

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

September 30, 2025

Message from the Manager:

This month's message is brought to us by Parks Director Amy Atkins:

Gratitude

In January I held an all staff meeting in the Parks and Recreation Department to kick off the new year and set the tone for how we wanted to embrace 2025. I asked staff to write 2-3 words that describe the way they feel when they hit the door each morning. There were many good words: community, rewarding, family, service are just a few. From the list we collectively decided on a word for each month of the year to be used as a tool for positive impact, to inspire each other daily, and achieve our goals together, making each month a success.

As we approach October, I want to take a moment to highlight our Word of the Month: Gratitude.

Gratitude is more than saying thank you. It's a mindset, a way of seeing the world that shifts our focus from what we lack to what we already have. Research in psychology and neuroscience consistently shows that gratitude is linked to greater happiness. Gratitude has even been found to improve resilience during difficult times. When life feels overwhelming, acknowledging what you're thankful for can act as a grounding force. By focusing on gratitude, we can foster a more positive, productive, and collaborative environment.

Gratitude is about recognizing the effort, dedication, and support we show each other every day. Whether it's stepping in to help a coworker, sharing knowledge, or simply offering a smile during a busy day, these small acts make a big difference.

This month let's be intentional in showing gratitude not only using the word but demonstrating it in our actions. Take time to thank a coworker, a citizen, celebrate small wins, and acknowledge the hard work happening all around us. A little gratitude goes a long way. As we move through this month let's do so with gratitude.

- Amy

"When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around". -Willie Nelson

General Updates:

Retirements:

PD's Duarte Fernandes retired on August 1. We wish Duarte all the best in his retirement!

New Hires:

Nicholas Gilveli – Facilities Maintenance and Safety Coordinator on September 1st

Deshawn Sutton – Part Time Recreation Aide on September 2nd

Promotions:

Angela Sabino – Human Resources Specialist on September 1st

Trevor Jorgensen – Code Enforcement Officer on September 27th

Betiale Hawkins – Assistant City Manager on September 27th

Sonja Clay – Chief of Police on September 27th

Casey Brazzil – Assistant Parks and Recreation Director on September 27th

Michelle Smart – Permit Technician on September 27th

Annette Jorgenson – Volunteer Coordinator on September 27th

Transfers:

Nathaniel Trimble – Maintenance Technician II on September 13th

Police Academy Graduation:

Jared Tipton graduated from the police academy on September 13th

September Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to **Arno Stemmer, Casey Brazzil, and Amber Love-Clark** who were our September Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do, and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

August Challenge – Gratitude Journal: The Gratitude Journal Challenge was our August challenge. Our winners were 1st Place – Melonie Matthewson, 2nd Place – Andrea Contreras and citizen winner was Angie Mitchell.

Clyde and Gene’s Crossword Challenge: This month’s Clyde and Gene’s Crossword Challenge winners were 1st Place – Kelsey Coffman, 2nd Place – April Edwards and 3rd Place Andrea Contreras.

September Self Care Challenge: Our September Challenge is Self Care. The Challenge runs through October 3 and calendars are due by October 6 to be entered into the drawing.

Pep in Your Step October Challenge: Want to take that next step with pep?? Join us for October’s challenge which is sure to make us all get our steps in! The challenge will run from October 6 to November 4. Contact Angie Sabino at hr@harkerheights.gov by this Thursday, October 2 to get signed up for the challenge!

First Friday Music Series: The Friday Night Concert Series returns October 3 with Lucas Miller! The event is always in Carl Levin Park at the Amphitheater from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and food trucks will be present.

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'm hearing there have been some HH-N-GO "bingos" but nothing officially submitted to date – who will be the first winner??? Remember you have to complete all the activities on the card and take a picture of each task!

Harker Heights Farmers Market: The Harker Heights Farmers Market will reopen this Saturday, October 4! The Market runs every Saturday from October 4 to December 6.

Fall Garage Sale: The Community Garage Sale will be Saturday, October 4 across Harker Heights.

