

NASCOE Now

Your News Bulletin

November 17, 2005

Membership...

FRANK BENDER

Some quick updates:

- The Cats: the cats are mother natures "Tick Vacuum". The same cats that my darling wife allows to sleep in the bed are also the cats that bring home about 10 ticks a night. And then my darling wife asks me, "Do you think the ticks can make the cats sick?" The heck with the cats – the question should be – "Do you think the ticks can make us sick?" She never asks about me. I could have a tick the size of a basketball under my arm and she will ask, "Did you change the cat's water?" I would but I cannot move my arm.
- Bernie the Guinea Pig – he is home for the holidays. He looks a little scruffy. He or she (we never did find out what Bernie is) looks like a member of a heavy metal band. If Bernie had a body piercing and a tattoo, and he/she just might under all that hair he could be the drummer with the band,
- One quick story about my wife and the FSA Tomorrow Plan. My office had a big red **X** on it - to be closed. Now I know how she gets upset so, I did not tell her right away, I wanted to let the process get started and see what congress's reactions would be. Smart on my part except, my wife thought I was a jerk. How was I supposed to know my name and office would be listed in the paper and all her friends at work would ask her when I was going to lose my job? So my wife wanted to prepare for my unemployment – which meant she was taking control of the household budget. For example:
 - The normal budget is about \$30.00 per month on cat food and treats. I spend about \$15.00 per month on beer and chips. My budget was cut by 50%. I could get the beer but I would have to eat the cat treats.
 - She was buying old Sushi. Not for the cats but for me. Not one of my better meals.

You get the point – I tell her the potential problems up front and she gets upset. I wait and see what is going to happen and she gets mad at me.

NASCOE – College Football – Membership Rankings.

This is the computer poll that factors in the college football teams in a state and that states NASCOE Membership. I am using the 2005/2006 membership numbers so if your state did not submit their dues – you are not in the running for the trophy.

#1: Alabama – everybody wants a piece of the defending champions

#2. Louisiana – Strong membership, bad offense.

#3. Minnesota – Strong push this year, lucky that they play in an easy division.

#4. Utah – Always strong on the membership – overlooked. Needs a big win.

There is a formal appeal filed by the folks from South Dakota. They are looking for a college football team. Membership is best in the nation – they want to know if a local Pop Warner team can count.

The rules committee will be making a decision on this appeal.

The following is from a new member from Indiana.

My name is Chris Hare. I am a CED in Jasper County Indiana and have been employed with FSA for 3 years now. I attended my first national convention for NASCOE this year in South Dakota. The experience that I had was incredible.

When I signed up 3 years ago I really had no idea what I signed up for, except that it was our employee association and the more members the better.

After attending the convention in South Dakota, I have never felt a sense of belonging to the right group of people than I did out there. Titles have no meaning at a convention. Whether you're a PT, CED, DD, Program Specialist, A.O., SED, Retiree, or even a head chief from Washington D.C. we were all there with a common goal. Like any sports team, each one of us brings something to the field. We all crawled out of our corners in the nation to come together to accomplish goals. I can recall chills running up my neck during role call, as I sat there, just one individual of approximately 700, and watching the South Dakota employees full of energy come into the room. This was worth it. I attended every Legislative session to become more aware of the issues that face us as employees and at the same time meeting new people who have the same concerns.

With the tumultuous year we have had with the possibilities of offices closures, this was the time to be involved. I can honestly say that everyone who I met those five days are determined, caring, dedicated, hard working, and full of fun. This is why I will be at Cleveland next year for the NASCOE national convention in 2006. I would encourage any one, who has never attended a convention, or hasn't been to one in awhile, now is the time to, so GET INVOLVED! I know from experience you will have fun doing it.

I would like to thank Chris for taking the time to submit the above item. If you have something that relates to NASCOE membership – send it to me.

Some Membership Did You Know Items?

