



**NAFSCC**  
North American  
Forum For  
**SMALL**  
**CHRISTIAN**  
**COMMUNITIES**

**FNPCC**  
Foro Norteamericano  
Para  
**LAS PEQUEÑAS**  
**COMUNIDADES**  
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pour  
**LES PETITES**  
**COMMUNAUTÉS**  
**DE FOI**

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## **E-Newsletter**

Volume 1, Issue 6  
July 15, 2005

*The NAFSCC E-Newsletters sent bi-monthly to members*

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1. News and Ideas
2. Upcoming Events
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### **I. News and Ideas**

#### **NAFSCC Membership**

**A kindly reminder the annual memberships are due July 30, 2005. If you have not renewed your membership, the e-newsletter will expire after this issue. Contact Diane Kledzik, Associate Director for Evangelization and Adult Faith Formation, Diocese of St. Petersburg, P.O. Box 40200, St. Petersburg, FL 33743-0200, Voice: 727-341-6839 or 727-344-1611, ext. 332, Fax: 727-374-0209, Email: [dmk@dosp.org](mailto:dmk@dosp.org).**

## **Membership Report as of 7/8/05 from Diane Kledzik**

Thank you to the following (arch)dioceses, eparchies and organizations that have registered for membership in the NAFSCC for July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006:

Archdiocese for Military Services (USA)

Archdiocese of Anchorage

Archdiocese of Dubuque

Archdiocese of Hartford

Archdiocese of Portland, OR

Archdiocese of San Francisco

Archdiocese of St. Louis

Diocese of Cleveland

Diocese of Erie

Diocese of Grand Island

Diocese of Las Cruces

Diocese of Nashville

Diocese of Owensboro

Diocese of Rouyn-Noranda

Diocese of San Bernardino

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Diocese of Youngstown

National Pastoral Life Center

Ruthenian Byzantine Eparchy of Parma

Membership renewal letters and applications were emailed to each contact and mailed with a brochure through the US Postal Service. Renewal letters and brochures were also sent to member Bishops. In addition, letters and brochures were sent to the following:

US (Arch)Diocesan Designates for Evangelization (of non-member dioceses)

US Bishops

Canadian Bishops (French speaking)

Canadian Bishops (English speaking)

The total mailing was 600 pieces!

If you have misplaced your registration form, here is another one for you! If your organization or (arch)diocese does not renew by September 15, this will be your final e-newsletter! Act now so you don't miss any of our communications!

## **NAFSCC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Membership: July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006**

**Membership Fee: \$100.00 US/Canada per (Arch) Diocese - Make checks payable to**

*NAFSCC*

(Arch)Diocese:

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(Arch)Bishop:

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SCC Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Title:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete BOTH SIDES and return with your check to:  
NAFSCC Membership

Ms. Diane Kledzik,

Diocese of St. Petersburg, PO

Box 40200

St. Petersburg, FL 33743-

0200

Names of four additional persons included in one (Arch) Diocesan NAFSCC Membership:

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
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Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Additional members, beyond four, may be added at \$25.00 per person per year.)

## **Current Concerns About Small Christian Communities**

© Donna L. Ciangio, OP  
Director of Pastoral Services  
and NAFSCC Chair and Secretary of the Board

### **Chapter Two: Maintaining Interest In SCCs**

In our culture, we can be a bit contradictory. In parishes, we say that we do not like programs, and yet we start them, seem to need them for all kinds of things to happen—especially to get SCCs started.

We say that we don't need a program, but when it is over, we can lose many SCC members. Why? From what I can ascertain from the way parishes operate, is that they forget what they have learned from the program. For example, parishes drop their core teams. The core team is necessary to inspire, organize, train the facilitators and the small communities. New core team leaders need to be invited, trained, and nurtured as leaders so that new ideas can be generated and people will not burn out or get stale. That is what is very often said – “We are burned out!” The core team, along with pastor and parish pastoral council, needs to be the

driving force behind the SCC effort. You can't get around it, you need a core team.

Some other things that parishes do that is not helpful to small communities is neglecting to train and inspire facilitators; the pastor and staff do not encourage parishioners to continue journeying in their groups; have not developed a style of faith reflection throughout the staff, parish pastoral council, and all of the parish ministries, organizations, and societies, and even in parish meetings; have not developed the connection between the Catechumenate (RCIA) with small communities; and have not evaluated their efforts.

