

# GACOE GAZETTE



*“OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE GEORGIA  
ASSOCIATION OF FSA COUNTY  
OFFICE EMPLOYEES”*

*Sandersville, GEORGIA  
MARCH 2009*



Greetings Everyone,

Despite all the happenings for the beginning of 2009, GACOE remains strong! It has remained strong because of its members. Sure, we have had problems, but because of the ultimate goal of representing GACOE's membership, and employees' benefits, we have faced our problems and have overcome them. It is time that GACOE as a whole moves forward, facing each challenge as it presents itself, and making decisions that reflect the entire membership's wellbeing.

GACOE has an opportunity to become a part of all the changes that are taking place in our workplace. We can look forward to meeting new people, sharing our concerns, ideas, and even solutions with them. The Acting SED, David Laster, is very open to GACOE, very interested in our purpose, and has a willingness to listen. The State Office Staff is also very supportive of GACOE. We need to keep our lines of communication open, and remember that GACOE's purpose is to promote the general welfare of employees within the scope of USDA and State FSA Committee rules, regulations and policies.

By the time you read this we will have attended NASCOE's Legislative Conference in DC, March 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Our visits to the Congressional leaders are very important to NASCOE/GACOE as a means of promoting employee benefits. Joe Hester, Pam Dennis, Keith Willis, Denise Otto, Carolyn Taylor, Kenny Bennett (producer), and I attended. Additional information will be forthcoming.

I wish to invite all employees to your convention on St. Simons Island at the King and Prince Resort, September 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. Plans are not finalized, but the convention is coming together to be a very interesting affair. Mark these dates on your calendar and start making plans to attend. Come and see how NASCOE/GACOE works for you.

This is the time for employees to get on board and support GACOE which was founded to ensure county office employees were given the benefits allowed other government employees. Take the time to talk to your district representative about joining, they are in place to answer your questions, listen to your ideas, and help in any way.

I am always available for any comments, good or bad, so let me hear from you. United we can make a difference.

Barbara

**Vice President's Report**  
**By: Denise Otto**

HAPPY SPRING EVERYONE! As we roll right on into spring, there are many things we have on our minds. Taking DCP applications, new 902's, CRP(ongoing), NAP, Acreage Reports, where we are going on vacation this year, will summer break ever get here and the list goes on and on and on. Spring is a time where we need to start thinking about gearing up for the Convention. There are many things that have to be done to prepare for such an event. We will be sending out raffle rickets for you to sell soon, also please take the time to send out a letter in your county to buying points, banks, crop insurance agents, etc.... asking for donations to help with the cost of the convention and scholarships. We will be sending out an example letter for you to revise to fit your counties needs. It only takes a few minutes to do this as it is very important for our convention. Also, try to be collecting door prizes and auction prizes as you see people in the community. Get these prizes to your District Representatives as soon as you can. Folks please come and join us for this year's convention, I think it is a trying time and we need all the representation we can possibly get. Details about the Convention are on the GACOE website and more details will be updated as the months go by.

I had a great time in Washington at the Legislative Conference; I feel we had some good appointments with the Representative's and Senator's of Georgia. Some were very concerned about our agency and what we can do. I do want to say, as I have said before that if you ever get the chance to go to a Legislative Conference, do. This is a wonderful experience not only for GACOE but also for you to see how our government really works up there in Washington.

I would like to say thank you for your generosity, while I served as Secretary for 6 years. This was a great experience for me. I congratulate Delores Hartley on becoming our new secretary and I know she will do a wonderful job! As your New Vice President, I will try my best to help you all in any way possible. Please call me anytime.

God Bless and Happy Easter to you all!

## **Secretary Report**

*A few days ago we were just trying to survive in the colder temperatures and wishing for spring. Hopefully it is on its way. Trees are budding (pollen is killing some of us) and spring flowers are popping out. Hopefully we all have revived and ready to complete this year's chores with a super smile and our attitudes better than ever. Most of us have the mind set of "all of this work- how will I get it all completed – I wish DCP sign up was behind us and please don't forget new payment limitation. Guess what – this too will pass and we will do a good job. Don't wish your life away. Stop, take a deep breath and smell the roses.*

*Two good ways later in the year to relax the NASCOE convention in Gatlinburg, TN - Check out NASCOE website and go for it. Also, GACOЕ convention will be in September at St Simons. Information will be coming out soon on the GACOЕ Convention. We all need some R & R. Take a chance and go for it. Hope to see you there.*

*RASCOE has been on my mind for awhile. I joined RASCOE last year for the 1<sup>st</sup> time as an associate member and I feel this organization is just as important as GACOЕ. GACOЕ over the years have provided all of us as employees some great benefits. If you don't know all of these benefits - I dare you to check them out. To coin the phrase, "We come a long way baby". RASCOE members are trying to help improve benefits when we retire. Check this out, read June Faulk's message in the Gazette and think about joining. It's easy - need help call anyone of the executive committee.*

