

## **Fall 2008 Ag News**

**With Whitney Benefits logo, painting of Edward**

**Whitney, and portrait of Mr. Whitney as young man**

**(can use one of these with sidebar)**

Legacy Award winner creates E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture

By Robert Waggener, Editor

Office of Communications and Technology

This year's Legacy Award winner is a firmly planted name in Sheridan County, and its new ties with the University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture will expand those roots across Wyoming and beyond.

Whitney Benefits Inc., a private, non-profit educational foundation in Sheridan, last year gifted \$1.25 million to create the E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture.

The state of Wyoming matched the gift, bringing the total to \$2.5 million.

Anne Leonard, director of the UW College of Agriculture's Ag Development and College Relations, says this is the largest cash gift ever received by the college.

"The generosity of Whitney Benefits, together with the vision of the state legislative match program, made this new faculty position possible," Leonard says. "It creates the second endowed professorship within the college."

The other is the Rochelle Chair of the Center for the Study of Fetal Programming in the Department of Animal Science.

Whitney Benefits Vice President Roy Garber and the foundation's executive director, Patrick Henderson, will accept the Legacy Award on behalf of the foundation during Ag Appreciation Weekend September 26-27 on the UW campus.

"Whitney Benefits is pleased to be recognized for this gift," Garber says. "It will greatly benefit college students, and it's a nice opportunity to get Sheridan College (SC) and UW together."

The endowed professor will implement at SC a three-year program within the College of Agriculture's agroecology curriculum. Recruiting for the position is underway, and the program is scheduled to start in 2009.

Once students complete three years of coursework at SC, they will transfer to UW to finish their bachelor's degree in agroecology with an emphasis in horticulture. The agroecology program is shared between the College of Agriculture's Department of Plant Sciences and Department of Renewable Resources.

"There is a lot of potential out there in agroecology and horticulture," says Garber, whose family runs a diversified agricultural operation in Sheridan County. "If you look at the job offerings, it's a very wide field. Agriculture is not just cows and plows anymore; agriculture is a very diverse field in the United States and throughout the world."

College of Agriculture Associate Professor Steve Herbert says, "This will give students more options for completing a degree that emphasizes horticulture, and it allows another opportunity for cooperation between UW and community colleges around the state."

Adds Herbert, who is head of the Department of Plant Sciences: “This also provides another chance to put distance learning to great use.”

Herbert believes the new program will attract traditional college students from around the region – and likely beyond – interested in horticulture, and it will also draw non-traditional students from the Sheridan area because they can complete most of their coursework at SC.

Jim Bennage, dean of SC’s Agriculture and Technical Career Programs, says, “This is a very unique cooperative agreement between Sheridan College and the UW College of Agriculture. It’s very rare there is an endowed chair at a university outreach facility.”

Bennage adds, “I am thrilled Whitney Benefits has chosen to continue its outstanding support and recognition of agriculture – and the importance of agriculture in northeastern Wyoming – by providing such a generous gift in support of the endowed chair.”

The E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture will oversee operations at the UW College of Agriculture’s Sheridan Research and Extension Center (SREC) east of Sheridan (<http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/uwexpstn/Sheridan.asp>).

Among the services at SREC are crop and plant evaluation for their adaptability to northeastern Wyoming’s climate and soils, turf grass and native plant research, and providing technical assistance to Sheridan County gardeners, ranchers, and agribusinesses.

The endowed professor will also teach two horticulture-related classes and advise students at SC, says College of Agriculture Associate Dean Stephen D. Miller, director of the Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station, which manages SREC.

Miller says a second faculty member will be hired to teach two additional horticulture-related classes and advise students at SC.

One of the faculty members will oversee turf grass research while the other will direct native plant studies at SREC.

“These two positions will allow us to provide the third-year agroecology curriculum at SC with a horticulture emphasis,” Miller says.

**Caption** – Whitney Benefits logo

**Caption** – Edward A. Whitney as a young man

**Caption** – This portrait was painted from a photograph after Edward A. Whitney’s death.

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## **Fall 2008 Ag News – sidebar to Legacy Award story**

Whitney Benefits first educational foundation in Wyoming

By Robert Waggener, Editor

Office of Communications and Technology

Sheridan County benefactor Edward A. Whitney willed most of his estate to establish Whitney Benefits Inc., reportedly the first educational foundation in Wyoming.

The nonprofit foundation was created in 1927 – 10 years after Whitney’s death.

Since then, it has granted interest-free loans to help thousands of Sheridan County students attend college, generously supported the Sheridan County YMCA, established a community park called Whitney Commons and a community ice rink, and developed the Whitney Center, which allows nonprofit organizations and agencies to work side by side.

Whitney Benefits has also played a pivotal role in establishing and helping grow the Sheridan College (SC) campus and its programs. This includes the first gift of land on which the campus is built and which now encompasses 124 acres – all given by Whitney Benefits. The foundation has provided SC more than \$23 million.

In 2007, Whitney Benefits gifted \$1.25 million to SC, which in turn donated the money to the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture to create the E.A. Whitney Professorship in Agriculture (please see separate story). The gift was matched by the state of Wyoming.

Edward A. Whitney, a member of a notable and wealthy family from England, was born in Massachusetts in 1843. At age 13, he started school in Switzerland and later studied geological engineering in France. He reportedly visited many countries around

the world and was one of the first white men to tour what would become Yellowstone National Park.

“Edward was driven by a passion for learning and exploration,” says Patrick Henderson, Whitney Benefits’ executive director.

Travels to the West eventually led Whitney to Sheridan, where he lived for 32 years. Whitney started a bank in 1885 and was also involved in the livestock business, owning approximately 10 ranches in Sheridan and Johnson counties. One of those operations, the Adams Ranch just south of Sheridan, would become the site of the SC campus.

Whitney had extensive real estate and business holdings, and he was involved with the establishment of the famous Sheridan Inn, bringing the railroad to Sheridan, and the development of coal mines in the area. He also served as the second mayor of Sheridan.

Whitney died at age 74, and his estate, in accordance with his will, was kept intact and run by his trustees for 10 years before Whitney Benefits was established.

Whitney Benefits, which had net assets of more than \$127 million at the end of the 2008 fiscal year, is governed by a 13-member board.

Trustees include Tom Kinnison, president, Roy Garber, vice president, Tom Belus, secretary, Kim Love, treasurer, Val Burgess, John “Jack” Chase, Stephen Holst, Maureen Humphrys, Everett McGlothlin, Peter Schoonmaker, Sam Scott, Samuel Street, and David Withrow.

More about E.A. Whitney and the foundation he established is at [www.whitneybenefits.org](http://www.whitneybenefits.org).