE Convention usually held in mid-March.
- The Judging Committee will use the Score Sheet in Attachment 1 to make their selections. The State Awards and Scholarship Chairperson will tabulate all the points for the applicants.

Documents for Submission:

- DMASCOE (NASCOE) Scholarship Application (available online), high school and/or college transcripts, letters of reference, List of school and other extra curricular activities, and any other documentation should be submitted to support your request.

EMBLEMS

Lynn Manges, Chairperson

INFORMATION FROM THE NASCOE EMBLEMS ONLINE STORE ABOUT FALL ITEMS

Let's Shop www.thenascoestore.com. Browse Fall's Finest 2005...

That's the way you see new items available for fall. We'll be adding more products in the next week or so.

Fall Items are not on sale, but many of the polo shirts in the store are reduced to \$20.00 Each -- that includes ladies polos, too!!!

The Item Numbers included in this sale include the following:

- 3004 - Women's Polo
- 3030 - Ladies Jockey Polo with no curl collar
- 3031 - Ladies V-neck placket shirt
- 3032 - Ladies Sleeveless Shirt
- 3036 - Ladies Fine Pima Pique Polo
- 3029 - Men's Jockey Polo with no curl collar
- 3035 - Men's Pima Cotton Polo

This sale runs through October 15, 2005. Order several at this price.

PROGRAMS

Following in the steps of NASCOE and the Northeast Area, DMASCOE needs to establish a PROGRAMS Committee. If you would be interested in chairing this committee, please let Patsy know.

PUBLICITY

Carole Hill, Publicity Chair

Announcing the webpage address for DMASCOE, <http://www.geocities.com/dmascoe/>.

At the National Convention, the Publicity Committee meeting shared some information on how to get a website up and running. I took their information and this is what I put together. I hope you find it useful. It seemed fitting that since last year's convention launched the newsletter, this year's convention should launch a website.

Also, as part of the website, is a *Delaware & Maryland Family* page that includes members' birthdays (as known) and a way to send them a greeting on their special day. It is really simple to use and even simpler to have your name and birthday added to the list – just drop me an email with your birthday (month & day) and the email address where you would like to receive your greetings. That's it! I'll add you to the list, and then you can just sit back and wait for your greetings to roll into your inbox. Of course, during your wait time you should double-check if there are birthday greetings to be sent to fellow DMASCOE members and friends.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions to improve the website, please do not hesitate to contact me.

PS. This is an addition to the newsletter, not a replacement.

CHECK OUT the NASCOE Website! WHOLE NEW LOOK! Lots of Changes!

Photos of the New Officers, Executives and Committee Chairpersons...In Memory Of Page...Katrina Relief Fund Info...NASCOE NEGOTIATION/CONSULTATION ITEMS...2005 NASCOE Convention Photographs! Click on www.nascoe.org

LEGISLATIVE

Legislative Alert –



**NASCOE
wants
YOU!**

Now, more than ever NASCOE members and COE's need to contact their elected Congressional members to do the following:

- Support HR 2209
- Ask Secretary Johanns about the proposed closing of COF's.

HR 2209 requires FSA to submit workload data to Congress on an annual basis and ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained to deliver programs as mandated by Congress.

NASCOE knows from experience that county office closures and consolidations follow closely behind reductions in staffing levels. DMASCOE has learned that potentially some MD/DE COF's are being targeted.

This impacts all FSA employees! Office closures will result in additional workload being redistributed to other county offices without additional resources. The promised reduction in COF workload through web based programs has not materialized yet. Office closures and staff reductions impact all COF level employees – CO

and GS alike, so don't think of this as a NACS, NASE, NASCOE problem. We're all affected by such potential actions.

You've seen the message from Dan Root, NASCOE President. *[Editor's note: The letter is included in NATIONAL NASCOE NEWS & NOTES]* He is asking us to tell our elected leaders to contact USDA to request the details of any possible office closure plans and to delay any downsizing or restructuring until these proposed changes can be reviewed by Congress.

What you can do to help! This is the easiest part – enroll in CapWiz. CapWiz automatically notifies you when an important issue affecting FSA county offices arises and needs Congressional attention. If just one member from each COF participated in CapWiz, Maryland and Delaware would have coverage in each Congressional district. I challenge you to enroll today at www.nascoe.org.

Don't have a home computer? Then FAX/mail a letter to your Congress member's regional or Capitol Hill office. Look in your local phone book in the blue pages or visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov for your representative's mailing address and phone number.

If we sit back and wait for our future to be determined, rather than being a part of the process (as promised), then we have no one to blame but ourselves for the results. Doing your part by voicing your concern to Congress ensures that you at least tried to make a difference. FSA is needed now more than ever. Make sure we are there to help when it counts the most.

Kelly Hereth, Legislative Chair

Membership Report - September 15, 2005

Just a brief report to bring you all up to date on the latest DMASCOE membership information.

First of all, my thanks to all who have either paid their dues in full or set up payroll deduction so far this year - and my plea to those who haven't yet paid - please do!

Congratulations to our 100% membership counties so far this year: Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent Delaware, Prince George's/Anne Arundel, Queen Anne's, Somerset, St. Mary's, Sussex, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester.

Thanks and appreciation to our Associate members: Margaret Arnold, Richard Bergold, Tiny Greenway, Janice Landers, Tom Long, Mavis Robertson, Laura Schlote, Jim Voss and Della Watkinson,

Our situation in general as county office employees is not so good right now, I guess, and some offices and some states are in worse straits than others, but at least the one thing we can do is support each other by making DMASCOE and NASCOE as strong as possible. From the top of NASCOE on down through our state association, your officers and execs are working hard for us all. We're certainly not getting every single concern resolved completely, and there are many - sometimes divergent - sides to each of the major issues facing county office employees right now. But . . . the more of us there are to stand together, the harder it is for those "in charge" to resist the positive changes that are needed..

