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# NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Retired Conservation Service Employees

Vol. 51, No. 1 Jan/Feb 2024

The *ARCSE Newsletter* is published bi-monthly by the  
Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE)

1024 E Cascade Ave., River Falls, WI 54022

Website: [www.arcse.org](http://www.arcse.org)

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Julie MacSwain, ARCSE President*

Greetings!

On behalf of your ARCSE Board and Advisors, I wish you a very Happy New Year! We hope in 2023 that you and your families have been blessed with good health, happiness, and great friendships, and that 2024 continues with many blessings.

ARCSE is grateful for the dedication of its members and would like to thank you for all that you do for our organization. In 2024, ARCSE will continue to work on implementing our Plan of Work, Strategic Plan, and our MOU with NRCS. Through the MOU, both NRCS and ARCSE will continue to explore ways to mentor NRCS employees. This process may take time to develop. You are right, taking on these

various workload items is something that is new for ARCSE. The timing is perfect as our organization is turning 50 in 2024.

In my spare time I am serving as House Mother for the Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) Fraternity in River Falls, Wisconsin. This is a perfect way for me to give back in retirement. Over the years I have met many SCS/NRCS employees who were AGRs. If your travels bring you to Wisconsin, please stop by to visit.



## SAVE THE DATE



Save the date for the 79<sup>th</sup> SWCS International Annual Conference, July 21–24, 2024 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina! This year's conference theme is "Rising Together: Collaborative Conservation for All."

Call for presentation submissions and more details regarding the event will be posted in the coming months at [www.swcs.org/24AC](http://www.swcs.org/24AC).

More information will be forthcoming in an upcoming issue of the ARCSE Newsletter regarding details for our Annual ARCSE meeting. Please visit our website to learn more

about ARCSE: <https://arcse.org>.

## ARCSE State Representatives

For those of you who are currently ARCSE State Representatives or who may be considering becoming one, **Deb Legear** in Wisconsin has articulated her activities as an ARCSE representative. Please see her excellent article under the Wisconsin section of this newsletter.

## NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC

–*Craig Derickson, retired USDA-NRCS*

### Federal Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the Senate passed a last-minute spending bill to avoid a government shutdown and a catastrophic effect on Americans and the economy. The measure, H.R. 5860, was signed into law by **President Joe Biden** and provided funding to Federal agencies through November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED CONSERVATION SERVICE EMPLOYEES

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, new Speaker of the House, **Mike Johnson**, announced plans to split the 2024 federal appropriations into two groups — described as a “laddered” approach. The laddered plan funds some federal agencies until mid-January and others through early February. Speaker Johnson told CNBC news that he expected to win bipartisan backing for this continuing resolution strategy because it did not contain contentious cuts or extreme policy riders that would result in a stalemate. See <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/11/14/house-speaker-johnson-predicts-bipartisan-agreement-on-two-step-government-funding-plan.html>.

On Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, President Biden signed the bill, H.R. 6363, the “Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024.” The bill provides fiscal year 2024 funding through January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, for four appropriations measures, including: veterans benefits, agriculture, military construction, housing, transportation, and urban development. Funding for defense and the remaining eight appropriations bills is provided funding through February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. See the Congressional website for more information at:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6363?loclr=bloglaw>.

The House of Representatives is scheduled to return to Washington on January 8<sup>th</sup> after the Christmas and New Years recess. The first ladder of the CR will expire on January 19<sup>th</sup>, and that leaves a limited amount of time for negotiations on the 2024 appropriations. Congress will be challenged to resolve several high priority issues in early 2024.

### ***President’s Supplemental Funding Request for Ukraine and Israel***

The Further Continuing Appropriations spending bill does not include the President’s nearly \$106 billion request for wartime aid for Israel and Ukraine. It also does not provide humanitarian funding for Palestinians and other supplemental requests, including money for security at the US southern border.

The bulk of the money would go to support Ukraine's defenses against Russia, and the remainder split among Israel, Taiwan, and increased border enforcement at the US southern border. The biggest line item in the supplemental funding request is \$61.4 billion to support Ukraine. See <https://apnews.com/article/biden-budget-mike-johnson-congress-shutdown-527c15d86de31470d1d659387912e66c>

Democrats and Republicans have been deadlocked for weeks on the supplemental aid package, and the House is scheduled to recess for the holidays by December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. According to Politico News, pushing the aid negotiations into 2024 could further complicate already fragile budget talks set for early next year. Several sources have determined that the US will run out of funding for Ukraine this month, if Congress does not act to pass the President’s emergency supplemental spending request that has been stalled for weeks on Capitol Hill. See

<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/18/u-s-funds-ukraine-00132304>.

### ***Congress Passes Fiscal 2024 Defense Spending Bill***

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, both the House and Senate passed the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. Among other things, the bill authorizes a pay raise for both service members and civilian defense employees.

"This important legislation not only authorizes a 5.2% pay increase for service members and civilian employees, but directly invests in America's national security and military power projection to meet the challenges of the 21st century," said Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force **Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder**.

The National Defense Authorization Act supports \$841.4 billion in funding for the Defense Department. For more information on the Defense authorization see:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3618367/congress-passes-fiscal-2024-defense-spending-bill-pay-raise-for-service-members/>.

### ***Congress Passes Farm Bill Extension***

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, along with action on the continuing resolution, the Senate voted to pass a House bill that extends the authority of the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill extends the farm bill through September 2024 to provide time for lawmakers to come up with a new Farm Bill. This extension bill includes funding for almost all “orphan” programs that would have otherwise lost funding as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

The extension gives Congress an additional 10 months to pass a new farm bill. Despite this longer runway, there is still lots to be negotiated. Legislators still need to decide how Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding will be distributed, as well as funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—two extremely contentious issues. It’s expected that Congress will use this extension to present a draft of a new farm bill early next year. See <https://www.farmaid.org/issues/farm-policy/the-latest-updates-on-the-2023-farm-bill/>.

### ***Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program***

Through the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program, experienced workers, including many NRCS retirees, age 55 and over, help NRCS employees provide technical services in support of conservation.

According to the NRCS website, NRCS enters into agreements with nonprofit organizations that provide ACES workers on a part-time or full-time basis. NRCS provides funds, office space, position descriptions, work assignments and oversight for the ACES positions, while the nonprofit organization handles advertising, recruiting, hiring and payroll for each position. Available positions span a variety of skill sets and educational levels. In addition to wages, NRCS covers administrative fees such as federal payroll tax, unemployment compensation, and pay increases. ACES enrollees are neither federal employees nor state agriculture department employees, nor the employees of the nonprofit organization, and their wages do not impact retirement annuities. For more information visit the NRCS website at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/aces>.

Applicants must be age 55 and over and able to provide services and skills required for the jobs advertised on the web sites of the three non-profits with which NRCS has national cooperative agreements, such as Senior Service America, Inc., and National Experienced Workforce Solutions Inc. National and state budget priorities determine which NRCS offices participate in the ACES program.

A summary of ACES services and impacts includes the following: 46,841 people positively impacted, 48 states participating, 26 years in business, and 27.8 million hours of service. For more information visit the New Solutions website at <https://newsolutions.org/>.

### **Proposed Expansion of ACES Program in new Farm Bill**

In February 2023, the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) sent a letter to several leaders of the Agriculture Committees in both the Senate and the House, including **Senator Debbie Stabenow, Senator John Boozman, Congressman Glenn W. Thompson, and Congressman David Scott**. Their letter stated that they were aware that the National Experienced Workforce (NEW) Solutions had submitted proposed statutory language to both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees for their consideration during the 2023 Farm Bill development process.

Their letter requested the support of the Ag Committee members to a NEW Solutions proposal for the 2023 Farm Bill that would establish USDA-wide access to ACES and Experienced Services Program (ESP), covering all programs and including all types of positions (technical, scientific, professional, and administrative). This statutory language would provide the authorization for a permanent program not dependent on renewal through the annual appropriations acts. For more information see <https://nafsr.org/advocacy/2023/022323 Letter of Support for New Solutions.pdf>.

### **NARFE Support for Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA's)**

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) is the only organization dedicated solely to the general welfare of all federal workers and retirees. NARFE provides valuable guidance, information resources, and advocacy for important legislative actions. For 100 years, NARFE has been working to support federal retirees, lawmakers, and the news media.

The NARFE website states: "The 2024 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will provide a 3.2% increase to Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuities and Social Security benefits, while Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuities will see a 2.2% boost. NARFE emphasizes the importance of this adjustment to counter inflation, particularly for those living on fixed incomes and retirement savings."

However, it also points out that not all federal retirees will benefit equally, as FERS retirees face COLA caps. NARFE supports the Equal COLA Act (H.R. 866), which seeks to address this disparity and ensure equitable COLAs for all retirees.

ARCSE members are urged to consider supporting NARFE's advocacy efforts and to visit their website for additional information and resources for retirees. See

<https://www.narfe.org/blog/2023/10/16/2024-cola-revealed-narfe-pushes-for-equal-colas/>

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## **ARCSE Mentoring Program Update**

**From Bill Ward and Craig Derickson.**

The November-December 2023 newsletter introduced ARCSE members to the recently signed NRCS/ARCSE Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish and solidify a working relationship between the ARCSE and NRCS. The objective of the MOU is to identify ARCSE members, as well as other NRCS or conservation partner retirees, to participate as mentors for NRCS employees and participate in ongoing communication about NRCS mentoring.

Effective mentoring for NRCS employees in all stages of their careers can not only improve leadership development and skills, but also improve employee satisfaction and retention. We also believe that mentoring relationships can provide positive outcomes for both the mentor and the mentee.

The ARCSE MOU Work Group of **Craig Derickson, Julie MacSwain, Bill Ward, and Chris Tippie** are working to develop a "framework plan" to explain how ARCSE State representatives can work with State Conservationists to identify mentoring needs. The goal of the framework plan is to describe a sample process to assist states in bringing on retirees to provide valuable mentoring assistance. The MOU work group will continue to collaborate with the ARCSE regional Vice Presidents on this effort as well.

The other accomplishment since the last newsletter was the development and distribution of a survey to all ARCSE members to determine interest in working with NRCS staff in mentoring assistance. The survey asks about ARCSE member interests in mentorship, earth team, serving as an ACES employee, and ARCSE communications. The survey instrument was developed by Frank Clearfield, retired Director of NRCS Social Sciences Institute. ARCSE leadership is eager to receive an analysis of the survey results.

With the new year now upon us, the ARCSE MOU work group is eager to complete the framework plan to assist States in bringing on retirees interested in mentoring. Look for more updates on the ARCSE Mentoring effort in upcoming editions of the newsletter.

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## **ACES Program**

**Julie MacSwain, ARCSE President**

The Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Program, authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, and implemented in USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices throughout the country, is a legislative older worker program for those 55 and older. ACES is a grants-based program administrated through a five-year umbrella agreement between NEW Solutions (National Experienced Workforce Solutions) and NRCS.

The ACES Program was modeled after the Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) Program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

NEW Solutions is proud to connect professionals, age 55+, with part-time and full-time opportunities throughout the country. These are non-federal, grant-administered positions and are not meant to compete with private sector wages. Duties range from clerical

and administrative to technical and scientific. To learn more on how to apply, [please click here](#) or go to:

<https://newsolutions.org/jobs/?program=ace>

Phone: (703) 558-4200

Email: [hq@newsolutions.org](mailto:hq@newsolutions.org). Website: [www.newsolutions.org](http://www.newsolutions.org)

## Donations to ARCSE

In the last few years, ARCSE has added a feature to our website which may be of possible interest to you.

As an ARCSE member, you can donate to ARCSE. Your donation to ARCSE provides funding for special projects that help us provide additional services to our members so that we are more visible and relevant.

Your contributions have enabled us to keep the first-year dues free for new members and partner with the Soil and Water Conservation Society to hire summer interns.

To contribute online, go to the ARCSE website, <https://arcse.org/give/>.

## Parting Words from a Former NRCS Sociologist

*Submitted by Barbara Osgood, PhD., retired NRCS Sociologist*

This is probably the last of my articles on the experiences of a sociologist in NRCS. I'm afraid my life wasn't that exciting! This story is not so much what it was like to be a sociologist, as it is about what it was like to be a **female** sociologist! I often found that it helped to have a sense of humor, at least in part directed toward myself.

In the days when I was head of the Social Sciences staff at the Northeast National Technical Center (NTC) in Broomall (later, Chester) Pennsylvania, **Karl Otte** was the head of the Water Resources staff. Karl had formed a team that he called the SWAT Team, (Soil and Water Action Team) that was made up of disciplinary specialists from the NTC. I'm going to forget a few names, but as I remember, in addition to Karl and me, the team included **Scott Hoag**, economist; **Tom livari**, geologist; and **Paul Welle**, engineer. There were a couple of others that I don't remember. Maybe someone reading this who was there at the time will help me!

When the NTC got a request from a State Conservationist for technical assistance on a watershed project, the SWAT went into action. We travelled all over the 13 Northeast states that were within the assigned area of the NTC.

This story is about our trip to Richmond, Virginia, to provide assistance on a water resources project in Abingdon, Virginia. We left Pennsylvania in a large van, filled with equipment and our luggage, swung by the state office in Richmond to pick up a couple of planning staff members, and headed on to Abingdon. There wasn't a motel in Abingdon where we could stay, so our destination was a motel in the nearby community of Bristol, Tennessee.

The motel had seen better days but appeared neat and freshly painted. The men didn't really care where they stayed at night as long as there was enough per diem left over for beer and a steak dinner. My standards were a little higher, and after a couple of experiences with cobwebs and bugs I made it known that I wasn't staying in any more questionable motels.

I made declarations like this cautiously, not wanting to look like I was playing the woman card. But no one had objected. They didn't like cobwebs and bugs in their motel rooms either.

Our team—seven men and I—piled out of our van onto the pavement of the motel parking lot, happy to be out in the open after a long drive. We filed into the motel office.

The middle-aged woman at the counter looked us over and gave me a curious stare.

"Are you all checking in?" There was a "Yes" from one of the men, and she shuffled paperwork from under the counter.

"All single rooms?" Another "Yes" from our leader. As she handed out our keys, the clerk's curiosity finally got the better of her. She looked at me with a scowl.

"What are you doing here with all these men?"

"I'm the Den Mother. I watch them for their wives while they are on the road, so that they don't get into any trouble." Someone in the group snickered.

The clerk nodded with an understanding look, smiling in silent agreement that these men probably could use some looking after.

That evening, as we enjoyed our steaks and beer, the men got their revenge.