*Thank you for your support in electing me as Secretary. I will always strive to do my best for you as secretary. Just let me know if I can help in any way.*

*Delores V Hartley  
Secretary*

Congratulations  
to the  
Distinguished Service Awards  
for  
Georgia

SERVICE TO GACOE/NASCOE

ROGER SWAIN

SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

DEBORAH GREGORY

**Congratulations**

**Roger Swain**

**Winning  
Southeast Area  
Service to  
NASCOE**

## Legislative Conference



**Pictured left to right: Joe Hester, Barrow's Aid, Keith Willis, Pam Dennis, John Barrows, Denise Otto, Barbara Jackson, Carolyn Taylor.**

### Legislative Committee Report By: Joe Hester

GACOE Executive Committee Members went to Washington DC to participate in the NASCO legislative conference March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. The group included Kenny Bennett a farmer from Colquitt County. Executive Committee members attending were Barbara Jackson, Denise Otto, Pam Dennis, Carolyn Taylor, Keith Willis and Joe Hester. Cliff Fussell, Southeast Area NASCO representative also attended

The legislative conference began the afternoon of the 17<sup>th</sup> with a review and discussion of the "talking points" which we were to cover with our elected officials. The talking points were as follows:

- Benefits:
- Have FERS sick leave treated the same as CSRS sick leave for retirement purposes.
  - Increase the government contribution to health insurance.
  - Keep 3 year high for retirement calculation rather than a 5 year high.
  - A self plus one as an option for health insurance coverage.

Raise the dependent care coverage age from 22 to 25 if the dependant remains in school.

Allow GS and CO employees to donate leave to each other.

Eliminate the Government Pension Offset / Windfall Elimination.

Add Whistle Blower Protection for CO Employees.

## USDA Modernization

Include all levels of USDA, WDC to COF. This will give better results.

Have one undersecretary for local service center agencies rather than the current two. This will eliminate overlapping administrative teams at the national level, reduce the computer software and hardware systems from two to one, and allow savings in space, office equipment and office services.

Return Conservation administration to FSA; keep all technical conservation duties with NRCS.

Eliminate duplicate USDA duties such as acreage reports to multiple agencies, FSA, NASS, and RMA.

Place FSA in charge of the Animal Identification System information collection.

Place more of the USDA employees into the grass roots areas thus reducing funding by moving personnel out of “the high cost living” area of WDC.

Our group was included in conference with our legislative consultant, Bob Redding due to Georgia’s elected official having important committee and sub-committee assignments. Mr. Redding gave the groups pointers on specific items to discuss with our Congressmen and Senators.

The next morning we dashed off to our first meeting with Congressman John Barrow. We sat down with the Congressman and he was very receptive to our concerns for benefits and the talking points regarding USDA Modernization and the Animal ID system. Congressman Barrow was very positive and said he supported House Ag Committee Chairman Peterson’s efforts to reorganize USDA.

Next stop was Congressman John Marshall’s office. We met with the Congressman’s Ag Aide and covered all our talking points. The aide assured our group that he would

pass our concerns on to the Congressman and he stated Congressman Marshal has a close working relationship with Chairman Peterson.

Next stop was Congressman Sanford Bishop's office. We met with the Congressman's Ag Aide, Michael J. Reed. We covered our talking points and Mr. Reed became very interested in the requests we had regarding benefits. He promised to pass our concerns on to Congressman Bishop.

Next stop was Senator Saxby Chambliss' office. We had a photo taken with Senator's Chambliss and Isakson. The Senate was in session and the Senators were unable to meet with our group but we did have time to give a condensed presentation of our talking points to Senator Chambliss' Ag Aide, Matt Coley.

We had a quick lunch in the Senate Buildings cafeteria then split up with Carolyn, Barbara and Keith going to Congressman David Scott's office and Cliff, Pam, Denise, Kenny and I, going to Congressman Jack Kingston's Office. Both Congressmen met with our groups and were receptive to our talking points. Congressman Scott was very interested in reorganizing USDA and the benefit talking points. Congressman Kingston listened carefully and was non committal.

During each visit Kenny Bennett explained his concerns about migrant labor and the salmonella scare that devastated his tomato crop sales last year. Kenny encouraged the congressmen and their aides to utilize the FSA Offices as much as possible. The congressmen were very receptive to Kenny's concerns.

Keith and I stayed over to attend a reception held by NASCOE for the Congressmen and Senator's and their aides. The rest of the group ran to catch their flight out to Atlanta. The reception was very well attended and allowed the Association members a chance to talk to the aides or Congressmen. Two aides from Congressman Kingston's office attended.

The legislative conference was very affective in my opinion as this gives the members a chance to voice our concerns directly to our Senator's and Congressman.

**GA-RASCOE  
GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED ASCS-FSA OFFICE EMPLOYEES**

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It's a little late to be saying Happy New Year but better late than never so.... Happy New Year!

