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The lush, rolling green landscape between the Will Rogers Turnpike and old Route 66 near Chelsea surrounds an artifact of the days when Oklahoma became the 46th state to enter the Union.

Mossy stones – almost hidden by grass and spiny vines – now barely peek above the ground. These historic gems are permanently etched with the simple markings of surveyors who helped lay the boundaries for the Sooner State more than a century ago.

The stones rest tranquilly beneath a taut barbed wire fence around a pasture on the 800-acre ranch of E.J. and Wanda Snider.



The Snider family's roots here are as deep, if not deeper, than the buried surveyor's stones.

E.J.'s grandparents came here in 1889 from Alabama, and parts of his ranch and other family members' land have deeds linked to those early days. His grandmother was full blood Cherokee, and received a 160-acre allotment. The grandparents also purchased additional land in the area.

Some of his father's original spread, which also has a pre-statehood deed, is across old Route 66 and still owned by a sister. E.J. and Wanda have made their own history on the land, too.

TIES WITH THE

A childhood fondness develops into an adult devotion.

By Mike Nichols





Left top: Grass and thorny briars almost obscure the old surveyor's stones on the Snider ranch. The stones have been there since before Oklahoma became a state in 1907, and are the original markers from the days when surveyors laid the boundaries for the state.

Left: The size of the Belgian horses E.J. and Wanda Snider have on their ranch is apparent when the owner stands by one of the big horses.

Left inset: The big Belgians, which get up to 18.5 hands high, amble through a pasture on the Snider ranch.

Above: E.J. is about finished making a few minor renovations to this carriage. It was purchased at an auction and caught his eye despite being covered by a heavy coat of dust and grime.

They operated a sizeable dairy and raised much of their own forage here for some 30 years. The couple also maintained a herd of 80 beef cows at the same time.

They sold the dairy cows in 1993 or 1994, shifting totally to beef production. E.J. ran Polled Hereford cows crossed with Simmentals, and “got a good crop of heifer calves. A guy offered me \$2,000 a pair, and I sold them.”

He now has about 75 beef cows, mainly Polled Hereford and Braunvieh crosses.

“I sure like them (Braunviehs). They’re a good carcass breed and hang on the rail good.”

He plans to introduce some Angus influence in the herd since the market is better for those crosses. However, E.J. has purchased a couple of black Braunvieh bulls still on their mothers that will be added to the mix in the future.

He and his son, Stan, also own and operate a custom Bermuda grass sprigging business. They’ve had it for 10-plus years, and normally sprig 600 to 700 acres each season.

At 72, E.J. remains focused on the future but he’s fixed on a facet of his childhood that’s as vivid today as it was 65 or 66 years ago. He remains enamored with draft animals just as he was at 6 or 7 when he followed them with a planter across the family’s land.

“When I was a kid, we had a team of big gray mules we used for planting. I started doing that when I was 6 or 7 years old. I liked those mules.”

His family replaced the mules when they got too old to work, and bought a team of Percheron horses.

“I planted quite a bit with horses. It was a long, slow job,” E.J. remembers. “But I didn’t mind doing that with the horses. I just really always liked those horses.”

His fondness for draft horses never wavered as the years slipped by.

“Years passed,” said E.J., “and I’d see horses at fairs. I finally told Wanda I’m going to get a team.”

His mission to acquire a team of horses took him to St. Joseph, Mo., in 1993.

“I wound up at a sale at St. Jo and bought my first team – two Belgian mares. Everybody’s got a preference. Belgians aren’t the showiest, but they’re gentle and the most dependable.”

He didn’t rush home and hitch the big palomino-colored mares to a

planter, however. Harness and something to put behind the two muscular Belgians were next on his priority list.

He found harness was readily available to purchase from the Amish because “they’ve just never got away from that.”

With the harness issued solved, the focus turned to something for the team to pull.

“I can build things,” said E.J., and he constructed a wagon that he still has and uses today.