So . . . pay your dues, please. You may have neither the time nor the interest to get really involved, and you may not agree with each and every stand or tactic that NASCOE or DMASCOE takes, but your dues show your support of all county office employees and the job we're trying to do for our farmers. If there are questions or concerns that you want to share, please contact any of DMASCOE's officers or directors or committees. We haven't always been successful in resolving your problems the way we'd like to, but we will ALWAYS keep trying.

And . . . remember that each of the good things that we sometimes take for granted about our jobs - our leave, health insurance, flex schedules, for example - are not "givens" just because we're employees of USDA. As county office employees, we're the beneficiaries of the agreement negotiated and renewed each year (and signed at the National Convention - see photo below) by NASCOE and FSA.

So . . . do a good thing for NASCOE, DMASCOE, your county office friends and colleagues - and YOURSELF. Join today!

Susan Hardinger,
Membership Committee



July 28, 2005 - David Vidrine, NASCOE President, and Michael Yost, FSA Associate Administrator for Programs, signing the Annual Agreement giving County Office Employees the same benefits as GS Employees.

DUES NOTICE

Dear FSA County Office Employees and Associates:

It's time for all those who haven't paid yet to send DMASCOE dues for the 2005-2006 dues year, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006.

The rates are:

\$85.00 per year for CEDs, CORs, FLMs and FLOs or \$3.27 per pay period using automatic payroll deduction

\$55.00 per year for permanent PTs - full time and .8 part-time or \$2.12 per pay period using automatic payroll deduction

\$20.00 per year for Associates, all temporary employees and permanent PTs .6 part-time or less.

Please make checks payable to DMASCOE and mail to 1004 Littlestown Pike, Suite C, Westminster, MD 21157 - or, if you prefer to use automatic withholding, submit form FSA-444.

Thank you so much. Feel free to call or e-mail questions, concerns and suggestions at any time.

Susan D. Hardinger, Secretary/Treasurer
410-848-2780, ext. 119, susan.hardinger@md.usda.gov
or, home, 410-876-6507, shardinger@aol.com

If you mail a check, please include this form:

2005-2006 Dues - DMASCOE

Name: _____

County: _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Regular member _____ PT (permanent, full-time or .8) - \$55.00

_____ CED - \$85.00

_____ FLM - \$85.00

_____ FLO - \$85.00

Associate member _____ PT (permanent, .6 or less) - \$20.00

_____ temporary employee - \$20.00

_____ former employee/retiree - \$20.00

_____ State office employee/WDC employee - \$20.00

NATIONAL NASCOE NEWS & NOTES

Hello DMASCOE Members!

Carole Hill has graciously offered a space on the website or in the newsletter for comments from the members of the NASCOE Executive Committee. Thank you Carole!

I won't take much of your time or space in the newsletter, but I did want to tell you how much I appreciate being elected as Vice President of this great association. As you may know, I am the first female Program Technician to be elected to this office. My intention is to do my best to live up to the trust placed in me by the delegates who elected me. As a member of NASCOE you should accept no less. I invite you to let me know your opinion of whether or not I am meeting your expectations.

No man (or woman) is an island. The Executive Committee of NASCOE is made up of the five officers and five Area Execs. Each one brings something different and unique to the table, and it takes the input of each person to be the best leadership we can be. One of the most important aspects of NASCOE leadership is the ability to be a team player while striving to make decisions that will improve the working lives of all members of NASCOE. Sometimes that is next to impossible, but over the years as I've sat on the Exec Committee I've observed that each Committee has the same drive, determination, and desire to do the best they can possibly do for the membership.

We are now, and will continue to be, facing some very difficult times as employees of the Farm Service Agency. The NASCOE leadership is facing some very difficult decisions while trying to ease some of the difficulties, and we will need your assistance and advice to do what is best for the entire association. Communication is one of the keys to success of any organization but most assuredly a key to NASCOE. As a member you should never hesitate to contact your Area Exec John Lohr or his Alternate Keith Richmond with any questions, concerns, suggestions, etc. you may have. John and Keith are your first line representatives, and, of course, Area and National Committee Chairpersons are a great source of information to and for you.

Can NASCOE always do exactly what you think should be done, when you think it should be done? Can NASCOE solve every problem? The answer to these questions is "No", but together we can do our best to make a positive difference for all of us.

President Dan Root and I are committed to working together and with the other Exec Committee members over the next year in an effort to unify the team and provide the best service to you, the membership. I know that I speak for Dan when I say that "our door is always open". We want you to know we are only a phone call or an e-mail away.

Thanks again for the opportunity to visit with you, and please don't hesitate to contact me if I can ever be of service to you.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Heinzman
NASCOE Vice President

NASCOE Organization Meeting Report

Submitted by
John R. Lohr, NEA NASCOE
Executive Committeeperson

September 1, 2005

This past Sunday and Monday all the NASCOE Officers, Executive Committeepersons, and National Committee Chairpersons met at the site of next year's national convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Much of this organizational meeting was spent reviewing NASCOE's recent activity, setting annual goals, and planning for the year ahead.

Some of this planning included:

- Reassigning of some of the NASCOE Secretary's duties.
- Signing a new agreement with JM Marketing.
- Pursuing discount membership benefits at a large range of stores and motels.
- Beginning a monthly electronic newsletter, called "NASCOE Now", to supplement the traditional quarterly newsletter.
- Continuing to work on the Political Action Committee.
- Promoting CAPWIZ and working to increase member use.
- Holding a full legislative conference early next year.
- Having all states establish a program committee to network through the area chairperson to the national level.
- Increasing our membership level.
- Continuing the current level of support of the awards and scholarship programs.

Some additional issues on our agenda include:

- PT classification
- Involvement with the development of the next farm bill
- Animal ID
- Buyout process
- Directed reassignments
- Office closings
- Inadequate FSA administrative funding

Please keep yourself informed about your employees' association by checking www.nascoe.org on a regular basis. Also visit the legislative tab on our website and register with CAPWIZ so you can quickly help with NASCOE's legislative efforts.