"Well, Mom, are you going to tell us how much beer we can drink?" "Mom, do I have to eat my vegetables?"

Back in the office after our trip, I saw something shiny on my desk. A gold paper crown, labeled "MOM" in large black letters. I laughed and put it on.

I had blazed a trail. It wasn't the boys' team anymore.

\* \* \*

Every Monday morning, suitcase in one hand and briefcase in the other, I took off from the airport for a new destination ... a potato farm in Maine ... a ranch in California ... a dairy in Wisconsin ... a town with a flooding problem in southern Arizona ... a seminar in Texas.

I loved traveling to parts of the country that tourists never see. And I loved working with the people who lived there. But after a few years it was time for a change. There were other trails to blaze.

I wanted a home. I wanted a social life. I wanted a dog. It was time to return to headquarters.

*Part of this article is an excerpt from my book, "84 Paws: Life with Old Labs".*

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**Paul Benedict, Membership Chair**

### New Life Members

Mark W. Berkland – Chocowinity, North Carolina  
 Kenneth B. Leiting - Rio Rancho, New Mexico  
 Richard J. Bednarek, Jr – Altoona, Iowa  
 Gerald L. Montgomery – Lincoln, Nebraska

### New Members

James M. Woods – Ankeny, Iowa  
 Claudia Stevenson – Ogallala, Nebraska  
 Tim Bohnhoff – Auburn, Michigan  
 Robin Martinek – Prior Lake, Minnesota  
 David Hoover – Lincoln, Nebraska  
 David Dishman – Olympia, Washington

**2024 ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES and HARD COPY NEWSLETTER FEES were due Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.**

For your convenience ARCSE annual dues and hard copy fees can be paid by credit card via **PayPal**:

<https://arcsecommunications.wordpress.com/renew/>

Or you can pay by check. Make check payable to **ARCSE** and mail to: **ARCSE, PO Box 8965, Moscow, ID 83843**

For 2024, the **annual membership dues** have been raised to **\$25/year**, and **hard copy fees** have been raised to **\$15/year**. If you are a **Life Member** or are an **Honorary Member** (Member with 5 or more years of paid membership who turned 91, or will turn 91, in 2023 or earlier), you do not owe annual dues. Life and Honorary members receiving the printed newsletter in the mail must still pay \$15 for that service. If you have questions about your membership or newsletter status do not hesitate to contact me at [soilwarden@verizon.net](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net).

### –NEW RATES–

#### ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES

Due by January 1<sup>st</sup>

Member	\$25 per year (1 <sup>st</sup> year free)
Affiliate	\$25 per year
Life (One-time payment)	
Age 64 or younger	\$325
Age 65 thru 74	\$275
Age 75 or older	\$175

**NOTE: Dues payment includes receipt of the bimonthly electronic newsletter only. All members (both life members and those who pay annual dues) who desire a hard copy of the newsletter must pay an additional fee of \$15.00 per year.**

**Please submit Dues to ARCSE at P.O. Box 8965 Moscow, ID 83843**

## ALABAMA

**Earl Norton, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [earl.norton@charter.net](mailto:earl.norton@charter.net)**

Retirees and current NRCS staff were saddened recently at the passing of retired Area Engineer **Tim Willians** and retired Area Conservationist **Jim McCullough**. Both Tim and Jim had long and productive careers in Alabama.



**NRCS retirees in the Auburn-Opelika Camellia Club who enjoyed an appreciation dinner on October 10 are pictured (L-R), back row: Perry Oakes, Ken Rogers, and Charles "Jessie" Bush. Front row: Earl Norton, Ken Aycock, Mac Nelson, and Vic Payne.**



**Retirees in the Auburn area continue to meet for breakfast and fellowship on the first Monday of each month at Chappy's Deli. Pictured at the December meeting (L-R): Mac Nelson, Earl Norton, Ken Rogers, Steve Musser, Charles "Jessie" Bush, George Martin, and Cliff Jones.**



**NRCS retirees gathered with the current AL Conservation Agronomist for this picture at the AL Row Crops Short Course at Auburn University on December 14-15. Pictured (L-R) are Steve Musser, retired AL Assistant for Programs; Bill Puckett, retired AL State Conservationist; Worku Burayu, current AL Conservation Agronomist; Bill Kunstler, retired Conservation Agronomist, Central NTSC, Fort Worth; Earl Norton, retired AL State Resource Conservationist.**

## CALIFORNIA

**Bill Ward, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [bluegrassbillward@gmail.com](mailto:bluegrassbillward@gmail.com)**

It is with great sadness that I begin my California report sharing news of the passing of **Harold Honeyfield**. Harold was well known for his expertise in Engineering and contributions to the great success of our PL-566 program in New Mexico and excellent training and mentoring he provided young engineers. Following is a link to a complete obituary prepared for Harold:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/dailydemocrat/name/harold-honeyfield-obituary?id=53724124>

Our December 6<sup>th</sup> NRCS retiree Zoom meeting theme: **to celebrate the life of Harold Honeyfield**.

The group of NRCS retirees shown below gathered by Zoom to share our memories of knowing and working with Harold. Many in this group, including myself, enjoyed a special and close friendship with Harold.

### NRCS Retiree Zoom meeting Participants celebrating Harold Honeyfield's life



**Top: Lamont Robbins, Bill Ward, Mark Cocke**  
**Middle: Bob Snieckus, Carlos Velasquez, Jim Chapman**  
**Bottom: Ed Schmidt, Bill Gradle, Walt Sykes**

**Lamont Robbins** shared about his time working with Harold early in his career in New Mexico, where Harold was head of Design and led New Mexico to a very successful implementation of numerous PL-566 Projects. Both Lamont and Harold spent time together at the West Regional Design center in Portland OR and stayed connected throughout much of their careers, with both being involved in Design and Review of California's PL566 projects.

**Bob Snieckus**, California's first Landscape Architect, with a creative, environmentally friendly approach to PL-566 work, came to California from New Jersey about the same time Harold came to California from New Mexico, having led New Mexico to very successful records of design and installation of numerous PL-566 projects. Harold and Bob developed a special relationship right away as California began to incorporate innovative and environmentally friendly measures into our PL-566 work. Bob and Harold cited their work together on the Pine Creek Detention Basin.

**Bill Gradle** shared news about an honor for Harold we can all look forward to some time in this next year. Bill came back to work for NRCS as an ACSES employee about two years ago when funds were made available to NRCS to work on the nation's PL566 backlog.

As part of that effort on our PL-566 backlog, there was an effort to recognize PL5-66 "legends" who played a huge role in the success of our PL-566 program. The first NRCS individual recognized as a PL-566 "Legend" was Oklahoma's **Larry Caldwell**. Here is a link to a YouTube video on USDA's YouTube channel, recognizing Larry Caldwell as a "PL-566 Legend:" <https://youtu.be/NktFkPo8mMw>, Legends, Episode 1, Larry Caldwell.

Bill was happy to share the news that Harold had been recognized as a "PL566 legend" for the very successful PL-566 work he led in New Mexico. Bill shared that he had interviewed Harold at his home in preparation for a future YouTube video similar to what was done for Larry Caldwell. This will be a special honor for Harold. I look forward to sharing this with Harold's family and our fellow retirees.

**Bill Ward** shares his Harold Honeyfield Memories: "Harold and I had many things in common and enjoyed a close friendship. We both loved our Engineering profession and the agency and mission we had with our work. We loved working with so many good folks we were blessed to work with.

We both loved the old 'Country and Bluegrass style' of music my Western Lights band played. It was a real honor for my band to provide music for his special family events including the 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations for both Harold and **Valma**. And then just before the pandemic we were honored to share our music as part of Harold and Valma's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration.

Prostate Cancer Connection: Both Harold and I shared the experience of dealing with prostate cancer. Harold was a big help to me on how to deal with prostate cancer and connected me with a great prostate cancer support group in Cancer.

**The “Rock Church,” also called the “Johnson Mesa Church:”** A number of years ago, Harold shared with me information about a Church he attended as a child in New Mexico. There was a hymn associated with this church, and Harold asked me if I could learn and record this song for him. I am not sure I understood that at that time his intention upon his passing was for me to sing this song at a celebration of life memorial for him. That is what his intention was, however, and that is what I did at his memorial service. I was honored to do this for him and his family.

I was also honored to put together the following recording sharing more about this little “Rock Church” and more about Harold as well. Thanks for all the great memories, Harold!

[https://youtu.be/WI09c\\_m5doU](https://youtu.be/WI09c_m5doU)

‘Come to the Church on the Mesa’

Wishing all our retirees across the Nation a happy and prosperous New Year!”

–Bill Ward, CA ARCSE State Rep., ARCSE West Region VP

## COLORADO

**Jack Carlson, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [pspicata@gmail.com](mailto:pspicata@gmail.com)**

The Fort Collins breakfast club convened the first Tuesday in November and December, including retirees **Phil Smith, Terry Buettgenbach, Stu Keil, Chuck Hart, Frank Geter, Ken Rojas, Dave Butler, Wendall Oaks, and Jack Carlson.**

We were deeply saddened by the passing of fellow breakfast club member **Jason Restad** (see In Memoriam), who we counted on for his interesting takes on just about any topic under the sun and beyond. Including a little-known tidbit that he came from Alaska to the West National Technical Center in Portland in the late 1980s to lead a trial project involving early AI technology. Ahead of his time, just about any NRCS software used today has his imprint on it in one way or another. At Fort Collins he pushed early adoption of web services leading to the Customer Service Toolkit, Web Soil Survey, and many other agency on-line applications, also leading to the Conservation Resources architecture running models as services, including DayCent recently used to quantify carbon dioxide removals referenced in Time Magazine’s Climate 100 Catalyst recognition for conservation partner Land O’Lakes CEO **Beth Ford**. This thread an indicator of Jason’s impactful life and career within and beyond NRCS.

## CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Carl DuPolt, ARCSE Representative**

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**Connecticut** Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2025-2030 Draft Update – <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/IGPP/ORG/cdplan/CD-Plan-Sept-2023-Draft-to-Continuing-Comm-State-Planning.pdf>

36 Things to Do in Connecticut this January – <https://www.ctvisit.com/articles/36-things-do-connecticut-january>

Active Adventure, Rest and Relaxation, Arts, Culture and History, Food and Drink Adventures, Family Fun, Romantic Escapes, and Valentine’s Day.

**New Hampshire** State Conservation Committee–[www.agriculture.nh.gov/divisions/scc/](http://www.agriculture.nh.gov/divisions/scc/) Conservation Moose Plate Grant Program–Fiscal Year 2024–Conservation Grant Application Instructions–<https://www.agriculture.nh.gov/publications-forms/documents/application-instructions-scc2024.pdf>

New Hampshire Winter Festivals & Events: 2023 Calendar–<https://newhampshireway.com/new-hampshire-winter-festivals/>

Concord Winter Fest, NH Sanctioned & Jackson Invitational Snow Sculpting Competition, Hooksett Winter Carnival, Nansen Ski Club Winter Carnival, Keene Ice and Snow Festival, Dartmouth Winter Carnival, Derry Frost Festival, Alton Winter Carnival, Winter Carnival at Wasserman Park in Merrimack, NH

27 Fun Things to Do in **Rhode Island** this January–<https://www.rimonthly.com/27-fun-things-to-do-in-rhode-island-this-january/>

January–March: Winter Carriage Rides; 1/8–21: Providence Restaurant Weeks; Ongoing: Newport Harbor Island Resort Skating Rink; Theater; fairs and festivals, kid’s stuff, benefits, music, sports, museums, galleries

Urban and Community Forestry Program–Technical Assistance for RI Urban Forests

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/agriculture-and-forest-environment/forest-environment/urban-and-community>

**“Forever Fields:” How Pennsylvania became a dumping ground for discarded artificial turf**

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/pennsylvania/artificial-turf-pfas-rematch-pennsylvania-dumping-ground-20231213.html#:~:text=Pennsylvania-,'Forever%20Fields'%3A%20How%20Pennsylvania%20became%20a%20dumping%20ground%20for,are%20piled%20up%20on%20farms.>



**IOWA****Mark Jensen, ARCSE Representative****Email: [amjens1@gmail.com](mailto:amjens1@gmail.com)**

Thank you to Lee White for the following: "**Lee and Alice White** enjoyed a two-week trip to Amsterdam and a cruise up the Rhine River in early October. We had tentatively planned this trip to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020 – right during the height of COVID. We enjoyed a private tour to the North Sea to observe the Dutch flood control works in the region and were told that much of the breadbasket area of Holland is seven meters below sea level. While in Amsterdam we toured the Anne Frank House and had an enjoyable tour of the canals.

On the boat trip, stops included Dusseldorf, Cologne, Rudesheim, Mainz, Strasbourg and Basel, Switzerland with a fun day through the Rhine River gorge region of castles, vineyards, and small villages. Side trips included magnificent cathedrals, wine tasting, Heidelberg with its castle ruins and picturesque city. A small group took a tour of the Maginot line – the pre-WWII fortifications designed to protect the eastern border of France. Leaving Basel, we took a train to Lucerne, Switzerland and spent a couple of days there exploring this beautiful city and location. Mt. Pilatus was a special treat summitting the peak via two different cable cars and descending on the world's steepest inclined cog railway. The views of Lake Lucerne and the surrounding countryside were breathtaking. Then it was another train ride to Zurich and back to Amsterdam for our return flight. Oh yes, I came down with COVID three days after returning from Europe."



**Lee and Alice White are standing in a life size section of the steel tubes at "Maeslantkering" designed to protect against North Sea storm surges of up to 22 feet.**



**One of the many canals within Amsterdam**

Thank you to **Barb Stewart** for the **Barb and Randy Stewart** update: "Greetings from the Stewart Farm. It has been a busy year trying to keep up with a now teenage granddaughter. We had fun showing sheep and hauling horses around to Hailey's newfound love of barrel racing this summer. Randy, daughter **Jenny**, and I spent some relaxation time hiking the slot canyons of Southern Utah and Northern Arizona. I strongly recommend the beautiful hanging gardens of Zion National Park, but if the crowds are a bit much you can always find some interesting slot canyons to explore. Just beware that recent rains can wash out the ladders and you may have to resort to repelling down a rope or turning back!"



**Barb and Randy Stewart hiking in the mountains and slot canyons of southern Utah and Northern Arizona**



**Barb Stewart's granddaughter Hailey practicing barrel racing out on the farm**

The last newsletter included a picture of **Ernie and Pat Aust's** family at their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration. Ernie told me that they have had some additions to the family since that picture was taken. Their family had two summer weddings, plus their first great grandchild was born in September.