I know that it is not a very happy time for so many of our friends and neighbors as well as our selves. Those of you reading this are still employed, still have your health benefits along with a healthy tax break us retirees call "premium conversion", and hopefully you still have your health so you can count yourselves blessed as can retirees. However, immediately upon retirement you lose that tax break and join the ranks of us retirees who are not blessed with that benefit. So, we encourage you to support NASCOE, GACOE and RASCOE in extending that premium conversion benefit into retirement.

With the economy in the state that it is in, it is just natural that the president and congress are looking for ways to cut costs. Below are some items that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is looking at as a means of cost-cutting. If any of these are enacted, it will mean a reduction in your "take home" pay and when you retire your annuity. These items are presented by *The Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University*.

\* *Adopt a voucher plan for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.* Currently, the government pays 72 % of the average premium of plans participating in FEHBP, but no more than 75% of any single plan's premium. CBO recommends replacing that with a flat fee. Under its plan, the government would offer a voucher to cover the first \$4,300 of an individual's premium, or the first \$9,900 of a family's premium. The government's contribution would rise annually at the rate of inflation. CBO estimates that premiums would increase three times faster than inflation and the government would save \$13 billion over five years. Such a change also would create incentives for federal employees to switch to lower cost plans and for providers to hold down premiums, according to CBO.

\* *Base federal retirees' health benefits on length of service.* The government's share of FEHBP premiums for federal employees who retire in 2010 or later would be cut by 2 percentage points for every year of service less than 20 years. For a retiree with 15 years of service, for example, the government's contribution would decline from 72% of the average premium to 62%. About 14% of employees who retire from federal service and opt to continue FEHBP coverage have fewer than 20 years of service, CBO estimates. Reducing the government's contribution to FEHBP premiums for such retirees could save \$1.1 billion over 10 years, according to the report.

\* *Subsidize Medicare Part B premiums for federal retirees.* the government would begin subsidizing Medicare Part B premiums for federal retirees who currently pay for the coverage. In return, FEHBP health plans would reduce their coverage of Medicare cost-sharing by an equivalent amount. CBO's rationale is that exposing FEHBP enrollees with Medicare coverage to cost-sharing would lead them to forgo some services that have little or no expected benefits. Exercising this option would decrease Medicare spending by an estimated \$3.9 billion over five years and discretionary spending by an estimated \$60 million over that same time period, CBO calculates.

**\* Allow outside people and firms to purchase health insurance through FEHBP. The government would open FEHBP to individuals and employers outside of government, but unlike federal employees, these participants would be required to pay the full cost of premiums. To avoid people waiting to join the program until they needed health care services, the option would introduce an annual open-enrollment period similar to that for federal employees. This would not save the government any money. In fact, it would increase the federal deficit by an estimated \$1 billion over 10 years, CBO says.**

**Now as never before is the time for employees and retirees and their organizations to be more active than ever. It is doubtful if all the above items are enacted but we know that it is only fair that we do our part to help the economy and those who are hurting but at the same time we do not want to see much of what we have worked for taken away from us. It is imperative that we “get on the ball” before it is too late and become “activists” in support of our own cause.**

**# # # # # # #**

**Keeping retirees informed is a priority of RASCOE. We need to be aware of what Congress is looking at and changes they are thinking about making to our benefits. In this regard, the more members we have the more influence we have with our congressional delegation. Won't you consider joining RASCOE as an associate member? Dues for associate members are \$20 per year.**

## GACOE MEMBERSHIP

*As membership chairperson, I would like to encourage everyone to join GACOE. Our organization works very hard to obtain special benefits for each and every employee. Just recently the House approved the retirement reform measure. This gives FERS employees credit for their unused sick leave towards their retirement. GACOE thru NASCOE has worked very hard to get this passed. Another benefit is you are eligible to purchase insurance from J M Marketing. Please look at our web page for a list of all benefits.*

*Wanda Mccurdy*

**REMINDER: IF YOU'RE A NEW EMPLOYEE. YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS FREE THE FIRST YEAR. MEMBERSHIP BEGINS ON JANUARY 1 OF EACH YEAR.**

**IF YOU'VE BEEN HIRED AFTER JANUARY 1 PLEASE SUBMIT INFORMATION TO WANDA MCCURDY, MEMBERSHIP CHAIRPERSON AT [WANDA.MCCURDY@GA.USDA.GOV](mailto:WANDA.MCCURDY@GA.USDA.GOV).**

**INFORMATION TO BE SUBMITTED NAME; COUNTY AND DATE YOU WERE HIRED. THIS WILL ALLOW A RECORD OF MEMBERSHIP.**

**1<sup>ST</sup> TIME MEMBERS (IF USING RAY ROLL DEDUCTION) PLEASE REMEMBER TO SUBMIT YOUR PAY ROLL DEDUCTION FORM (FSA-444) TO THE STATE OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT. AND A COPY TO WANDA MCCURDY.**

**STRIVING FOR 100% IN GEORGIA**

## 2009 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

GACOE annually offers the Vicki Cannady Memorial Scholarship and the Robert F. Williams, Jr. Memorial Scholarship in memory of our lost co-workers to provide financial assistance to deserving individuals to continue their education. GACOE awards four scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each.

