

Message from the Manager:

This month's message is brought to you by none other than our outstanding Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee! I can tell you I greatly enjoyed learning from her message this month and I know you will also!

February, The New, New Year

Most feel that January 1st is the time to start anew, but for others, February can be the perfect month for letting go of the past year and preparing yourself for the upcoming spring. This is the time to reflect on yourself and make way for new energy, new experiences, and new adventures. I say this as a reminder that every day is a new day to start again.

February is known as the month of doers, so take the time to plan your future successes, work on your goals, and develop your personal growth. Take advantage of the opportunities you have to learn from your peers and supervisors in your day-to-day duties. There is so much more we can learn from each other than our daily tasks by having a conversation. Many of us employed here have had other jobs and life experiences that can be looked upon to assist in your personal and professional development.

In preparing for this reflection, I reviewed earlier messages that have guided my writing. Mr. Mitchell and the Leadership Team are my mentors, the people I turn to when I need a hand. And in looking back the theme of all of the messages was clear – communicate with each other, share knowledge, mentor each other, and most importantly be kind to each other.

So, let's get started on our countdown to March 1st. What are your new goals? It doesn't have to be work-related. Do you want to be happier? I've read that if you practice smiling several times a day, it'll "trick" your brain into thinking you are happier which puts you in a better mood. Want to feel more accomplished? Start with smaller goals so you can check them off quicker. Want to learn how your supervisor or colleague got the experience they have? Ask them if they have 30 minutes to speak with you one on one and set up a meeting; don't wait for a chance to come open.

And if March isn't your New Year, there's always April. There's never a wrong time to start something new.

"If you can't fly, then run; if you can't run, then walk; if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward." — **Martin Luther King Jr.**

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." – **Martin Luther King Jr.**

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts." – **Eleanor Roosevelt**

General Updates

Retirements:

Melissa Wolfe retired on February 12 after serving 11 years with the City. Melissa brought a no drama, no non-sense approach to her work that made her an exemplary officer. She will be missed and we wish her all the best in her retirement even though she was one partner on the pickleball team that derailed the Olympic hopes of Team Thunder Cats!

Melonie Matthewson retired on February 19 after 27 years with the City. What a career Mel had with us! She was such a tremendous public servant and brought such a great attitude to work every day. I share with you what I shared with Mel at her retirement and that is she mentored me by far more than I ever did her. Best in all you do in retirement Mel, we love and miss you!

Paul Carey retired on February 27 after 11 years with the City. Paul runs the evidence storage for our PD. The thing I will always remember about Paul was the smile he always carried and the kind words he always shared with me. Those interactions were always so uplifting. Paul did such a great job on keeping our evidence inventoried and stored correctly. Paul thank you for all you have done for our PD and our public and enjoy retirement my friend!

IT Director Gary Bates will be retiring with 20 years of service on Thursday, March 5. A come and go celebration of Gary's service will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Activities Center on Thursday, March 5. Come out and thank Gary and wish him all the best in his retirement.

Welcome to our new hires:

Regan Wells began employment as a Telecommunicator on February 12th.

February Kudos Award Winners: You all do such great work serving our public and each other! Congratulations to Nate Nesbit, Clyde Hicks, Louis Hill and Eric (Jack) Jackson who were our February kudos winners! Many more to come!

Clyde's Crossword Challenge: This month's Clyde's Crossword Challenge winners were 1st Place – Crystal Thomas, 2nd Place – Sherill Carillo and 3rd Place Lyndsey Amundson.

Sudoku Winner: This month's winner of the Sudoku Challenge was IT's Lorissa Byse!

New Beginning Share Vision Winners: The New Beginning Shared Vision Winners were 1st Place Ursula Paddie, 2nd Place Lorissa Byse and 3rd Place Julie Helsham.

Heart, Kindness and Community Wellness Challenge: The February challenge is Heart, Kindness and Community Wellness and it ends on February 28. Completed calendars are due by March 2.

HH-N-GO: A new HH-N-GO bingo challenge began with the start of 2026! 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! It's never too late to get a card and play!

Aquatic Summer Staff Needed: Parks is hiring for summer aquatics staff: lifeguards, cashiers and water safety instructors. Know of someone who would enjoy a temporary summer job please refer them to Parks.

Harker Heights Arts & Music Festival: This year the City is combining the First Friday Music Series with the Harker Heights Arts Festival! Friday, April 3, come out to hear the Purple Hulls from 6 to 8 p.m. and also get to visit with the Harker Heights Arts Commission and various vendors. Food trucks will be available and please bring a chair or blanket to best enjoy the concert! On Saturday, April 4, from 12 p.m to 4 p.m. the fun continues with the Arts Festival!