### ***What Should A Parish Do To Get On Track?***

#### **1. Evaluation**

The parish leaders should call together the core team, facilitators and all of the SCC members to discuss the experience. They should discuss what is life-giving for each person and the parish in general, evaluate the process, and determine the next steps.

#### ***How does a parish do evaluation?***

The best way to begin is with the positive. You want to find out what draws people into groups, what sustains them, and how they apply their reflection to their daily lives. You want to know if significant change happens to people – is it part of the ongoing conversion process for each of the members or is it just a “nice” experience of talking with other parishioners.

Some questions you might use to determine this:

- What was/is the overall experience like for you?
- What has been a significant learning for you in the group?
- In what ways has this experience changed your life? Why or why not?
- In what ways has your faith in Jesus Christ been deepened? Why or why not?
- How have the materials enhanced or not enhanced your group reflection?

You might also want to ask questions that may aid you in planning such as:

- What would you like to learn about?
- What do you feel would attract other parishioners?
- What methods should we use to invite other parishioners?

(Remember we are talking about the possibilities of many types of groups throughout the parish.)

Following this session, the core team should meet to discuss what they learned from the feedback and to continue planning. They may also want to have a separate session with facilitators to see what their particular needs are in order to plan for further training and for ongoing evaluation in every group after every meeting.

## **2. Discernment**

Presuming that most of the seasonal and ongoing groups will stay together, the groups should spend some time talking about their future by identifying what kind of a small community they are, what they want to be, and the goals that will be set for the coming year.

### ***Why do small faith communities need to set goals***

Goals for small communities may sound strange but groups that discuss who they are and what they want are significantly stronger than those that just go along. They review their goals periodically, evaluate their session and the depth of their reflection, look at whether their action is helping them live as the disciples of Christ that they would like to be, etc. This also makes the members responsible for the group rather than rely on the facilitator to keep it all together.

Another reason is that many people say that they don't continue membership in a small community because they are too busy. That may be so but if they analyzed what they spend their time on, they might be dissatisfied with themselves. However, as true as that may be, the small community is not managing to hold them: it is not challenging them, it is not fulfilling a spiritual need, and it may not seem to be going anywhere. Evaluation and discernment can help members to reflect deeper on the why of the group – why do we do what we do? And how does this group help me live and work as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Maintaining interest in SCCS takes care. A core team needs to be the impetus to call together the groups to evaluate what they have done and to discern their direction. The core team needs to assess what they heard from group members and set their own goals and plans along the line of the expressed interest and needs. For example, groups may want to know more about available resources so that they can plan their next meetings and choose their own materials. This, in fact, is a good thing for mature groups to do. It is not necessary to only do lectionary-based reflection. Frankly, many are bored with that. Groups may want more scripture study, social justice topics, understanding of Church teaching, etc. The core team might procure a resource room or begin a parish library that could benefit all of the parishioners. Or, at least make a list of the myriad resources that are available for

small communities and adult faith formation.

### **3. Theological Reflection**

The purpose of small communities and using this style of faith reflection in multiple ways in the parish, is to promote theological reflection among all parishioners. In general, I find that parishes don't think deeply enough about SCCs. They think about them as another parish activity rather than as a force for building community, promoting adult faith formation, providing reflection on parish ministries, and developing stronger faith lives in families, particularly among young adults.

It might be important to use particular language to describe the group process such as "theological reflection." This may help the group elevate the importance of what they are doing as a group to a serious reflection on Christian faith and daily living and the impact on the individual and society.

What is theological reflection in simple terms?

Theological reflection means that we read and deeply reflect on the Scripture and the teachings of the Church and interact with the world around us with the mind and heart of God – the world in which we live our daily lives. We need to continually discern how we put Catholic faith and our understanding of being a disciple of Jesus right into the middle of the world. The best thing we can do is to reflect with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other!

#### **Preparation**

#### **Prayer**

Before the group assembles, read, reflect on, and pray with the Scripture passages for your upcoming gathering.

#### **Personal Experience**

#### **Reflection**

Reflects on your personal experiences that deal with the chosen Scripture or theme in the light of the Scripture passages - especially experiences that have been particularly meaningful, thought-provoking, or life changing.

#### **Struggle For Meaning**

#### **Support and Learning**

Each person is invited to listen to and share his or her struggle for meaning in the Scripture texts enhanced by life-experience. This should be a genuine search for the meaning of the Scripture in Jesus' time, in the developing Church eras, and in our present context.

#### **Common Meaning**

#### **Reflection & Learning**



The group moves toward a common meaning or “common story.” The group attempts to discover if there is a common meaning in all of their stories and experiences and if the Scriptures are leading them in similar ways. Or, are there genuinely conflicting meanings and interpretations among the group members?