The committee had a tough job this year, but it was great to receive so many wonderful scholarship applications. All applications were submitted to the Southeast Area Scholarship Committee for competition in the SE Area Scholarship Award.

After much thought, review of applications, and discussion by the committee, the committee is proud to present the following winners:

### *Vicki Cannady Memorial Scholarship Winners*

**Lindsey C. Hall**, daughter of Terri Bolton, PT in Jenkins County. Lindsey will be a 2009 Honor Graduate of Jenkins County High School and plans to attend Georgia Southern University in the fall.

**Jimmy C. Jenkins, III**, son of Katy S. Jenkins, PT in Screven County. Jimmy will be a 2009 Honor Graduate of Screven County High School. Jimmy has been accepted at Augusta State University, Georgia Southern University, Armstrong Atlantic State University, and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

### *Robert F. Williams, Jr. Scholarship Winners*

**Joseph Ashton Hall**, son of Darby Hall, CED in Berrien County. Ashton will be a 2009 Honor Graduate of Thomas County Central High School. Ashton has been accepted at Georgia Southern University and Valdosta State University.

**Casey Norman**, son of Tammie Norman, PT in Wilkes-Lincoln County. Casey will graduate in May from Georgia Military College and plans to continue his education at Middle Georgia College.

GACOE is happy to have a small part in the continued education of these young people and wish them success as they pursue their goals for the future. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

*Jo Lynn Futch, Chairperson  
Scholarship Committee*

Dear GACOE Members:

Hello Everyone!! We are gearing up for the Convention in September and getting ready for donations, selling, and auction items. GACOE Committee members are asking you to sell to help with Convention Cost. The tickets are for a 110 CC ATV-4-Wheeler and \$500.00 Cash. We are selling them for 1 for \$5.00 and 5 for \$20.00. Your District Representative will be passing tickets out shortly. Please try to sell as many as you can and if you need more contact your District Representative. The convention will be in St. Simons Island at the King and Prince on September 10-13. GACOE hopes that you all will come, relax and enjoy yourselves. The Convention Info is on the GACOE website [www.gacoe.org](http://www.gacoe.org) For those of you who did not make it to the All South Rally last year in March you missed a great time. This place is beautiful!!

**PLEASE MAKE A NOTE:** We are going to award the seller of the ticket \$50.00 a prize so if you sell the ticket write your name and phone number on the back and you just may be the lucky one!! Also, We would like to thank Kyle Brown for getting a great deal on the 4 wheeler for us to raffle.

**YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!!!  
GACOE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**"LAUGHTER IS GOD'S SUNSHINE".  
"TAKE TIME TO LAUGH FOR IT IS THE MUSIC OF THE SOUL".**



**What's Happening in  
Your District????**

**DISTRICT NEWS**

**Don't let your District or County Office be absent from future issues. Send items of interest to your District Representative or directly to the GACOE GAZETTE Editor at the address on the back over.**

**Thanks**

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## District 1A

### CARROLL COUNTY

Brenda Phillips, PT, Carroll County will welcome her 3<sup>rd</sup> grandchild, a girl, in early July. The proud parents to be are Brandon and Dawn Phillips of Canton.

Ronnie Morris, COR, will be a first time Grandpa the last of June. It will be a boy (Rex Bailey Spiva). Ronnie is very excited and looking forward to his new grandbaby.

Everyone in the office wishes Pam Wilkes the best of luck in the COT program.

Carroll County has a great big welcome for Jackie Akins! Jackie and her family live on a farm in Alabama (we won't hold that against her). She enjoys horseback riding in her spare time.

Gigi (Gilda) Wilson, PT, recently hosted a birthday party for her three grandchildren; Ashlyn – 13, Nathan – 9, and Jackson – 6. A good time was had by all including the 35 guests!

Carolyn Taylor, CED, celebrated her St. Patrick's Day birthday in Washington, DC attending the NASCOE legislative conference. It was a busy trip but a lot of fun.

### WALKER COUNTY

Carol Defore, PT, celebrated her birthday on March 19. According to Todd Nice, CED, the coconut cake was great!

## District 1B News

### JACKSON COUNTY

Pam Hunter (PT - Farm Loan Team) is a new grandmother of a bouncing baby girl named Chloe Jones. She weighed 7 lbs and was 19 ½ inches long. Pam states that Chloe is spoiled rotten already!

Congratulations to Dianne Westmorland – Sorry to see you leave the district, but glad to see you in the State Office.

**“Anger is a condition in which the tongue works faster than the mind”.**

## DISTRICT 2



The CED's from District 2 gave Freddie a going away from District Party. Roger Swain cooked fish and they were delicious! They also had a cake made especially for Freddie. Good Luck in your new office Freddie!

#### Webster-Stewart

Abbie Otto, daughter of Denise Otto, PT in Webster-Stewart, has been hard at it playing soccer for the Terrell Academy JV Eagles. They have won their first 2 games and are eager for the next. Abbie also made the Headmaster's Honor Roll for the 3rd Nine Weeks.

