

Independent Agent

Scott Bruner

Sets Pace in Reinventing Education; Helps Raise \$9.1 MILLION

How can students in Texarkana who graduate with a college degree be encouraged to stay home to pursue a career? That was the deceptively complex challenge a citizen's group set out to tackle 6 years ago.

A generation earlier long-serving U.S. Rep. Wright Patman testified that median income in his northeast Texas district was 30 percent below the state average. Today it is still 30 percent below average with the number of people holding 4-year degrees also 30 percent below the state average. That reality lit a fire that burns to this day.

One of those citizens is Texarkana insurance agent Scott Bruner, a principal at Offenhauser & Co. With his abundant energy and passion, it wasn't long before Scott began to act on his notion that there appeared a strong correlation between education level and a region's economic health.

He believed that Texarkana needed an innovative system of education that would mentor and monitor students in math and engineering from pre-kindergarten through college graduation - PK/16 for short. Scott calls it a silo approach to education.

Scott's wisdom, dedication and hard work brought in \$9.1 million in a fundraising campaign in partnership with Texarkana native son, H. Ross Perot for a new College of Information Sciences and Engineering and downward expansion to include freshmen and sophomore students at a brand new campus of the previously upper division-only Texas A&M University - Texarkana. It will eventually serve 8,000 students.

A critical step in the solution has been the construction of a new math and engineering elementary school that opened in late summer of 2007. The new school, called the Martha and Josh Morriss Math & Engineering Elementary, is the starting place for students who will continue through the system to a college degree in engineering from the downwardly expanded TAMU-Texarkana.

In addition to his tireless work reinventing the education system, Scott is also wrapping up a 6-year



Scott Bruner, left; Ross Perot Jr.; Josh Morriss Jr.; Larry Sullivan (former superintendent); Martha Morriss and Frank Coleman, president, Texarkan College, break ground for the new Martha and Josh Morriss Math & Engineering Elementary School. (Groundbreaking brochure [<http://www.iiat.org/down/TexarGrndbrking.pdf>])

stint on the Texarkana ISD school board, four of those as president. He and his wife, Jane, were recognized for their lifetime of civic volunteer work with the C.E. Palmer Award, a distinction they share with agency principals, Don and William Morriss.

Bruner also received the Eagle award presented by the university and is only the second recipient in the history of the institution to have received the award. Lt. Governor David Dewhurst is the only other recipient. Perot and Dewhurst both helped mark the opening of the new campus.

Scott continues a long history of his agency's community service dating back to the dawn of the 20th Century when founder Fred Offenhauser set the pace.