

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Carol L. Whitson, MOS, GISP

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Each month, The Center for Rural Development catches up with consultants, trainers and other partners to find out how they're making a difference in southern and eastern Kentucky. This month, The Center interviews Carol Whitson, Owner of Computer Specialty Services, and a frequent trainer with Your Center of Learning.



Carol L. Whitson, MOS, GISP

### Where are you from?

I am originally from Cincinnati Ohio, but I have spent the greater portion of my life in Kentucky. The last 24 years I've lived in the Lake Cumberland area.

### How did you get started in your career?

I have always had an interest in how things work. When given the opportunity to apply that interest

to computers, I was able to develop skills setting up, troubleshooting and maintaining servers and desktop computers. On the job training and exposure to new technology continued to push the direction of my career. When I was given the opportunity to train new employees, I realized how much I enjoyed teaching new skills to others.

### What are your specific training areas of expertise?

I am proficient in Microsoft Office (2007-2013) family of products, QuickBooks, and Sage Software. I have also taught various GIS and custom software courses.

### Do you have any professional certifications?

I have completed various Train the Trainer courses during my time as owner of Computer Specialty Services. In addition, I am a certified Microsoft Office Specialist and have obtained my GISP (Geographic Information Specialist Professional) certification. Although not certified on Intuit or Sage software products, I have over 20 years of experience with both lines of software.

### What major changes do you see looming on the business horizon and how do the training courses you teach help address those changes?

I think it is going to be imperative for business owners and employees alike to be prepared to wear more hats, do more with less and maximize their skills and time. Employers expect more

for their payroll dollars and employees face more and more competition for jobs. The technology and software classes I teach will help provide needed skills.

### What role does technology play in education, professional development and training?

Technology has facilitated effective education in a variety of ways. Promethean boards in our local schools, web-based seminars, on-line courses: technology is everywhere! The capabilities of a virtual environment provide access and interaction in new ways every day. In our instructor led class room training, we utilize technology to provide sample files, videos and follow up materials to supplement the training received in the classroom. While many of the younger business owners seem to utilize more online options, it has been my experience that one or two day workshops and classes have provided a more successful learning experience and is the preferred method of many small business owners.

### What do you see as the top professional development and training needs for small businesses?

While there are many specialized training courses mandated by various industries, there remains a need for basic foundational classes, such as database, spreadsheet and accounting packages. These provide skills that will span many disciplines. In addition, marketing and people skill classes (i.e., How to deal with irate customers) are also quite valuable. Many local businesses have expressed a need for applicants to have more advanced soft skills, including business social skills and dress.

### Who / what influenced your career the most and why?

My parents were instrumental in instilling a good work ethic in me while I was young. I think one of the most influential people to help me establish my business was Doris Petercheff, a well-known political consultant in Pulaski County. She encouraged me and gave me some superb advice.

### What are your hobbies? What do you like to do for fun?

I enjoy horseback riding, reading and crocheting.