

Message from the Manager:

Throughout 2025 in the City Manager's Update, you are going to hear from members of the leadership team on issues that are so important to them that they want to share it with the entire organization. This month's guest author is none other than Assistant City Manager Jerry Bark! Ronald Reagan once said, *"Surround yourself with great people; delegate authority; get out of the way."* I am blessed to be surrounded by great people! I have so been looking forward to this series because I know that the lessons shared will help me grow as a leader! These lessons will also help our organization grow and evolve as we take on new challenges. Without further ado... here's Jerry:

Happy New Year! I hope this message finds you refreshed and ready for another year. I wanted to take a moment to share an important value that I hold dear and believe is critical to how we work together to serve our city: Accountability

For me, accountability is not just a principle - it's a practice. It means putting the needs of our community above personal interests. I believe this value is especially important in our work as public servants, we have the responsibility to act as stewards of the public's trust and deliver those outcomes to improve lives in our community.

It falls in line with our shared Vision Statement *"Providing public services that empower people to focus on what matters most – their goals, hopes, and dreams."*

This value guides me at work and in my personal life on how I approach challenges, building relationships, and making decisions. My hope is that it inspires all of us to continue striving for excellence and collaboration in everything we do.

This year let's commit to looking forward and not back. There is an old saying that states that the windshield is larger than the rearview mirror because what's ahead of you is far more important than what's behind you. Please know that the daily work you do every day—big and small—makes a tangible difference in the lives of our residents. Thank you for your commitment to our shared mission.

Let's keep leading with purpose!

Jerry Bark

"If you don't take responsibility for your actions, then your actions will take responsibility for you." – Unknown

I could not agree with Jerry more! Jerry, thank you for sharing this message with us and may we all hold ourselves to a high standard in all we do. Next month's guest author is Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde and I'm excited to see what he is sharing!

David

General Updates:

Retirements:

Jack Wallace Retires: PD Lieutenant Jack Wallace retired on January 3rd after 19 years of service to the City. We wish Jack all the best in his retirement!

Promotions:

Rodney Trantham promoted to the position of Senior Equipment Operator on January 18th

New Hires:

Ethan Quigley hired for the position of Police Officer Trainee on January 6th

Jonathan Rosado hired for the position of Water Maintenance Technician on January 13th

Vicente Fernandez hired for the position of Firefighter/Paramedic Trainee on January 16th

Kai-Tano Concepcion Duenas hired for the position of Park Light Equipment Operator on January 28th

Transfers:

Alexander Lujan transferred to the position of Parks Light Equipment Operator on January 18th

Achievements:

Massoud Howayeck received Officer of the Year

Logan Green received Firefighter of the Year

Aaliyah Smith and Kaily Funez-Lenon achieved their Level 1 Court Clerk Certification

Finance Department achieved GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

We Hire Vets Employer Recognition 2025

January Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to Jack Wallace, Ayesha Lealiiee, Ethan Phillips and Gary Bates for being our January Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do, and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

HH-N-GO: A new HH-N-GO bingo challenge began with the start of 2025! A new letter/number will be 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. Contact HR for your bingo card! I was an early winner last year and I already have two hits on my bingo card so far this year – can you beat me?? You can't win if you don't play – join me!

Squatsgiving: If you put your money on the Squatting Girls of Fall you won big! They along with citizen Robert Griffen II squatted home the prize for Squatsgiving!

Work Out Time Challenge: Our January team challenge began January 4 and challenges us to all perform and log the time from whatever fitness we enjoy doing. We have 14 teams of 5 as well as 13 citizens participating! I know it has made me step up my exercise time! We have already had many workout time team mini challenge winners. *Best Team Flyer* went to Team Heavyweights which is comprised of Lizette Brooks, Veronica Lupian-Soto, Brandon Casto, Jim Miller and Christian Batista. *Best Team Photo* goes to Team Healthy Hustlers which is made up of Fernando Fernandez, Peter Quichocho, Melissa Wolfe, Erica Lozano, and Jazmyne Lee. The *Most Improved Team* goes to Donut Patrol which is made up of Alexis Jorgensen, Dennis McAfee, Andrew Barnstable, Savannah Christopher, and Massoud Howayeck.

Harker Heights' Scavenger Hunt: The new Harker Heights' Scavenger Hunt has begun. Check out the City's social media pages for the clues! We already have our first winner in the scavenger hunt – Nichole Ratliff! Nichole knows the City – how well do you? Put your knowledge to the test and join the scavenger hunt!

