

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

November 2024

Message from the Manager:

Thanks a Lot!

Since it's almost Thanksgiving and great food is right around the corner let's spend a minute discussing the obvious - The Easy Bake Oven. As kids, my sister got one of these marvels for Christmas. Now I have a wonderful sister and the first thing she thought to do was cook up "brownies" for her brother. Oh, the picture on the box of that Easy Bake Oven (put there by the good folks at Kenner Products) was one of baking delight that made the eyes on this chunky boy sparkle with anticipation! Now I put brownies in quotations earlier because after it was finally done (hours later under the struggling heat of the ovens little heat lamp), when my sister pulled the final product out of the oven, what we both saw was one tiny brownie! A brownie in fact so small that I, as a chunky kid in my husky pants, felt the deep pains of disappointment just looking at it. Thanks a lot Kenner Products for teaching kids that not all is as advertised. While I am not at all thankful for The Easy Bake Oven, I am thankful for the sister that loved me enough to cook her first ever treat just for me!

I really do enjoy Thanksgiving – and no, not just for the food! Thanksgiving brings in a time of gathering, sharing and fellowship with friends and family. It reminds us of how truly blessed we all are and how thankful we are for the blessings of others around us. One of the common denominators you will find among people who are joyful is that they are thankful. From studies of thankfulness and happiness, Harvard Medical School's Harvard Health Publishing says this, "In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships." The great philosopher Willie Nelson said it this way, "When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around". It's simple, if you want to experience more happiness, express more thanks! We should give thanks a lot!

I have so much to be thankful for and I love that Thanksgiving helps me focus on those blessings. One of those blessings is our team here at the City! I am so thankful for the service that you all pour out to those we encounter. While you often don't get to see the full impact of your efforts, you are making a huge difference in the lives of others! In fact, many slow down during the year to submit kudos to the City for your good works. Thank you for all you have done and all you will do in service to others! You make me proud!

David

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” —William Arthur Ward

*“And when we both get older
With walking canes and hair of gray
Have no fear, even though it's hard to hear
I will stand real close and say*

Thank you for being a friend (I wanna thank you)” – Lyrics from the song Thank You for Being a Friend by Andrew Gold

General Updates:

Retirements:

Lawrence Stewart retired on November 15 from the PD. Lawrence was a smiling face that did much for our PD in support of Chief Hawkins. Lawrence will be missed, but we wish him well in his next endeavors!

Promotions:

Congratulations to all those promoted:

Crystal Thomas promoted to Administrative Officer to the Chief on November 9th

Calvin Fleming promoted to Code Enforcement Supervisor on November 9th

Fabian Brooks promoted to Building Inspector on November 9th

Eric Moree promoted to Code and Building Coordinator on November 9th

Erica Lozano promoted to Victim/Witness Coordinator on November 9th

Trevor Jorgenson promoted to Building Official Secretary on November 9th

Kaily Funez-Lenon promoted to Juvenile Case Manager/Teen Court Coordinator on November 9th

Transfers:

We had one transfer in November - Jazmyn Lee transferred to the position of Healthy Homes Youth Specialist on November 9th. We are excited to see Jazmyn serve our youth in this position!

Employee Recognition Ceremony: Our Employee Recognition Ceremony is coming up on Tuesday, December 17! I look forward to celebrating you all!

Blue Santa: PD is accepting monetary and/or new bike donations for Blue Santa.

Christmas Ornament Contest: Look for more information to come on a Christmas Ornament Contest from HR!

November Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to Andrea Contreras, Catharina Hoffman, Quinton Amerson, and Donovan Martinez for being our November Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

HH-N-GO: The HH-N-GO bingo style challenge began on January 2. A new letter/number is pulled each week and there are specific things to do for that letter/number if you have it on your card. There is a game card for employees and one for citizens. The game helps us to get to know our organization better and for our citizens it helps them get to know the City better. You can still get a card and play so contact HR if you want to play! This month saw winners: Leona Clay (finally!!), Stephanie Hall, Lawrence Stewart, and from citizens – the Allison Family.

Squatsgiving: November's challenge is called "Squatsgiving" and as the name implies it involves lots of squats! 12 teams of 3 are participating. Mini-challenge winners include: Week 1 – Best Team Flyer – Squatter Rebels, Week 2 – Best Team Squat Photo – Gobble Gains, Most Creative Squat – Vincent Fernadez. The Grand prize will not announce till the end of the month, but Squatting Girls of Fall are a betting favorite!

Farmers Market: The Market will run every Saturday through December 21. Come on out to City Hall on Saturdays to get fresh produce and/or unique gifts.