LeAnn Swain, daughter of Roger Swain will be getting married to Chip Watson. Roger, Ann and LeAnn have been working hard on wedding plans in hopes for a beautiful day.

The wedding will be held at the Quails Landing at Little River Plantation in Ashburn, Georgia on May 9th.

Denise Otto had a great time at the Legislative Conference on March 17-18 in Washington DC. We had some very good visits. This is my second time attending and I would like to tell all members that this is a great experience and is what GACOE, NASCOE is all about. "If you ever get a chance to go, Please do! You won't regret it one bit."

### **District 3**

District 3 would like to welcome Pat Ray to the district. She has been around for awhile in district 2 but now she has graciously made her way to Madison Service Center as CED. Welcome Pat Hope you're having loads of fun.

#### Morgan

Pat Ray, CED in Morgan County has a new grandson. Tuck Owen Ray, born March 2, 2009. He was welcomed into this world by his twin brothers, Russ and Riley Ray, age 5 ½.

#### Laurens-Wilkinson

Heather Milks Optional Level 8 gymnast with Vidalia Gymnastics Center recently completed the 2008-2009 competitive season, she finished first on Vault, Bars and All Around several times early in the season, but had a foot injury late in the season. At state on March 29 she got the Bronze (3rd) on Bars and placed 6th on Vault. Heather has moved from level 5 last year in December (07) to Level 8 which is a big jump and she is looking forward to her next season starting in September.

Hunter Milks is competing with the Twin Oaks Youth Sport shooting Team under the Scholastic Clay Target Program – He had his first competition on March 28 and took first place. Hopefully he will continue to be successful for the rest of this season.

Hunter and Heather are the children of Lisa and Greg Milks. (Lisa is a PT in Laurens County)

## Jefferson

Jefferson County hosted District 3's Christmas Party. Everyone had a great time. District collected can goods for needy families in area. We had several retirees to join the day, Carolyn Langford, Warren; Ponda Johnson, McDuffie; Malcolm Mobley, Washington/Johnson; Billy Sirmons, Laurens/Wilkerson.

We all enjoyed the gathering – Thanks Jefferson County



Penny McNeely, Antonia Smith, Lazelda Williams, Teresa Snider, Lisa Otis – Louisville Service Center

## Putnam

Sgt. Jody Reel, daughter in law of Judi Moore, PT in Putnam County will be deploying to Afghanistan in April. She has started the first phase of training at Ft. Stewart; the second phase will be at Camp Atterbury in Edinburg, Indiana. Jody will be in Afghanistan for 10 months. Please keep her in your prayers.

## Washington

Faye Yarbrough, PT has 2 of her 3 children back in school. Clay and Jennifer both decided to return to school and to pursue a nursing degree. Clay is going full time and doing great. Jennifer on the hand works a full time job with 2 active boys decided to return to school at night. Guess What??- - This quarter she had a 4.0 grade point average.

Faye's husband Trippi has decided to hang it up with the Department of Corrections. He will be retiring the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.

Wilkes

Tammy Norman, PT and family will be cruising to Mexico the last week of March.

Tammy's son Dylan is playing baseball for the Lincoln County Red Devils. While son Casey has completed classes at Georgia Military College in Augusta and will be graduating May 2, 2009.

## **District Four**

### **Jenkins**

Barbara Mobley, CED, is still at home recovering from stem cell replacement.

Dustin Hall, son of Terri Bolton, graduated from Georgia Southern University in December with a Bachelor of Science degree in Construction Management. Dustin was then hired by Norfolk Southern as a Management Trainee/Track Supervisor in Lexington, KY

Lindsey Hall, daughter of Terri Bolton will be an honor graduate from Jenkins County High School in May. Lindsey will be attending Georgia Southern University in the fall. Also, Lindsey has been selected to receive the Vicki Cannady Memorial Scholarship.

Dillon Fields, son of Kellie Fields, was selected to play on the Jenkins County C Team Baseball team.

### **Screven**

PT, Emily Flanders has a new grandson. Walker Andrew Saxon was born 3/23/09 and weighed in at 7lbs, 7 ozs. Congratulations Emily!!

PT, Katy Jenkins son, Jimmy Jenkins III, received one of the GACOE Vicki Cannady Memorial scholarships this year. He will graduate as an honor graduate on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and will be going into the medical field.

### **Tattnall Evans**

Everyone in the Tattnall Evans office has scheduled their vacations for 2009. They feel these vacations are going to be needed!

PT, Carmen Guy's son, Landyn, will graduate from Vidalia High School on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. He plans to attend East Georgia College in the fall.

Belinda Thompson's daughter, Callie, has recorded a CD and will soon be shooting a music video. Belinda is planning her retirement.

### **Bulloch**

Bulloch County congratulates Julia Sharpe as she enters COT training.

Welcome to Beth Spence, temporary. Beth comes to FSA with experience as she has her own herd of cows and helps her husband with his farming operation. Also they were named Bulloch County's Farm Family of the year for 2009. Welcome Beth!