Since he wasn’t farming with the team, his attention with the horses

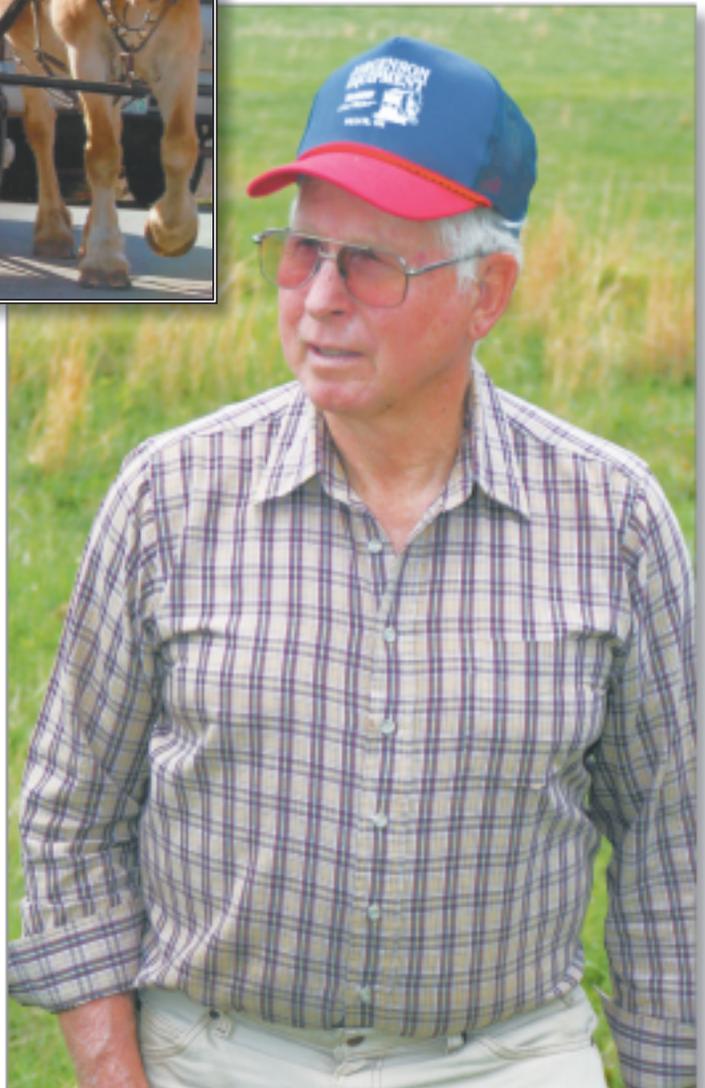


Left: E.J. and Wanda Snider are on the driver’s seat behind the team of big Belgians in this photo from a past event.

Below: E.J. Snider is a longtime Farm Bureau member in Rogers County. He now serves as president of the county organization.

Right top: The surrey E.J. has behind the team of Norwegian Fjords here is the original “surrey with the fringe on top” from the movie Oklahoma. A museum has allowed him to pull the surrey in several events.

Right Bottom: The ornate harness E.J. uses on his teams is purchased from the Amish, where horse drawn vehicles are still the norm.





shifted to parades and special events.

"If it was a business, it would be a poor business," E.J. says with a grin.

"We primarily haul people, do parades and have fun."

Over the years, E.J., Wanda and the hitch have become permanent fixtures at the Will Rogers Day Parade in Claremore. Other events and Christmas parades at nearby communities and towns like Nowata, Oologah, Pryor and Locust Grove also regularly feature the Snider hitch. They've even done weddings, company picnics, family reunions and a few school events over the years.

As time passed, Belgian numbers have grown with the addition of a stud. Five of the Belgians graze the lush pasture with a few Belgian crosses mixed in the small herd.

"They're just big, ole gentle things," E.J. explains as the 18-hand-high horses crowd around him in the pasture. "If you're hauling people, you need everything as foolproof and safe as you can get it."

The Belgians have been sedate in parades and at events despite being passed several times by speeding emergency vehicles with sirens blaring.

"We've never," says E.J., "had any problems. Safety's the first thing. It's a fun deal, but if somebody gets hurt the fun's out of it."