### **Making the Reflection Real**                      Participation

The group reflects on ways in which their “wrestling” with the Scriptures and meaning strengthens their commitment to furthering the mission of Christ through each person’s participation in Church, neighborhood, local community, and the world.

### **Putting It All Into Practice**                      Mission (Action)

The concept of ‘mission’ or being “missionary” needs to be studied by the group. To be “missionary” means that each person and the group understands that they are responsible to further the mission of Christ and that forming community and “wrestling” with meaning will help them live it out. A group should figure out its mission and set goals to achieve it. These need to be reviewed every six months or so.

It is best if the group decides to take on a “mission” or action. This gives a sense of “esprit de coeur” – the group working together, participating in the same experience from which to have a reference point and to build community while gaining insight into mission.

Some types of actions that a group might engage in:

- Getting involved in a particular ministry at the parish
- Getting involved in a social project at work or in the neighborhood
- e.g., a community organizing effort, a soup kitchen, or other direct service
- Organizing a project for a special need
- Reaching out to others and inviting them to the group
- Being involved in evangelizing in the neighborhood

Some types of actions that people might individually engage in:

- Spending extra times in prayer
- Reading Scripture or other spiritual reading
- Praying for someone
- Extra care
- Reaching out
- Healing a hurt
- Getting involved in a ministry at the parish e.g., participating in a social ministry project, visiting a sick or elderly person, visiting a prison, being a Eucharistic minister or lector, providing child care

- Getting involved in a social project at work or in the neighborhood; e.g., a community organizing project, soup kitchen, food pantry, or other projects to help those in need

#### ***4. Be Intentional***

There are many things a parish can do to sustain interest in SCCs but they have to be intentional about it. Things just don't happen or fall into place – maybe in some SCCs but not in the majority. In training SCC facilitators, I always make the point to “make the group be responsible for the group!” That is what we need to encourage in each group and in each parish – be responsible for your groups and be creative. There are lots of great material out there but if groups are not inspired, resourced and directed, we are losing opportunities to form and sustain great disciples or missionaries of Christ.

**Please feel free to write to me with other suggestions or things that you are trying to support the parishes. Also, if your parishes have tried something that really makes a difference, please feel free to email me and we might have enough to start an E-Forum! Send to [dciangio@nplc.org](mailto:dciangio@nplc.org)**

*Please note: This series of articles may not be reprinted – they are the basis for a future article*

Thank you

### **Message from RENEW International**

Because RENEW has worked in Rwanda with small faith-sharing communities, we were happy to read Pope Benedict XVI's thoughts to the Rwandan bishops encouraging small Christian communities there. We thought you might be interested too.

### **Pope Benedict XVI Calls for Pastoral Program Using Small Communities**

Encouraging the bishops of Rwanda to work tirelessly to instill the Gospel in their nation, which was torn by genocide a decade ago, Benedict XVI urged them to use the vehicle of small Christian communities.

The Pope directed this message to the Rwandan prelates whom he met Saturday May 22, 2005, at the conclusion of their five-yearly visit to the Holy See.

He told them, "To work actively in peace and reconciliation, you must give preference in particular to a pastoral program of closeness, founded on the commitment of small lay

communities in the Church's missionary pastoral endeavor in harmony with pastors," he told the bishops.

In response to the words addressed to him on behalf of the prelates by Bishop Alexis Habiyaambere, president of the Rwandan episcopal conference, Benedict XVI expressed words of hope for the citizens "harshly tried by the 1994 genocide and its consequences."

The tragedy broke out April 7 that year, when clashes took place between Hutus and Tutsis. In just three months, 800,000 people were massacred and 3 million fled the country.

The Holy Father appealed to Rwandan Catholics to "remain firm in the faith, persevere in the hope that the risen Christ gives, overcoming all temptations to discouragement."

Benedict XVI continued: "I encourage you to support these communities so that the faithful will accept the truths of faith and its exigencies, developing in this way a more intense ecclesial and spiritual life, without allowing any falling away from the Gospel of Christ, in particular, because of the numerous sects present in the country."

About 48% of the central African nation's 8.4 million inhabitants are Catholics.

The Pope told the bishops: "Work tirelessly so that the Gospel will penetrate ever more profoundly in the heart and life of believers, inviting the faithful to assume increasingly their responsibility in society, in particular in the field of the economy and politics, with a moral sense nourished by the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church."