Library Programs: I always say our Library programs never slow – they just reload! Lisa and the Library Team have so many offerings for all ages – check out the Library's webpage or better yet stop in and visit with the Library team to learn more!

Blue Santa: PD's Blue Santa event donated 55 bicycles to six elementary and middle schools!

Giving Tree: In partnership with Seton Hospital, Giving Tree was able to assist 70 children in need with Christmas gifts.

We Love our Schools Food Drive: The Harker Heights Parks and Recreation Department is hosting the “We Love Or Schools Food Drive” to benefit the Killeen ISD H.A.R.P. (Homeless Awareness Response Program) from now to the end of March 2025. Donation boxes are located in the lobbies of the Activities Center and the Recreation Center. Items needed include pasta, rice, mac and cheese, starches, non-perishable snacks, ramen noodles, can openers, and canned veggies. High need items include peanut butter, chili, soup, pasta sauce, canned fruit, canned meat and beans.

Enchanted Dance: Join the Parks Department for the Enchanted Dance on Saturday, February 8! The night will be all about Taylor Swift so wear your favorite Taylor Swift inspired outfits, make friendship bracelets and other fun crafts and sing and dance to Taylor Swift songs.

Spotlight on Service:

Ashlyn Brooks, Hal Alcorn and Library Volunteers Work Tirelessly: Librarian Heather Heilman wrote to thank Library Clerks’ Ashlyn Brooks, Hal Alcorn and Library Volunteers with their efforts for Broadway Week. Heather wrote, *“We celebrated Broadway Week January 20-25, 2025. Because we knew that we would be closed the opening Monday, the volunteers led by Library Clerks Ashlyn Brooks and Hal Alcorn worked tirelessly through the day Saturday, January 18, 2025, to get everything ready for the following week which offered to our patrons displays, photo ops, a puppet stage craft, a mask craft, a costume character day, and more! All this Ashlyn and Hal completed while continuing to help patrons, shelve books, etc.”*

Ashlyn Brooks, Library Clerks, Library Staff and Volunteers Go Out of Their Way: Librarian Heather Heilman wrote to thank Library Clerk Ashlyn Brooks, Library Clerks, Library Staff and Volunteers for their assistance with a “*The Sound of Music*” production. Heather wrote, *“I would like to add that our Library Staff and volunteers go out of their way to give our community meaningful and often unexpected experiences! In this case our Library Clerks designed the entire week to highlight our Library materials, to encourage creativity, and to offer families opportunities to play and learn together. Ashlyn Brooks even wrote a song inspired by the famous “My Favorite Things” from “The Sound of Music” to highlight our staff’s favorite things. (I have attached that here just for fun!) We posted on our Facebook the verses and even sung a longer version of a storyteller’s favorite things for storytimes and the virtual family night on our Library’s Facebook page. The week culminated in a FREE showing of the 1965 movie “The Sound of Music” at the Beltonian at which we dressed in appropriate costumed, provided prizes, highlighted cultural artifacts and musical instruments, and more!”*

Harker Heights' Employees Thanked: Librarian Heather Heilman wrote to express her thanks to all employees for their help collecting shoeboxes for projects at the Library. Heather wrote, *"We would also like to thank all the City of Harker Heights employees who brought shoeboxes for us to use in our puppet stage making. The kids and families loved the project! We are going to have this project available throughout the rest of the month in the Maker Space and specifically for our Homeschool Meetup in January!"*

Frankie Conlee and Cody Cook Recognized: Firefighters Frankie Conlee and Cody Cook were recognized in a letter from a citizen *"for being amazing humans and fantastic at their jobs."* The citizen stated the firefighters were *"thorough, patient...and showed impressive compassion."* The citizen also stated that they don't believe their loved one would have survived without the care of Frankie and Cody.