The Sniders usually make eight to 10 events a year with their horses. The animals are hauled in a utility trailer that's normally trailed by the

appropriate wagon for the specific event.

"You've had a good day when you make people as happy as they can be," explained E.J. "One day at Pryor, we had 400 or 500 people we gave rides to in the wagon. We'll stay and give rides as long as anyone wants to ride."

One of the more memorable days they had was a private Christmas party in Tulsa.

"A woman in Tulsa wanted to have a Christmas party. Her husband was in bad health and she thought it would be his last Christmas. She spent a lot of money decorating our wagon. We hauled people there for two or three hours. It was," said E.J., "a good experience."

His fondness for draft horses saw the introduction of another breed to the ranch in 2002 or 2003.

Rare Norwegian Fjords now occupy a second pasture on the ranch. They're a smaller draft horse, measuring about 14-hands. Their off-white color is accented with a dark stripe extending from the middle of their heads all the way down their tails.

"I told Wanda there might come a day I couldn't harness the 18-hand horses," E.J. recalled as the hint of a rascally smile crossed his face, "so the 14- to 14.5-hand horses would be easier to harness."

"They're a classy little horse to look at, and a very old breed."

This Norwegian Fjord colt is the latest member of the equine herd on the Snider's Roger County ranch. The colt was about two weeks old when this photo was taken.



It's believed that the Vikings would take Norwegian Fjords on ships with them when they explored because the horses were small, stout and had a good disposition – three traits they really needed.

"They used them for saddle horses, pack animals and whatever else they needed them for . . . and then would put them back on the ship and leave.

"There's not many of them today," E.J. continued. "We have nine of them. If you have two mares and a stud, those numbers will build up. The stud is more of a nuisance than the whole herd of horses. I think I have five young geldings. I'm trying to simplify life."

Parade and event duties are split about 50-50 between the Belgian and Norwegian Fjord hitches nowadays. When one of the big red wagons is used, it's likely the Belgians will be the favored hitch. The Norwegian Fjords are the usual choice when a buggy or surrey is called for at an event.

The smaller Norwegian Fjords have been hitched to the original surrey with the fringe on top from the movie *Oklahoma*. The surrey was loaned out of by a local museum to trail the smaller draft horses.

"I've pulled that in the Will Rogers Parade in Claremore," E.J. said. "We've pulled it probably two or three times."

While he's carried senior citizen status for several years, his passion has not dwindled for his teams and the events he attends.

He's currently building a larger version of his original red horse-drawn wagon to use. When it's finished, his red wagon fleet will number three. A second red wagon was purchased at an auction in Kansas. It was new – its owner had planned to give rides at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo., but a heart attack sent the wagon to the auction block.

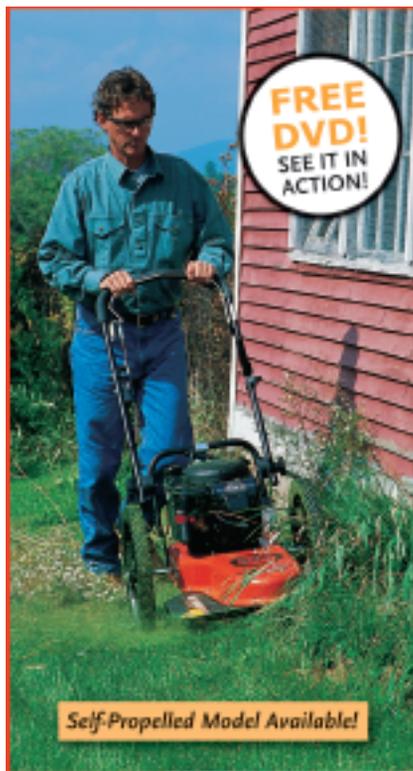
A carriage also has been added to the Snider's horse drawn fleet recently. E.J. found the dust-covered carriage at an auction. It's cleaned up now, and he's making a few minor cosmetic repairs to ready it for parades and special events.

There also are plans to put together a four-abreast team of Norwegian Fjords.

"I've got the horses and the harness – everything but the time. But, I think I can figure that out before summer's end.