Thank you to **Marty Adkins** for the following: "We've had a good and busy fall. I directed and Carol was in the cast of *Godspell*, which many retirees might remember from the 1970s movie or a local stage production. It might have been a perfect retiree experience. The show itself, the relationships that developed and strengthened - it was all life-giving and something I will remember for a long time. For the last month we have been in parent/grandparent catch-up mode, with trips to Texas, Missouri, and Fairfield. Zoom calls are nice but actual hugs and in-person times are even better. Now that Advent is here, we are trying to slow down a little, so we don't miss what's important at Christmas time."

On November 16<sup>th</sup> we had our retiree Christmas party at the Machine Shed Restaurant in West Des Moines. This is the first time since 2019 that we have held this event. We had 48 people attend the party. We enjoyed a great meal and had a fun time visiting and catching up with a lot of old friends. **Brian Peterson** did a good job serving as the M.C. The names with the pictures show who attended, except for **Jim** and **Marsha Ayen**. I'm not sure how they avoided the camera!



**Christmas Party Attendees: Jerry Stevens, Marion Stevens, Ronda McIntosh, Jim McIntosh, Alice White, Lee White, and Jim Phillips**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Lew Brent, Connie Brent, Maralee Sarasio, Margaret Dysart, Jeannie Weber, Eldon Weber, and Larry Beeler**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Dale Faulkner, Dora Guffey, Dale DuVal, Greg Mathis, Roger Link, Donita Link, Deb Billingsley, Helen Kopitzke, Linda Miller, Dennis Miller, and Jerri Faulkner**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Dennis Pate, Alan Lauver, Randy Stewart, Barb Stewart, Richard Rogers, Mark Lindflott, and Duane Miller**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Dennis Schrodt, Keith Edwards, Charlotte Asell, Lyle Asell, Tingting Beck, Dave Beck, Kay Peterson, and Don Peterson**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Jean Wilson, Carmita Wilson, and Herb Wilson**



**Christmas Party Attendees: Brian Peterson, Kathy Peterson, and Mark Jensen.**

During the past few months, several folks have retired and joined our retiree family. These include **John Davison**, Soil Conservation Technician on the Tipton Resource Team; **Yolanda Butler**, Soil Conservation Technician on the Waterloo Resource Team; **Bruce Dake**, Civil Engineering Technician in the Creston Engineering Office; **Alan Lauver**, Agricultural Economist in the State Office; **Carolyn Christian**, Management Analyst in the State Office; and **Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen**, Outreach Coordinator in the State Office.

In October we were saddened by the passing of two of our retiree family. **Cheryle Martin**, wife of **Rod Martin**, passed away on October 23. **Don Carlson**, a long time Soil Conservation Technician in northwest Iowa passed away on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

# MAINE

**John Simon, ARCSE Representative**  
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**September 12<sup>th</sup> breakfast attendees: Bob Lagassey, Brian Stuart, Art Taylor, Patty Wright, Ray Voyer, Chris Jones, Kyle Bolduc, and Roger Ache (John's favorite Marine). John Simon Taking the picture. Great bunch of Quality folks!**

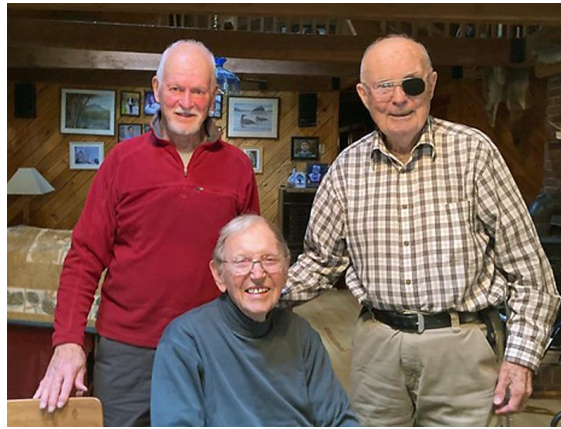
2023 October 10<sup>th</sup> breakfast attendees were **Karen and Bruce Champeon, Dan Baumert, Bob lagassey, Dan McCallister (FMHA), and John Simon.**

No photo except the one of Dan Baumert's book, which is priceless. I could not find my notes, but we had a good time discussing the 60 years of trapping Dan has enjoyed. Some are funny—some are scary! The following day, Oct 11<sup>th</sup> **Art Taylor and John Simon** visited **Joe Bertolaccini and Ellie** at their Home.

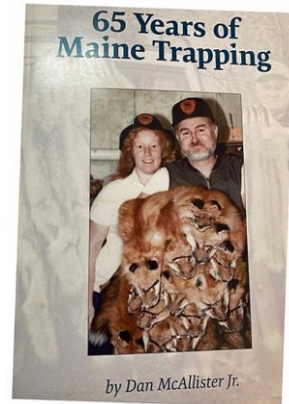
We spent the whole afternoon solving all the world's problems.



**October 11, 2023. Ellie and Joe Bertolaccini at their home in Orrington, ME.**



**October 11, 2023 at Joe Bertolaccini's place: Art Taylor, Joe Bertolaccini, and John Simon.**



**Recent book by Dan Baumert who was a classmate of John Simon at UMO in the 1960s.**



**2023 November 14<sup>th</sup> breakfast attendees: Art Taylor, John Simon, Bruce Champeon, Karen Champeon (hidden), Patty Wright, David Mussulman, Lydia Mussulman, Mary Thompson, Dan Baumert, and Bob Lagassey.**

The Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> breakfast was held six days before the disastrous flood and windstorm of Monday December 18<sup>th</sup> that caused massive flooding in the western part of Maine.

Along with that the heavy rains, winds caused massive damage to the power grid. Anyone familiar with Maine knows there are lots of old White Pine that line our roads, and these took down a lot of the grid. This is similar to the famous ice storm of 1998 which caused havoc throughout the Northeast. It will be a Christmas to remember for all of us. Lots of heroes came out of the woodwork here in Maine in the last week for sure!



**Karen Champeon, Chris Jones, Lydia Mussulman, and Bruce Champeon.**



**Bob Lagassey, Mary Thompson, Mike Thompson, Patty Wright, Art Taylor, Dave Chiappetta,**



**Dave Mussulman, Dan Baumert, John Simon, Mary Thompson, Mike Thompson, Patty Wright.**

God bless you all and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Maine!

John Simon Representative.

## MIDATLANTIC STATES

**Terry D'Addio, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [tmdaddio@aol.com](mailto:tmdaddio@aol.com)**

"Greetings fellow retired conservationists! I am your new Mid-Atlantic Representative for the Association Retired Conservation Service Employees.

I retired from NRCS in July 2021. I came to NRCS midcareer after various positions in government and in the nonprofit world. I joined NRCS as the National Program Manager for the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program in 1996 and ended my career as a Natural Resources Specialist in the Outreach & Partnerships Division (OPD). I am currently an ACES employee assisting with equity agreements for OPD and the National Conservation Planning Partnership, <https://www.nationalconservationplanningpartnership.com>

I have been a member of ARSCE for two years and was recruited by **Melvin Womack** to be your representative. I have worked with several of you in the past, but many of you I have not met.

As the Mid-Atlantic representative, I will be your contact between ARCSE and retirees in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Several of my duties include maintaining contact with you, providing retiree news to the newsletter Editor, leading or assisting in retiree activities in the Mid-Atlantic section, identifying and reaching out to new NRCS retirees and information and informing ARCSE Secretary and Editor of the deaths of retirees.

I will need your help. Please let me know of any activities you have going with other NRCS retirees and items you wish to share about your life with the NRCS retiree family. Please also let me know of any who have passed away. If you have a news item for the ARCSE newsletter, please send it to me at [tmdaddio@aol.com](mailto:tmdaddio@aol.com).

I will be forwarding you information I receive from our East Region ARCSE Vice President. I will be periodically sending out requests for information for items for our national newsletter.

I look forward to this new role! If you have any questions for me, please ask.

Sincerely, **Terry D'Addio**"

From **John Peterson**: "**Blanch** and I toured Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, recently. Here are some pictures."



**Colonial Governors Palace**



**A Colonial Williamsburg tourist carriage**



**Colonial Williamsburg Court House with people in period costume.**

MidAtlantic breakfast retiree group meets monthly the first Tuesday, at the Bob Evans in Woodbridge, VA.



**MidAtlantic Breakfast group, 11/14/23. (L-R): Ron Marlow, Jerry Bernard, Paul Benedict, Dave Thackeray, Bill Irwin.**

**Melvin Womack** sent the following pictures of Ken Carter and son on recent fishing and hunting excursions. Ken was the former ARCSE representative for the MidAtlantic area.



*Ken Carter and son on boat.*



*Ken Carter with a nice striped bass (also called rock fish).*



*Ken Carter with a nice bass.*



*Ken Carter, goose hunter.*

## MISSOURI

**Dave Rastorfer, ARCSE Representative**

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The Columbia area retirees held a quarterly breakfast in Columbia on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Those in attendance were **Ed Smith, Jean Herman, Odie Swanegan, Dennis Hoffman, Troy Chockley, Frankk Miller, Bob Hummel, Gail Sallee, Gena Michalson and Dave Rastorfer**. The next quarterly breakfast will be on February 14<sup>th</sup> at JJ's in Columbia.

**Craig A King:** Another year is about to surpass us. **Andrea** and I have had an interesting year, to say the least. I haven't responded since the spring so I might double up on info. I'll keep this as short as possible.

Andrea had a routine colonoscopy in January 2023. There was cancer found in the colon and spread to her stomach lining and a spot on the liver. Her daughter in Columbia immediately referred her to a Dr. Kim at the James Cancer at the Ohio State University Hospital. She took 20 rounds of chemo that ended the first of August. She had her surgery on December 13<sup>th</sup>. There were two spots found on a scan the end of October. They were about 4 x 4 x 5 inches. As her surgery date approached, we could tell she was in pain, pushing on her lower abdomen area. Her surgery went well, doing a total hysterectomy and removing the two spots, which were the size of bowling balls. She is at home recuperating. Her three sisters are helping out, two of whom stayed with her in the hospital. I drove out after **Candra's** ballgame and drove all night. We always have wanted one of us at the kids' events. Also, Candra scored her 1,000<sup>th</sup> point that evening.

Candra won the Class 3 shot and discus championship last spring. She will be attending Iowa State University to further her academic and athletic career participating in track and field.



**Weston** is midway through his junior year. UCM Football made it to the post season and finished with an 11-2 record, losing by 1 point in regular season and losing by 1 point to the team that won the championship. Weston also made second team MIAA for defense. He also cooped in the Warrensburg NRCS Office last summer and is planning on working again in another office. He enjoyed it and did well. (Must take after his mom).

I have been running some tests since the old ticker is wearing out. I have one more to do, and then a team including my cardiologist, surgeons, nutritionist, etc. will decide when to put me on the transplant list. They talked about a possible LVAD (pump) to assist my heart until a transplant. Time will tell. I'm still hauling grain or lime for the neighbor. They're calling for a few days of rain—we need it. Ponds are dried up or very low.

Hope all is well. God Bless and Merry Christmas  
Craig A King

We are sad to report the recent death of **Jay Dains**.  
<https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/mo/el-dorado-springs/jay-dains-17123731>

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## MONTANA

**Lori Valadez, ARCSE Representative**  
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**Gooby Ranch Report:** Last year was a real tough year, but this year made it look like a picnic.

Things got so bad we had to sell our cattle. **Mary Ann** herded the cows to the sale yard. They grazed as they walked along. It took her four days. She bawled all the way. There will be good grass along the road next year because she gave it a good irrigating.

A couple weeks later we got two thank-you cards from the neighbors saying they were really proud of us for selling the cattle. I guess they won't miss our cattle grazing on their hay fields once in a while.

We had a bunch of trees in our yard that had died from lack of water. They are nice-sized. Mary Ann cut them down. Then she got the crosscut saw and cut them into firewood size pieces. They made a nice stack for winter. Since we had this nice pile of wood, when we went to the mountains, Mary Ann was free to carry my hunting rifle instead of cutting wood. That way we could go farther and climb higher.

Mary Ann wanted a lap dog that would sit on her lap and keep her warm this winter. I offered to sit on her lap, but she said she preferred the dog. He wouldn't block out the TV screen. She heard that a neighbor had a litter of Toy Aussies. We had to immediately go look at them on a freezing winter night. She picked out a little boy and named him Timber. Now he is a year old and weighs 14 pounds. He loves to chase cats, horses, her other dogs, and coyotes. He's so busy that all year he sat on her lap twice. Maybe if he keeps up his current activities, I will get to sit on Mary Ann's lap after all.

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## NEBRASKA

**Norm Kempf, Jim Culver, ARCSE Representatives**  
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Lincoln SCS/NRCS Retirees' Club  
NRCS/SCS Retirees' Club  
November 15, 2023 and December 20 2023

The November meeting was opened by Chairperson **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **JoAnne Thiele, Steve Stover, Keith Sheets, Dave Camper, Gary Muckel, Jim Culver, Louie Buller, Craig Derickson, Dana Snyder, Steve Scheinost, Norm Helzer, Harold Klaege, and Donna Dornbusch**.

The December Meeting was opened by **Craig Derickson**. Attending were **Dana Snyder, Dave Camper, Norm Kempf, Jim Culver, Tom Reinsch, Gus Dornbusch, Gary Muckell, Steve Stover, Steve Shienost, Harold Klaege, Norm Helzer, Richard Boli, Craig Derickson**. NRCS Guests: **Rob Lawson**, State Conservationist; **Kelly Klenke**; Assist. State Conservationist for Management and Strategy; and **Stacy Sall**, Business Services Specialist. Craig introduced the NRCS guests, Rob, Kelly, and Stacy. Craig thanked the guests for attending the meeting and complimented Rob Lawson on his Santa Claus hat.

Craig announced that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NRCS and the Association of Retired Civil Service Employees (ARCSE) to allow retirees to mentor new employees has been approved. The NRCS anticipates hiring 4,400 new employees in the coming year. The Nebraska State Conservationist **Rob Lawson** spoke on this at our December meeting. New hires are currently being announced.

The National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) met on November 18<sup>th</sup> at First Lutheran Church in Lincoln. **Harold Klaege** said a BXBS representative was scheduled to talk about the new Medicare program about drug coverage. Medicare recipients should have received a letter about the new program. If you want to accept the new drug coverage plan you don't need to do anything. If you do not want to accept the new plan, you need to notify Medicare.