NOTE: CAPWIZ is not to be used on any government computer.

In case you missed this email...



National Association of FSA County Office Employees

www.nascoe.org

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Wednesday, September 7, 2005

Dear State Presidents:

By now I am sure all of you have heard of the Agency's initiative that is looking at the field structure of FSA. This initiative as we know it is called "FSA Tomorrow". FSA Tomorrow is a broad agency review looking at the future delivery system in FSA. FSA Tomorrow is nationally driven and has had no input from field level employees. The fact that no input has been sought from field level FSA employees leave us with no alternative but to take action by enlisting NASCOE members to contact Congress to prevent the closing and consolidation of FSA field offices. First let me say there are a number of people who insist this is not a plan but only a concept. I am of firm belief that the concept has risen to the level that it can now be called a plan and it is time for NASCOE and its members to become engaged.

For some time NASCOE has remained very opened minded and has not taken a position in regards to this concept due to the fact that very little information had been shared with us. I have to ask, how can you form an opinion when very few of the details have been shared with us? Before NASCOE could form an opinion we would need to review the plain in detail.

NASCOE has made numerous attempts to garner details but to no avail. We have been informed numerous times that we would be provided details when they are available. I believe the details will be announced very soon and hopefully it will not be too late for us to respond. It is my understanding SEDs will be brought into WDC during the week of September 19. They will be briefed by the Secretary and given plans pertinent to their state. These details will include information in regards to how many and which offices are required to be closed in their states.

Our attitude and work ethic has gotten us through many challenges in the past and I believe it will help drive us through it again. The main reason I am writing you is to ask for your help in getting our members involved. We must get involved at the grass roots level to ensure the administration's goal to reduce offices will have minimal impact on our members and the producers we serve. From the few details we have heard, we believe FSA Tomorrow will make major changes in how we exist as an agency in the field. It will impact our ability to serve producers. It will close and consolidate county offices and will probably reduce even more staff.

NASCOE needs all members to become involved immediately. We are asking that you, as your State President, encourage your members to get involved and help us make congressional contacts. We need our congressional leaders to make contact with USDA to request and determine the details of any possible office restructure/closing plans and delay any downsizing or office restructuring until these proposed changes can be reviewed by Congress.

Workload figures continue to show we need more staff, but management has chosen to staff us at levels well below our current workload and local County Offices are continuing to deliver programs under difficult circumstances as we approach the end of the current Farm Bill. Wouldn't it make better sense to determine what

will be expected of FSA in the next Farm Bill before management decides to consolidate and close offices that have served American agriculture well and with high efficiency?

We need our members to enroll in Capwiz and be ready to use it when action alerts are sent. Members can enroll in Capwiz from the link located on the NASCOE web page. We also need our members to make personal contacts with their legislative leaders on this issue and also engage local farm groups in this fight.

FSA has been and still is a model that should be followed for delivery of farm programs. We have and will continue to play a vital role in the delivery of current and future USDA programs.

FSA Tomorrow could jeopardize our presence and our ability to service the American Farmer.

Now is not the time to ask "what is NASCOE doing", it is the time to ask "How can we help"

Thanks for all you do!

/s/ Daniel L. Root
NASCOE President

Note: Just as The Dispatch was going to print we learned of an Associated Press article published September 16th entitled "USDA Plan Would Close 665 Local FSA Offices." The article is below...

USDA Plan Would Close 665 Local Offices

By LIBBY QUAID The Associated Press Thursday, September 15, 2005; 8:00 PM

WASHINGTON -- More than one-fourth of the nation's Farm Service Agency offices would close under a plan being pushed by the Agriculture Department, according to an agency document obtained by The Associated Press.

As outlined in the document, the department would shutter an estimated 665 of the 2,353 offices nationwide.

J.B. Penn, undersecretary for the Agriculture Department's Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, said that he had not seen the document obtained by the AP but that the numbers cited were inaccurate. He said the agency's main concern was not closing offices. "We may consolidate functions, but we're going to provide improved service."

"When you talk about closing offices, people think you're taking away something from them," he said. "That's not the objective at all _ we're going to be giving them something more."

Penn discussed the plan to modernize FSA offices in briefings this week with chairmen of the Senate Agriculture Committee and House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. More congressional briefings were planned.

State FSA directors are coming to Washington next week for a briefing on the plan.

As the central link between farmers and the department, FSA offices help farmers obtain loans and get payments from a number of farm programs. The federal agency has changed names over the years, but its network of offices in local communities dates to the 1930s.

The department's goal is to modernize a system now burdened with rustic technology and underused offices. The FSA uses computer systems from the mid-1980s that can't use the Internet. The agency has an office in virtually every rural county in the nation, no matter how close together two county offices are.

"A lot of farmers go into an office now, and there are two full-time employees, and they have to wait a long time to get service," Penn said. "When they finally do get service, the employee doesn't have the experience or the knowledge of a particular program that they need."

In some offices, it costs \$2 to distribute every dollar of benefits to farmers; in others, it costs less than a penny to deliver a dollar's worth of benefits, Penn said.

Penn said he had never seen the FSA "working document" obtained by the AP. He said officials haven't drawn any conclusions on reams of raw data generated as the agency develops its modernization plan.

Republicans in Congress reacted cautiously. Georgia Sen. Saxby Chambliss, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, hasn't signed off on a plan or seen specifics. He met Wednesday with Penn to discuss the plan.

"If the goal is to modernize the agency and to train employees for continued service improvement to the customers, the producers, then he understands that reasoning," said Keith Williams, a spokesman for Chambliss.

Another Agriculture Committee member, Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo., called the timing inapt, because Congress may soon be considering disaster aid for farmers battered by Hurricane Katrina, drought and other natural disasters.

He said lawmakers may try to amend a spending bill to delay the modernization plan. But like Chambliss, Talent was open to the idea.