Source: ZENIT News Agency

## **2. Upcoming Events**

**NAPRC** (National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities) Conference July 28-31, 2005, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Cinnaminson, New Jersey. Keynote speaker: Ronald Rolheiser OMI, with small group workshops.

**Buena Vista Convocation** August 4-7, 2005, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota  
Theme: *Creating Communities of Hope: Making a Difference in Our World*. Keynote speakers: Mike Cowan, Felicia Wolf, Jose Marins, followed by small group workshops and workshops in Spanish.

**National Pastoral Life Center Annual Parish Convention**  
Spirituality and the Parish, Keynote: Ron Rolheiser, OMI Conference  
November 17-19, 2005, Radisson Hotel, Ft. Worth, Texas

NCCL Convention April 30-May 4, 2006 at the O'Hare Hyatt Regency, Chicago, Illinois

**NAICE (North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization) Conference  
July 12-16, 2006, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio**

### **3. Share Your Views**

#### **A VIABLE SOURCE**

J. David McNamara, D.Min.

Director of Education and Formation , Diocese of Las Cruces

From my perspective as a trainer of lay ecclesial ministers, small Christian communities clearly comprise a viable pool of potentially service-minded parishioners willing to assume active roles in parish leadership. Indeed, it is in the productive introspection of the faith-sharing group that our baptismal call to serve is reiterated time after time.

Today, we Catholic Christians find ourselves increasingly on the forefront of parish administration and maintenance. And, more often than not, we feel unprepared to meet that task. Undeniably, trainings and orientations for important ministries such as parish director of religious education, parish office manager, or even parish pastoral council member, are needed to ensure that such programs and activities run smoothly and effectively. Yet, while as willing parishioners we can learn those “techniques” which correspond to a specific area of service, we must also examine and develop our underlying spiritual foundation which, ultimately, motivates us to do what, as lay ecclesial ministers, we feel called to do.

It is there that the small Christian community becomes an invaluable resource for defining intentional ministerial practices by lay persons. In the context of the faith-sharing group, its members are challenged both to recognize the implications of their baptism, and to explore the practical applications of those implications in daily life. And, therein, potential – and *current* – lay ecclesial ministers “connect” with the source of their ministry . . . and the source of all creativity. Indeed, without that link to the all-encompassing Creator God, our “ministry” becomes just that: *our* ministry.

My experience in pastoral ministry formation has taught me that many – if not *most* – parishioners who accept the challenge of volunteer or remunerated service on the parish level either have been, or are currently, associated with a small Christian community – *somewhere*. Likewise, I have found that in parishes where no faith-sharing groups are active, pastors tend to struggle each year to fill positions that require volunteers to step forward to assume roles of service in their congregational community.

Therefore, it is my opinion that, as a venue of prayer, reflection, Scripture study, and sharing, the small Christian community represents a truly viable source of support and

motivation for current and future parish leaders involved in lay ecclesial ministry. And in the coming years, the importance of the small Christian community will continue to increase as the larger parish community grows in its awareness of Jesus' clear invitation directed toward all of us – *to serve*.

***Biographical Note:***

Currently, Dr. McNamara is Diocesan Director of Education and Formation with the Diocese of Las Cruces. He coordinates the Diocesan Pastoral Ministry Formation Program which prepares future lay ecclesial ministers for service in their respective parish settings.

**UN RECURSO VIABLE – David McNamara**

Desde mi perspectiva como instructor de ministros eclesiales, las pequeñas comunidades cristianas claramente contienen un grupo viable de feligreses deseosos de asumir papeles potencialmente activos en dirigir la parroquia. De hecho, es en la introspección productiva de los grupos que comparten su fe donde nuestro llamado bautismal a servir es reiterado una y otra vez.

Hoy, nosotros los cristianos católicos nos encontramos cada vez más al frente de la administración y del mantenimiento de la parroquia. Y, a menudo, nos sentimos sin preparación para enfrentar esa tarea. Indudablemente, los entrenamientos y las orientaciones para los ministerios importantes tales como, director parroquial de educación religiosa, administrador de oficina de la parroquia, o aún miembros del consejo pastoral de la parroquia, son necesarios para asegurarse de que tales programas y actividades funcionen sin obstáculos y con eficacia. Aunque, como feligreses dispuestos a servir podemos aprender esas "técnicas" que corresponden a un área específica de servicio, debemos también examinar y desarrollar nuestra fundación espiritual básica la cual, después de todo, nos motiva a hacer lo que, como ministros eclesiales, nos sentimos llamados a desempeñar.