**Harold Klaege** contacted the state authorities about the January 1<sup>st</sup> Nebraska tax cut for Federal annuities and whether it also applied to survivor annuities—which it does. When filing NE state income tax for 2024, you will have to include the CSA-1099R form in order to have the taxable income from your annuities reduced.

The 2024 SWCS annual meeting will be held at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in August 2024.

**Jim Culver** announced that on December 5 there will be a movie, "Roots So Deep You Can See the Devil Down There" in celebration of World Soil Day. It will be shown at the UNL Hardin Hall Auditorium at 6:30pm with a 30-minute panel discussion to follow.

Jim Culver also announced that some of his retirees' coffee group were still deer hunting. **Louie Buller** said he belongs to a Monday afternoon retirees' coffee group that has been meeting since 1971. He also stated that he will be 95 next month and is still deer hunting.

Craig provided some introductory comments about the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between NRCS and the ARCSE association. Craig explained the new MOU was signed in August of this year and that NRCS States are beginning to take steps to meet with ARCSE groups to talk about the new MOU. The MOU provides an opportunity for ARCSE members to participate in mentoring with NRCS employees, especially newer employees.

Rob Lawson described his interest in working with the ARCSE groups and explained some of his plans. Rob has developed a letter that will be provided to NRCS employees when they retire, and it provides an ARCSE membership brochure and a contact person for the ARCSE organization in Nebraska, which is Norman Kempf.

Rob also explained the hiring strategy in Nebraska and commented that the total staff in Nebraska is now at about 340 employees and several other partnership employees working in NRCS offices. Rob, Kelly, and Stacy each provided comments about the continual hiring they are doing to try to keep up with staffing demands and attrition of employees who retire or move on to another position.

Rob described the demands of a big workload in Nebraska in keeping up with implementation of Farm Bill programs to help farmers and ranchers with their conservation needs. He also mentioned the large influx of Inflation Reduction Act funding that brought additional program funds to Nebraska in several Farm Bill programs. The workload demands are high, and the need to recruit and train new employees to meet the workload is a top priority for NRCS in Nebraska.

Several Nebraska retirees asked questions about how the mentoring might work in Nebraska. Rob explained that there is no single process for NRCS states to engage in mentoring the new employees and that every state will be trying to establish a mentoring process that works well for their state. Some retirees mentioned that they might be interested in mentoring, but they are not certain that they have enough current information about activities within NRCS, the terminology, and agency priorities. Rob replied that although we have new programs, new tools and new techniques, the work to get conservation on the land remains the same. The work of assisting landowners and operators is based upon relationships and one-to-one communication. Rob suggested these basic skills are the things that retirees could help with mentoring NRCS employees.

Rob announced that he would like to work more closely with the NRCS retirees in Nebraska and possibly produce a biennial newsletter for retirees to keep them informed of agency activities. Follow up discussion at the close of the meeting indicated there may be opportunities to arrange for a summer retirees' meeting in Nebraska, possibly in conjunction with an SWCS event, golf tournament, or another event.

**Harold Klaege** provided an update on NARFE activities and provided some information about contacts with Nebraska Dept. of Revenue. Harold has talked with several individuals at the department regarding the new legislation that will exclude federal annuity payments from State income taxes starting in 2024.

Harold encouraged the group to support the NARFE activities and mentioned the types of issues they are promoting on behalf of federal retirees, including health insurance, COLAs, and Windfall tax penalties for certain groups of retirees.

**Norm Kempf** reported that his wife **Sylvia** had recently been in the hospital and was experiencing severe pain in her back due to complications. Norm explained some of the recent problems and medical treatments that Sylvia has been through. The group offered their sympathy to Sylvia's situation and sent wishes for her to get well soon.

Harold reported that he and his wife are excited to have their son and family coming to Lincoln for Christmas. They reside in Arizona and will be in for a change in weather with the rain or snow expected this weekend and cooler temperatures expected for next week.

Craig ended the meeting with a Merry Christmas wish to all and thanked them for attending.

The November minutes were compiled by Donna Dornbusch and December minutes by Craig Derickson



**Norm Helzer and Daughter Deb attending a fall University of Nebraska football game. Norm and his wife Linda are also very big supporters of the University of Nebraska Volleyball team.**



**Members of Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club getting ready to order breakfast during our November 2023 meeting. (L-R): Harold Klaege, Norm Helzer, Steve Scheinost, standing our hostess Karina, Dana Snyder, and in background Donna Dornbusch and JoAnne Thiele.**



**Rob Lawson, NRCS State Conservationist talks with Lincoln ARCSE members before Christmas about the opportunity for retirees to provide mentoring services to NRCS employees, especially new employees.**



*An excellent turn out for the December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 retirement party of Dave Hoover, Director of the National Soil Survey Center (NSSC), Lincoln, NE and Drew Kinney, National Leader for Soil Business Systems at NSSC Both Dave and Drew have indicated they are strong prospects to being members of our Lincoln NRCS Retirees Club.*



*Discussion on current NARFE activities prior to order our breakfast at the November 2023 monthly meeting. (L-R): Norm Helzer, Steve Scheinost, Dana Snyder, Craig Derickson, Lou Buller, Gary Muckle and Dave Camper.*

**NEW JERSEY**

**Nancy Paolini, ARCSE Representative**  
**Email: [npaolini@comcast.net](mailto:npaolini@comcast.net)**

**Max Olynyk**, retired geologist and NRI coordinator for NRCS, passed away in October 2023. Max was a good friend to many, and several of us attended the Celebration of Max's life. Many people shared great personal stories of Max. Those in attendance are shown below.

"Rest in peace, Max." See the In Memoriam section for more information and his obituary at <https://www.bronsonandguthleinfh.com/obituary/Max-Olynyk>



**Front (L-R): Ken Taaffe, Nancy Paolini, Irene Lieberman, and Ronnie Lee Taylor.**  
**Back (L-R): Mike Mirage, Dave Lamm, Kent Hardmeyer, Greg Westfall, Tom Drewes and Bill Heffernan.**

## OKLAHOMA

**Randy Freeland, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [randy.freeland@suddenlink.net](mailto:randy.freeland@suddenlink.net)**

The Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees met at the Golden Corral Buffet Restaurant in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Twenty-six people were in attendance: **Mike and Mary Barrick, Laurie Bogle, Don Bartolina, Larry Coppock, Wayne Fjeseth, Fred Fortney, Bonnie and Randy Freeland and guest Wilene Jones, Harry Fritzler, Sandra and Terry Hough, Chad Kacir, Nick Lambeth, Tim Miller and son David, Kevin Norton, John Pewthers and guest Eyvonne Hart, Brent Reavis, Dan Runnels, J. Kirk Schreiner, Jim Smith, Ed Stinchcomb, and Jamey Wood.**

President **Kirk Schreiner** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. **John Pewthers** provided the blessing for the meal, and everyone enjoyed the buffet meal.

First time attendees were: **Chad Kacir**, retired September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, (only 27 days ago). He had served in Oklahoma as an Assistant State Conservationist (FO) for 8 years (2011–2019). Before that he served in Texas as a Soil Conservationist from 2002–2007, then as a District Conservationist in Hawaii from 2007–2011. He retired as the State Conservationist of Louisiana which he served since 2019.



**Jamey Wood, Jim Smith, and Nick Lambeth**

**Jamey Wood**, retired May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. He worked in Oklahoma in various positions across the state (1988–2019) before accepting a position as a member of the Policy and Program Analysis Division under the Management and Strategy Deputy Area in Washington, D.C., from which he retired. Those in attendance introduced themselves and their spouse/guest.



**Bill Johnson, Ed Stinchcomb, Chad Kacir, Sandra Hough, Dan Runnels**

Secretary-Treasurer **Sandra Hough** read the list of those retiring since April 2023: **Chris Stoner**, State Conservation Engineer, Stillwater SO, 5/30/2023, 36 years' service, only the sixth engineer to serve as State Conservation Engineer (1987–2023); **Jamey Wood**, former ASTC Management and Strategy, 5/31/2023, 34 years' service, went to Texas in 2019; **Steve Alspaugh**, State Soil Scientist, Stillwater SO, 7/28/2023, 32+ years' service; **Chad Kacir**, former ASTC (FO) 8 years in Oklahoma (2011–2019), 9/28/2023, 21 years' service, State Conservationist of Louisiana at retirement.

Sandra also read the list of known retirees who have passed since April 2023: **Paul Hamilton**, 77, retired AC, McAlester, retired in 1995 with 25 years' service, passed on 5/3/2023; **Victor Slowik**, 56, Resource and Design Engineer in Oklahoma, Supervisory Civil Engineer at Soil Mechanics Lab in Fort Worth, TX since 2019, 32 years' service, passed in service 5/5/2023; **Shawn Fleming**, 51, Resource Conservationist, Shawnee, passed in service 5/13/2023, almost 30 years' service; Steve Mornhinweg, 73, retired DC, Ada, 30+ years' service, passed 7/14/2023; **Glen Williams**, 92, retired Soil Scientist, Stillwater, passed 8/9/2023; **Norm Smola**, 85, retired State Forester, 33 years' service, passed 8/11/2023; **Jim Stover**, 75, retired GIS Specialist, State Office, passed 9/4/2023; **Dellas Anderson**, 91, retired from Chickasha Watershed Planning Staff, 38 years' service, passed 9/15/2023; **Loretta Burton**, 87, wife of **Dural Burton**, retired SCT at Chickasha, passed 9/14/2023; **Ed Abernathy**, 92, retired Soil Scientist, Poteau, retired in 1985 with 31 years' service, passed away 9/19/2023; **Ronnie Warren**, 69, retired SCT, Altus, retired in 2016 with 40+ years' service, 9/25/2023; **Bobby Birdwell**, 90, retired State Soil Scientist, Stillwater, retired in 1988 with 34 years' service, 10/19/2023; **Nancy Ellis Wycoff**, 82, retired Area Clerk at Claremore and former Secretary at Nowata FO, 20 years' service, passed 7/13/2022.

Sandra presented the minutes of the April 2023 meeting and provided the treasurer's report. There were 72 notices mailed and one returned for incorrect address.

**Randy Freeland** asked the new retirees in attendance to complete an information sheet and other retirees to provide their retirement activities (i.e., volunteer work, travel, part-time work, activities, etc.). The short form is for retirees previously in attendance and the long form to obtain more basic information on retirees who have not been in attendance. This information is used for the Oklahoma Retired SCS/NRCS Employees Association newsletter along with the minutes of the meeting. Many retirees have expressed their appreciation for the information presented on the website [www.joepad.com](http://www.joepad.com). When they are not able to attend the meetings, the website provides pictures, lists of attendees, etc. **Joe Freeland**, retired Construction Engineer, has been very gracious to keep the website updated after each meeting. Thank you, Joe!

**Harry Fritzler**, board member, provided the group with an update of the activities of the Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society (OCHS) in its sixth year of operation. Fifty conservation oral histories have been completed and are available on the OSU Library's website. NRCS is providing funding for four additional oral histories. Work on these oral histories is underway. The four individuals are: **Rick Jeans**, **Greg Scott**, **Paula Templeton**, and **Ed Mouss**. Work is nearing completion with the Oklahoma Historical Society on a conservation photo collection available to the public on the OHS Gateway to Oklahoma History website. There will be 12 to 15 thousand photos in the collection when completed. A grant has been secured from the Oklahoma Historical Society to create a traveling photo exhibit of Oklahoma's conservation history. There will be ten panels and will primarily use the conservation photos from the collection to tell the story. The exhibit will be completed the first of the year. It will be available to conservation districts to use for events or to set up in local museums. Oral histories which were gathered can be accessed at:

<https://library.okstate.edu/digital/>.

Several conservationists who have provided oral histories are now deceased, emphasizing the need to obtain as many as possible before it is too late. The photos may be accessed at:

<http://gateway.okhistory.org/explore/collections/OKCHS>.

The website can be accessed at:

<https://www.oklahomaconservationhistory.org>.



*President Schreiner speaking to the group*

**President Schreiner** challenged each retiree to contact one or more retirees before the next meeting and encourage them to attend our semi-annual meetings in April and October. There may be retirees who would like to attend but are not able to bring themselves. Offering to provide them transportation might further encourage their attendance.

To put it mildly, **Wayne Fjeseth** is into "Libraries." As a volunteer he has helped open three new libraries in Oklahoma City and two in Norman for the Pioneer Library System—a total of 70,000 books. He also assists them with native plant plantings and butterfly gardens. He fishes a lot in Minnesota as well as in Oklahoma.

**Jamey Wood** claims to be his wife's pool boy, but he has also taken up basketball officiating. He said he likes to get hot, sweaty, and yelled at by parents. He continues to support the OSU Cowboys and plays a little golf and tennis since retirement.

**Sandra and Terry Hough** celebrated 55 years of marriage in August. They have two daughters and sons-in-law, three grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. She volunteers at her church pantry once a week.

**Tim Miller** continues to ranch and work in his church. **Larry Coppock** works three days a week as an ACES Employee and follows their adult children and grandchildren. (*Editor's Note: For those of us that have been retired for "quite" some time, ACES is as way to work part time for NRCS that doesn't affect your annuity.*). Lots of travel (including Hawaii) keeps **Brent Reavis** and his wife busy, along with spending time with their seven grandchildren.



**Tim Miller and Brent Reavis**

And a couple sent information about their lives although they weren't able to attend our meeting.

**Ron Hilliard** wrote: "**Edith** and I traveled to London on August 5<sup>th</sup>, for a few days' tour of the city. We then boarded the Island Princess for a 16-day cruise of Ireland, Iceland, and Greenland, returning on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Weather was perfect for the cruise, and we got to navigate the Arctic Circle. The beauty of Iceland is something to see. We were really surprised that 95% of the water is drinkable from the lakes and rivers, with an almost unlimited supply. The harnessing of the geothermal energy was very interesting, too. The Haukadalur Geothermal Field is the largest Geothermal Plant that generates most the power and hot water needed by all residents of Iceland.

We were also able to navigate the Prince Christian Sound in Greenland to view magnificent icebergs, glaciers and beautiful waterfalls. Fantastic trip. We are preparing for our next trip/cruise January 2–22, 2024, to Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia, with an extended stay in Singapore."