Bulloch County enjoyed COT, Teresa Bryan during the month of March. Teresa will make any county a great CED; we wish her well in her new journey.

### **Emanuel**

Emanuel County is so happy to have Cathy Barlow as a new PT. Delois Jenkins retired in January after 30 years service. Cathy has been a part of FSA for 20 years having worked in Evans and Tattnall County.

Delois Jenkins retired in January after 30 years service. The Emanuel County FSA Office honored Delois Jenkins on January 2nd with a reception at the office with farmers and friends attending. On January 3rd the office staff honored Delois with a luncheon at Flat Creek Lodge. She was presented with a 30 year certificate and a monetary gift from co-workers in the office and District 4.

### **Effingham**



I can't believe how time has flown by. My son, Mason Thomas Brant, will be one on May 28th of this year. It seems like just yesterday that he was born and we brought him home. It has been an amazing experience this first year. He has grown so fast, said his first words, discovered his hands, toes, fingers, and so much more! He is the best thing that has ever happened to me and I can't wait for the next year (I do wish it would slow down). We are having a "farm" theme for his first birthday... imagine that! ---Shanna

The USDA Service Center in Springfield GA has a new office! In December 2008, we relocated to new space just a couple of blocks from our old office. After two years of planning, studying, meeting, reporting, phoning, stressing, and even a little arm-wrestling (just kidding), all of the effort paid off. We now reside in some of the best space in Georgia and probably all of the USA! Everyone is invited to stop by for a tour when you are in our area. We will be happy to show you around.

For all of you who are hesitant to begin with space acquisition, redesign, and leasing, here is our best advice, it will not be easy, change never is; but if you will take it one step at a time, and let the process work as it should, then you will eventually be glad with the results.



Springfield Service Center Entrance and Reception



Springfield Service Center Open Office Area and Conference Room



Dana Black and Shana Edwards, Program Technicians in the Springfield Service Center.



Secure and Climate-Controlled LAN Room – designed according to the current OCIO IT specifications.



Springfield Service Center CED Office.

In the midst of planning the new Springfield Service Center space, CED Pamela Poole traveled out to Colorado for a much needed vacation.

In September 2008, Pam spent nine days in Colorado with her family. While there they attended the wedding of Pam's niece, Whitney, who was married at the Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel near Colorado Springs. They also visited Denver, Boulder, the Rocky Mountain National Park, Breckenridge, the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Royal Gorge, Pike's Peak, and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad on the Colorado/New Mexico border.

The Cadet Chapel was awesome; the Rocky Mountains were breathtaking; Breckenridge was beautiful, the Great Sand Dunes were unbelievable; the Royal Gorge was fun; Pikes Peak was covered with snow, and the peaks and valleys along the Scenic Railroad were covered with the autumn gold of the aspen trees. It was a fantastic trip. There is a lot to see and do in Colorado. Go when you get a chance!

### **Toombs**

PT, Melissa Branch has been very busy getting a couple of her children married off. Her daughter Mary Beth got married in October of 2008 and then stepson Tommy got married in February 2009. Melissa wishes she could get in on some of the stimulus hand out money since she has done nothing but hand out money for months. Now she can sit back and wait on the grand babies! Melissa is also scared to death Deborah Gregory and Deborah Dotson are going to retire. She says she doesn't think the Doctors could write her enough prescriptions to handle that. If Deborah Dotson leaves there are a few folks in some neighboring counties that will also need some help!

Speaking of grand babies – Deborah Gregory, CED, will be the grandmother of TWINS this fall. The babies are due September 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **District 5**

### **Turner County News**

Wanda McCurdy is busy planning her daughter's wedding. Rebecca is getting married April 25th. It is going to be an outside wedding. Pray for beautiful weather. She also helping with her niece's wedding June 20th.

Dawn Gibbs is also planning her daughter's wedding. Kelli is getting married June 6th. It is going to be at Quail's Landing. Kole is playing ball with Dawn coaching.

Gwen Daniels is enjoying her grandson, Kyler. He is growing too fast. He will be 1 year old in July.

Jo Lynn Futch is also wedding planning. She is helping her twin cousins with their wedding festivities. Kristl will be married on April 4th and Brooke on July 11th. Also she is helping Kayla, her daughter find another apartment in Athens. Kayla will start on her masters' degree in accounting in the fall but this summer she will be an intern with the accounting firm of Ernst & Young in Atlanta.

All of the ladies will need a vacation. If you need a wedding consultant, just call Turner County.

The Bleckley-Pulaski-Twiggs FSA office staff are proud to welcome Edith Castleberry back as a permanent employee on March 16. Edith had served in the Pulaski County office as temporary employee until December 31, 2008.

## **District 6**

Early County

Early County is excited to be getting a new CED. Welcome Back Freddie Cody! Your desk is stacked up and ready for you.