"For me, the issue is service _ do our producers have convenient access to an FSA office? That's the key to me. That's more important than any particular number of offices," Talent said. "Now, I am concerned about closing that many offices and the impact that will have on services."

Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts, a Republican Agriculture Committee member, said he would look carefully at any plan to close FSA offices in his state to make sure services aren't reduced, "especially with the high cost of energy already an enormous burden for our farmers and ranchers."

Congressional Democrats were hostile to the idea.

"If this is true, it's another slap at South Dakota farmers and ranchers from the Bush administration," said Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., a member of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee. "There's no substitute for the face-to-face interaction that producers have with FSA personnel. They need the opportunity to ask questions, to explain their circumstances. To lose that opportunity is going to be a serious problem."

The top Senate Agriculture Committee Democrat, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, said he doesn't know specifics of the plan but that it seems drastic.

"Shuttering nearly a fourth of the FSA offices in Iowa can only lead to more inconvenience and less service for Iowans," Harkin said.

BREAKING NEWS... We have just received FSA's Talking Points and a PowerPoint Presentation about FSA Tomorrow. Patsy has emailed it to those for whom we have email addresses. If you did not receive a copy, please let us know! If you did and have comments and/or questions for the NASCOE Execs and Officers, please contact Patsy or the VPs ASAP!!!

NASCOE Now

It is a short, monthly bulletin that will address issues between quarterly newsletters.

At the Fall Board Meeting in Cleveland the NASCOE Board decided to try a new method of communicating to the membership. We are going to email a short, monthly bulletin in an attempt to address issues between Quarterly Newsletters. This will be a "barebones" bulletin with little or no clipart/photos. Most of the items will only be a paragraph or two long with directions on where to find more in depth information. These directions may lead you to the NASCOE website, other websites, magazine/newspaper articles, anywhere information important to the members of NASCOE may be found.

Watch your email for these bulletins!

NASCOE Members Information System Announcement – Creation of NASCOE Member Forums

The current NASCOE Members Information System serves as a one way tool to send information to the members of NASCOE. It has become very apparent that we lack a tool to allow members to communicate with each other in real time without using government resources.

Therefore the NASCOE Member Forums have been created for your use, <http://nascoemembers.org>. This new tool does not replace the email based information system, but instead will enhance it.

On the forums you can have an interactive discussion about the news items that you see on this system, or you can post questions and collect feedback from fellow members of NASCOE.

Registration on this new site is free and available to all. Members of NASCOE can gain access to hidden

sections of the forums by proving they are in fact members of NASCOE (It's easy, instructions are on the front page).

Please visit <http://nascoemembers.org> and register on the forums. The forums are the place where the hottest, freshest, most controversial information will be posted, because there are some news items that are too sensitive to be sent to your government email address.

NASCOE Members Forums: Where membership has its privileges and information is treated like fertilizer (It's only good if it is spread around). [Editor's Note: If you are not currently receiving emails from the NASCOE Information System, contact Patsy so she can get you hooked up.]

Negotiation/Consultation Items

It's that time of the year again to get your voice heard on items that are important to you. Items for Negotiation and/or Consultation are due to the NASCOE Secretary, Area Exec, or Area Negotiation Consultant by December 15th. The online form is available on the NASCOE website at this link, <http://www.nascoe.org/pdf/NEGCONSULTFORM.pdf>. Just fill in the information, save it to your computer with a different name, attach it to an e-mail to secretary@nascoe.org and to your Area Exec. or Negotiation Consultant. The traditional manual form can also be used, and is available in the NASCOE newsletter or from any member of the Negotiation Team (Officers, Area Execs, and Area Negotiation Consultants).

I am honored to once again represent the Northeast Area, and encourage you to take the time to write up your concerns so that they can be presented to Washington DC. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Carole Hill, Northeast Area Negotiation Consultant



Barbara Clugston

Barbara Clugston is a firm believer in NASCOE and all that this organization has done for her. She, along with her husband Lee, has attended 21 National Conventions, and over 15 NE Area Rallies. She worked endless hours as the Registration Chair for our National Convention, “B’more in 2004”, and was truly a great part in its huge success.

Barbara was born and raised in Cecil, County, MD. She married Lee Clugston, and they have been happily married for 46 years. They have 2 children; a son, Timothy, and a daughter, Leslie. They are blessed with 3 grandchildren also; Samantha, 16, Timothy, 14, and Ricky, 14. Barbara and Lee have lived in the same house since 1960, where they have raised beef cattle and, in most recent years, have raised full blood and percentage Boer goats. She has always loved the farm life.

Barbara started working for FSA/ASCS in 1978 as a Temporary PA. After 3 months, she became permanent. During 1986, she went into the COT Program, and took the position of CED in Cecil County, MD. In 1997, she took the CED position in Harford County, MD as well.

For over 27 years, Barbara has worked very hard for the farmers of Cecil and Harford Counties. She has been involved with training sessions both in the state and nationally. She has served as a COT trainer, and has covered for the District Director in his absence. Barbara was the Program Specialist in the STO for DCP, filling in for the Program Specialist who went to DC.

Barbara has supported DMASCOE by being a paid member ever since she became an employee in 1978. She has been DMASCOE Secretary/Treasurer, Vice-President, President, and served on most of the Committees. Also, she has served on the Awards and Emblems NE Area Committees.

As you have read above, Barbara has worked hard for the agency, and its employee association and is truly a firm believer in the FSA way. She has a very large extended family of FSA friends that she has made by supporting DMASCOE/NASCOE.

Congratulate Barbara for all her hard work in the agriculture field.



ANTICS & ANECDOTES

Travels in South Dakota

Elizabeth Ridgely, PT Calvert

When Patsy asked me to write an article about my trip to the National Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota, she said “write about your side trips, your bout with your sprained ankle... just make it interesting.” I had really hoped to keep the ankle thing quiet, and not spread knowledge of my lack of gracefulness too far and wide. The truth is, the first side trip was sideways off a step in a step aerobics class two days before flying to South Dakota. That day as I watched the human body’s colorful swelling response to a joint being bent in the wrong direction – I remember thinking “this can’t be good”. Well, suitcases on wheels are a wonderful invention, and shuttle drivers are generally tolerant of people who are limping. After being pulled aside by airport security to see what I was packing under my ankle brace, I was off to the big skies of South Dakota.