1. That if you are a member and you have a child graduating from high school or that is in college you are eligible to apply for a NASCOE scholarship. Each year NASCOE provides one \$1,500 scholarship per area plus one of the area scholarship winners will be selected for an additional \$2,500 NASCOE scholarship. You have to be a member to apply.
2. That for every 5% increase in state membership your state will receive 5% more in financial assistance to pay for your state delegates to attend the National Convention.
3. The NASCOE Constitution reads – “A state cannot be an affiliate of NASCOE and be afforded all rights, privileges, etc, of a state affiliate unless the state has in excess of 50% of its eligible members as members of the state association” The bottom line is - if your state association membership is not GREATER than 50% then your state association can not vote on NASCOE business or receive financial assistance with NASCOE meetings.

FRANK BENDER NASCOE NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CHAIR NY083fb@aol.com

**Cathy Blackurn
Becky Zirpel
Nadene Gaynor
Dave Stratton
Wilbert Herr**

**Southeast Area Membership Chair, Alabama
Northwest Area Membership Chair, South Dakota
Southwest Area Membership Chair, Colorado
Northeast Area Membership Chair, Pennsylvania
Midwest Area Membership Chair, Indiana**

Bonnie Heinzman, Vice President

Holidays – The holiday season is quickly approaching. Within the week most of us will be sitting with family or friends enjoying a Thanksgiving meal and giving thanks for our blessings. The Holiday Season tends to bring out the good in most of us. Unfortunately, it can also bring out the bad in some situations. Sometimes the added stress of scheduling annual leave, purchasing gifts, cooking, wrapping, paying the bills, etc. can elevate a situation to where folks need some help dealing with it. We have a couple of places where folks can obtain help, guidance, or insight into handling workplace situations that may be troubling. The USDA Employee Assistance Program at 888-290-4327 is one. Another is a Workplace Violence Counselor at 202-418-8963. I hope none of us will need to use either of these services this Holiday Season, but if needed please remember they are available.

New Job Performance Evaluations Training – I am embarrassed to admit that I could not sit through the teleconference training on the new Performance Evaluation System. I have received several comments on the training format, content, handling of questions that were posed by the participants, and other aspects of the training. If you sat through it and have questions that were not answered, would like to comment on the format of the training, or would like to comment on the actual Performance Evaluation System; we want to hear from you. Comments should be sent to your Area Exec.

Negotiations and Convention Questions – NASCOE Officers and Execs will be traveling to WDC to visit with management December 12 & 13, 2005. The main purpose of the visit is to follow up on 2005 Negotiations and current concerns of our members. If you have a question or concern about 2005 Negotiations, Questions from the 2005 NASCOE Convention, or any other matters that you would like NASCOE to address during our visit PLEASE contact any of the officers or your Area Exec as soon as possible. Again, we want to hear from you.

Suspensions, Dismissals, OTI's, Reprimands, Etc. – Most everyone is aware that the procedures for Adverse Actions have changed. The changes were effective August 1, 2005. Unfortunately, updated versions of Handbook 22-PM reflecting these changes have not been received in our FSA field offices. This can leave our membership in a bit of a dilemma. If you have a reason to question what your rights might be you may not want to contact your STO for guidance/information. If you find yourself in this situation and you believe NASCOE can assist you, please contact your State President to request NASCOE's assistance. The process for requesting assistance can be read at www.nascoe.org under the Vice President's page.

Thanksgiving - Turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, gravy, dressing, and pumpkin pie enjoyed with good friends and family – what more could we ask? While we are enjoying our holiday let's all remember to say a prayer for our military who are busy defending our way of life and can't enjoy the holiday with family. Please accept my sincere thanks to each of you for your support of NASCOE, and my wish for a wonderful, healthy, happy holiday season for each of you.

Benefits...

Darrell Jones, NW Area Benefits Chair

Becky Zirpel, National Benefits Chair, has asked me to update members on how to access discount tickets to SeaWorld, Busch Gardens, Adventure Island, Sesame Place, and Water Country USA. Normally, one has to sign up for membership through the Adventure Club to get access to the tickets. I have already done this, so all you have to do is link to this website:
http://www.adventureclubonline.com/swo_newest_offers.html (every blank is actually an underline).