Jay Leach is Thoughtful: PD's Lieutenant Jay Leach was thanked by Court's Cat Hoffman for a thoughtful gesture. Cat wrote, *"Thank you for the Starbucks treat for courts! It was such a thoughtful gesture, and we truly appreciate you thinking of us! May I add it is one of my favorite treats!"*

Chief Hawkins and Officer Massoud Howayeck are Exceptional: Market Heights' management wrote to thank Chief Hawkins and Officer Massoud Howayeck for their assistance keeping Market Heights' safe. They wrote, *"I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for the exceptional support the Harker Heights Police Department has provided us as property managers of Market Heights. The department's commitment to fostering a safe and cooperative environment has had an immensely positive impact on our community. You and your department take the time to meet with us monthly to discuss the previous month's activities and address any needs or concerns. This proactive approach has made a significant difference in maintaining safety and security on our property. When a call is placed, the department responds promptly, ensuring that our concerns are swiftly addressed. Having worked with many cities prior to this, I can confidently say that the Harker Heights Police Department is by far the best. I would also like to recognize Officer Massoud Howayeck for his outstanding dedication and the profound impact he has had on our community. Officer Howayeck consistently goes above and beyond his duties. He has helped resolve incidents of vandalism, often stepping in when he didn't have to. He frequently patrols the property, even after his shift, ensuring that everything is secure. Officer Howayeck has taken the initiative to build relationships by personally meeting with most of the managers on-site, introducing himself, and providing his contact information. His emphasis on trust and communication has set a new standard for what community policing should look like. Chief, I know your department holds its officers to the highest standards, and Officer Howayeck exemplifies these qualities. Thank you for your leadership and for cultivating a team that helps businesses like ours operate more smoothly and feel safer."*

Parks Provides a Great Farmers' Market: Mayor Blomquist thanked Parks for their excellence in providing the Harker Heights' Farmers' Market

Fire Department's Santa Program Impresses: Mayor Blomquist thanked the Fire Department publicly at a Council meeting for their Santa on a firetruck program.

City Thanked for Participation in Career Quest: Workforce Solutions wrote to thank the City for our participation in Career Quest. They wrote, *"On behalf of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas and the Central Texas Regional Pathways Council, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable participation in the inaugural Central Texas Career Quest: Pathways to Your Future event. Your support helped make this event a tremendous success, positively impacting the lives of 2,637 eighth-grade students from across our region. By setting up engaging booths, sharing your industry insights, and taking the time to inspire our students, you played a pivotal role in broadening their understanding of the diverse career opportunities available in Central Texas. Your dedication to nurturing the next generation of professionals is both commendable and deeply appreciated."*

Betty DeLong Gets a Kudos: FD Chief Stephens wrote to show his appreciation for FD's Betty DeLong. Chief Stephens wrote, *"I would like to recognize Betty DeLong for a Kudo. She has done a fantastic job recently, picking up some of the additional workload. This uptick was compounded this week when Eunice was selected to serve as a juror for a federal case. Betty has shown professionalism, grace, and resilience with the slack we are all picking up. I am always impressed by her work ethic."*

Library Admin and Staff are Incredible: Jaybird Learning Academy wrote to thank Library Admin and Staff *"for the incredible support and assistance extended to us by the Harker Heights Public Library. Your unwavering commitment to the Harker Heights community and the compassionate support of your staff have left an indelible mark on our hearts."*

Mayor Blomquist, Lorissa Byse and Nick Byse Get Heartfelt Thanks: FD's Betty DeLong wrote to thank Mayor Blomquist, IT's Lorissa Byse and her husband Nick Byse. Betty wrote, *"I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Mayor Blomquist, Lorissa Byse, and her husband, Nick Byse, for their invaluable help with the Santa Routes this year. Thanks to their efforts, this was our best and smoothest year yet! Their contributions made a tremendous difference. While we prefer to keep our Santa's identity a mystery, I'm sure the community would be eager to express their gratitude personally if they knew who donned the Santa suit!"*

Nicole Loayza Exudes a Team Heights Mindset: Parks Director Amy Atkins wrote to thank Park's Nicole Loayza. Amy wrote, *"I wanted to send Kudos for Nicole Loayza. She continues to exude a*

Team Heights mindset. Tuesday (1/7/25) evening the part-time recreation aides processed a transaction as cash, the patron changed their mind and wanted to pay with check. The recreation aids contacted Nicole to make her aware, as the change in transaction type would affect the end of day financial report. Nicole came in that evening at 8pm to fix the transaction to ensure the end of day reports would be accurate for submittal to finance on Wednesday morning.”

Heather Heilman Gets Love: A citizen wrote on Facebook of their appreciation of Library’s Heather Heilman. The citizen wrote, *“we love when Ms. Heather does baby time or toddler time!”*

Mark Hyde and the Water Crew Get it Done: A citizen called to thank Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde and the Water Crew for helping them with a water issue. The citizen stated they were very happy with the response they received.