Spotlight on Service:

Zully Reyes, Eve Vazquez, Nichole Ratliff, Kelsey Coffman, Sherill Carillo, Michelle Smart, Annette Hamman, and Remy Duenas Thanked: Finance’s Susan Crawley wrote to share her appreciation for Zully Reyes, Eve Vazquez, Nichole Ratliff, Kelsey Coffman, Sherill Carillo, Michelle Smart, Annette Hamman and Remy Duenas. Susan wrote, *“I would like to thank each and every one of you for pulling together as a team to help make sure utility billing was completed yesterday. Zully, Eve, and Nichole: Thank you for staying on top of things all week and staying resilient when things got down to the wire. You handled the pressure with poise and came together with a game plan. Kelsey, Sherill, and Michelle: Thank you so much for putting your own work aside to assist with reviewing the bill calculation. We would not have gotten it done without you! Annette and Remy: Thank you for taking the brunt of calls and customers to allow your colleagues to work on billing. I appreciate you both! The teamwork and dedication demonstrated yesterday exemplifies the City’s mission, and I am truly grateful for this remarkable group that I have the pleasure of working with. The day to day isn’t always easy but it’s because of all of you that I enjoy coming to work every day!”*

Susan Crawley Leads the Charge: Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiiee wrote to thank Susan Crawley for her leadership. Ayesha wrote, *“And let’s not forget Susan for leading the charge and keeping me posted while I’m out so I don’t walk into surprises. #hhfinancerocks #lovemyteam”*

City Gets Compliments for Dia De Muertos Event: Library Director Lisa Youngblood wrote to share some compliments the City got for the Dia De Muertos Event. Lisa wrote, *“When we were out yesterday at the Amphitheater, I remembered a few very nice compliments that our City, the Activities Center, Parks and Rec, and the Library received regarding the “Dia de Muertos” event on November 2, 2024. I was fortunate enough to be working in the amphitheater area where we had our cultural information, our ofrenda, performances, art experiences, and La Loteria games. Several families remarked that they loved coming to Harker Heights because of the care with which the City and its departments put together programs. As many were making items to place on the ofrenda to honor loved ones, many individuals thanked us for bringing attention to this celebration and for educating the community.”*

Casey Brazzil and Billy Stevens Help Out: Bell County Election Judge Steve Moody shared his thanks for Parks’ Casey Brazzil and Billy Stevens with the City Council for their help with election related items around the polling site at the Rec Center.

Julie Helsham Hits it Out of the Park: City Attorney Charlie Olson shared praise for City Secretary Julie Helsham at the Council meeting for all her efforts to get the City’s Charter election on the ballot. Lots of work went on behind the scenes by Julie to get it successfully listed.

Leona Clay and HR Team Praised: Citizen Adam Sears wrote to thank HR's Leona Clay and staff for the citizen engagement activities. Adam stated, *"y'all do a great job engaging the community."*

Gary Bates Impresses: Former Mayor Spencer Smith expressed his appreciation for IT Director Gary Bates. He stated he was at a presentation that Gary recently gave, and he was impressed with Gary's presentation and professionalism. Spencer stated, *"He was an outstanding representative for Team Harker Heights!"*

Christina Link Appreciated: Library's Erica Rossmiller wrote on World Kindness Day of her appreciation for Christina Link. Erica wrote, *"Today is World Kindness Day, and I want to let you know how much I appreciate you! Whenever I come to you with questions, you are always so thoughtful, and I greatly value your input and the ideas you share with me. Your kindness to our patrons and staff is apparent every day, and I am thankful the Library has you as a model public servant. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day."*

Erica Rossmiller Valued: Library's Christina Link wrote of her thanks for Erica Rossmiller. Christina stated, *"Thank you, Erica! I appreciate your kind words! And I want you to know that the spirit and professionalism you bring to the library is greatly appreciated as well. The children and families you serve love your programs and we, the staff, value you and the positive energy you bring."*

Angela Sabino Assists: Erica Rossmiller wrote to thank Angela Sabino. Erica wrote, *"Today we celebrate World Kindness Day, and I must say that when I think of Kindness, I immediately think of you! Every day you go above and beyond for our patrons and for your colleagues. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your offers of assistance with my programs and correspondence with community partners. Our programs are as robust and successful as they are because of your commit to the Library and our mission. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day."*

Heather Heilman Brings the Joy: Erica Rossmiller wrote to thank Heather Heilman. Erica stated, *"Today is World Kindness Day, and I want to thank you for being a consistent source of light and joy for our patrons and your fellow staff members. Your positive energy and generosity with your delicious baked goods keeps morale high, and I know we are all very thankful for it. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day!"*

Annette Jorgeson is Dedicated: Erica Rossmiller wrote to thank Annette Jorgeson. Erica wrote, *"As we celebrate World Kindness Day, I want to tell you how much I appreciate your dedication to*

our patrons, the Library, and your fellow staff members. Your kindness and willingness to go the extra mile always astounds me. I am also very thankful that you are our Library Volunteer Coordinator. I see the wonderful relationships you foster with our volunteers, and I know that they love working with you. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day!”