After landing in Rapid City (with Mr. and Mrs. Roger Richardson across the aisle!) the beauty of the landscape was overwhelming – I had to just stop, and take it in for awhile. The prairie was unbelievably gold, and the skies were filled with great rolling clouds – just like in the movie, “Dances With Wolves”.

I attended the convention proceedings each morning, and spent the afternoons seeing the sights. The sheer number of South Dakota employees in attendance was startling, but then it IS a big state! As the convention progressed, the NASCOE officers and area representatives impressed me more and more. They are a very forthright and good-hearted group of people, and have a refreshing appreciation for the tidbits of humor and irony buried within what we do at work everyday. They also work VERY hard in our behalf.

One of my first afternoons was spent poking around downtown Rapid City. Main Street looks like an old west town, with parking on the diagonal. The City of Presidents Arts Program has placed 19 life-size bronze likenesses of U.S. Presidents on several street corners. They intend to have all 43 placed on street corners by 2011. One of the most memorable is of John F. Kennedy holding John Jr.’s hand. Another highlight was walking through the Prairie Edge Trading Company and Galleries, a place devoted to educating the public about, and preserving the heritage and culture of the Northern Plains Indians. It is housed in a restored National Historic Registered building originally built in 1886. Prairie Edge provides an outlet for the sale of the Northern Plains Indians’ beautiful artwork and craftwork. Just outside the entrance is a poignant bronze statue of a Native American with downcast eyes and hands bound behind him, called “He Is, They Are”. There is a nice “tour” on their website at <http://www.prairieedge.com/>.

The Black Hills rise beckoningly just outside of town, and the next outing was south toward jaw-dropping scenery at Mt. Rushmore, Needles Highway and Custer State Park. It was very tough to bypass all the Black Hills Gold outlets, and I didn’t. The leaf motif used in the Black Hills jewelry is a unique American art form. They blend little copper pellets into gold to make pink-toned leaf designs, and silver pellets into gold to make a delicate green color leaf, to set off the gold and silver jewelry. It’s very striking. Mt. Rushmore was truly majestic to lay eyes on, and to understand how Gutzon Borglum and his crew sculpted it, using careful measurements of a model and a plumb bob, not to mention dynamite and many drill bits. I headed south from there, and had a death grip on the steering wheel most of the way through the Needles Highway, which has one-lane tunnels through rock, wicked switchbacks with no guard rails to “straight down”, and awesome vistas. Looking back, that drive was possibly my most memorable aspect of the trip.

About an hour east of Rapid City is the Badlands National Park – takes about half an hour if you drive like they do out there. It felt like being on another planet, since it looks like a moonscape! It was 97 degrees that day, so I hung close to the air conditioned Hyundai, although there was a really enticing trail to a fossil exhibit. On the way back north to Rapid City, I stopped at a place called Prairie Homestead, which is the original home of a Mr. and Mrs. Ed Brown, who homesteaded the surrounding 160 acres in 1909. Mr. Brown built the house into the

side of a hill with cottonwood logs and buffalo grass sod, so it would stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It looked like they made do with next to nothing back then. Nowadays, there are lots of little white prairie dogs that live there! There are some pictures at <http://www.prairiehomestead.com/>.

I couldn't end my trip until I completed a mission for my brother. He has a Harley, and had given me a list of desired souvenirs. So I headed north to Sturgis - one week before the 2005 Rally. Motorcycles lined the streets, just like in the pictures! I found his "stuff" at the Harley dealership, including the ultimate Harley T-shirt with a buffalo on it. A few miles to the west of Sturgis, I paid respects to Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane at Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Deadwood. Gambling is big business there. It is also what put Wild Bill in Mt. Moriah, with a bullet to the back of his head!

Getting briefly acquainted with the diversity and history of South Dakota has made me want to go back, and explore some more! The next morning, I reluctantly turned in the rental car, and flew back to the "not QUITE as crystal-clear air" back home.

CONVENTION & SOUTH DAKOTA PICTURES...

DMASCOE Delegates – President Patsy Wiles (and her husband Tommy) and Carole Hill, Publicity Chair, await the beginning of the General Session of the 46th Annual NASCOE Convention.



South Dakota Delegates make their entrance.



Rapid City's MAIN ATTRACTION – The Shrine of Democracy on Mount Rushmore.

FLYING T

CHUCKWAGON SUPPER & SHOW



Enjoying local entertainment...we received supper and a show at the Flying T Chuckwagon. The bandmembers were our servers. The chuckwagon supper is served buffet-style, and they were able to get this crowd served in under 25 minutes!



AROUND THE STATES

Layne Ballard, CED of Frederick County, MD says, “Not that I usually toot my own horn but I recently received the Administrator’s Award for my work on the Florida Disaster Team. I was one of about 100 FSA employees who received this award. The award reads: ‘For outstanding team effort in providing an expedited Disaster Program to the State of Florida assisting producers harmed by the 2004 hurricanes.’”

Trisha Knight, daughter of Jean Knight, PT of Harford County FSA, was one of the youth speakers to open a listening session for the new farm bill at Ag Progress Days at Penn State. Trisha had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Johanns and pose for pictures after the session. Trisha was also seen on PA Cable Network giving her speech. Trisha represented 4-H as a State Officer.



Trisha is the to the right of Sec. Johanns

DMASCOE RETIREES...



On Aug 2nd Harford County had an open house to wish Beryl Sprout well on her retirement. Beryl worked for FSA for 17 years. Beryl received many citations and proclamations for her dedicated work to the farmers of Harford County. She will be sadly missed, but we wish her many years of happiness and relaxation in the next phase of her journey.