"I think I'll still be in pretty good shape at 80. I feel good, but your energy level kind of drops. But, you can make some adjustments."

Odds are that E.J. will make those adjustments when draft horses, parades and special events are involved.



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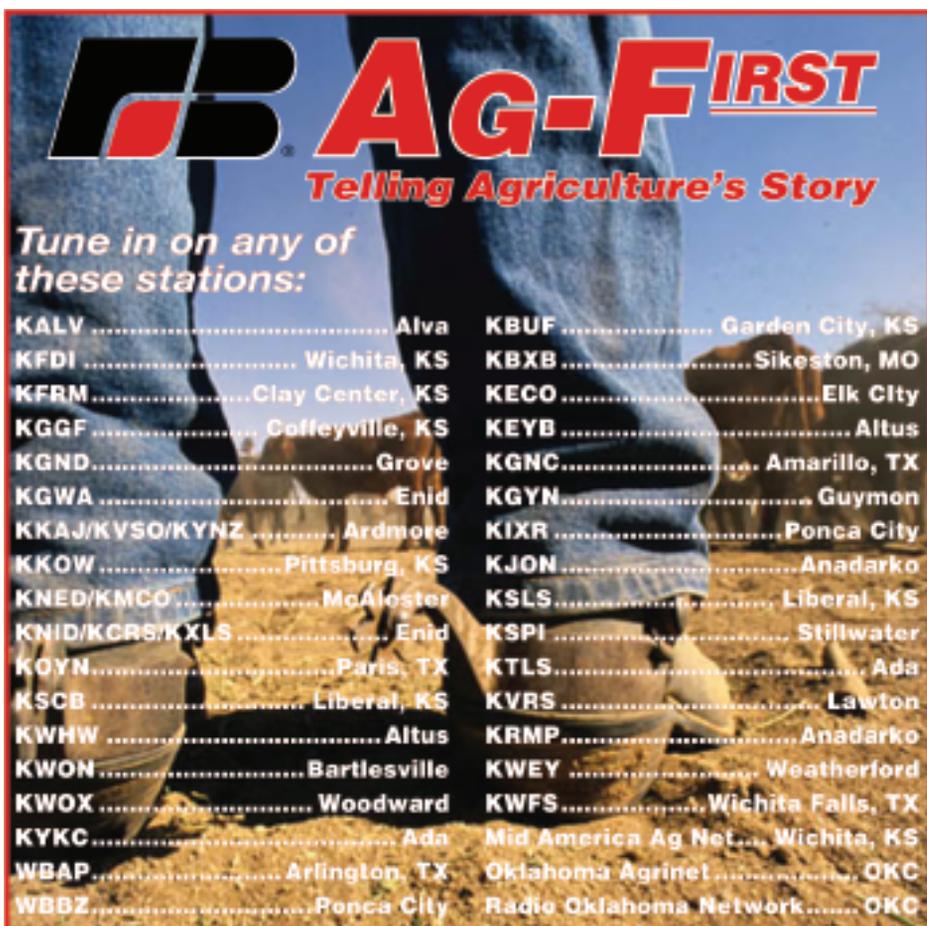
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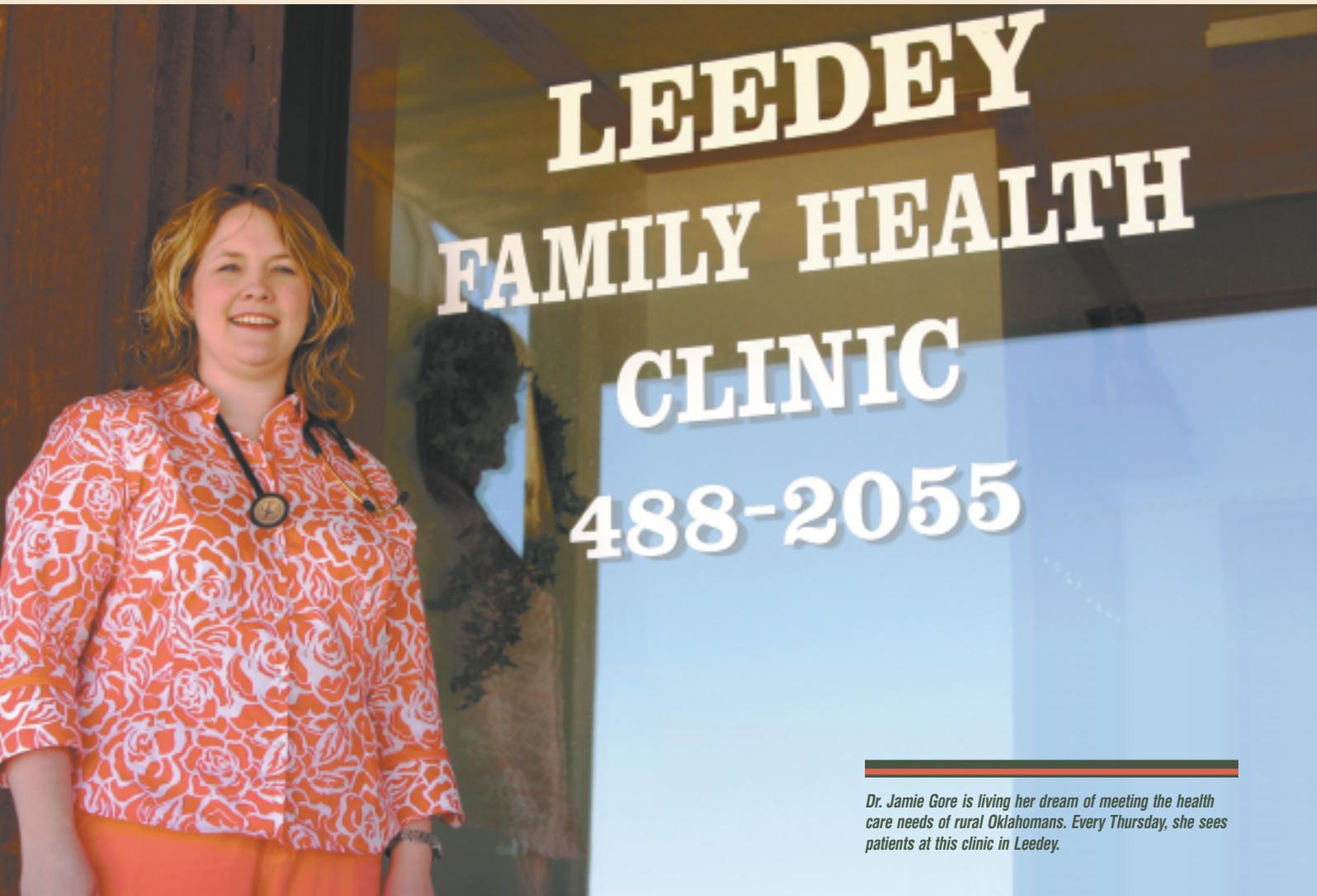
GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



