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Charles Yearta Named 2010-2011 Optimist Club Officer of the Year

Winthrop University

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Charles Yearta Named 2010-2011 Optimist Club Officer of the Year

Quick Facts

- Officer Yearta '05, a native of Rock Hill, joined the Winthrop University Police Department in 2008.
- Yearta helped develop the university's successful bike bait program.



Charles Yearta

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The **Optimist Club of Rock Hill** has named **Officer Charles Yearta '05**, campus police, the 2010-2011 Officer of the Year.

Yearta, who joined the Winthrop University Police Department in November 2008, will be recognized at a May 17 Optimist Club dinner in his honor.

The Rock Hill, S.C., native earned the special designation for his work with Winthrop's bike bait program, an initiative to curb campus bike thefts. Started in September 2010, the program uses "bait bikes" fitted with GPS devices. The **bait bikes** are placed among students' bikes across campus. When these bikes are stolen and taken beyond a certain point, the GPS device begins tracking the bike, sending its location to campus police.

Yearta was part of a group of officers who came up with the bike bait proposal, adapted from a similar program used at the University of Wisconsin. Bike baiting at Winthrop has resulted in 12 arrests and a decrease in stolen bikes from fall 2010 to spring 2011. The program has attracted local and national attention, **Yearta** said. He's fielded calls from colleges and universities across South Carolina as well as schools in Pennsylvania and Ohio and a police department in California.

He noted that WUPD has considered expanding the baiting program to include cars and book bags on campus. The **GPS tracking devices** are versatile enough to be used in nearly any crime considered larceny, he said.

Yearta earned his degree in sociology with a concentration in criminology at Winthrop and his master's in criminal justice at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

The **Optimist Club** honors officers from Winthrop University Police Department, the Rock Hill Police Department, the York County Sheriff's Office, the South Carolina Highway Patrol officer and the South Carolina Highway Transport Police.

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