Brenda Cooley has a new address it is Ball Park Ave., Ashford, Al. Ridge and Kendall are both playing and Mom and Dad are both jumping up and down in the stands. She also has four new babies coming last of March. Miniature Schnauzers.

Cindy Brown has entered the big 50 gracefully. She has found a new 18 in the number fifty. Cindy, What's your secret?

Cindy Brown has a wonderful new grand boy. He took charge on December the 9th, 2008. Charles Thomas Davis IV (Tom)  
Weighing 6 lbs 14 oz. 20 inches long.

Ty Godfrey came in second in the race of who was gonna have the first grandbaby. He has been in charge since December 14th, 2008. Parker Tyson Godfrey Weighing in at 7 lbs. 10 oz. 20 1/2 inches long blonde hair.

Ginger and Todd Carters baby, Carmen is now 19 months old. She has put Ginger on a new exercise plan running after her.  
She is a sweetie.

Jennifer McCormick's grandbaby is now 9 months old. Marlie loves to come to her grandparents house. She can get some really good sugar their. And of course anything else she wants.

## District 7

The Lowndes County Staff had a great time celebrating Terrie's "40<sup>th</sup>" Birthday! It was a week long celebration! Black was the theme... Black balloons covered the office, a banner was put on her office and yard signs were placed on the front lawn entrance to the Service Center exclaiming "Lordy, Lordy, Terrie's Forty"!

The black flowers and black cake was just the finishing touches!



Jerry Winters - DCA, Susan Sparks - PT, Peggy McGhin - PT, Terrie Wolford - CED, Kathryn Nesmith - PT, Cindy Batten - PT, and Chad Scruggs, DD

Long time friend and farmer, John David Moore came by to visit on Terrie's birthday! He just couldn't believe that he had been doing business with Terrie and her staff for 22 years! You know "T" was just a baby when she came to work with the old ASCS Office!



The Lowndes, Lanier, Clinch, and Echols County Committee and Advisors celebrated Terrie's birthday also.



Derek James - V. Chair, Felton Coggins - Chair, Terrie, Bobby Exum - Member, Nannie Beth Lawson - Advisor, Larry Downing - Member, Ivynease Riley - Advisor, Ronnie Cook - Member, Arletha Sermons - Advisor

\*\*\*\*\*

Jeff Harden, this one is for you! Jerry Winters enjoying the home cooked meal in the Lowndes County Office. You just can't beat Cindy's cathead biscuits and Gran's Cane Syrup!



\*\*\*\*

Rumor has it that Ronnie Morris is planning a trip over to Lowndes County to see if Cindy's cathead biscuits make the grade!

\*\*\*\*\*

The Lowndes County Staff is on their toes! Virginia Lovering, COR is HERE! We welcome Mrs. Virginia and hope that she enjoys our southern hospitality while she is in South Georgia!

\*\*\*\*\*

Just what are these two up to! It looks like Chad was caught by surprise... Susan is holding down the fort while Terrie is in meetings. We are excited about Chad becoming our District Director; apparently he has gotten the word about the good cooking! He has already made several trips to Lowndes County!?!?



Congratulations to the following:

Kathryn Nesmith, PT had 5 Years of Service in November of 2008  
Susan Sparks, PT had 20 Years of Service in December of 2008

\*\*\*\*\*

Lily Marie, daughter of Cindy Batten, PT celebrated her 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday on March 21<sup>st</sup>! Wow, what a party held in Miss Lily's honor! It was like having Christmas in March. It's hard to believe that it has already been a year!

Jeff Davis

The Jeff Davis County Office is proud to have Brandi Spell as a Newly Hired Program Technician. Brandi was born and raised here in Jeff Davis County, has an Animal Science Degree from ABAC, and will prove to be an asset to the FSA office here in Hazlehurst.

Pierce County

Pierce County PT, Linda Thornton, has a new grandson, Seth James Hilimire, born to daughter, son in law and granddaughter, Anna, Josh and Lillie Hilimire. Seth weighed 6 lbs. 9 ozs, was 19 1/2 inches long born March 31 at 6:40 am. Seth, Anna and family are doing great.

Atkinson-Ware

The Atkinson-Ware county office would like to welcome Jason Adams of Douglas to our FSA family. Jason has hit the ground running with CLU and getting adjusted to all of the new programs. His greatest adjustment maybe trying to work with a "bunch" of women.

Congratulations are in order for Gwen Pollock, PT Atkinson-Ware County. On September 27, 2008 she and Tim Wescott were united in Holy Matrimony. Gwen and Tim had a beautiful service which was attended by her FSA and NRCS family. We all wish Gwen and Tim a long and happy life together.

## District 8

Decatur

Just a little from Decatur County. We are so glad to have Val Turner back at work full time. She is doing great. Will have some more surgery April 13 so please continue to pray.

Cathy Summerhill has been dreaming about Wedding Bells. She will become a Farmers Wife on March 28. She is marrying Sammy Smith. Congratulations Cat!!! Your Decatur County FSA family.