Es allí donde las pequeñas comunidades cristianas se convierten en un recurso invaluable para que los laicos definan sus intenciones sobre prácticas ministeriales. En el contexto de los grupos para compartir la fe, sus miembros son retados tanto a reconocer las implicaciones de su bautismo, como a explorar las aplicaciones prácticas de esas implicaciones en la vida cotidiana. Y, dentro de ellos, los potenciales -- y *los actuales* - ministros eclesiales se "conectan" con la fuente de su ministerio. . . y la fuente de toda creatividad. De hecho, sin esa conexión con el Dios Creador, nuestro "ministerio" se convierte sólo en eso: *nuestro ministerio*.

Mi experiencia en la formación del ministerio pastoral me ha enseñado que muchos - si no la mayoría – de los feligreses que aceptan el desafío del servicio, voluntariado o remunerado a nivel parroquial han estado, o están actualmente, asociados a una pequeña comunidad cristiana. Asimismo, he encontrado que en las parroquias donde no hay grupos activos para compartir la fe, cada año los pastores tienden a luchar para llenar las posiciones que requieren voluntarios que asuman papeles de servicio en su comunidad.

Por lo tanto, es mi opinión que, como un medio de oración, reflexión, estudio de las escrituras y para compartir, las pequeñas comunidades cristianas representan una fuente verdaderamente viable de ayuda y de motivación para los líderes actuales y futuros de la parroquia implicados en el ministerio eclesial. Y en los años por venir, la importancia de las pequeñas comunidades cristianas continuará aumentando al mismo tiempo que la comunidad parroquial crece en su conocimiento de la clara invitación-- *a servir* --que nos hace Jesús.

Nota Biográfica: Actualmente, el Dr. McNamara es Director Diocesano de Educación y Formación de la Diócesis de Las Cruces. Él coordina el Programa de Formación Pastoral Diocesano que prepara futuros ministros eclesiales para el servicio de las parroquias.

## **4. Good News Column**

### **New Brochure - New Look!**

It took many months to put together our new letterhead and brochure which you have undoubtedly noticed! Lots of work and rejections went into the translations and design. Thanks to all who worked on it – Margarita Hayes of the Diocese of Las Cruces, Fr. Pierre Goudreault of the Diocese of Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, Emil Antonucci, our artist and all of the NAFSCC Board members for critiquing and proofing! We truly have a North American representation in three major languages.

## **5. Resources**

The Kentucky Bishops have just published *Economic Justice in the 21st Century Kentucky: Holding Ourselves Accountable*. This is in the form of eight pamphlets one of which is entitled "Resources and Suggested Uses." The other seven are: "Human Dignity," "Option for the Poor," "Call to Family, Community," "Rights and Responsibilities," "The Dignity of Work," "Solidarity," and "Care of God's Creation." These last seven are all presented in small community format.

Although parts of the publication are directed to the people of Kentucky, the use of Scripture, the documents of the Church, the references to "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" and the basic principles are universally directed to all followers of Christ.

The set of the eight pamphlets is available for downloading in pdf form in black and white or in color at [www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org) (publications).

**NAFSCC Board Members and E-Mail Addresses:**

**Sr. Marci Blum, Archdiocese of Dubuque: [DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us](mailto:DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us)**

**Carlette Chordas, Diocese of Youngstown: [cchordas@youngstowndiocese.org](mailto:cchordas@youngstowndiocese.org)**

**Sr. Donna Ciangio, National Pastoral Life Center: [dciangio@nplc.org](mailto:dciangio@nplc.org)**

**Sr. Patricia Froning, Diocese of Owensboro: [pat.froning@pastoral.org](mailto:pat.froning@pastoral.org)**

**Rev. Pierre Goudreault, Diocese of Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec:**

**[p.goudreault@cablevision.qc.ca](mailto:p.goudreault@cablevision.qc.ca)**

**Ms. Margarita Hayes, Diocese of Las Cruces: [mhayes@dioceseoflascruces.org](mailto:mhayes@dioceseoflascruces.org)**

**Ms. Diane Kledzik, Diocese of St. Petersburg: [dmk@kosp.org](mailto:dmk@kosp.org)**

**Visit NAFSCC website: [www.nafsc.org](http://www.nafsc.org)**

We hope you enjoyed reading this.

For additions, comments and address changes, to the  
NAFSCC E-Newsletter

please email Marci Blum OSF at [DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us](mailto:DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us)