**Mark Mosely** wrote: "Can't believe the time that has passed by since we enjoyed Oklahoma and all the good folks there. I must confess that we have not totally retired—we just volunteer! I am on the local Soil conservation board and our church board and do like that as it keeps me in the loop of doing what I like to do—except for those pesky watershed structures we have to maintain! At least we can be selective about what we get involved with.

Thanks for the kind words about **Will**. We are proud of him and his family. We do have a grandson who is 4½, and we enjoy him when we can see him. Will has done well with his work and has coped with the big changes that the Noble Research has implemented. **Chris** was in the Master Gardeners program for a while, and we still work with them from time to time giving programs. They are a good group to associate with. It does not take long to get a weather report down here: 'extremely hot, dry, no end in sight!' We have had several years of this and getting a little tired of it, to tell you the truth. It is nice to travel back to Oklahoma and see what green grass looks like! We are doing okay, some of our parts are out of warranty from time to time, but we live in a great time, medically speaking, with all the new knowledge and medical technology. My Dr. tells me a lot of this is "age appropriate." I think she is trying to be diplomatic! Thanks again for writing. I communicate with **Harry Fritzler** from time to time, and a couple of years back he and **Beverly** blessed us with a visit. Tell everyone we are doing fine and have always appreciated Oklahoma. It was one of the best experiences of our life."

As a special treat for us, **Wilene Jones** attended her first meeting with **Randy** and **Bonnie Freeland**. When the crowd was asked for a show of hands of how many either worked with or knew of **Mavis Jones**, at least 75% of those attending raised their hand. He was a great employee who left behind a beautiful wife.

Please feel free to send something similar to those above that can be used in the April 2024 Newsletter. Do it now before you forget! Send it to: [randy.freeland@suddenlink.net](mailto:randy.freeland@suddenlink.net)

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at the Golden Corral on MacArthur Boulevard in Oklahoma City. The Golden Corral opens at 10:30am, so there is extra time for visiting before the meeting starts at 11:30am.



*Wilene Jones, Randy and Bonnie Freeland*

## OREGON

**Don Stettler, ARCSE Representative**  
 Email: [don.stettler@comcast.net](mailto:don.stettler@comcast.net)

**Gary Yeumans** recently had a phone visit with **Dale Boner**. Dale's wife passed away several years ago. He still lives on his ranch near Enterprise but leases the land. **Gary** and his wife **La Vonne** recently celebrated their birthdays and their 67<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with an open house at their church.

**Stefanie Aschmann** plays in three musical groups, all of which had holiday concerts this year. As such, she is pretty busy playing her viola. She entertained four of her siblings, along with their children and grandchild, during the holidays. In addition, she hosted **Linda's** family, along with a few friends and neighbors, totaling about 30 people.

**Beth Zetter and Butch** are staying close to home. They still have their Chiweenie dog, D.A.Z.Y. Ray, and their one-year-old grey tabby cat, Katy Jane.

**Jon and Jolyne Lea** acquired a Great Pyrenees puppy last June. At eight months she weighs eighty-five pounds. They entered the pup into a dog show for the first time in October, and she did alright for a first time out, second in her class the first day only to be beaten by her sister, but on the next day she was first in class. They took both of their dogs to Santa Rosa, California to visit Jon's mother for Thanksgiving. Daughter **Rowyn** and husband **Nathan**, along with their Golden Retriever who live in San Jose, will be at Jon and Jolyne's for Christmas.

The winter quarter retiree lunch will be held on January 17<sup>th</sup> at the Elmers on NE181<sup>st</sup> Street. Watch your email for details.



***A consequence of a retiree who failed to take the advice of getting a mature dog rather than a puppy. What is left of the January issue of the National Geographic.***



## PENNSYLVANIA

From **Frank Resides**:

**Robert W. Franzen** died in the Corning Hospital at 14:30 on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month with his family present. Bob was the oldest of four brothers—**John, Rick, and David**—and one sister, **Ellen**. He had a pacemaker installed about two years ago and had been advised to "slow down" physically, which he did not do. Few people knew how serious his condition was because he didn't talk about it, even when asked.

He was unable to go hunting this year, and that activity was very limited last year—not like Bob. He had a number of strokes and was hospitalized earlier this year.

I have known and worked with Bob since the 1970s when he transferred to Amherst MA and joined the SCS staff.

He was of the highest caliber as a Wildlife Biologist, a devoted professional, and a dedicated employee.

He will be missed by many, and may the Lord's Blessing be upon him and his family.

God Bless, Frank

## TENNESSEE

**ARCSE Representative: Dana D. Ensor, DBA**

**Email: [dyork818@yahoo.com](mailto:dyork818@yahoo.com)**

We met at the Shoney's in Lebanon, TN on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023. There were 20 in attendance including spouses and a sister.

In attendance were: **Joe Carmack**, his sister (and chauffeur) **Penny**, **Patty Lane**, **Bobby Moore**, **James Sims**, **Ron and Charlene Graner**, **Chester and Janet Bush**, **Anna and Jack Chidester**, **Kevin Brown**, **Jim Lansford**, **Gary Handley**, **Traci Horne**, **Jeanne Eastham**, **Allen Crowe**, **Larry and Connie Hasty**, **AnnSue Wattenbarger**.



News of those not in attendance that were reported on:

**Donald Dotson** has a scheduling conflict. He is doing ok and has been enjoying retirement since 2005. **Nathan Hartgrove** is unable to attend, but is interested in keeping up with retiree events and news. May do some consulting in his retirement.

**Shirley Childs** is in Japan visiting her daughter who is retiring from the Air Force with 24 years of service.

**Dana York Ensor** is out of town and wishes everyone a Merry Christmas. **Allen Persinger** is unable to attend but wishes everyone a Merry Christmas.

**Darwin Newton** has a conflict with a TACD planning meeting. He was honored at the Southeast Conservation District Employees Association annual meeting last month and was presented an award for Outstanding Conservation District Supervisor. He and Martha Lynn took 9 different trips in the US this year, trying to make up for COVID. He wishes all of us a Merry Christmas.

**Mike Hart** says hello and Merry Christmas but was unable to attend. **Debbie Brasfield** was enroute to the meeting, but she got stuck behind a wreck on I-65 and was unable to make the meeting in time.

News of those in Attendance:

**Joe Carmack** was a former Asst. State Engineer in Tennessee before moving and working in other positions in other states and several of them overseas such as Egypt. He lives in Washington State and travels back and forth to Ripley where he still manages the family farm operation. He is glad to be here.

**Kevin Brown** enjoys retirement more every year. He recently returned from Sarasota, FL where he was helping Teresa's aunt. His kitchen is being remodeled right now. His children live in Clover, SC and Cookeville, TN.

**Jim Lansford** lives in Cookeville. Spends most of his time at church, doctor's appointments, and funeral visitations. He lives a simple life and is glad to be here.

**Gary Handley** enjoys retirement and is working on building a 4-car garage for the antique cars that he collects. He also still enjoys deer hunting.

**Chester Bush** was in Cumberland County for 30 years and now lives in Fresno, CA. They enjoy Yosemite, Monterey Bay, along with the weather. He was here this fall when his brother passed away from multiple myeloma. He is in town visiting his children in Tennessee for Christmas.

**Patty Lane** retired 12 years ago and really enjoys it. She has had a tough year this past year with health issues including having a pacemaker installed in June, an ablation for her AFIB in October and a bout with RSV and a hole in her retina repaired. She's hoping for a better year health-wise.

**Traci Horne** is working as an ACES employee for the admin staff. She is planning to travel to Tampa for 10 days beginning December 20 to celebrate Christmas with her family.

**AnnSue Wattenbarger** started in 1975 as the first female soil conservationist in Tennessee. She worked 41 years in Knoxville, Maynardville, Lebanon, Nashville, and Ashland City before coming to the State Office. She has sold her beloved 1983 Datsun 280ZX car, named "Baby" in September to pay for an upstairs HVAC system. Her older brother passed away around Thanksgiving. He was a high school teacher in Oak Ridge.

**Jeanne Eastham** was the former Public Affairs Specialist. She has four great grandchildren living with her and she helps with several of her other great grands. She escaped the recent tornadoes this past weekend but heard from **Carol Chandler** who lost a bathroom window to the tornado, it sucked the glass right out of the frame. Jeanne has Dr. appointments like everyone else but enjoys good health.

**Bobby Moore** has two problems: his hearing and his memory. He and **Brenda** are proud of their 61-year marriage. Brenda has health issues that keep her homebound. He had his first great grandchild this year, and he still has strong ties to West Tennessee and the family farms. Glad to be here and to see everyone.

**Anna Chidester** spends her days at Dr. appointments and she or Jack has a surgery scheduled for tomorrow. They are not traveling for Christmas but invite anyone to stop by and visit with them. She and Jack recently saw **Pete and Bea Danielson**. They attended a play together at the Cumberland County Playhouse. Bea is doing ok.

**Ron Graner** began his career in Texas, then Arizona before moving here to Tennessee as the Geologist. He took the buyout to retire in 1994 and turned 89 this year. He enjoys playing golf and resides in Brentwood, not too far from **Bobby Moore**. He wishes everyone a Merry Christmas.

**Allen Crowe** worked as a student trainee in Oneida and then at Jennings Creek, where he got to work with **Joe Carmack**. He then began his career in Dresden. He and **Ron Graner** were good buddies at work and often got to travel together. He used to keep a radio/cassette player at work where he and Ron would sing along to tapes of **Ralph Stanley**, providing entertainment to **Patty Lane** and **Peggy Birdwell**, who could hear them through the wall! Patty wanted to know if he and Ron were going to sing to us today!

**Larry Hasty** gave the sad news that **Ruby Mae Farrar** had passed away a couple of weeks ago. He attended her funeral. She was 98 years old. One of his granddaughters is the State FFA President since last March, and her term runs until March 2024. She stays on the road all the time giving speeches and presentations. He has 12 grandkids and 4 great grandkids. He retired 17 years ago this coming January.

**James Sims** still works as an ACES employee and has 5 A&E contracts for planning, design, and construction. He does a lot of dog-sitting for his daughter **Jana**, who has achieved a GS14 working for the Commissioner of IRS's staff. He is very proud of her. His favorite Ron Graner story is how Ron always starts off with "In the beginning....." then you get the entire story!

We all enjoyed a good meal and a wonderful visit. Please mark your calendars for our next meeting to be held on Thursday March 21, 2024.

Merry Christmas everybody! – Traci.

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## TEXAS NORTH

**Mike Bogard, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [mbogard41@gmail.com](mailto:mbogard41@gmail.com)**

**John Mueller** wrote: Kate and I were recently blessed with a second grandson, Levi Daniel. Living a couple of hours away, we get to visit frequently and really enjoy those times. We also continue to explore the Hill Country area via day tripping. Much of the area focuses on tourism, so there is always something to do.

I also attended the ASABE meeting in Lubbock in October and made an interesting detour one afternoon. My uncle was a glider pilot in World War II who unfortunately died in a training exercise shortly before D-Day, so I had always wanted to visit the Silent Wings Museum. It was well worth it and proved to be a good afternoon.



*John Mueller family*

From Julie MacSwain:

### **Distinguished Texas public affairs specialist Quenna Terry retires**

**Quenna Terry**, Zone 1 Public Affairs Specialist, recently retired after 32 years with the agency. Quenna attended Texas Tech University (TTU) where she obtained a degree from the College of Agriculture, Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) with a major in Agricultural Communications and minored in journalism technical writing. Quenna came from a ranching background in Salida, Colorado and Seymour, Texas. During summers while she was in college at Tech, Quenna interned with the Baylor County Soil and Water Conservation District. It was there she learned more about the innerworkings of the relationship between the local SWCDs and the NRCS and how they helped producers apply key conservation practices on their operations. During her junior and senior years at Tech she was offered an opportunity to work for the Lubbock Soil and Water Conservation District and complete data entry for the national resource inventory (NRI) working through NRCS' zone soil scientist.

Upon graduation from Tech, Quenna continued to work for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now NRCS, in a non-permanent capacity through a part-time work program called WAE where she continued her efforts with NRI and learning conservation planning and technical support. In 1993, she was converted as a full-time Conservation Planner in the Lubbock field office. She held this position for 9 years before **Mickey Black**, then Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Zone 1, recognized her talents and ability to effectively communicate agency information and programs and hired her as the Zone 1 Public Affairs Specialist based in the Lubbock field office. Quenna held the first zone public affairs position in the state and with her success in this area, this model would be later adopted for all five zones in the state.

Quenna spent her career serving the field offices with communication support in the form of developing handouts and educational materials, organizing, and promoting field days and workshops, attending recruiting events and much more. Through events and extensive networking efforts, Quenna developed important relationships with the soil and water conservation districts, underground water conservation districts, AgriLife Extension and commodity organizations in the Lubbock and Texas Panhandle areas, including Texas Corn Producers, Plains Cotton Growers, Texas Wheat Growers, Texas Peanut Growers, Texas Grain Sorghum, Texas Cattle Feeders, and others. She made concentrated efforts to hire student interns from the TTU CASNR College of Communications as interns for NRCS in the Public Affairs role throughout her years with the agency. Many of them went on to serve in careers in the agriculture industry and their early experiences with the NRCS through Quenna helped increase NRCS's understanding and assistance with those respective audiences.

Quenna developed a successful working relationship with high profile media in the Texas Panhandle and South Plains region. She served as a member of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce Ag committee, the Agricultural Communicators in the High Plains and as a TTU CASNR advisory board member for a several years. In 2009, Quenna received the TTU CASNR Distinguished Alumni award "in recognition for her professional achievement and contribution to society."

One of the favorite parts of Quenna's job was to do feature stories on agriculture producers utilizing NRCS assistance to further their operations' management and conservation goals. Over the course of her career, she had many of her stories featured at the national and international level. Through a unique education grant she worked on through a partnership with The Texas Corn Producers (TCP), Quenna represented NRCS working through TCP to plan and execute several "Field to Fork" events across the state. These events were hosted by farmers who utilized NRCS assistance with key social media influencers and bloggers invited to attend the event to learn about agriculture food production at the grass roots level and the conservation efforts involved that improve the environment and boost the economy. The blogs, articles, videos and media interviews produced from these events reached broad audiences of thousands of people, taking the good news of NRCS and conservation to new and non-traditional audiences.

Taking a further step to reach an even larger consumer audience, the TCP and NRCS duo conducted satellite media tours. One example was the Texas Corn Producers Female Farmers Cropping Up media tour that took place on a West Texas farm near Muleshoe. The farmers spoke with stations across the country to share their different experiences on how farming became part of their lives and the impact it has had on the way they view food. The women farmers also discussed how the farming lifestyle has developed over the years and the new technologies being utilized to maximize production while conserving resources and protecting the environment. The media tour reached more than 116.8 million people with 493 airings of the content with an Ad Value of more than \$2 million.

