

## Craig Smith

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

From track and field to the farming field. Today we'll meet a young Kansan who has made the transition between those two. In doing so, he is positively impacting the lives of young people in rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Craig Smith is assistant professor of agribusiness at Fort Hays State University. He grew up on a small farm near Yoder where his dad had a construction business. "My interest in ag really got sparked when I worked for a neighboring farmer," Craig said.

He was also interested in sports and was an outstanding three-sport athlete at Haven High School. By graduation, however, he felt rather burned out on sports and decided not to pursue sports in college.

He went to K-State and majored in Agricultural Technology Management. By his sophomore year, however, he was feeling bored. He decided to give athletics a try again.

"I became a walk-on for the track team," Craig said. In high school, he had done well with the javelin, so he became a thrower for K-State. He had lots of success.

"It was quite an experience," Craig said. "I traveled with the team, and it was the first time I ever flew on a plane." As he trained with the K-State coaches, he continued to improve.

In 2001, he set the school record for the javelin throw. He even qualified for the NCAA and USA Nationals before suffering an injury.

"I think everything happens for a reason," Craig said. "God had a hand in it." In this case, Craig spent time in the training room after his injury. There he got acquainted with some of the girls on the Big 12 champion K-State volleyball team, including Cari Jensen. The two hit it off and ultimately were married.

Craig went on to get a masters degree in Agricultural Economics. He then became an ag extension agent and natural resource engineering specialist in Missouri before moving back to Kansas and earning his Ph.D. in Ag Economics from K-State.

In 2011, he joined Fort Hays State as an assistant professor of agribusiness. His wife Cari is from Colorado so Hays was in a great location, situated between where their families are located.

"I teach five classes a semester," Craig said. At Fort Hays State, he has taught classes such as Marketing Farm Products, Technology in Agriculture, Computer Applications in Agriculture, Advanced Farm Management, Commodity Marketing, Agriculture Finance, Agricultural Resource Valuation (rural appraising), Agribusiness Firms Management and Marketing, and Current Issues and Ideas in Economics (an online Economics course).

Craig and Cari made their home on a small farm southwest of Hays. The farm is south of Ellis, near the unincorporated town of Antonino which has a population of perhaps 30 people. Now, that's rural.

"We wanted to raise our kids in a rural atmosphere like the kind that we grew up in," Craig said. He and Cari have four children: Jett, age five; Colt, age three; Shaylen, age two, and Remy who is four months old. The family raises Texas longhorns which are crossed with a Charolais bull. "The kids love it out here," Craig said.

Craig values his teaching. “Our classes are small so we really get to know the students and their home farms and ranches,” Craig said. “I can tailor my lectures or homework assignments to their farming operations.”

In 2013, Craig won the university-wide outstanding research award. Even though he has not been at the university long enough to qualify for the university outstanding teaching award, he has been nominated for it twice. But the awards are not what motivates Craig.

“The biggest reward is when students come back and thank me for what I might have contributed to their success,” Craig said. “I want to have a positive impact, both academically and personally, on the lives of these young ag students.”

From track and field to the farming field. Craig Smith has made this transition and is now making a difference in the lives of students.

And there’s more. His sister is making her mark in the field of entertainment. We’ll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.