



Items of Interest



Dr. Sreedhar Upendram Named the 2021 Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award Recipient

The Southern Rural Development Center is proud to honor Dr. Sreedhar Upendram as the 2021 recipient of the *Bonnie Teater Community Development Early Career Achievement Award*. Dr. Upendram is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

On behalf of Dr. Sreedhar Upendram's nomination, Dr. Christopher D. Clark, Professor and Department Head, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Tennessee stated that "Dr. Upendram's applied academic research and statewide Extension education programs are devoted to promoting community and economic development by enhancing the infrastructure communities need to thrive in the 21st Century." In addition, Dr. Matthew J. Ulmer of the Community Resource Development, Alabama Cooperative Extension System stated that "the impacts of his work are greatly improving the lives and wellbeing of Tennesseans while also providing great frameworks by which others in the Community Resource Development arena can model after his work."

[FULL PRESS RELEASE](#)

Monica Babine Awarded 2021 Charles Benton Digital Equity Champion Award

The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society recently announced their Charles Benton Digital Equity Champions for 2021. Monica Babine, a member of the [National Digital Education Leadership Team \(NDEET\)](#) has been named the 2021 Charles Benton Digital Equity Champion recipient for her service of more than 25 years in the field of digital equity. Currently she is the Senior Associate leading the Program of Digital Initiatives within the Division of Governmental Studies and Services (DGSS) at Washington State University.



Webinars:

Other:

Stay tuned for more upcoming webinars!

In addition to serving on NDEET, she is also active within several other national, state, and regional groups such as the National Telecommunications Information Administration State Broadband Leaders Network, Rural Telecommunications Congress, Partners for Rural Washington, WSU Economic Council, and the Stevens County Broadband Action Team.

The Southern Rural Development Center would like congratulate Monica Babine on this prestigious award as she is most deserving of this honor for her tireless service in which she focuses on rural and economic development, e-connectivity, and telecommunications. SRDC has benefitted greatly from Monica's expertise through NDEET, which SRDC helps to coordinate.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

Regional Spotlight

The Economic Opportunity Mapping (EOM) Tool

As part of a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant, Drs. Craig Carpenter and Rebekka Dudensing, Extension faculty from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, led a team of researchers from Michigan State University, Iowa State University, and the University of Wyoming in the development of an interactive online mapping tool.

[The Economic Opportunity Mapping \(EOM\) Tool](#) provides interactive online maps that allow users to visualize potential county-level economic opportunities for businesses in different industries across the United States. In addition to county summary statistics, the EOM tool provides a visual representation of results of a model producing expected industrial predicted presence. The model output is compared to measured values to categorize each county as above, below, or near predicted values for a specific industry. Measures of both expected and actual performance are subject to error and thus imperfect. The tool is used to provide an accurate and engaging starting point to spur discussion and understanding of economic opportunities for different industries within a particular county of region, as well as discussions of the important local factors that may be supporting or hindering local industry.

The mapping tool has been adopted by [Michigan State University](#) and [University of Wyoming](#).

For suggestions on how economics development practitioners, Extension professional, and communities can use the maps, visit the [Suggestions on How to Use the EOM Tool](#) page.

[TO LEARN MORE](#)



Employee Highlight: Victorino Cantu, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Victorino Cantu is a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Associate working with the CDC-funded Working on Wellness Environments (WOW-E) program in Starr County. A local asset to the program, Victorino primarily works on the ground, helping local groups create healthy changes in communities along the Texas-Mexico border.

Over the past two years, Victorino has been involved in several projects. He coordinates a Farm to School grant at RT Barrera Elementary in Roma, TX, and assisted the school in securing an NRCS GREEN grant to purchase a pollinator garden and a high tunnel to expand farm production. Victorino is supporting local groups in expanding school garden and orchard efforts to other schools by facilitating the creation of operations manuals and

meeting with other schools already excelling in Farm to School efforts.

Victorino has also helped facilitate a downtown walkability and connectivity project. His engagement with the local community has included communication, coordination, and showing a “behind the scenes” look at the infrared sensors being used to collect walking movement in downtown Rio Grande City.

Victorino’s passion for creating healthy lifestyles and access to healthy places exudes through his work. Victorino is looking forward to continuing Policy, System, and Environmental change work and continuing his involvement with rural communities and healthy changes.

Job Postings

Assistant or Associate Professor – Community and Rural Development

Deadline to apply: June 30, 2021

This position is an 11-month tenure track appointment consisting of both extension and research duties (75% extension, 25% research) with the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University. The faculty member will be expected to develop and/or sustain a nationally recognized program in rural economic development, focusing on issues associated with economic development and small business development for rural communities.

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Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

The 52nd Annual International Conference of the Community Development Society (CDS)

July 12-15, 2021 – Virtual

An incredible lineup of speakers will address the global challenges of climate change, labor, and immigration; and the over-arching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fight for racial justice. Each speaker will be followed by a panel discussion of local resilience in the face of each of these challenges.

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2021 Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society

July 29-August 1, 2021 – Virtual

For this year’s meeting there will be three plenary speaker sessions at the 2021 Virtual Annual Meeting. The date and time for each session has yet to be determined.

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Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Courses

Online: August 4 - October 5, 2021

In-person: October 12 - October 13, 2021 (St. Paul, MN)

For inspiration, new skill development, or brushing up existing skills, we encourage individuals or teams to take the course. The course gives you the opportunity to prepare a new or updated BRE plan. It allows you to think through the right approach for your situation including two fundamental approaches to business outreach and follow-up action:

- The community-led, volunteer-intensive approach
- The staff-driven, continuous approach

What's new?

We're all learning how things are changing in the post-pandemic period. This includes BRE methods. Thus we will discuss both new and traditional ideas and methods. We welcome discussion of new ways of doing the work. One

thing hasn't changed however; retaining and expanding businesses will continue to be the lion's share of local ED work for Minnesota communities.

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2021 National Extension Tourism Network Biennial Conference

November 7 – 11, 2021 – Savannah, GA

The National Extension Tourism Network's conference theme this year is "Navigating the Uncharted" which will reflect on how Extension and other tourism professionals have been responding and adapting to the challenges and changes facing the communities we serve. It also will serve to catalyze future Extension programming that best serves our stakeholders' needs.

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