Hal Alcorn is Thoughtful: Erica Rossmiller wrote to give appreciation for Hal Alcorn. Erica wrote, *“It is World Kindness Day! With that in mind, I want to share how much I appreciate your thoughtfulness. You are observant, always thinking ahead, and your creativity is astounding!*

Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day!”

Ashlyn Brooks Good Work Acknowledged: Erica Rossmiller wrote to share her excitement for Ashlyn Brooks efforts. Erica wrote, *“As we celebrate World Kindness Day, I want to tell you how excited I am that you are a part of the City of Harker Heights Family. You have already shown your commitment to public service, and I am incredibly excited that are you willing to share your love and knowledge of music with our patrons in future programming. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day!”*

Patrick Morris Provides Comic Expertise: Erica Rossmiller wrote to thank Patrick Morris. Erica stated, *“Today is World Kindness Day, and I want to make a special effort to let you know that I appreciate the comic expertise you bring to the Harker Heights Library. Our graphic novel sections look incredible thanks to your knowledge and diligent work ethic. I also appreciate the initiative you take during Library closing procedures. Thank you for everything you do for Library and our patrons, and Happy World Kindness Day!”*

Ayesha Lealiiie Supports: Court’s Andrea Contreras wrote to express her thanks for Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiie. Andrea wrote, *“I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you once more for attending Teen Court last night. I hope you enjoyed this amazing program, and I appreciate your support. Thank you and have a great day!”*

Nathan Loris and Norris Lockett are the Best: Park’s Nathan Loris and Norris Lockett get high praise from HR’s Lyndsey Amundson. Lyndsey wrote that they were *“the best crew making sure we all have parking at City Hall”* during voting.

HH Library is the Best: Library Director Lisa Youngblood relayed some kudos she heard of the Library. Lisa wrote, *“I recently attended the Texas Library Association Region 3 Fall Conference in Austin, TX. Much to my surprise, I found that two separate presenters – one from the Texas A & M University of Texas Library and one from Chapparral High School Library – featured four of the Stewart C. Meyer Harker Heights Public Library and the Harker Heights Senior Center programs. In a discussion of collaborative efforts among service, government, and schools, the Library’s numerous*

school outreaches and the popular Senior Prom were mentioned and pictured as examples of excellence in working together to provide services to our community. In a presentation regarding libraries as places to encourage socialization and to combat loneliness, the Library's Bridgerton Tea Party and the Library's in-person and virtual book clubs were used to illustrate best practices for building community through library participation."

Chief Hawkins and Deputy Chief Clay are Instrumental: City Engineer Kristina Ramirez wrote to thank Chief Hawkins and Deputy Chief Clay for their assistance. She stated they gathered the information quickly and Chief stayed in the office to sign the needed documents. All of this was instrumental in the success of the items she was working on.

Stephanie Hall Goes Above and Beyond: Building Official Michael Beard wrote to thank Planning's Stephanie Hall. Mike wrote, *"with the recent staff shortages, she has stepped up and went above and beyond to help keep up with permitting applications on top of her normal duties as the City Planner. She has done a fantastic job, and we are lucky to have her on our team!"*

Louis Hill and Rebekah Scottini Impress: PD's Louis Hill and Rebekah Scottini received a note from a citizen for their good work. The citizen stated that they were extremely impressed with Rebekah and that she was understanding, professional and caring. The citizen stated it's the type of call that when you hang up you say to yourself, *"they really do care about us."* Officer Hill responded to that call and provided information and was very personable!

Ethan Phillips Gets a Shout Out: HR's Lyndsey Amundson wrote to share her appreciation for Pet Adoption's Ethan Phillips. Lyndsey stated, *"he did an outstanding job during the Career on Wheels Day at Nolanville Elementary. Ethan was not only knowledgeable but also engaging as he shared valuable information about the tools and techniques he uses to help animals in the City of Harker Heights. It was clear that Ethan's passion for his work shone through, as both the students and teachers were eager to ask questions and learn more. It was truly inspiring to see the City of Harker Heights involved in teaching young minds about animal care and the various ways they can help, as well as the opportunities available if they want to join the Pet Adoption Center team one day. Ethan's contribution to this event made a real impact, and I wanted to make sure his effort doesn't go unnoticed."*

Lisa Youngblood, Angela Sabino, Melonie Matthewson, Lyndsey Amundson, Kiarrah Carlisle and Leona Clay Are Friends to Students: Mountain View Elementary Parent Liaison Wendy Laurenson wrote to thank Lisa Youngblood, Angela Sabino, Melonie Matthewson, Lyndsey Amundson, Kiarrah Carlisle and Leona Clay. These staff members participated in Friday Friends at Mountain View Elementary and Ms. Laurenson wanted to thank them.