Turning Out Country Doctors

Improving rural health care has been OSU's college of osteopathic medicine's priority since its founding in 1972.

By Sam Knipp



Dr. Jamie Gore is living her dream of meeting the health care needs of rural Oklahomans. Every Thursday, she sees patients at this clinic in Leedeey.

it's Thursday morning in the small southwestern Oklahoma community of Leedey and the doctor is in. Dr. Jamie Gore is making her weekly stop in the small clinic and knows most of her patients on a first name basis. She was raised on the family dairy southeast of town. After earning her Doctor of Osteopathic medicine degree from Oklahoma State University's Center for Health Sciences in Tulsa she headed home to practice medicine.

"I'm living my dream," Dr. Gore said.

She is also fulfilling the university's vision of providing primary care physicians to under served, rural communities. However, that vision could become clouded by funding issues.

The OSU Center for Health Sciences Hospital is owned by a trust operated by St. John's Medical Center in Tulsa. The major source of funding for Oklahoma's residency programs is the Physicians Manpower Training Commission.

"These are limited funds with many demands," said State Senator Brian Crain, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services.

"Funding for OSU's residency program is extremely important. We can't have a vibrant rural economy if all our doctors are in Tulsa and Oklahoma City."

According to the American Medical Association, Oklahoma ranks last in doctors per capita.

"State government must do more to get more doctors in rural Oklahoma," Crain said.

State Representative Mike Ritze, who is also a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, estimates the state should kick in at least \$5 million per year for the next five years to adequately fund the medical school.

"That would allow us to graduate about 100 doctors per year, many of which would practice in rural Oklahoma," Ritze said.

This year the school will graduate 85 doctors.

Studies have shown doctors usually choose to practice within 150 miles of where they completed their residency. (See map of Oklahoma's residency programs on the next page).

"If our residency programs are under funded, doctors will be forced to attend residency programs in others states. We will never get those doctors back to Oklahoma," said Leigh Goodson, vice president for research and institutional advancement at OSU's Center for Health Sciences.

"Our focus has always been on rural Oklahoma," said Goodson.

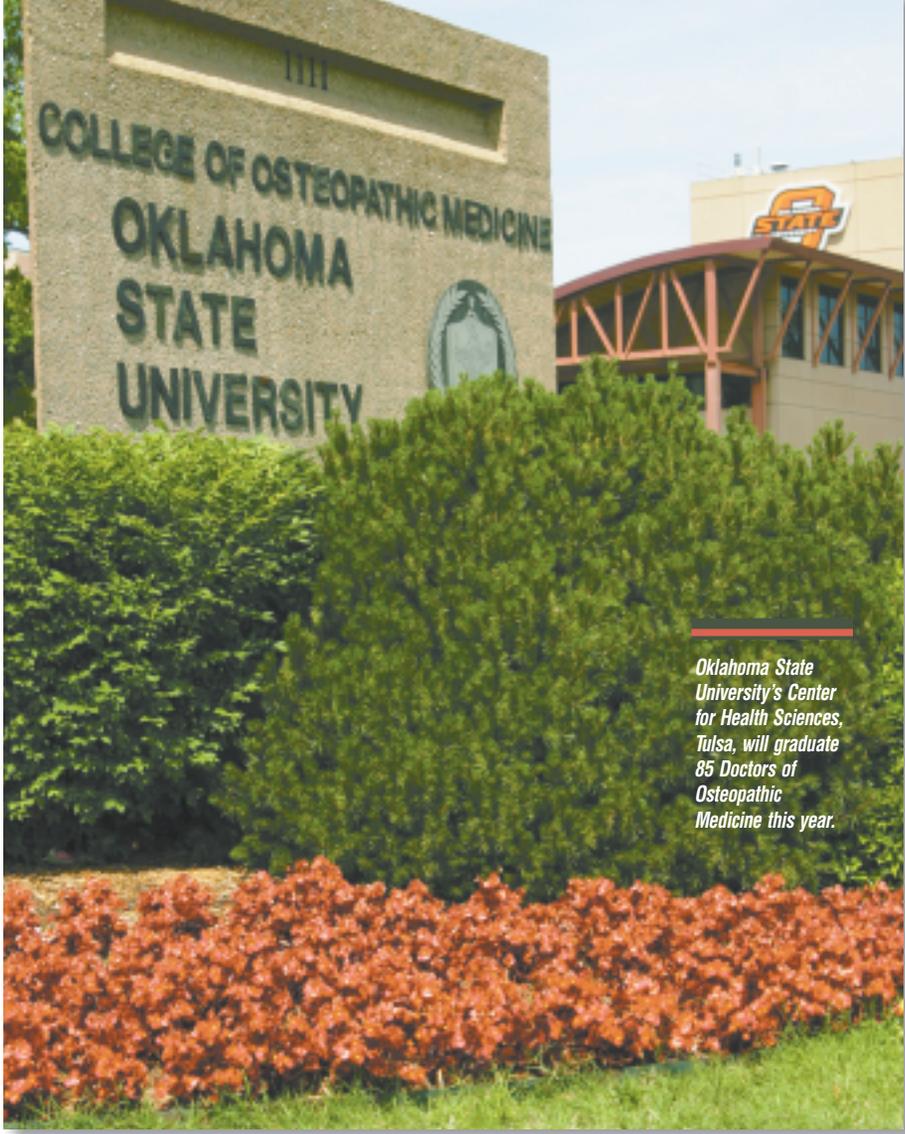
Improving rural health care has been OSU's college of osteopathic medicine's priority since its founding in 1972.