With her network of partners and geographic location in the Panhandle and South Plains regions, Quenna served as an agency liaison to the national office for NRCS initiatives including the Lesser Prairie Chicken, Ogallala Aquifer, Playa Lakes, and Urban Agriculture efforts. Quenna also organized and hosted many events and tours for key USDA VIPs, including several Secretaries of Agriculture and Deputy Under Secretaries.

Also, through the partnership agreement with TCP, Quenna was one of the key founders of the [www.WaterGrows.org](http://www.WaterGrows.org) website. She was instrumental in developing the initial marketing campaign, "Water Grows – Lets Make it Last," that focused on the benefits the Ogallala Aquifer provides Texas in growing food, jobs, the economy, and our future with an emphasis on NRCS providing producers with water conservation practices, including the most advanced technologies used for water use efficiencies and cost-sharing. Quenna worked with TCP and NRCS staff to develop social media posts, blogs, public service announcements, videos and events to educate the public on the water conservation efforts implemented by farmers and ranchers over the Ogallala Aquifer and the many public benefits that result.

One of the capstones of her career was the 2023 launch of an online training platform that has resulted in online curriculum and certification centered around NRCS approaches to natural resource conservation. [Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification](#) is the first of its kind online training focused on soil, water, air, plants, and animals. It is offered through iCEV, a comprehensive online resource for Career and Technical Education programs that offers certifications with CTE curriculum aligned to industry standards. Quenna gathered and guided a group of NRCS soil, water and range scientists and public affairs specialists to develop the curriculum, provide video interviews, and provide their technical expertise in the entire project – from writing the course narration to video production and photo selection oversight.

From her concept initialization in 2014 to her leadership in the development of this complex project – this new product will take historic and educational information that meets the agency mission and goals to audiences the agency has never had access to, as well as FFA students and 4-H members. In addition to being an educational tool for career professionals and decision makers in the areas of city and company management of natural resources, this product will serve as an exceptional recruiting tool to a very important target audience: high school, college students and other adult learners. In addition, this certification course has the potential to be an excellent training option for new NRCS employees.

Throughout her career, Quenna utilized her talents and role as a public affairs specialist to help unprecedented audiences learn about the agency, to recruit and mentor new employees and to position the agency for growth in the future. She helped guide and shape an effective public affairs and communications program for NRCS Texas. We are glad she chose to serve the agency as she did and wish her well in her future endeavors.

Submitted by: **Dee Ann Littlefield**, Zone 5 Public Affairs Specialist



*Queena Terry*



*Queena and Mickey on Nuffield Tour*



*Queena shooting pictures from tractor*

**DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH/APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS FEB. 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2024.**

## WEST VIRGINIA

**Peg Reese, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [pegreesevw@gmail.com](mailto:pegreesevw@gmail.com)**

Two women will become retirees at the end of the year: Economist **Pam Yost** located at the State Office; and Soil Conservation Technician **Pamela Lupton** located at the Moorefield Service Center. We wish them the best as they enter a new period of their lives.

The Mountain Harvest Farm beat out the **Cody and Jessica Findley** Farm (Mason County) to become the 2023 WV Conservation Farm of the Year and receive a \$1,000 award. Mountain Harvest Farm is owned and operated by **Chica Ramirex and Mary Oldham**. The Preston County farm specializes in certified, naturally grown vegetables. The farm represents the Monongahela Conservation District. Middletown Tractor Sales in Fairmont sweetened their win by giving them use of a John Deere tractor for 200 hours, or three months, with an option to later purchase the tractor at a discounted rate.

West Virginia forests are making the holidays merrier for the folks of DC. The 63-foot Norway Spruce that is displayed on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol building comes from the Monongahela National Forest in Randolph County. After the tree was harvested, it was taken on a tour across West Virginia with stops in Elkins, Summersville, Marlinton, Beckley, Charleston, Huntington, Wheeling, Morgantown, Upper Tract, and Davis before heading to the U.S. Capitol. The Spruce is decorated with 10,000 ornaments made by West Virginians to highlight this year's theme of "Endlessly Wild and Wonderful." The Shawnee tribe named the tree **Wa'feem'tekqi**, which means "bright tree." After the holidays, the Shawnee tribe will use wood from the tree at their ceremonial grounds in White Oak, Oklahoma. This is the third time WV has provided the U.S Capitol Christmas tree. The other years were 1970 and 1976.

Preston County Christmas tree growers **Jim and Laura Rockis** provided a 25-foot West Virginia Balsam, also known as a Canaan Fir, for the vestibule of the USDA Headquarters. Cones from the tree were collected in August for seed production. 84 Lumber harvested 84 Canaan Fir and Fraser Fir trees from the Rockis farm to give to service members stationed at Joint Base Andrews and other offices throughout D.C.

Nominations for the WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame are due February 16, 2024. The application form is at <https://agriculture.wv.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/1/2024-AFHOF-Nominations-Form.pdf>.

The Winter Blues Farmers Market will be held at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center from 12pm to 6pm on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## WISCONSIN

**Deb Legear, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [deb.legear@gmail.com](mailto:deb.legear@gmail.com)**



As another year comes to a close, I wanted to share the experience of my freshmen year as the State Representative for Wisconsin. Wisconsin had luncheons in Arena, Mt. Horeb, Shawano, Green Lake, Antigo, and Eau Claire from March through October this year. Area representatives find and schedule a venue, and sometimes a tour, to accommodate members. They provide the information to me to disseminate by email.

When I worked for NRCS and OCIO in USDA as an IT Specialist, I was able to meet and provide support to many around the state. Participating in the luncheons this year was a great opportunity to catch up with former coworkers and friends to revisit and share memories of yesterday. I managed to attend all seven luncheons, and I found the experience very rewarding. I plan to attend as many of these outings as I can in 2024 too.

My job as the ARCSE state representative is to keep the member database current, distribute information about meetings, tours, and golf outings dates, and to provide In Memoriam information. I try to capture information on NRCS employees who are planning to retire and get their contact information, so they get included in the email stream.

I introduced many retirees to the Association of Retired Conservation Employees (ARCSE) organization. I bring applications to the luncheons, and interested retirees can fill out the form so I can forward the information to get the membership process started.

I ask members to send articles and pictures of their travel adventures and volunteer activities in retirement. I submit an article every two months to the national ARCSE newsletter.

I can only be successful with the assistance and cooperation of area representatives and members who keep me informed of things happening around the state. I am counting on all of you to keep me informed. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the members who make my job easier.

–Deb Legear

Following is from **Julie MacSwain**, ARCSE President:

Keeping in touch with former NRCS coworkers has been a lot of fun. Recently **Tracy Harrell**, former NRCS Area Coordinator, stopped by to see me at my home in River Falls. It's nice to see that after several years we still stay in touch. Cellphones, emails, and social media have certainly helped!

(L-R) Tracy Harrell, Julie MacSwain



**SENIOR CONSERVATIONISTS:** *Senior Conservationists have reached the minimum age of 83 years and have completed the Senior Conservationist Questionnaire (download at <https://arcsecommunications.wordpress.com/senior-conservationists/>). See IN-MEMORIAM for the Senior Conservationists who have left us since the last Newsletter. Please help us identify retirees who should be named Senior Conservationists. Please provide their contact information to your ARCSE Representative or Regional Vice-President.*

### Are You a Senior Conservationist?

If you have ever skimmed through the ARCSE Newsletter or browsed the ARCSE website, you have probably seen some people referred to as a "Senior Conservationist." Have you ever wondered what that means? Maybe you have wondered if you could be recognized as a senior conservationist, or how you go about being recognized as a senior conservationist.

The recognition of senior conservationists began many years ago to salute retirees of the Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service for their efforts in building and maintaining a very strong agency. For most SCS/NRCS retirees, their work with the agency was much more than just a job. Their work centered around an ethic of desiring to protect our soil, water, and other natural resources for future generations by serving the public through promotion of wise voluntary stewardship of the land. Many retirees have continued those efforts into retirement through volunteering, consulting, or just providing perspective and advice to younger generations on how conservation has changed over the years. The Senior Conservationist recognition honors these individuals.

As of December 2023, over 820 retirees have been recognized as senior conservationists. Here are the requirements to be recognized:

- You must be a retiree who worked for the SCS or NRCS
- You must be 83 years of age or older
- You must complete and submit the Senior Conservationist Questionnaire

Please note you are not required to be an ARCSE member to be recognized as a senior conservationist. So, if you know of a deserving retiree who is not a member, please let them know about this recognition so they can apply. And you are certainly welcome to encourage them to join ARCSE too. You also don't need to have worked as a soil conservationist. Any retiree of SCS/NRCS of any discipline is eligible. We have senior conservationists that were engineers, soil scientists, biologists, technicians, area clerks, computer specialists, etc. It doesn't matter, your work helped put conservation on the ground.

After you meet the requirements and are named a senior conservationist, there will be a writeup in the ARCSE newsletter about your career and what you have been up to in retirement, and it will be posted on the ARCSE webpage as well.

Our ARCSE webpage dedicated to senior conservationists is here: <https://arcse.org/senior-conservationists/>. On this site you will find a link to the Senior Conservationist application. If you do not have access to a computer, I would be happy to send an application to you. Just call me, Paul Benedict, at 202-578-8226, and I will get one in the mail to you right away.

**Senior Conservationist Chronicler Needed:** As many of you know, our Senior Conservationist Chronicler, **Marc Safley**, passed away a year ago, leaving a huge gap in the association. ARCSE needs someone to take over the great work that Marc was doing in recognizing our senior conservationists. Perhaps you are not old enough to be recognized as a senior conservationist yourself and are looking for a rewarding way to put your energy to use. The Senior Conservationist Chronicler prepares the Senior Conservationist articles for the Newsletter and maintains the file on the Senior Conservationists. You don't do this all by yourself. The Regional Vice Presidents and State Representatives help. So does **Jerry Bernard**, our Editor. As Membership Chair, I work closely with the Chronicler to make sure he/she has an accurate record of who is eligible or approaching eligibility. If you are interested or have questions on what might be involved, please contact ARCSE President **Julie MacSwain**, your regional Vice President, or me.



**OBITUARY INFORMATION****Paul Benedict, Membership Chair**

When you receive word of someone passing, with little other information provided to you, obituaries can often be found by doing an advanced search using Google, using the full name of the deceased. If you do not have access to the internet, Paul Benedict will be glad to do the search. **PLEASE SEND DEATH NOTICES AND OBITUARY INFORMATION DIRECTLY TO PAUL BENEDICT AT [soilwarden@verizon.net](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net)**. Always include the position or the spouse's position with SCS/NRCS.

Surname	Year	<i>In-Memoriam</i> (Note: These are recent notices. For a complete list, please see <a href="http://www.arcse.org">www.arcse.org</a> )
<b>Bluhm</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>George Charles Bluhm</b> (82) of Kelso, Washington, passed away in mid-December 2023. George was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota to <b>Howard</b> and <b>Hattie Bluhm</b> . His family moved to Tacoma, Washington when he was just 4 years old. George attended Washington State University (WSU) where he graduated with a degree in Agriculture Engineering in 1963 and was co-awarded as the top Agriculture Engineer in his graduating class. He finished top of his class and received many accolades while attending WSU, including president of Farmhouse Fraternity, Alpha Zeta (an honor agriculture fraternity), ASAE (American Society of Agriculture Engineers) Sigma Tau (National Engineering Honor), ROTC, and Crimson Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa. Shortly after graduation, George married his first love, <b>Karen Keil</b> . They moved to Pennsylvania to further George's education, where he attended Pennsylvania State University and received a master's degree in meteorology. George and Karen went on to spend their next 4 years in Ramstein, Germany where he was a captain in the Air Force. Upon returning to the United States, George worked on his PhD at the University of Washington while working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS). George wrote part of the Farmers Act in Washington DC for the SCS. He also worked on the National Air Quality Workshop and was part of SCS for 30 years. George continued in the Air Force and in the Air National Guard Reserves where he was part of the 113th regiment and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. George retired as the Director at the West National Technology Center, in Portland, Oregon. In 1985, George was fortunate to find love again in marriage to <b>Patricia Damery</b> . George's love for farming and people led him and Patty to open Polar Farms together. They believed in the farm to table philosophy for dining. They grew, sold, and delivered fruit and vegetables to many respected restaurants in the surrounding area. George is survived by his two daughters, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren.
<b>Burt</b>	<b>2023</b>	ARCSE Member <b>John Patrick Burt</b> (80) of Temple, Texas, passed away peacefully in Temple surrounded by family on December 5, 2023. John was born in Neshoba County, Philadelphia, Mississippi on January 20, 1943, to <b>John L. Burt</b> and <b>Ida Francis (Kilpatrick) Burt</b> . He graduated from East Central Junior College in 1963 and Mississippi State University in 1965 with a degree in Civil Engineering. John met his wife, <b>Betty Lea Douglass</b> in Jackson, Mississippi and the two were married on March 17, 1973. He was employed in 1965 with the United States Army Traffic Ability Research Section of the Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The primary mission was to develop tools to predict and improve the mobility of military equipment in Vietnam. Mr. Burt joined the U.S. Army in 1966. He received an officer commission as 2nd Lieutenant and entered the Medical Service Corps, United States Army in Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. His first military duty assignment was in the Military District of Washington, Washington, D.C. The next assignment was Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. He was awarded the Bronze Star medal for Meritorious Achievement in ground operations against hostile forces, primarily controlling Bubonic Plague during the 1968 Vietnam Tet Offensive. Other medals received include the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (3 Campaign Stars), Vietnam Campaign Medal, and 2 Overseas Bars. John completed military service as a Captain in 1969 at the 3rd Army, Environmental Health Laboratory, Fort McPherson, Atlanta, GA. Upon leaving the Army in 1969, John was employed by the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in Jackson, Mississippi. as an Environmental Engineer. He was the first Environmental Engineer hired by the Soil Conservation Service. In 1976, Mr. Burt was promoted to the South National Technical Service Center in Fort Worth, Texas. This position provided technical assistance to Soil Conservation staff in 12 Southern states. In 1989 John was promoted to the National Headquarters of Soil Conservation Service in Washington, D.C. He was selected as a member of the Senior Executive Service of the United States of America and served in different leadership capacities. In 1997, John returned to Texas as State Conservationist. He retired from this position in 2002 after 31 years of service. He enjoyed traveling, fishing, and spending time with family. He was a member of First Methodist Church of Temple and Sons of the American Revolution Texas Society. John is survived by his wife <b>Betty Burt</b> , son <b>Brian Patrick Burt</b> of Round Rock, Texas, son <b>James Michael Douglass</b> (Ruth Anne) of Clifton, Texas, and daughter <b>Stacey Lea (Ronnie) Boiles</b> and husband of Crowley, Texas; four grandchildren, <b>Lauren Douglass</b> , <b>Jordan Hainsfurther</b> , <b>Trevor Boiles</b> and <b>Juliann Boiles</b> along with one great granddaughter, <b>Annabelle Hainsfurther</b> . A funeral service was held December 9, 2023, at Scanio-Harper Funeral Home in Temple, Texas. Buriel was at Greenwood Memorial Park in Fort Worth, Texas.
<b>Carlson</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Donald D. Carlson</b> (86) of Spencer, Iowa, passed away October 26, 2023, at the Spencer Hospital. Donald was born on January 26, 1937, at home in Laurens, Iowa. He was the son of <b>Eric (Pete)</b> and <b>Fern (Waldron) Carlson</b> . After high school he enlisted and served in the Air National Guard in Fort Dodge, Iowa. He worked for the USDA Soil Conservation Service for 32 years as a Soil Conservation Technician in northwest Iowa, retiring in 1994. He then surveyed for Luft & Sons for 16 years. Post-retirement, he worked for Rural Community Insurance Agency as a hail adjuster. Don was a member of the United Methodist Church in Pocahontas, Iowa, and Grace United Methodist Church in Spencer. Don's survivors include his daughter, <b>Kristi (Jim) Shimon</b> , son <b>Kevin (Tanya) Carlson</b> , daughter, <b>Kelley Nedved</b> , stepson, <b>Chris (Michelle) Stimson</b> , stepdaughter, <b>Kelly (Brad) Johnson</b> , grandchildren, <b>Zach Carlson</b> , <b>Zevin Carlson</b> , <b>Haley Shimon</b> , <b>Karter Shimon</b> , <b>Allena Shimon</b> , <b>Kellen Shimon</b> , <b>Jack Nedved</b> , <b>Allie Nedved</b> , <b>Henry Nedved</b> , step-grandchildren, <b>Bailey Stimson</b> , <b>Hannah Stimson</b> , step great granddaughter <b>Harlow</b> ; and friend <b>Pat Carlson</b> .
<b>Clark</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>John Calvin "Jack" Clark, III</b> (70) of Danville, Pennsylvania, passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on November 17, 2023, at his home. Jack was born on April 8, 1953, in Danville, the son of the late <b>John C.</b> and <b>Louise Durlin Clark</b> . He attended Keystone College and graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1977 with a degree in Agriculture Business Management. Jack was employed by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a soil conservationist, working in multiple counties throughout his career, retiring as District Conservationist in Snyder County in 2010. He was a member of St. John's "Vought's" Lutheran Church Danville, where he served as Treasurer for the Church Council for many years. His other memberships included fire companies in the Danville area and the