Nichole Ratliff and Zully Reyes Hard Work Appreciated: Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee wrote to thank Finance’s Nichole Ratliff and Zully Reyes. Ayesha wrote, *“I’d like to send a HUGE kudos for Nichole and Zully for working so hard this week to get billing done for Zone 1. They have been working up to the last minutes of our deadline to get the mailout this week to our third party processor. Nichole stayed as late as she was needed, and Zully is still working as we were not aware that INCODE needed an update. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes and these ladies are true magic makers in what they do daily!”*

Rodney Trantham, Rokeema Collins, Ben Becerril and Brandon Casto Do a Wonderful Job: Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde received a phone call from a citizen complimenting Public Works’ Rodney Trantham, Rokeema Collins, Ben Becerril and Brandon Casto. The citizen stated, *“Your guys just left here after dressing up my ditch and they did a wonderful job. Man I sure do appreciate ya’ll.”*

Kiarrah Carlisle Impresses: HR’s Kiarrah Carlisle was recognized by City Manager David Mitchell. David wrote to Kiarrah of her excellent efforts developing a newsletter to keep employees informed. He wrote, *“so proud of this effort! Thank you for your creativity and helping keep us all in the loop!”*

Ayesha Lealiiee and Susan Crawley are Winners: Finance’s Kelsey Coffman wrote to congratulate Finance’s Ayesha Lealiiee and Susan Crawley for a recent GFOA award. Kelsey wrote, *“Congratulations to you two especially! There’s so much I watch you both do behind the scenes to make sure everything is taken care and everyone involved knows the what, when, and how of their role in this annual project. You somehow manage to do it all while leading this little circus of ours and making sure the day to day operations don’t go overlooked. Thank you for all your hard work!”*

Mark Hyde, Todd Maxon, Arno Stemmer, Jaime Davalos, Dale Reeves and Nate Trimble are Public Works Warriors: Mayor Pro Tem Tony Canterino made a verbal presentation on the hard

work of Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde and Public Works' Todd Maxon, Arno Stemmer, Jaime Davalos, Dale Reeves and Nate Trimble. This team worked long into the night and in rain to repair a water leak that was impacting residents. Mayor Pro Tem Canterino was impressed with their hard work in the tough conditions!

Rose Ramon is Amazing: Fire Chief Stephens wrote of his thanks for Pet Adoption's Rose Ramon. Rose assisted the FD when they operated a warming shelter and had a person in need come in with a pet. Rose brought over a kennel for the pet so that the person could remain in the warming center with their pet. Chief Stephens wrote, "*amazing work Rose!!!*"

Duarte Fernandes, John Howell and Louis Hill Have a Great Attitude: HR's Lyndsey Amundson wrote to thank PD's Sergeant Fernandes, Sergeant Howell and Officer Hill for their help at the Mega Career Fair on Fort Cavazos. Lyndsey wrote, "*They brought a great attitude that made the event fun and engaging. Their preparation and professionalism were truly impressive. Thank you again!*"

Victoria Ellis and the Pet Adoption Center Get the Sweets: Two citizens wrote a thank you note to Animal Services Officer Victoria Ellis and the Pet Adoption Center thanking them for all that they do. They also brought a box of chocolates for Staff, which was much appreciated.

Andrew Barnstable and the Pet Adoption Center Help Out: A gentleman that lost his dog thanked PD's Officer Barnstable and the Harker Heights Pet Adoption Center for helping get his beloved baby girl Nala home.

Rose Ramon and Shiloh Wester Provide Warmth: Pet Adoption Coordinator Rose Ramon and Shelter Administrator Shiloh Wester were thanked for assisting citizens during the bout of cold weather. They said they were grateful that such kind people were here to help both people and animals during this wintery time.

Lindsay McLaughlin, Ethan Phillips, Victoria Ellis, Gage Genthner and Johnny Widener Provide Quick Action: Animal Services Officers Lindsay McLaughlin, Ethan Phillips, Victoria Ellis, Gage Genthner, and Johnny Widener were recognized for their quick action during a variety of calls in the past few days. They were able to secure several aggressive dogs that were causing concern in a few neighborhoods. Several citizens called up thanking the officers for their fearless service and humane approach.

Harker Heights' Pet Adoption Center Staff Are Great: An elderly citizen thanked the Harker Heights Pet Adoption Center Staff for their help during the difficult time of putting her terminally ill dog to rest. She complimented the staff for handling this sad moment with kindness and compassion, and she wished more facilities were as good and kind as the HHPAC.