

The Walter E. Jeske Award 2001: Dr. Ted Mills, Oklahoma State University

The 2001 Jeske Award recipient, Dr. Ted Mills, has been a noted influence in environmental education since the early 1970s. As an instructor at Oklahoma State University for more than 25 years, Ted has reached hundreds of students, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for the environment and environmental education. He developed and maintained the Center of Environmental Education at OSU from 1976 to 1997, which remains the only entity of its type in the state. Dr. Mills has published over 50 articles in professional journals, and presented at numerous local, state, regional, national, and international conferences.

Dr. Mills was one of the first to focus on water and water quality education while working with classroom teachers. Through his summer conservation education leadership programs, Ted secured the necessary funding to take teachers on environmental study trips throughout Oklahoma and surrounding states. He later established a summer high school environmental academy that profoundly impacted participating students, many of whom are now leaders in environmental education and who credit Dr. Mills for their interest and success.

Ted is known as the "father of environmental education in Oklahoma" and founded OKAEE, the state's environmental education association. He served on OKAEE's board for many years, and remains active as an ex-officio Board member, providing guidance, motivation, and advice as needed. He also strongly encouraged his students to also get involved with professional organizations; again, many have served in leadership capacities within the field.

As a Board member for NAAEE for the last five years, Dr. Mills has participated on various committees and helped guide the organization. He was the VINE Program liaison, represented NAAEE's International Commission as a roving ambassador, and coordinated NAAEE's annual photography contest, one of several special conference events, from 1991 to 1995.

Since his retirement in 1997, Dr. Mills has continued to further environmental education by working with Jane Goodall on the development of an adult-level course based on her work, advising the Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education, and conducting many teacher training workshops in Project WILD, Project WET, Project Learning Tree, Spirit of the Last Great Places (OK Nature Conservancy), and Roots and Shoots (Jane Goodall Institute).