		American Legion Post #40. He was also a member of Danville Moose #1133. He is survived by his children: daughter, <b>Leslie Jo Warriner (Adam)</b> of Millheim, Pennsylvania, and their children: <b>Emily Louise, Elizabeth Joan, Katherine Helena, William John, and Adam Robert</b> ; daughter, <b>Jessica Clark</b> of New York City, New York, and son, <b>Aaron Clark (Katelyn)</b> and their son <b>Parker John</b> of Danville.
<b>DePue</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Julie Chalfant DePue</b> (55) of Silver Spring, Maryland, passed away November 23, 2023, at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring following a stroke after a heroic battle against lung cancer. Julie was born in Suffolk, New York on May 7, 1968, to <b>Wanda Sutherland Chalfant</b> and <b>Richard Chalfant</b> . She was a natural storyteller and pursued education in writing and filmmaking. Julie had the talent to make a reader feel transported to whatever destination she wrote. Her first attempt to work on a film behind the camera, however, ended with her in front of the camera in <i>The Arrowtooth Waltz</i> (aka <i>Arizona Dream</i> ). She was a natural beauty and a star. Julie's love for the arts filled her life. Ballet, Jazz, Piano, and chorus informed hours with loved ones listening to music and critiquing movies. In 2008 she began work with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a data manager at National Headquarters. She is survived by her husband <b>Dean Anthony DePue</b> , and brothers <b>David Chalfant</b> and <b>Mark Chalfant</b> , and stepsons <b>Jody, Zach, and Jeremy</b> .
<b>Ford</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Donald "Don" L. Ford</b> (77) of Tomball, Texas, passed away November 21, 2023, in Tomball. Don was born February 1, 1946, in Paris, Texas to <b>Byron and Joan (Caton) Ford</b> . He married <b>Betty Taylor</b> , the love of his life, on August 31, 1968. Don attended Texas Tech and graduated in 1975 with a degree in Agricultural Engineering. He worked one year at Fort Hood then went to work as an engineer for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, from which he retired from in 2010 in San Angelo, Texas. Don and Betty moved to Tomball, TX in 2017 to be near their children. While in Tomball, he formed his own engineering business and contracted work for other companies. Don worked for the Harris County Flood Control District from June 2019 to August 2023. He loved working and retired only when he could not work anymore. Don loved soccer and tennis. He coached soccer for both boys and girls for many years in San Angelo. Don was preceded in death by a son, <b>Christopher Kyle</b> . He is survived by his wife of 55 years, <b>Betty Taylor Ford</b> , son <b>Kevin (Allie)</b> , and son <b>Jason (Julia)</b> and 3 grandchildren, <b>Lawson, Brooks, and Stella</b> .
<b>Franzen</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Robert "Bob" W. Franzen</b> (82) of Corning, New York, passed away December 15, 2023, at Guthrie Corning Hospital. Bob was born March 10, 1941, in Corning. He worked as a wildlife Biologist with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service beginning in the 1970s, including working as the Regional Biologist at the Northeast National Technology Center in Chester, Pennsylvania. He was a devoted professional and a dedicated employee. A day in the woods with Bob, and you would begin to understand the important relationships that occur in nature. Bob and his family always hoped to return to their birthplace in upstate New York someday. Upon retirement, their dream came true, and they returned to Corning to live out their lives. Bob enjoyed hunting, fishing, and any activity close to nature; this is where he was most comfortable. ARCSE member <b>Frank Resides</b> reports that Bob had been in declining health the last few years after having a series of strokes and having a pacemaker installed. He was preceded in death by his wife, <b>Cynthia Franzen</b> in 2009 and their son <b>Martin Franzen</b> in 2001. He is survived by his siblings <b>David (Margaret), Gerald (Laura), Jon, and Ellen</b> .
<b>Haggard</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Mary Janice (Vance) Haggard</b> (76) of Stillwater, Oklahoma, passed away December 12, 2023. She was the wife of David W. Haggard, retired Construction Engineer for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Janice was born January 15, 1947, in Henryetta, Oklahoma to the late <b>Everett W. and Helen (Martin) Vance</b> . Janice and <b>David Haggard</b> met at a basketball game in Morris, Oklahoma at the age of sixteen. They married August 21, 1965, two years later in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Their first child was born while David was serving his country in Vietnam. Janice was active in the church choir, played the accordion, and later in life became talented in calligraphy. Janice loved genealogy, reading, and spending time with her family. She possessed a great love for all animals, but particularly dogs, and had many that she adored over the years. Her self-proclaimed 'major hobby' was her grandchildren. Survivors include her husband, David; son <b>Chris Haggard</b> , daughters, <b>Kellie (Ryan) Ebert</b> and <b>Laura Little (Brett) Price</b> ; and grandchildren, <b>Tyler Ebert, Jake Ebert, Cole Ebert, Gentry Ebert, Ashlynn Price, Collier Little</b> and <b>Malone Price</b> .
<b>Hansen</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Verella Jean Hansen</b> (82) of Napoleon, North Dakota, passed away November 2, 2023, at the Wentz Living Center in Napoleon. Jean was the wife of <b>Chris A. Hansen</b> , retired Napoleon District Conservationist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. Jean was born in St. Cloud, Minnesota on December 20, 1940, to <b>Christoph and Martha (Frigen) Biederstedt</b> . Jean met Chris on a double-blind date in 1967. They married on August 31, 1968. Jean loved making quilts. She helped the Golden Age ladies make quilts and made many Baptismal quilts for church over the years. She enjoyed making shirts and clothes for her children and husband. Later in life, she created many clothes and quilts for her grandchildren, too. She was preceded in death by foster son <b>Keith Vaulters</b> . Survivors include her husband, Chris; children, <b>Kurt (Tonja) Hansen</b> and <b>Kirsten (Darin) Schadler</b> ; and grandchildren, <b>Alexandra (William Deane) Hansen, Robert Hansen, Andrew Schadler, and Alyssa Schadler</b> .
<b>Haslem</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Dolores Faye Haslem</b> (87) of Albany, Oregon, passed away March 23, 2022. She was the wife of the late <b>Donald W. Haslem</b> , former USDA-Soil Conservation Service Area Engineer, who retired in 1985 and passed away in 2012. Her husband Donald was a Life Member of ARCSE. Dolores was born August 9, 1934, in Florence, Oregon, to <b>Joseph and Wanda (Miles) Riesenhuber</b> . Dolores was just 20 when she met and married Donald. Donald's career took them to Hawaii, India, Washington State, Pakistan, New Jersey, Oregon, and Haiti. In Albany, Dolores worked as a travel agent, was an enthusiastic volunteer and at one time the oldest employee of Samaritan Health Services when she was managing the Albany General Hospital Auxiliary gift shop. She enjoyed friendships with many women through her involvement in the hospital auxiliary, Thursday Study Club, P.E.O. Sisterhood, and Springhill Country Club. She enjoyed golf, bridge, and the company of her dogs. She was a gracious and willing hostess with a home filled with art and interesting objects from their lives abroad. Dolores is survived by sons <b>David</b> of San Jose, California and <b>Douglas</b> of Hillsboro, Oregon; three grandchildren <b>Sierra Schroder, Kaden, and Kyle Haslem</b> (all in Oregon); her brother <b>Delvin Riesenhuber</b> , and her dog Missie.
<b>Hildebrandt</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Jerome Garfield Hildebrandt</b> (86) of Stewartville, Minnesota, passed away December 14, 2023, at Cottagewood Senior Community in Rochester, Minnesota, where he had been a resident since 2020. Jerome was born February 14, 1937, in Faribault, Minnesota, to <b>Jerome Sr. and Clara (Gunderson) Hildebrandt</b> . He attended the University of Minnesota earning a bachelor's degree in Soil Science and a minor in Economics, graduating in 1959. Jerome was