"We strongly recruit new students from rural areas," Goodson said. "Almost half of our students today come from rural areas."



Abvpe: Patients young and old, big and tall, all depend on the health care services provided by Dr. Jamie Gore. Here she checks the heartbeat of her four-year-old daughter, Rylie, in her Elk City office. She practices medicine in partnership with Dr. John Perkins, MD, the physician who delivered her 30 years ago.

The rural lifestyle has always been important to Dr. Jamie Gore. Stepping outside her back door on the farm near Leedey where she grew up and now lives with her husband Darin and two children immediately immerses her into the agricultural world.



Oklahoma State University's Center for Health Sciences, Tulsa, will graduate 85 Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine this year.

What's the difference between DO and MD?

Not much, as it turns out. According to information from the American Osteopathic Association, the primary difference is the type of post-graduate school they attend. MDs (Medical Doctors) attend a college or school of medicine, and DOs (Doctors of Osteopathy) attend an Osteopathic College. Both must complete four years of medical school and take comparable state licensing exams. Osteopathic doctors have additional training in the musculoskeletal system, emphasizing a holistic approach to diagnosing illness and disease.

Traditional MDs practice allopathic medicine, which is the treatment of a disease using remedies whose effects differ from those produced by that disease. Osteopathic medicine focuses more on homeopathic or whole-person techniques.

Just like their MD brethren, DOs incorporate drugs and surgery as valid treatment methods.

You can find DOs and MDs practicing side-by-side in many hospitals and private practices. But that has not always been the case.

Since its modern day inception in the late 1800s, osteopathic medicine has stirred controversy due to the unique aspects separating it from traditional medicine. Although Hippocrates first pondered the question – should the doctor focus on the patient or the disease – traditional medicine pursued a different course. The two paths have converged today, ultimately benefiting the patient.

The state's largest farm organization has thrown its substantial political might behind legislation supporting OSU's residency programs.

"Our rural farm and ranch families deserve quality health care," said Mike Spradling, Sand Springs rancher and Oklahoma Farm Bureau president. "OSU has developed a strong reputation for graduating highly qualified, empathic primary care doctors who want to practice in rural areas."

One of the bigger challenges for the school has been educating the general public about the difference between a DO and MD (see story above).

"We've mastered that challenge in recent years as we've sent more DOs out into the rural areas," Goodson said. "We now have doctors in 70 of Oklahoma's 77 counties."

Interestingly, it is that key difference between MD training and DO training that has attracted students to the OSU college.

"I want to treat the whole person, not just the symptoms of the illness," Gore said.

"I like the idea of helping people and this is the best way for me to accomplish that goal," said Megan Wilson, a second-year medical student from Morris. Wilson is focusing her studies on obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) and family practice medicine.

"Treating the whole person makes a spiritual connection for me," Wilson said.

The decision to train as an osteopathic doctor was easy for Wilson and Dr. Gore.

"The focus on rural medicine, treating the entire family and the rural lifestyle attracted me," Gore said.

Gore noted that if doctors fail to understand the rural culture, patients won't trust them as doctors.

"If I am going to successfully treat a patient, I need to know what's going on in their lives, what's happening at home and possibly other factors that affect them," Gore said.

The AMA is predicting a shortage of 40,000 primary care physicians in this country by 2025. This shortage will be critically felt in rural areas.

"Traditionally rural doctors make less money than their city cousins," Goodson said. Part of the reason is rural doctors are primary care

Right: Second-year medical student Megan Wilson, left, and Leigh Goodson, vice president for research and institutional advancement, OSU Center for Health Sciences, are passionate about the role osteopathic medicine plays in rural health care.

