

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

April 30, 2024

Message from the Manager:

Tide and time wait for no man. This month I've had several reminders of just how short and precious life is. Benjamin Franklin, yes the guy who flew the kite in a storm as an experiment, once said, "You may delay, but time will not." I was telling someone just this week that, in what feels like a blink of an eye, my own boys are now 25 and 21. If I needed another milestone to make me feel old, I can just rattle off a song lyric or a sit-com title (Charles in Charge anyone, anyone??) and the blank stares from our young staff let me know the dinosaur I am. All this to say, life is short and time just moves on. Since time is a certainty, what can we learn from that fact in terms of how we all influence this world?

Live intentionally! I'm sure you all grow weary of me talking about goal setting and achieving your dreams. Why are these important topics to me? If our time is short, we need to be about the things that are important! There are so many distractions in our life these days that we must live focused lives if we are to achieve our desires. Next time you drive by the high school as the students are getting out count the number of kids shuffling down the sidewalk with their head down looking at their cell phone. Other students walking beside them and barely a word being exchanged. I heard a futurist discuss that future humans will have a physical humpback due to how we all look down at our phones over time. Smart phones – the bane they have become for our relationships (I'll get off my soap box on that for now)! The lesson today for us all is we must avoid what might distract us from our goals and plan intentionally to get the important things we want to achieve in life done. In so doing we, in our own different ways, can have profound impacts on our world. We need something to motivate us to stay focused, our "why" for what we are about on this earth.

Leo Buscaglia was a professor of special education at USC. A student's suicide promoted Dr. Buscaglia to look at the disconnectedness of humans and what life is about. His study of those subjects lead to some profound knowledge, some of which are summed up in his quote as follows. *"The majority of us lead quiet, unheralded lives as we pass through this world. There will most likely be no ticker-tape parades for us, no monuments created in our honor. But that does not lessen our possible impact, for there are scores of people waiting for someone just like us to come along; people who will appreciate our compassion, our unique talents. Someone who will live a happier life merely because we took the time to share what we had to give. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have a potential to turn a life around. It's overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt."* Why do we do what we do? We do it because it has purpose and meaning in the lives of others, and our own.

One of the best ways to have life altering impacts on the lives of others, and on our own, is through service. We lost one of our own servants recently. Lauren Curtin, one of our call takers at the Police Department, had a medical event while at work. Lauren's calling in life had her assisting those who are often at the darkest time in their lives – those who are calling needing assistance from law enforcement. While the loss of Lauren is so tragic, in her short lifetime she was a bright light for others and in the words of Dr. Buscaglia made her "love felt" through care for others in their most

vulnerable times. You better believe those were lasting gifts that will have impacts for others and ripple forward to generations beyond!

Examples like Lauren's encourage me to take up my mantle and continue to serve others. I hope you find that same strength in her example and the examples we see around us every day by those we serve alongside. Whose life will you impact? You may never know just who you help in service, but one – yourself! There is great joy in serving others. Thank you for being examples for me of what servant hearts can achieve!

Dedicated to Lauren Curtin
1989 to 2024

David

“When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love.” - Marcus Aurelius

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.”—Mother Theresa

General Updates:

New Hires:

Welcome to all our new hires:

Michell Henry hired for the position of Water Service Worker on April 1st

Cody Cook hired for the position of Firefighter/EMT on April 2nd

Tamara Gonzalez hired for the position of Light Equipment Operator on April 4th

Nathan Cassidy hired for the position of Lifeguard on April 11th

Bianca Alexander hired for the position of Lifeguard on April 12th

Ileana Alexander hired for the position of Lifeguard on April 12th

Arissa Erickson hired for the position of Aquatics Cashier on April 16th

Luz Barreto Gonzalez hired for the position of Aquatics Supervisor on April 19th

Grace Gower hired for the position of Lifeguard on April 19th

Luke Fecker hired for the position of Firefighter/EMT on April 22nd

Brandon Morgan hired for the position of Wastewater Maintenance Technician on April 25th

Aristotle Rhoades hired for the position of Wastewater Maintenance Technician on April 29th

Amy Atkins hired for the position of Director of Parks and Recreation on April 29th

Anna Lajarin Rivero hired for the position of Aquatics Supervisor on April 30th

Orlando Calderon De la Rosa hired for the position of Wastewater Maintenance Technician on April 30th

Promotions:

Zachary Gauthier promoted to the position of Driver/Pump Operator on April 13th

Certifications:

David Alex McCoy receives his Registered Code Enforcement Officer license.

Retirements:

John Moseley retires from the City on April 12th with 15 years of service to the City of Harker Heights. We wish John all the best in his retirement!

Awards:

The City received the VETS Indexes 3 Star Employer Award. Yet another award honoring the City's commitment to hiring veterans.