FAREWELL TO A REAL LADY OF FSA

August 31st was Janice Landers' last day with FSA. As you read this she is on a 2-week tour of America – and she better be sending us postcards!

The 31st was a day of much celebration and many memorable moments for those that attended Janice's retirement party. She and I both send thanks out to those who came and to those who could not come, but sent well wishes and gifts. Her day-long reception was attended by co-workers, family, and farmers. One of my favorite moments was when one of our farmers, with many, many acres to enroll each year, handed her a fancy gift bag and she reached in and pulled two granola bars off the top. Janice looked at the green wrappers and then said "Hey, didn't I give you one of these for lunch one year during crop reporting?" He said she had and that he always was grateful for her going out of her way to make him comfortable during their long office sessions. (Of course his wife had made sure that he also brought some wonderful lotions and bath salts along with the granola bars.) Janice was showered with gifts and well wishes and was quite overwhelmed – which was of course our goal in our pitiful attempt to thank her for her nine years of dedicated service to the farmers of Washington County, her co-workers in our Service Center, and the Farm Service Agency.

Janice started her career on May 13, 1996, with suitcase in hand, and got to spend her first week with the agency in Ocean City learning the new farm bill



program – PFC. She worked diligently with me to enroll 365 contracts in to the PFC program that year – five times our previous workload for commodity programs. Due to the new flexibility of PFC, many of the producers she worked with were as green as she was to FSA. She started there and continued on for the next nine years overcoming many "challenges" without complaint and with determination to assist everyone in the farming

community that could use our assistance. Some will tell you that they would not have bothered or may not have known about programs and deadlines without Janice's insistence that they show up for appointments to take care of the paperwork. I hope we can continue to live up to that level of service now that she is gone.

Before her farewell supper, Janice read to the group the Secretary's Prayer that she had brought to work with her on her first day and had found while cleaning out her desk on her last day. She must have prayed sincerely because she never faltered in her efforts. She leaves behind for all of us:

A Secretary's Prayer (author unknown)

Dear Lord I need help too...

Help me to be a good subordinate, to have the memory of an elephant or one at least three years long...

Help me by some miracle to be able to do six things at one time, answer four telephones at the same time while typing a letter 'must go out today.' And when that letter does not get signed until tomorrow, give me strength to keep my mouth shut instead of raising Cain as I'm tempted to do...

Dear Lord, never let me lose patience even when the boss has me searching files for hours for something that is later discovered in her desk...

Help me to have the intelligence of a college professor, though my education was limited to four years of high school...

Help me to understand and carry out instructions without any explanations whatsoever...

Let me always know just where the boss is, what he is doing and when he will be back, even though he did leave without telling me...

And Lord, when the year ends, please let me have the foresight not to destroy records that will be asked for in the next few days, even though I have been told to destroy them.

AMEN

As we said our teary farewells late that night, Janice thanked me for taking her on in 1996 and changing her life. She thanked me for standing by her during her trials with her handicapped son and her mother-in-law's recent illness. She thanked me for giving her a chance to work with the wonderful farmers of Washington County. I could only answer her by saying that she had earned my respect and deserved all of the support that she got, from me and from the farmers. We should all remember that at the end of our career that is all that really matters!

Colleen

Announcing

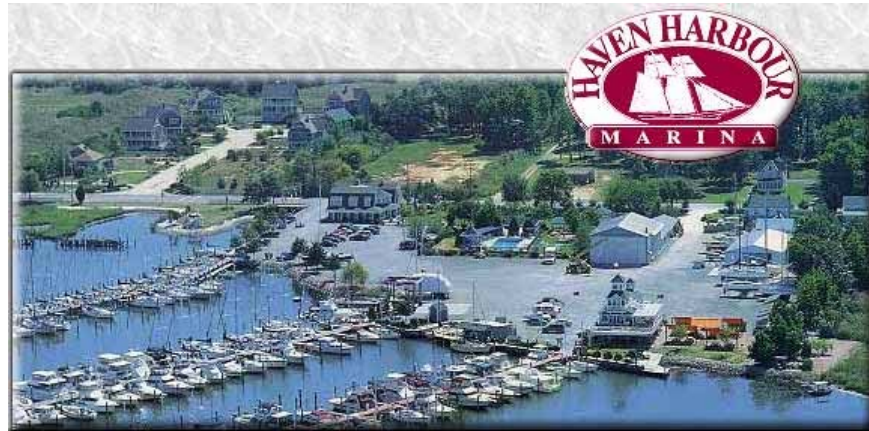
2ND ANNUAL

DMASCOE

PICNIC

Sunday, October 9, 2005

2:00 – 6:00 PM



Haven Harbour Marina

20880 Rock Hall Avenue
Rock Hall, Maryland 21661
Telephone (800) 506-6697

Come one, come all!

**All Our DMASCOE Members, Supporters, Families & Friends
are cordially invited. Get your reservations in early!**

Menu

Steamed Crabs
Steamed Shrimp
Fried Chicken
Salads
Baked Beans
Ice Tea & Coffee
Dessert
(Sodas, Beer, & Wine are BYOB)

Cost: \$20 per person

Featuring -

The "Salem Bottom Boys"
Back for an encore!

This is an outdoor facility right on the water.
Please dress appropriately.

There is overhead cover in case of rain.