		<p>married to the love of his life, <b>Ferrolyn McCusker</b> on June 27, 1959, at Vasa Lutheran Church in Vasa, Minnesota. Jerome was employed with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in Olmsted County, Minnesota as the District Conservationist for 30 years and with Dean Witter in Rochester as a financial advisor for a few years. He was employed as a feedlot compliance inspector with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the County of Winona and enjoyed getting to know many area farmers for 10 years. After his final retirement he drove a shuttle van for Luther Motors and Rochester Ford. Jerome was a longtime active member of the Stewartville United Methodist Church and Stewartville Lions Club. He and Ferrolyn helped establish the Interstate Hi-Flyers 4-H Club. He enjoyed fishing, farming, singing in the church choir, traveling, playing games and cards with friends and family. Jerome is survived by his wife Ferrolyn; daughters <b>Cathy (Mike) Podein</b> of Stewartville and <b>Chris (Mitch) Scrabeck</b> of Dayton, Minnesota; sons <b>Doug (Jill) Hildebrandt</b> of Stewartville and <b>David (Denise) Hildebrandt</b> of rural Stewartville; 9 grandchildren <b>Joy (Josh) Harris, Josh (Kayla) Podein, Andrew Scrabeck, Bridget (Dan) Anderson, Jesanna (Danny) Fisher, Kyle (Blair) Hildebrandt, Kaylyn Hildebrandt, Corrie Hildebrandt, and Carlie Hildebrandt</b>; and 10 great grandchildren <b>Britney, Emily, Landon, Brooks, Parker, Gannon, Brecken, Lane, Finley and Harper</b>.</p>
Honeyfield	2023	<p>Senior Conservationist and Honorary ARCSE Member <b>Harold Rex Honeyfield</b> (92) of Davis, California, passed away November 24, 2023, at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento, California. He was born December 28, 1930, in the same house that his father was, on Johnson Mesa, 19 miles east of Raton, New Mexico, the son of <b>Ed and Elizabeth (Black) Honeyfield</b>. After graduating from high school in 1948, Harold served 3 1/2 years in the United States Navy being promoted to Yeoman 3rd Class, then he served 2 years as a Midshipman at the United States Naval Academy. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from New Mexico State University in Agricultural Engineering in 1956 and a Master of Science degree from Purdue University. He was employed by the USDA, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) from January 1958 to September 30, 1989, with positions as Head Design Section in Albuquerque for 18 years, then to Afghanistan for 2 years, and then to Portland, Oregon as a Design Engineer at the West Regional Office of SCS, then to Davis, California as Assistant State Engineer for the SCS. for 11 years. After retiring from Federal Service, he became a Consultant with Harza Engineering in Pakistan. He was a Registered Engineer in the State of New Mexico. and a Registered Civil Engineer in the State of California. He enjoyed working as a design engineer as one could exercise the creativity of one's own ideas, and to teach younger engineers the thought process of evaluating the pros and cons of a design that conforms to the goals of the project's purpose. He was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity being inducted at Alpha Lambda Chapter at NMSU. During his time in Davis, he was the Chapter House Advisor for the local Phi Chapter of the Fraternity, He was a devoted genealogist, having published 7 books of genealogy information, 5 of which were devoted to his family, and 2 were for Pioneer Families of Colfax County New Mexico, and Saline Co. Nebraska. In 1997 he hosted a family reunion of the Honeyfield's, in Raton, New Mexico and in 2015 traveled to New Zealand to attend a reunion of the Honeyfield's living there. He was a prostate cancer survivor, and a charter member of the Yolo Prostate Cancer Support Group, to which he was an active supporter. He is survived by his wife, <b>Valma (nee Thompson)</b> of the home, and by three sons: <b>Holin (Rose)</b> of Spokane, Washington, <b>Keith (Joann)</b> of Davis, California and <b>Jason</b> of Phoenix, Arizona. Memorials may be made to the Yolo Prostate Cancer Support Group, (in care of Mr. Gil Walker, 800 Donner Way, Woodland, CA 95695 or to the Alpha Lambda Chapter of AGR Fraternity, 2545 So. Espina, Las Cruces NM 88001.</p>
Knudson	2023	<p><b>Dennis L. Knudson</b> (85) of Woodland, California, passed away on October 24, 2023. Dennis was born May 14, 1938, to <b>Ervind and Amanda (Nelson) Knudson</b> of Devils Lake, North Dakota. Dennis enrolled at North Dakota School of Forestry in Bottineau, North Dakota where in 1958 he graduated with an associate degree in Horticulture and then attended North Dakota State University for 2 years. Dennis worked on the family farm until he was drafted into the United States Army. During his 2 years of service, he served at Fort Carson, Colorado, Fort Riley, Kansas, West Germany, and West Berlin before being discharged in 1963. In January 1966, he accepted a position in Woodland, California with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. In his role as Conservation Technician, Dennis served the Yolo County farming community for over 28 years working with farmers, evaluating different cropping systems, designing sprinkler systems and pipelines and other engineering tasks until his retirement in 1994. He married <b>Marlyn</b> on December 31, 1971, and began raising a blended family. One of Dennis' lifelong hobbies was his garden and fruit trees. He enjoyed growing all types of fruits and vegetables throughout the different seasons. Dennis was a member of St Paul's Lutheran Church, American Legion, VFW Woodland, and past president of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. Dennis is survived by his wife Marlyn of 51 years, daughters <b>Denise (Tim) Prigge, Brenda Hawley (Scott Stewart), and Janene (Shawn) Scoonover</b> of Woodland, son <b>Michael Hawley</b> of Sparks, Nevada. Grandchildren <b>Elena (Christopher) Gorsett</b> of Sparks, Nevada, <b>Stephanie (Corey) Shepherd</b>, of Fair Oaks, California, <b>Holly Subia</b>, of Portland, Oregon., <b>Sara Scoonover</b>, Woodland, <b>Justin Scoonover</b>, Santa Rosa, California, <b>Joshua and Tyler Prigge</b>, Woodland; and great grandchildren <b>Izabelle Gorsett, Valen and Ivy Shepherd</b>.</p>
Lund	2023	<p><b>Robert Glen Lund Jr.</b> (74) of Townsend, Montana, passed away November 13, 2023, after a battle with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. Glen was the first of 12 kids born to <b>Robert Glen Lund Sr.</b> and Mary <b>Elisabeth Duchanie</b> on December 28, 1948. After high school Glen was drafted and began enlistment in the United States Marine Corps. He was deployed as a Field Wireman &amp; Radio Operator in Vietnam and actively served in Dongha, Cameron Bay and Quantree until he was wounded and received his Purple Heart. He then returned to Portland, Oregon and worked as a surveyor in Port Orford, Cottage Grove, and McDonald Pass in Helena, Montana. It was around this time he would soon meet his lifelong wife, <b>Judy</b>. From 1971 until 1976 Glen and Judy lived in Portland, Oregon and had three children, one daughter and twin sons. During their time in Oregon, Glen worked as a Cartographic Technician for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS) and retired in 2007. After two brief years of retirement, he returned to his job with NRCS on a part time basis. He permanently retired in 2009. Glen enlisted with the Air National Guard and served three years in Portland before his job transferred to Bozeman, Montana in April of 1976 where Glen enlisted in the Montana Army National Guard. Glen served over 30 years in the military, retiring in 2006. After retirement, he became a member and president of Big Sky Toastmasters (Bozeman) and served as Board President of Rae Water &amp; Sewer subdivision for 9 years (Bozeman). He also served as a member and historian of American Legion Post 42 (Townsend). Glen is survived by his wife Judy of 52 years; their 3 children, <b>Jenny (Michael)</b> and twins <b>Patrick (Kate)</b> and <b>Travis (Karen)</b>; 3 Grandchildren, <b>Katelyn (Aukeyla), Kyle</b> and <b>Emma</b>; 3 step-grandchildren <b>Ethan, Emma, and Colin</b>.</p>

Martin	2023	<b>Cheryle (Henneman) Martin</b> (75) of Ankeny, Iowa, formerly of Clarinda, Iowa, passed away October 23, 2023, at her home. Cheryle was born August 6, 1948, in Clarinda, Iowa to <b>Lee Henneman</b> and <b>Violette (Jensen) Henneman</b> . She was married to retired Civil Engineering Technician <b>Rodney L. Martin</b> who retired from the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in 1994. Cheryle and Rodney were united in marriage March 12, 1971. Cheryle became an administrator of nursing homes. Later she worked at the Farm Bureau. When they moved to Des Moines she worked for the State of Iowa. Survivors include her husband, Rodney Martin of Ankeny; children, <b>Lisa Overgaard (Kevin)</b> of Des Moines and <b>Lori Barnett (Billy)</b> of Texas; grandchildren, <b>Joey Burt (Michelle)</b> of Omaha, Nebraska, <b>Sarah Burt</b> of Des Moines; great grandchildren, <b>Jared Bean, Riley Bean, Conan Rinderman, Bailynn Martin, and Brandon Martin</b> .
McCullough	2023	<b>James (Jim) Marvin McCullough</b> (81) of Decatur, Alabama, passed away December 10, 2023, at his home in Decatur. Jim was born June 10, 1942, in Birmingham, Alabama, son of the late <b>Marvin McCullough</b> and the late <b>Irene Doty McCullough</b> . Jim was a 1965 graduate of Auburn University earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. He worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service for over 30 years where he retired as Area Conservationist in 2001. He also served in the Army Reserve where he retired as a Sergeant after serving over 30 years. Jim enjoyed his life in Decatur and loved time spent on the Tennessee River, whether boating with friends and family, or overlooking it from his home. Jim was active in the Fraternal Order of the Eagle. Jim also enjoyed spending time attending Auburn University Football games with friends and family. Jim was preceded in death by wife <b>Judy B McCullough</b> . Survivors include his wife, <b>Charlo McCullough</b> ; Daughter, <b>Amy (David) Mitchell</b> ; Son, <b>Jason (Lisa) McCullough</b> ; Son, <b>David (Melinda) McCullough</b> ; Stepson, <b>Bo Harris</b> ; Stepson, <b>Kelly Harris</b> ; Stepdaughter <b>Paige Blankenship</b> ; Grandchildren, <b>Tristen Mitchell, McKenzie Mitchell, Pate (Adi) McCullough, Parker McCullough, Sam McCullough, Bo Tyler Harris, Eli Harris, Tab Harris, Thad Harris, and Naomi Blankenship</b> .
Mehlhoff	2023	<b>Donavon Wade Mehlhoff</b> (63) of St. Helens, Oregon, passed away at his home on September 1, 2023. Don was born May 4, 1960, in Minot, North Dakota and raised on a family farm. He married <b>Tracy Slavens</b> on October 5, 1985. Don was educated at North Dakota State University-Bottineau and University of Idaho. Don was employed as a District Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for nearly 38 years. He retired in January 2021. Don was a man of deep faith. He loved the Lord, and his ministry was music. In his youth, he and his closest friends formed a Christian band, Journey's End. Over the years he enjoyed serving on the worship team at the churches he attended with his family in Minot, North Dakota, Colfax, Washington, Lewiston, Idaho, and Columbia River Foursquare in St. Helens, Oregon. Don's survivors include his wife, Tracy; daughters, <b>Sarah (Andrew) Woodall, Hillsboro, Oregon, Alexis (Daniel) Cole, St. Helens, Oregon, and Emily Mehlhoff, St. Helens, Oregon</b> ; grandchildren, <b>Eloise and Norah Cole and Sawyer Woodall, a foster grandchild</b> . He was preceded in death by grandson <b>laen Cole</b> .
Olynyk	2023	<b>Max Olynyk</b> (73) of Monroe Township, New Jersey, passed away peacefully on October 27, 2023. Max was born April 24, 1950, to Ukrainian immigrants, <b>Nina and Micola Olynyk</b> . He was raised on the Lower East Side of New York City before moving to Brooklyn. The son of an avid geologist, Max worked on the tunnel project in New York City before coming to work as a geologist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Max and his wife <b>Valerie</b> shared wonderful times together traveling around the world and enjoying concerts and the theatre. As devoted Ranger fans, Valerie and Max attended many games and cheered both the Yankees and Mets. Max had a passion for cars, motorcycles, scuba diving, and sky diving. Upon retiring, Max enjoyed time golfing, playing ping pong, and reading mystery novels. He will be missed by his beloved wife Valerie of 37 years, his brother, <b>Henry</b> , sister, <b>Ina</b> , and brother-in-law, <b>Michael Gerber</b> ; brother-in-law, <b>Robert</b> , and sister-in-law, <b>Theresa Bruno</b> ; many nephews and nieces, great nephews and nieces and numerous friends.
Porter	2023	<b>Dexter Porter</b> (78) of Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, passed away unexpectedly on November 22, 2023. Dexter was born on May 19, 1945, to the late <b>Sylvester Porter</b> and <b>Kathryn (Peterman) Porter</b> . He was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He married <b>Jean Bursack</b> on August 28, 1976, at Peace Lutheran Church in Wautoma, Wisconsin. He was a United States Army veteran. Dexter retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service after serving many years as a District Conservationist. He continued working on conservation projects after retirement. Dexter was an active church member and participated in various church activities. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, painting, birding, wood working, fly tying, gardening, pistol/rifle shooting. But most importantly Dexter loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren. Survivors include his loving wife, <b>Jean Porter</b> ; children <b>Matthew (Nikki) Porter</b> and <b>Melissa (Jon) Witkowski</b> ; and four grandchildren <b>Peyton, Hunter, Sawyer, and Lincoln</b> .
Restad	2023	<b>Jason Henry Restad</b> (68) of Fort Collins, Colorado passed away on November 19, 2023, peacefully at Pathways Hospice with his wife Karen by his side and surrounded by family and friends. His long courageous fight with prostate cancer was emblematic of his tenacity for life. Jason was born in Duluth, Minnesota on September 2, 1955, to <b>Carol and Sigmund Restad</b> and grew up in Palmer, Alaska. Jason obtained a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1978 from the University of Alaska. His enduring curiosity and drive for knowledge fueled his passion for computers and paved the way for a successful 33 years as a Computer Scientist including serving as the Lead Application Architect for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Jason was instrumental in conceiving and driving the development of the NRCS application system architecture that produced the Customer Service Toolkit, PLANTS.usda, Web Soil Survey, Resource Data Gateway, Performance Results System, and many other agency software tools. His early work with web services helped provide the foundation for the on-line presence the agency and USDA have today. Jason and Karen met at the Fairbanks Choir of the North. In their 42 years of marriage and sharing lives, music was a lasting bond. Jason is predeceased by his mother, <b>Carol Restad</b> . He is survived by his wife, Karen, four children, <b>Joshua, Evar, Phaedra, and Jacobi</b> , and two grandchildren, <b>Ethan and Rowan</b> . He is also survived by his father <b>Sigmund</b> and siblings, <b>Mary, Lori, Eric, Joyce, and Mark</b> .
Stevens	2023	Senior Conservationist and ARCSE Member <b>Jesse Ray Stevens</b> (88) of Clayton, North Carolina, passed away December 12, 2023. Jesse was born on September 16, 1935, the sixth child of the late <b>Almon and Dora Austin Stevens</b> in Clayton. He was a proud Korean War veteran, serving in the United States Army from April, 1954 to April, 1957. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal and remained a dedicated member of the American Legion Post 71 for 32 years. Jesse enjoyed a distinguished career with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as an Engineering Technician in the Design Section of the state office, retiring in 1993 after 34 years of service. After retirement, he and Barbara enjoyed many years traveling with the Clayton Senior Travel Club. Jesse was an avid fan of the University of North Carolina Tar Heels basketball and tried his best to help them win as

		a 'couch' coach. Jesse was a committed Christian and a faithful member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church for 65 years. He was sustained by his faith and was an inspiration to many in his long battle with Multiple Sclerosis. Surviving is his devoted wife of 65 years, <b>Barbara Johnson Stevens</b> , his loving daughter, <b>Kelli Stevens Padgett</b> , and many other relatives and friends.
<b>Williams</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Timothy Wayne Williams</b> (63) of Sardis City, Alabama passed away November 10, 2023, at his home. Tim was born July 25, 1960. He graduated Snead State Community College in 1980 and Auburn University in 1982, where he majored in agricultural engineering. He worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for 35 years, retiring in December 2019 as Area Engineer. In retirement, Tim helped his son, Daniel, begin his farming operations. Tim and his wife also worked diligently in their vegetable garden and took every opportunity to give away the bounty of fruits and vegetables he and Susan harvested. They also enjoyed retirement by travelling with their friends, children, and grandchildren. They crossed off quite a few locations like Alaska, Montana, Wyoming, and Maine. He was a member of Good Hope Delta Missionary Baptist Church. He is survived by his loving wife, <b>Susan Haynes Williams</b> of Sardis City; daughters <b>Ivy Malone (Mark)</b> of Washington, D.C., and <b>Leigh Dinarte (Carlos)</b> of Bowdon, Georgia; sons <b>Daniel Williams (Mary)</b> of Sardis City and <b>Alex Reynolds (Julie)</b> of Vestavia Hills, Alabama; grandchildren <b>Ben Dinarte, Major Malone, Vivienne Malone, Haynes Reynolds</b> , and <b>Bonnie Ann Williams</b> .
<b>Wisniewski</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Ronald Kenneth Wisniewski</b> (77) of Ruther Glen, Virginia, passed away December 14, 2023, at Spotsylvania Regional Memorial Center. Ron was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 2, 1946, to <b>Joseph</b> and <b>Ann Kabara Wisniewski</b> . Ron was a United States Army veteran. He worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and was the District Conservationist in Fredericksburg, Virginia when he retired. Ron was a member of St. Mary of the Annunciation, where he enjoyed volunteering, especially with the food bank. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus. He enjoyed tending to and raising sheep and enjoyed his dog, Charlie. Ron was preceded in death by his wife, <b>Annette M. Wisniewski</b> . He is survived by three children, <b>Norma Smith, Frank Haegle</b> and <b>Acina Nester</b> ; nine grandchildren; and two great grandchildren.



**Newport, Rhode Island lighthouse**