Spotlight on Service:

Gary Bates Thanked: City Secretary Julie Helsham wrote to thank IT Director Gary Bates. Julie wrote, *"I wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank you for the time, energy, and dedication you had put into developing the time tracking software for us. This project required a lot of effort, especially as it was something you took on during your spare time. Your finished product has already made a big impact by saving the City over \$30,000 for similar software. It's not just the financial savings that stand out, but the initiative, skill, and care you showed throughout the project. We're truly fortunate to have someone like you on the team. Thank you again for stepping up and helping us to improve our processes in a meaningful way."*

Commander Randy Stefek, Alexis Fujikawa, and Officers Jose Villacorta, Michael O'Hala, and Dustin Weaver Shown Gratitude: PD's Commander Randy Stefek, PSO Alexis Fujikawa and Officers Jose Villacorta, Michael O'Hala and Dustin Weaver were thanked by Temple Police Chief Shawn Reynolds for their assistance in providing coverage for Temple PD during the services for Officer T. "Charlie" Aumua. Chief Reynolds wrote, *"Your officers and staff demonstrated unwavering professionalism, compassion, and solidarity throughout the incident and the days that followed."*

Rodney Trantham, Eric Jackson, and Rokeema Collins are Fantastic: A citizen wrote to thank Public Work's Rodney Trantham, Eric Jackson and Rokeema Collins. The citizen wrote, *"Your guys did a FANTASTIC job on the ditch area at Man O War and Old Nolanville Rd! It is cut and scraped away from the road so it won't be growing back any time soon! I really appreciate the way you respond to requests and follow through to be sure the job gets done!"*

Duston Wilson, Roberto Chavez and Norris Lockett are Great: A citizen wrote to thank Park's Duston Wilson, Roberto Chavez and Norris Lockett. The citizen wrote, *"This afternoon the Parks & Rec property maintenance team, Duston Wilson, Mike Chavez, and Norris Lockett, were hard at work trimming trees and cleaning up around the old fire department building on Iroquois Drive in Broken Arrow Estates off Fuller Lane. They have always taken good care of this property, but today they cleaned up a real mess that has been accumulating against the neighbor's fence for a long time making it difficult for them to mow the area to the right of the building. I live directly across the street, so I see this property every time I walk out my front door. They have made it look so much cleaner around there and I am delighted. When I walked across the street to thank them, they were very nice to me and were happy to be doing something that I found especially pleasing to see. I want to commend the team for their good work and the city for choosing such great public servants as these three men."*

Library Staff are Amazing: Library Director Lisa Youngblood wrote to thank the entire Library staff. Lisa wrote, *"I just wanted to take a moment to give kudos to our Library staff for the amazing work that they have done with all the changes to our library cards, circulation policy, computer use rules, and other processes. They faced the need for change, quickly applied the research that they had been doing, and worked tirelessly to give quality service to our patrons. I know that we all go above and beyond for our community, but I have been impressed with the grace that the staff have shown and the care with which they approached decision making."*

Kristina Ramirez Gets a Shoutout: Mayor Blomquist passed on that City Engineer Kristina Ramirez was given a shoutout from KTMPO for her hard work on the Warriors Path project.

PD and FD are Outstanding: Mayor Blomquist made a special mention of PD and FD for their great work at the 9-11 Remembrance Walk. The event was at Harker Heights High School this year and Harker Heights PD and FD took the lead on the event.

Harry Sheppard Gives a Helping Hand: Code Enforcement Supervisor Calvin Fleming noted a kind act by Public Works' Harry Sheppard. Harry noticed a resident having a hard time getting off the curb after taking care of her business here at city hall. He helped her off the curb, getting her to her vehicle and putting her walker in the vehicle for her.

Dan Phillips is Awesome: Parks Director Amy Atkins wrote to thank Planning's Dan Phillips. Amy wrote, *"I hope you had a great weekend. I wanted to let you know how awesome Daniel is 😊. He produced the map for the Fall community garage sale for me. I sent him the addresses this morning and in less than an hour he sent me the completed map. He has such a positive attitude and willingness to help. I truly appreciate his Team Heights approach."*