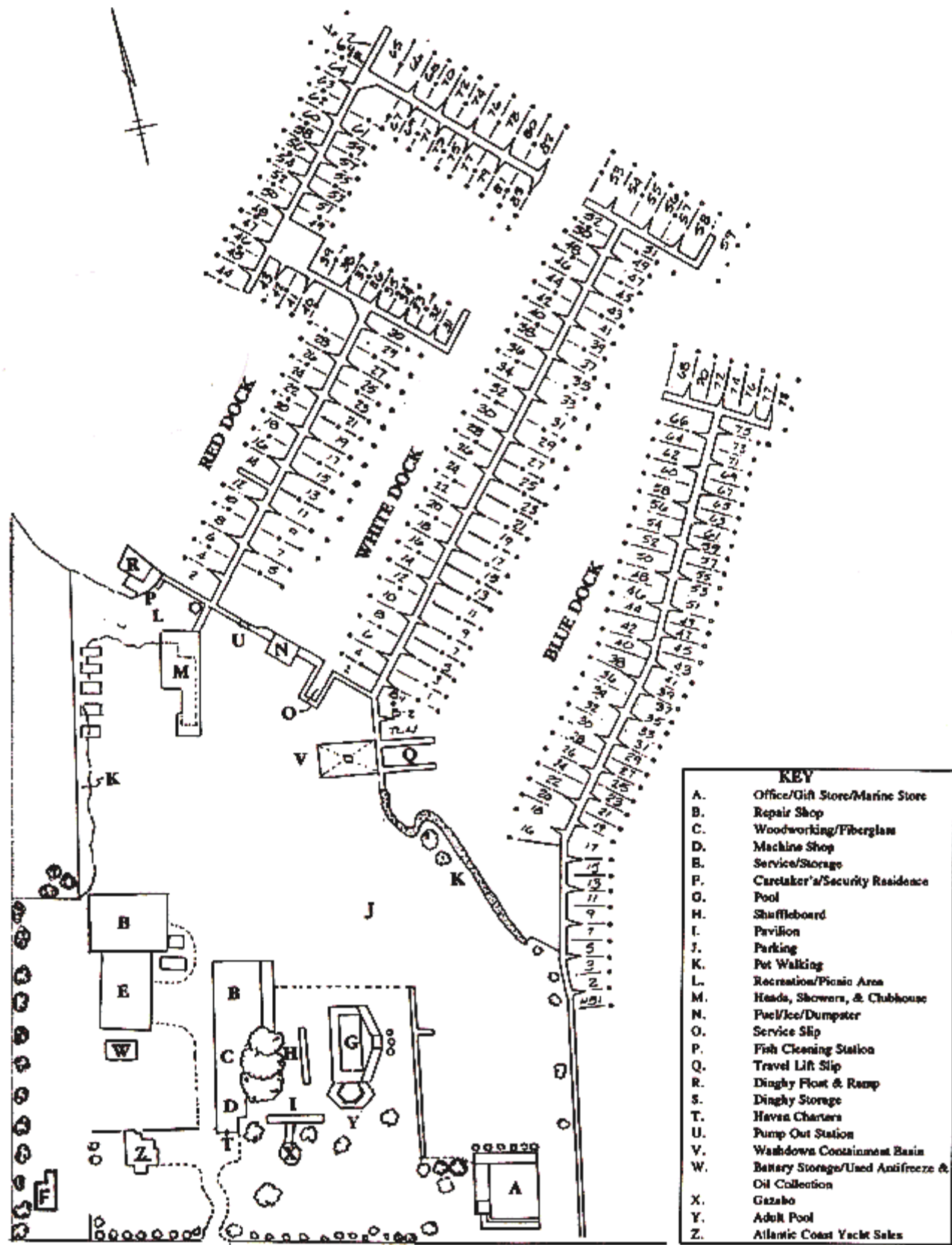
RSVP by October 1st



DIRECTIONS

From the north (Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York)–Take I-95 south to 896S (Middletown). Go about 15 miles to 301S at Middletown. Travel 8 miles to 290 exit (Galena / Chestertown); go 4 miles straight through light (onto 213S), then 5.5 miles more to 298S. Make a right turn (across from Vonnie's) and continue through Fairlee to the intersection of 20S. Bear right onto 20, proceed about 7 miles to Rock Hall. HAVEN HARBOUR MARINA is about 1 mile south of the traffic light in Rock Hall, on the right.

From Washington and Baltimore–Cross Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Take 50 until it branches off. Bear left onto 301N. Bear right under overpass onto 213N through Centreville, Church Hill and Chestertown. In Chestertown, turn left at 291S (5th traffic light after bridge) and proceed 1/4 mile to 20. Turn right and proceed 12 miles south on 20 to Rock Hall. HAVEN HARBOUR MARINA is about 1 mile south of the traffic light in Rock Hall, on the right.



To ALL DMASCOE MEMBERS & FRIENDS,

Once again, George Parsons has given us a rock bottom price on this fabulous menu and location!

He is billing DMASCOE just for his costs for food, and we have added a small amount for the band. But please be prepared. If we do not collect enough to cover expenses we will be passing the hat, or holding a quick 50/50 raffle at the picnic, to keep from dipping deeply into DMASCOE operating funds. (Remember, last year we were able to “subsidize” with surplus “B’more in 2004” funds.)

Below is the RSVP form.

DMASCOE PICNIC
Sunday, October 9, 2005

Name	
# Attending	_____ Adults _____ Children _____ Total
\$ Enclosed	\$ _____

Please complete and mail with your check (payable to *DMASCOE*) to...

DMASCOE
ATTN: Susan Hardinger
1004 Littlestown Pike
Suite C
Westminster, MD 21157

Please RSVP by October 1, 2005

CONCERNS & UPDATES

Opinions on Dues Increases

There has been no formal request made yet and action will require a change in NASCOE By-Laws, but DMASCOE needs to consider the need for and definite possibility of an increase in dues. Discussion is that dues will have to increase by \$10.00 per person in the next 2 or 3 years due to "rightsizing" and lower membership numbers.

What I ask you to consider is DMASCOE dues increasing to match the NASCOE increase. If you think \$10.00 in addition to your current dues would be excessive, think seriously about payroll deduction. PT's current deduction is \$2.12 and would go up to a whopping \$2.50. CED/Manager level currently pay \$3.27 and increase would be to \$3.65. That's pretty painless to help keep DMASCOE financially sound and viable. A BIG plus to payroll deduction is you don't have to remember to pay dues each year! (No one tracking you down, nagging and begging either!)