You'll be seeing less of Emily Bedwell and Suzy Harrison these days. No, they haven't won the lottery, but Team Lean has been putting them into shape. Only Two weeks left and Hello Olive Garden. Whoo-hoo!!!

Paul Digby has been keeping the road hot between Decatur County and Seminole County doing his CED duties. I believe he can put his vehicle on auto-pilot and it knows the way.

Decatur County has been enjoying getting out into the County and learning a little about how things operate on the Farmers level. In the past 1 1/2 years we have gone to:

PGC Farms and learned how to harvest wheat and sweet corn. (We actually rode on the machines and watched them operate.)

Toured the San Filippo peanut plant and learned how they process peanut products and store them.

Went to Davis Farms and learned how to inspect peanuts and learned a little about Cotton Combines.

And on March 24, we are going to Glenn Heard Farms to learn how to harvest carrots.

If you get the chance to do some of these things, do it. It is fun and interesting to learn the other side of the coin.

Birthday for Paul Digby is June 12.

*“A hug is a great gift.... One size fits all. It can be given for any occasion and it's easy to exchange”.*

## Poem Submitted by Judy Moore, Putnam County, District 3

Untitled

In time of need their will is sure  
American, their freedom pure.

Protect our life and liberty  
Unselfishly, they keep us free.

Each soldier knows what is at stake  
The risk is grave, there's no mistake.

With pride they serve our country strong  
They face each foe to come along.

Remember them while in your home  
Or where you choose to freely roam.

Don't take for granted what you see  
Some left this life, so it could be.

To God I urge you all to pray  
For soldier's brave, to face each day.

We should be thankful, one and all  
For those who march to meet each call.  
Author Unknown

Something easy when you have a chocolate attack and no candy is available.

### 5 MINUTE CHOCOLATE MUG CAKE

4 tablespoons flour

4 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons cocoa

1 egg

3 tablespoons milk

3 tablespoons oil

3 tablespoons chocolate chips (optional)

A small splash of vanilla extract

1 large coffee mug (Micro Safe)

Add dry ingredients to mug and mix well. Add the egg and mix thoroughly. Pour in the milk and oil; mix well. Add the chocolate chips (if using) and vanilla extract and mix again. Put your mug in the microwave and cook for 3 minutes at 1000 watts. The cake will rise over the top of the mug, but don't be alarmed! Allow to cool a little, and tip out onto a plate if desired. EAT (this can serve 2 if you want to feel slightly more virtuous). And why is this the most dangerous cake recipe in the world? Because now we are only 5 minutes away from chocolate cake at any time of the day or night.

# CAPWIZ

Are you checking CAPWIZ?????

Hope you have it on your home computer – *POP UP Reminder* -When you need to take action.

**A SPECAIL THANKS to all of you for helping with the Gazette this quarter. It's not as easy as one thinks to get all information in and get it in the correct order timely. All of you did a great job. A special thanks to Denise Otto for all of her assistance. If you have news or items of interest for the Gazette just send it to me as it happens and I'll keep it for the next edition.**

**Delores V Hartley**

**“May your troubles be less, your blessings be more  
And nothing but happiness come through your door”**

**“HAPPY BRITHDAY” wishes (belated and upcoming)go out to all of the following**

**District 1B**

**Dell Branson- January 3  
Wade Hood – March 16**

**Juanita Ayers (Retired PT) – March 13  
Dianne Westmorland- March 25**

**District 2**

**Kathy Miller – January 12  
John Dumas (Retired DD) – February 6  
Callie S Redmond – March 13  
Gary Norris (Retired PT) – March 24**

**Clyde Wilson (FLP) – February 3  
Kathryn Wood – February 21  
Judy Walker – March 20**

**District 3**

**Teresa Snider – January 2  
Mille Alexander – March 29**

**Lisa Otis – February 21**

**District 4**

**Terri Bolton - January 25  
Melissa Branch – March 12  
J. W. Black (Retired DD)- March 22  
Terry Donaldson (Retired PT)- March 24  
Wendell Batten – January 27**

**Pat Akins – January 10  
Lydia Roundtree – March 12  
Paulette Groover (Retired PT) –March 19**

**District 5**

**Gwen Daniels – January 3  
Cindy Keene – January 4  
Karen Grimes – January 15  
Becky Adams – February 6  
Patricia Smith – February 18  
Linda Weaver – March 22  
Jeff Harden – March 6**

**Brenda Allen – January 8  
Edith Castleberry – January 14  
Bubba Collins (Retired DD)- January 22  
Kathy Thomas – February 25  
Juanita Hamrick – March 6  
Dawn Gibbs – March 23**

**District 6**

**Jay Arnold – March 31**

**Carol Robertson – February 11**

**District 7**

**Karen Dyal – January 21  
Teresa Parker – February 21  
Sara Smith – January 8**

**Gail Roberson – January 25  
Jan Thomas – March 5  
Terry Wolford – March 10**

**District 8**

**Syble Mills – January 22**

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**Please Pass Around To All Employees**

**Georgia Association of FSA  
County Office Employees**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

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