

# 2022 National Convention Savannah, Georgia

Greetings all!!

The weather was beautiful, and the hosts were very attentive and helpful with any questions or concerns. The fresh peaches at the registration desk were delicious! And it was interesting to see the big container ships float by the hotel window.

The Convention in Savannah, Georgia convened on Monday, August 7, 2022. We were welcomed by Marcinda Kester, our NASCOE President. There were 333 attendees with 63 first time attendees that competed against each other gathering the most signatures and asking questions of various members of the board with top prize of \$100 for a first timer award that was given at the banquet.

Congressman Sanford Bishop, Georgia, was named our Legislator of the Year. He is currently working on the 2023 Farm Bill with others in Congress for the budget to be robustly funded to staff local offices and to retain those currently employed. He gave a heartfelt thank you to CO employees and promised his continued support.

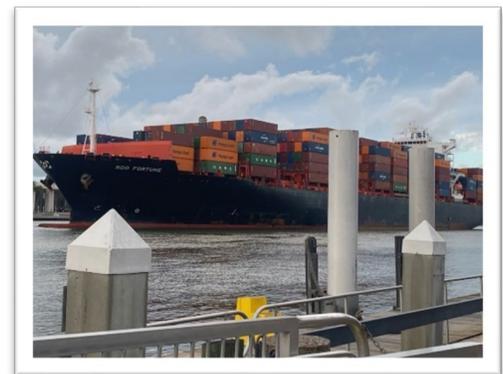
Arthur Tripp, Georgia SED, spoke to us virtually. He welcomed us and thanked all for the planning, attending, and working for FSA.

Steve Peterson also attended virtually. He thanked county offices for all the work we do and have done during the pandemic. He started out in a county office himself and is very sympathetic to what we are going through. Currently it was noted by Mr. Peterson that 86.5% of the offices are staffed at 100%, 12.9% at 50%, and 6.5% at 25% per covid guidelines.

He recommended we reach out to temps for additional help if workload is heavier than our staff can accommodate. He also noted that doing the RFS does burden the CO employee, so leadership is eager to hear suggestions from the field on needs of the CO employees and producers. However, it is an important tool that IS used in calculating workload. In the near future CARS will have receipt for service capabilities. As I am writing this, I saw that there is a training coming up for that service.

Zach Ducheneaux, FSA Administrator, was appreciative to county offices for getting out the Livestock and ERP payments so quickly. DAFO knows that the current wage scale is behind the private sector and is exploiting our passion for agriculture. They realize the training employees receive from FSA makes them attractive to outside businesses. They are working on better compensation for CO employees. Mr. Ducheneaux said that we have direct access to the administrator and that we/producer can contact him at any time to help understand programs. He said he recently had an experience helping to complete a micro loan. He thought he did well with his prior experience helping tribal members. But the application he helped submit had 15 things wrong with it! Feedback is needed on our programs. It helps them understand issues and helps assist to make changes so programs are streamlined and function better.

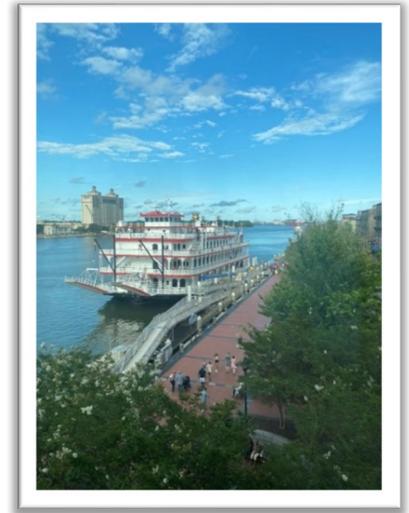
Steve Peterson and Brent Orr received the Friends of NASCOE award for their continued support of FSA.



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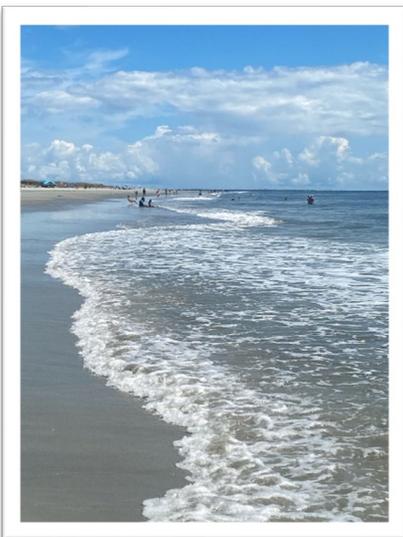
There was a virtual Q & A with Washington people including Marcus Graham (DAFO), Scott Marlow (DAFP), Bill Cobb (DAFLP), and members of their staff. Someone asked about the Xerox printers and all the problems offices have with them..., The Administrator said we should let him know about any continuing problems. Also, a request was made to please not have multiple reports due on the same date, it will be investigated. RFS was again stressed for its importance, even as they acknowledged how cumbersome it is for us to do. It was also asked about protocol for Early Dismissal Days. Washington is expecting that offices stay open and it is a management decision as to who stays – FSA &/or NRCS. They are working on people being able to “buy back” their long-term temp time for retirement calculation. There were many other good questions that can be viewed in NASCOE reports as well.