Once in the site, click on the ticket and another window comes up. Simply print as many tickets as you need on a color printer, and you are in business. Currently, the tickets available expire as of Dec. 31, 2005. Hopefully, an updated version will be there as of Jan. 1, 2006. We will see.

You can use this directly, or you are still welcome to work through your Area and State Benefit Chairs to obtain them.

Membership has its BENEFITS! **Becky Zirpel, NASCOE Benefits Chairperson**
Important Update

I have just received a packet from JM Marketing. Jim Mace has begun sending these packets out to the County Offices. This is for an open season for purchasing Life Insurance. This is the first time this has been offered since the beginning in 1993. Open enrollment runs from November 15, 2005 for 60 days and a special 30-day open enrollment beginning with each state convention in 2006 attended by a representative of J. M. Marketing. If your state does not have a state convention you should consider asking for this additional enrollment time during the area rally or at another time that your State would be having a meeting and the State Association is allowed to speak at it.

This is a one-time offer by Allstate Insurance Company through JM Marketing. It is a great benefit because this is the time to purchase life insurance with no health questions required. The saving for the membership is a 20% cost. Non-members would be paying a higher cost ranging from \$82 - \$184 a year. If a person is in need of life insurance coverage this is worth paying your dues just for this one thing.

This new special new Guaranteed Issue Life Insurance has a guaranteed interest earning of 4.5%. There are only 3 questions to answer:

- Do you work 20 hours a week? (Answer must be yes)
- Do you have AIDS? (Answer must be no)
- Have you smoked cigarettes within the last 12 months? (Non smokers have a lower rate).

Please be watching for these packets in the County Office.

The 2006 FSAFEDS Open Season! Open Season, November 14 to December 12, 2005.
Take a look at several program enhancements.

1) You will have 14 ½ months to use your money! You no longer have to use or lose your money within the calendar year. For the 2006 Benefit Period, you will have until March 15, 2007 to incur eligible expenses. Of course, that assumes you will enroll in a Health Care and/or Dependent Care account(s) during the FSAFEDS Open Season. Everybody has to enroll during this Open Season - even current participants!

2) The annual Health Care FSA maximum will be \$5,000 for 2006! That's higher than it has ever been.

3) The claims filing deadline has been extended to May 31 - - now, you have an extra month to submit that shoebox full of receipts! For 2006 participants, that means you will have until May 31, 2007 to submit your expenses.

4) The "My Account Summary" web page that's available to each participant has been redesigned to make it a little easier to view the status of your claims.

Attention Current 2005 Participants: If you want to participate in 2006 you MUST RE-ENROLL. Enrollments do NOT carry forward year-to-year. See www.FSAFEDS.com (<https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/index.asp>)

With Veterans' Day just passed; I thought it would be appropriate to share this bit of information with all of you. Thanks to *all* the vets over *all* the years for the freedoms we enjoy now!



On Jeopardy the other night, the final question was How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns ----- All three missed it

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?

21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.

2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?

21 seconds for the same reason as answer number 1

3. Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.

4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time and if not, why not?

He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.

5. How often are the guards changed?

Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30." Other requirements of the Guard: They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the

rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform {fighting} or the tomb in any way. After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.

The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt. There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror.

The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are: President Taft, Joe E. Lewis {the boxer} and Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy, {the most decorated soldier of WWII} of Hollywood fame.

Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

ETERNAL REST GRANT THEM O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.

In 2003 as Hurricane Isabelle was approaching Washington, DC, our US Senate/House took 2 days off with anticipation of the storm. On the ABC evening news, it was reported that because of the dangers from the hurricane, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment. They respectfully declined the offer, "No way, Sir!" Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment; it was the highest honor that can be afforded to a serviceperson. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930.