April's Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to PD's Roxanne Harrill, Planning's Yvonne Spell, Library's Lisa Youngblood, and Park's Casey Brazzil for being our April Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

March Wellness Challenge – Couch to 5K: The Couch to 5K Challenge ended March 29th. The winner drawn for this challenge was no other than Detective Yesmarie Burgo Figueroa! Yesmarie won a wireless charger complete with Harker Heights' logo! Congratulations Yesmarie!

April Wellness Challenge – The Movie Exercise Challenge: The Movie Exercise Challenge ended April 26. The winners drawn for this challenge were the teams of Leona Clay and Linda Graham, solo team of Wilson Riley, and David and Angie Mitchell.

May Let's Thrive Challenge – May's challenge is titled "Let's Thrive" and it is a 31-day journey towards wellbeing. Please join in, it promises to be easy and fun and should help us all learn much about ourselves.

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! No one has gotten bingo YET!

2024 Bell County Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony: The 2024 Bell County Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony will be hosted by the Harker Heights Police Department at the Harker Heights Activities Center on May 15 at 9 a.m.

May the Fourth Be With You: The Library invites you to celebrate Star Wars and all things science fiction from May 2 to 4 with lots of events provided by the Library! Visit the Library for more information.

Farmers Market: The Harker Heights' Farmers Market begins on May 4! The Market will be held at City Hall parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Lemonade Day: Lemonade Day weekend will be held May 4 – 5. You will see young entrepreneurs selling lemonade and other tasty treats throughout the City. This event teaches kids how to start and operate their own business, learning about how to be an entrepreneur and having fun.

Spotlight on Service:

Eric Moree is Appreciated: A contractor stopped our Building Official to tell him that Eric Moree was very patient and helpful last Thursday in helping him to understand the permitting process and that he appreciated it.

Sara Gibbs and Parks Staff Complimented: The citizen explained that her family participated in both days of the Eclipse Art's Festival in the Park and they really enjoyed the event. The citizen stated the city staff was really nice. She noticed Sara Gibbs going around visiting each vendor and was greeting citizens making everyone feel welcomed. The Parks crew cleaning the facilities even took the time to let citizens nearby know that they'll be cleaning so they wouldn't be alarmed by the loud noise. She hopes the City will continue to do more festivals like this and is proud to be a Harker Heights resident.

Melonie Matthewson and Wilson Riley Thanked: A representative from Advent Health wrote to thank HR's Melonie Matthewson and Wilson Riley. She stated, "I just wanted to thank you both for your help yesterday and allowing me the opportunity to provide lunch!"

Jaime Davalos Commended: Park's Jaime Davalos was commended for his work at the Police Department. Commander Ben Duiker stated, "I just wanted to take a moment and commend Jaime Davalos. His work ethic and the results that come from it have greatly improved the appearance and professionalism of our work area. We in the Criminal Investigations Division would like you and Jaime to know we appreciate his hard work."

Susan Crawley Exemplifies Team Work: HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Finance's Susan Crawley. Leona wrote, "I wanted to thank you so much for your help with getting our Capital Improvements item submitted into Cleargov. I appreciate everything you do for us and for the City. You exemplify what teamwork is all about and that means a great deal to me."

Calvin Fleming Assists: A citizen who was upset over a code notification came to the counter to talk to staff. Calvin Fleming assisted the citizen and told them how to fix the problem. The citizen thanked him and understood the issue and that he was not being picked on but that code was just doing their job.

Lisa Youngblood Makes it a Success: Library's Lisa Youngblood recently assisted with an eclipse event. The event coordinators wrote, "We especially appreciate your loan of the awesome galaxy backdrop and Rocket Ship. Those items were the perfect addition to our event. And, the Boy Scouts were so glad to receive it afterwards - the gift goes on! We couldn't have done it without you, you helped make our event a success!"

Melonie Matthewson Makes it Possible: HR's Melonie Matthewson recently assisted with the Copperas Cove High School job fair. A representative from the school reached out and stated, "I wanted to personally reach out and let you know how much I appreciate you attending the Transition Fair last week. It was such a great success, and it wouldn't have been possible without YOU! I truly thank you for taking the time to attend the event."

Jalon Johnson is Excellent: A citizen wrote to thank Officer Jalon Johnson after an interaction for his professionalism. The citizen wrote, "His exemplary manners serves as an excellent example of your police department. I was nervous for us to be pulled over but this officer's demeanor was friendly, courteous and professional. He explained the process to help us feel at ease. Please give out kudos to him for fostering excellence within your department. He left a great impression for your department, as we just moved to this town a few weeks ago!"

Yvonne Spell is Exceptional: A citizen called in to thank Planning's Yvonne Spell. The citizen stated Yvonne communicated the requirements and options in a professional and patient manner.

