



STILLWATER, Okla.—This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine. In 1948, the doors to the Veterinary School were opened and a history of excellence began. At the Veterinary Center's Annual Awards Banquet held recently, that tradition continued as the 2008 recipient of the Dean Clarence H. McElroy Award was announced. Derick Whitley was chosen based on ballots of faculty and fourth year veterinary students for his high academic achievement, leadership and outstanding clinical proficiency.



"I wasn't expecting the award," claims Whitley. "It's a real honor to be chosen by the faculty and my classmates for this award."

In 1954 the award was established in honor of the Veterinary College's first dean, Dr. Clarence H. McElroy, to recognize the most outstanding senior veterinary student.

"This is the most prestigious award bestowed upon graduates of the College of Veterinary Medicine," explains Dr. Michael Lorenz, professor and dean of the Veterinary College as well as the 1969 McElroy Award recipient. "Derick is a role model for other students. Instead of taking a much deserved vacation, Derick is on a preceptor at Sapulpa Equine Hospital gaining more equine experience."

"My junior year of high school I was trying to decide what I wanted to do in college," recalls Whitley. "I was really interested in biology and science. I've loved animals all my life and started thinking about becoming a veterinarian."

When the local veterinarian came to the Whitley farm to tend to one of the animals, Whitley talked with Dr. Gerald Parsons about veterinary medicine.

"Dr. Parsons invited me to ride along with him and see what the job was like," says Whitley. "So I did and I liked it."

Knowing that he wanted to pursue a degree in veterinary medicine, Derick worked hard and finished high school a year early. During his junior year of high school, he was home schooled and took college classes at East Central University in Ada, Okla., while working part-time.

"I didn't know if I would want to specialize in one particular area of veterinary medicine once I started the program," he says. "So I wanted to get as much of a head start as possible. By what should have been my senior year in high school, I was a freshman in college."

Whitley earned his B.S. degree in Biology at East Central University and will graduate from Oklahoma State University with his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree on May 3, 2008. He will join a mixed animal clinic serving the Sulphur/Davis, Okla., area. Dr. Cade Coppenbarger, OSU class of 2004, owns and operates Hilltop Animal Health located in Davis.

"We built this clinic a little over a year ago," says Dr. Coppenbarger. "We're real proud of Derick and glad to have him."

Whitley's soon to be wife, Callie Morrison, will also join Hilltop Animal Health as a veterinary technician following her graduation from Murray State College.

"It's been a dream of mine to get back to that area and be close to my family in Ada," smiles Whitley. "I enjoy rural veterinary practice where you get to go on field calls and meet good people."

As Derick prepares to start his veterinary medicine career, he has this advice to offer young people interested in becoming a veterinarian: "Get as much veterinary and animal experience as you can before you get to veterinary school and work hard to make good grades in undergraduate school."

In addition to the McElroy Award, Whitley received the Alfred M. Bradley Memorial Scholarship for his high academic standing and interest in large animal medicine in a rural area. He also was the recipient of the Lester and Lucille Johnson Scholarship for his character, professional potential, proficiency in food animal and/or equine medicine and surgery with a 3.0 GPA or higher. Whitley is the son of Brett and Nancy Whitley of Ada.