Monday was capped off with a sunset riverboat cruise. Beautiful & relaxing, and we even saw a couple dolphins swimming beside us!



Candidacy announcements were made on Tuesday morning. Marcinda Kester for NASCOE President, Joel Foster for NASCOE Vice President, Jessi Colgrove for NASCOE Treasurer and Taylor Stucki for NASCOE Secretary. On Wednesday morning, a motion was made to accept the candidacy nominations for the Officers. The motion was seconded and approved. These are the current NASCOE Officers.

Membership – membership – membership!!! It’s what keeps NASCOE going & working for our benefit. Alabama, New Hampshire, & Rhode Island are the only states with 100% membership. It’s up to all of us to recruit new members. Legislators will ask what the membership is in their state. For example, if NASCOE is pushing for us to get a raise, but only 65% of employees are members, maybe it’s not that big of an issue for us to get raises? The national office looks to employee associations for helping to develop task forces to resolve issues. Encourage associate membership – they can qualify for some of the benefits too!



We need to find out how members/prospective members want to get information – website, emails, Facebook, Instagram, texts? Communication is key and should always represent NASCOE in the best possible light.

College Station, Texas was awarded to be the hosts for the 2023 National Convention to be held August 1, 2023 through August 5, 2023, was agreed upon and awarded to Texas.

IASCOE (Illinois) submitted their bid to host the National Convention in 2024 in the Quad Cities. The bid was accepted and awarded to Illinois. It will be held either 7/31/24 to 8/3/24 or 8/7/24 to 8/10/24 depending on hotel chosen.

Microsoft Teams is available for state meetings. Anyone with a NASCOE.org email can set one up for us.

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During the Area breakout sessions, nominations were held for the Midwest Area Executive and Alternate Executive. Kayla Mattson and Amy Morman were respectfully nominated.

Asked if we thought we should get bids for other benefits companies as Dillard's contract is up in 2023. Motion was made and carried that that was a good idea. Emblems by Superior's contract is also up for re-evaluation. General consensus was it's always good to see what else is out there, even if we are happy with current providers.

Scholarship payouts have been made over 4 years, but in addition to being a logistical nightmare, kids aren't getting their

full award if they take a year off or do a 2-year program, or other situations. Recommended that they be paid off in a lump sum, or two payments max.

Hunter Moorhead spoke again about their being strength in numbers. His company, Crossroad Strategies, now employs 25 people, including Trent Lott (former senator from MS). One suggestion for the new farm bill is some kind of margin protection for crops, now that ARC/PLC seems to have run its course. He suggested we make friends with our representatives & senators. Let them know who we are, what we do, so they can support the need for FSA. Our legislative chairs can help up with talking points.

The 2023 Midwest Area Rally will be held in Michigan in March or April. More info to come. When our WI State Convention plans are set, we need to send them to Kayla & Amy.

Tuesday finished up with the scholarship auction – wow, was there a ton of stuff. Most went through the silent auction, with some larger items in the live auction. Wisconsin's contribution was a Packers soft-side cooler, Packers cap & can koozies, with some cheese, sausage & jerky from WI companies – winning bid \$80. Total auction proceeds were reported to be \$20,493.50!

Wednesday morning business began with the annual memorial presentation, then wrapped up the convention with assorted reports from the officers, area executives & associated organizations. One thing that Marcinda stressed is how GS employees are title 5, and CO employees are title 7. All too often benefits are written up for title 5, and title 7 employees are not included. NASCOE keeps an eye out, so we get the same, most recently the bereavement & parental leave. All reports given have recently been distributed.

Many people showed interest in the upcoming NWA rally, which may be an Alaskan cruise!

Neither Jodie nor Marilyn attended the banquet. Jodie was traveling home, and Marilyn did a little more touring of the beautiful city of Savannah.

And unfortunately, when we came home, we both came down with COVID. It's still out there folks – be careful!!!

Respectfully submitted by

*Jodie Groeschel & Marilyn Lentz*