Lt. Harrill, Officer Valdez and Officer Fowler Make Event Better: Court's Andrea Contreras thanked Lt. Harrill, Ofc. Valdez, and Ofc. Fowler for attending the 2024 Teen Court Competition. Andrea wrote, "It is not often that our teen court volunteers get to call an officer as a witness and ask questions of the officer while they are on the stand. Your cooperation, patience, and willingness to take time out of your hectic schedules to come is much appreciated by Judge Hall and our court staff."

Andrea Contreras Goes Above and Beyond: Court's Aaliyah Smith wrote to recognize Court's Andrea Contreras. Aaliyah wrote, "I just wanted to take the time out to recognize Mrs. Andrea Contreras for her efforts last night for Teen Court. Andrea went above and beyond for everyone involved in last night's Teen Court showcase. She thought of everyone from the teens and staff to our guest for the evening. She also was able to coordinate with the officers of HHPD, making last night one of our best programs yet. We here at court want everyone to know how much Andrea does for us all. She is a wonderful supervisor but most importantly she is an extraordinary person."

Andrea Contreras is Impeccable: Court's Dorcas Sappor-Kabutey wrote to recognize Court's Andrea Contreras. Dorcas stated, "I would like to recommend Ms. Andrea in court for employee recognition. She was amazing yesterday in getting things together for Teen Court. I was so impressed by all the work she did. Her organization skills are just impeccable."

Josh DeLong Does What it Takes: IT's Josh DeLong was thanked by Officer Bambi Basinger. Bambi wrote, "I wanted to tell you how appreciative Gray Team was when Josh came in after hours to pull UNIT 139's in car COBAN. Josh was so nice and made sure we were taken care of IT wise."

Kristina Ramirez, Michael Beard, Chris Mahlstedt and Mark Hyde Hustle: City Manager David Mitchell wrote to thank Kristina Ramirez, Michael Beard, Chris Mahlstedt and Mark Hyde for their help getting a local business open. David wrote, "You all were steady hands at the wheel finding ways for the business to work around obstacles. Your willingness to work toward solutions goes above and beyond your job descriptions and displays your hearts for service. A special thanks to Michael Beard who even came in on his day off to complete some inspections. You all rock! I'm proud of the hustle and professionalism of our team!"

Team Harker Heights is Not Eclipsed: City Manager David Mitchell wrote to thank the entire Harker Heights team for their hard work for the Eclipse event. David stated, “Great job by all. I had full confidence in our preparation for the event due to your hard work and professionalism. The weather changed it up for us, but we are Harker Heights and we adapt. Very proud of all the educational programs that the Library, Parks and I know Shannon assisted with as well. I think we achieved what our primary goal was and that was for our citizens to be able to enjoy the Eclipse. The Mayor, Jerry and I enjoyed cooking for and spending time with City Hall staff. Thank you all for always giving me the confidence that no matter what we face we will face it well!”

Mark Hyde and Kristina Ramirez Get Rave Review: An engineering firm received some kudos on Mark Hyde and Kristina Ramirez during their internal audit. An engineer with the firm stated that Mark and Kristina are “great to work with.” She talked about the professionalism of Mark Hyde and Kristina Ramirez and their responsiveness.

Courts For the Win: Court Administrator Catharina Hoffman wrote to thank the entire Court staff for Teen Court and for Warrant Roundup. Cat wrote, “There has been tremendous success with the Teen Court Competition 2024. I’m very grateful to the entire court staff for going above and beyond to make sure our teen court is a success. Your attention to detail and professionalism have really paid off. Additionally, I want to say thank you to the court staff for a job well done during our last warrant roundup. I am grateful to be part of such an incredible group and want to thank the team for their hard work and dedication. Your efforts have made a significant impact, and it shows.

Finance Lends Helping Hand: Court Administrator Catharina Hoffman wrote to thank the Finance Department. Cat stated, “To the Finance Department a big thank you for always being ready to lend a helping hand and support your colleagues.”

Police Department Exceeds Expectations: Court Administrator Catharina Hoffman wrote to thank the Police Department. Cat wrote, “to the Police Department for helping make the warrant roundup a success. Your team has exceeded all expectations with dedication and hard work. Thank you for consistently going above and beyond and delivering outstanding results.”

Mayor Blomquist Supports Students: A citizen shared on social media their thanks for Mayor Blomquist. Of the Mayor the citizen wrote, “Thank you for supporting our students every time!! We enjoyed having you there.

Mayor Blomquist, Councilmember McCann and David Mitchell Provide Wonderful Experience: A citizen shared their thanks to Mayor Blomquist, Councilmember McCann and David Mitchell for recently sharing insight on how cities operate with a group of homeschool students. The citizen wrote, “what a wonderful experience! I am certain that the students all gained a better understanding of local government. This was a wonderful experience.”

Library, Parks and City Staff in General Impress Visitor: A visitor from Virginia shared their thanks to the Library, Parks and City staff for our eclipse preparations. The visitor wrote, “Thank you Harker Heights librarians, other community workers for making the Eclipse such a special event... What a great day!”