This is my perspective. I am sure there are many other workable solutions. (I tend to be rather simplistic.) This article is not intended to be a one and final proposal. Rather, I only hope to get everyone thinking. *The Dispatch* is our way of putting our thoughts out for all to consider. Please send any response/alternative solutions to Carole for future issues.

I look forward to seeing you at Rock Hall October 9th!

Kathy Whitby



Patsy has asked me, as Treasurer and Membership Chair, to give my opinion about whether or not a DMASCOE dues increase is a good thing.

I'll give you some figures based on my five years as DMASCOE Treasurer, and refer you to the current Treasurer's Report in this issue of the *Dispatch* for more specifics about this year in particular. Since I've been in office we've raised funds in just four

ways: the B'more in 2004 convention, donations, the annual auction at the state meeting, and dues.

The convention money that was left over after all bills were paid was used to replenish the DMASCOE money market account (\$564) and to start up the DMASCOE Scholarship Fund (\$2,500). That surplus was a one time thing and now it's done.

The annual auction usually brings in \$200 to \$400. Each year we send \$100 of those proceeds to the NASCOE Scholarship Fund. The rest previously went into the DMASCOE operating fund, but from 2004 on, the DMASCOE auction money will go into the DMASCOE Scholarship Fund.

Donations are sporadic, and typically involve some members including a few bucks more than their required dues when they pay by check or payroll deduction (though we do have one member who has regularly given a \$50 donation with his dues).

As you know, CEDs, FLMs and FLOs pay \$85 dues and PTs \$55. We owe NASCOE \$40 for each of our members. Therefore we "make" \$45 for each CED/FLM/FLO and \$15 for each PT who pays. If we had 100% membership (24 CEDs/FLMs/FLOs plus 54 PTs) we'd "make" \$1,890 per year. We, of course, typically don't have 100% membership in Maryland. Right now DMASCOE owes NASCOE \$2,320 for 58 members. (I haven't included Associates' dues in this discussion because it's a "pass through;" we collect \$20 and we pay NASCOE \$20.)

DMASCOE's major expense is sending our delegates to represent us at NASCOE meetings and conventions. This year our delegates' expenses total just under \$3,000.

So, you can see that we can count on bringing in less than \$2,000 a year and spending at least \$3,000 a year. Therefore, though it's not an emergency situation, it certainly seems as if we need to consider increasing our income in some way. Our expenses are not likely to decrease by a substantial amount - the closer distance to National Conventions some years

will likely be offset by increases in travel and lodging costs, for example - and we're now only paying for what our By-Laws and Constitution require us to pay for.

Should we increase dues or increase fundraising? I guess it'd better be one or the other! (Which reminds me, we have about 60 B'more cookbooks left - there's \$600 for us - and it's STILL a great cookbook. Let's sell 'em!)

I have just two final thoughts on the subject. First, I think we should assume that a NASCOE dues increase is coming, but I'm not certain that it will be coming soon. There's been talk of a NASCOE increase for the 15 years I've been a member but it hasn't happened yet. Second, I can't tell you, after

five years as Treasurer and several - intermittently - as Membership Chair, whether or not a dues increase would keep more county office employees from joining DMASCOE. I can honestly say that none of the non-members has ever told me that the monetary amount of our dues is the reason they haven't joined. I have been told by several new members (who joined when they were first hired) that they were shocked - and pleased - by the low amount, because most other employee associations or unions, or whatever, charge considerably more. Also, though DMASCOE and NASCOE represent all county office employees, not just members, our dues are not mandatory, and this has been a surprise to new members.

Susan Hardinger

NASCOE Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund Information...

DMASCOE Contributes to NASCOE Katrina Relief Fund

DMASCOE has sent a check for \$300.00 to the fund established by NASCOE to provide an extra helping hand for our members in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. There have been extensive financial and property losses for some FSA county office employees in these states, though, thankfully, no lives were lost. NASCOE will quickly pass on every cent received in this fund to the state associations for distribution as they see fit. The NASCOE Board will determine how the fund will be divided among the states based on their needs. If you would like to contribute as an individual, please make checks payable to "NASCOE Katrina Relief Fund" and mail to NASCOE Katrina Relief Fund, c/o James Thomason, 2640 Sinks Road, Caneyville, KY 42721.

Hurricane Katrina Relief

Do you have any news about our members or employees? Do you have any concerns that you would like to have addressed? Send Concerns and Updates and news from Around the States to Carole.Hill@md.usda.gov or 1004 Littlestown Pike Suite C Westminster, MD 21157.

DMASCOE/NASCOE EVENTS



NOW - DMASCOE Dues for July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006

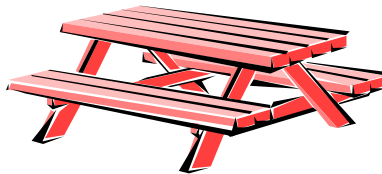
October 9 - 2nd Annual DMASCOE Picnic.

2:00 - 5:00 PM

Haven Harbour Marina in Rock Hall, MD

Entertainment by the Salem Bottom Boys, the Bluegrass Band that played at B'more 2004.

Catered by George Parsons



December 15 - Negotiation/Consultation Items must be submitted to either NASCOE Secretary, NEA Exec, or NEA Negotiation Consultant

February 1 - DMASCOE Scholarship and Awards Submission Deadline

March 1 - NE Area Scholarship and Awards Submission Deadline

March 18 - Annual DMASCOE State Meeting

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Delaware is hosting this year. Watch for more details.

To keep up with all the latest in NASCOE, be sure to visit the following websites:

Northeast Area Website at <http://www.geocities.com/nearea2002/>

NASCOE Website at <http://www.nascoe.org/>

DMASCOE Website at <http://www.geocities.com/dmascoe/>

If you do not receive the **DMASCOE DISPATCH** by e-mail and you would prefer to receive it that way, please send your e-mail address to Carole.Hill@md.usda.gov or Patsy.Wiles@md.usda.gov.

Thank You!