



**2011 Bonnie Teater
Community Development
Early Career Achievement
Award Recipient**

**Brian Whitacre
Oklahoma State University
Department of Agricultural Economics**

The Southern Rural Development Center is proud to honor Dr. Brian Whitacre as a 2011 recipient of the *Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award*. Whitacre is an Extension faculty member in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University.

In an effort to respond to community problems and concerns expressed by local citizens of Oklahoma, Whitacre has developed innovative Extension programs that are designed to address two key concerns in rural areas. The first focuses on strengthening the understanding and application of broadband and e-commerce strategies by small businesses and rural local governments, while the second is geared toward improving access to advancing community healthcare. Speaking of his work in these two critical areas, Mitch Renkow, an agricultural economics professor at North Carolina State University, stated that Whitacre has “an enviable record that clearly indicates a vigorous, resourceful, and multi-faceted approach to meeting the demands for information on various aspects of rural community economic development on the part of the citizens of Oklahoma.”

Whitacre’s Department Head, Dr. Mike Woods, spoke highly of his e-commerce initiative: “In only its fourth year of existence, the website and e-commerce program has been presented to nearly 1,000 small business owners in Oklahoma.” Success stories resulting from this initiative are abundant, including attendees that have built websites from scratch, set up on-line store fronts, or significantly improved existing sites.

Whitacre’s community health engagement process has been implemented in over thirty communities in just over three years. This long-term community process has as its core to “increase the use of local healthcare facilities.” Attesting to the success of the process are the expanding number of requests Whitacre is receiving from new communities, the growth in the number of feasibility reports he is generating at the request of communities to carefully guide their healthcare infrastructure decisions, and the number of participating communities reporting an accelerated use of local healthcare services by local residents.

In addition to his successful programs, Whitacre serves on SERA-19, a southern research/Extension group focusing on rural health and is a member of the National E-Commerce Extension Initiative led by the Southern Rural Development Center. He also partners with the Rural Women’s Business Center to provide assistance to women entrepreneurs and business owners.

The exemplary service and leadership that Whitacre has put forth has been recognized on both regional and national levels, earning him much respect and notoriety. OSU’s Regional Community Development Specialist, Stan Ralstin, spoke of Whitacre’s diligence: “He is a tireless worker who brings a high degree of professionalism, intensity and enthusiasm to every project he is associated with.”

His genuine concern with improving the quality of life for rural business owners and residents who have been beneficiaries of his Extension outreach activities, along with his impressive track record of publishing high quality journal articles that are of value to both researchers and practitioners, makes it most fitting that Dr. Brian Whitacre be honored by the Southern Rural Development Center as a recipient of the *2011 Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award*.

About the Bonnie Teater Early Achievement Award



Bonnie Teater is a special individual to friends of the Southern Rural Development Center. For 30 years, she provided valuable support and day-to-day assistance to the Center as a member of its staff. She served as an inspiration to all because of the dedication she brought to her work and her passion for the rural development research and Extension outreach mission of the region's land-grant schools. She currently is enjoying retirement in her home state of Kentucky.

Award Selection Process

The *Early Career Achievement Award* is sponsored by the Southern Rural Development Center for the purpose of honoring the work of a "rising star" who has already achieved great things in his/her early career in community development. This is a new award that launched in 2011 and will hence forth be awarded on odd numbered years. Individuals must meet the following qualifications for eligibility:

- Be currently employed by one of the 29 land-grant universities located in the Southern Rural Development Center region
- Serve as an administrator, specialist or agent who has worked in the Extension CD area for ten years or less
- Have an impressive portfolio of Extension-related programs and publications

Furthermore, it is required that nomination packets be assembled and submitted to the SRDC by the deadline date. These packets include:

- A primary letter of nomination prepared by an Extension educator or administrator in the South who has an excellent command of the accomplishments of the nominee
- Select examples of CD Products developed by the nominee
- Support letters from up to three individuals who are knowledgeable of the nominee's Extension CD work, and who can affirm the significance of the person's achievements in advancing CD work within a variety of arenas (i.e. state, region, national, international)

All packets submitted by the deadline date are evaluated by a subcommittee of the SRDC Technical and Operational Advisory Committee (TOAC), a group composed of land-grant university faculty and other rural development partners in the region. It is this subcommittee that selects the *Early Career Achievement* awardee.