Battle of the Court Annual Granny Basketball Benefit Game: This year's Battle of the Court Annual Granny Basketball Benefit Game will be held on Saturday, March 14 at the HH Recreation Center. Admission is a non-perishable food item or a new package of socks or underwear, benefitting the KISD homeless awareness response program.

Spring Community Garage Sale: The Spring Community Garage Sale will be held on Saturday, March 14 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Spotlight on Service:

Hal Acorn Gets Praise: Library Administrator Crystal Thomas wrote to show her appreciation for Library's Hal Acorn. Crystal wrote, *"I just wanted to send a praise/shoutout for Library Clerk, Hal Acorn. Hal stepped up to do story time which is out of her duties and responsibilities; on this particular day, all the librarians who normally run the story time programs were not able to do so, and Hal accepted the challenge. She not only did an amazing job that day but stepped up to do it two more times in the week. I received great feedback from the parents with one parent voicing she couldn't tell it was Hal's first time doing story time because she did so great! Speaking with Hal later that day, I learned*

she was uncomfortable when asked to fill in but she knew it had to get done. I am extremely excited to have someone like Hal on the team who is such a team player and takes risks!"

Betty Delong and Rose Ramon Thanked: Library Administrator Crystal Thomas wrote to thank FD's Betty Delong and PAC's Rose Ramon. Crystal wrote, *"Words cannot describe how much we at the library are thankful for Betty Delong and Rose Ramon's assistance with the library's 100% inventory. They both showed up before 7 a.m. with a positive attitude, and without direction, grabbed all their tools and got to work. Their willingness to volunteer and take time from their departments made such a meaningful difference. Collaboration across departments is something I value within the City and they definitely represented their departments well. I thank them for their generosity and teamwork!"*

Gary Bates Gets a Shoutout: Library Administrator Crystal Thomas wrote to thank IT Director Gary Bates. Crystal wrote, *"I wanted to send a huge thank you to Gary Bates for getting us all the laptops we needed to efficiently conduct a 100% inventory of the library. Gary was able to supply all library staff with laptops and made sure they were able to successfully access our library system to avoid any issues the day of. Not only did he prep the library the week before inventory, but he also came in the morning of the inventory to ensure staff didn't run into any technical issues. He was readily available to ensure inventory was a success. We really couldn't have done it without him!"*

Angie Sabino and Crystal Thomas Work Hard: HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Library's Angie Sabino and Crystal Thomas. Leona wrote, *"I want to sincerely thank you both for the outstanding job you did organizing Melonie's retirement ceremony. Everything was beautifully arranged and thoughtfully planned, and it truly reflected the impact Melonie has had on all of us. Your attention to detail and the care you put into every aspect of the event made it a meaningful and memorable celebration. It was clear how much effort went into making the day so special. Thank you again for your hard work and dedication."*

Rodnerus Palmer and Ursula Paddie Recognized: Planning Administrator Stephanie Hall expressed her appreciation for HR's Rodnerus Palmer and Admin's Ursula Paddie. Stephanie stated, *"I'd like to recognize Rod and Ursula for their outstanding teamwork and support. Yesterday afternoon, I needed to post three meeting agendas, and due to the busy season, bulletin board space was extremely limited. Rod immediately*

paused his own work and stepped in to reorganize the board, and Ursula quickly to helped to identify the best solution. Huge thanks to Rod and Ursula for all of their help!"

Todd Maxon, Arno Stemmer, Nate Trimble, Matthew Knight and Jaime Davalos

Impress: A couple of citizens wrote in to thank Water Department's Todd Maxon, Arno Stemmer, Nate Trimble, Matthew Knight and Jaime Davaols. One citizen stated, *"Our water was out for about 5 hours yesterday. That crew worked hard into the late evening down in a muddy 5' ditch and they're back again today. I have a lot of respect for those guys."* Another stated that she was super impressed with the water dept. as they tended to a water outage at her location and got everything restored in a short amount of time. Said everyone she talked to was super professional and courteous. She also stated she was very impressed with the Public Works Dept. and the communication and follow-up that we provide to our customers.

Ethan Ogas Goes the Extra Mile: PD Officer Ethan Ogas was noticed doing a good deed by a citizen who took a picture and shared a note. Officer Ogas noticed a disabled vehicle being pushed from the roadway. He promptly used his car to secure the roadway and jumped out and assisted the motorist in pushing the car from the roadway. The citizen stated that he had to take a picture and stop and shake the officer's hand and that Officer Ogas was an *"awesome guy and really nice."*

Alexis Jorgensen is Professional: Planning Director Michael Beard shared his appreciation for PD Officer Alexis Jorgensen with the City's Leadership Team. Michael wanted to thank Officer Jorgensen for her assistance with a recent property clean up. He was impressed by the way she took charge of the scene. She represented PD in a very professional manner.

Casey Brazzil, Duston Wilson and John Leivan are Exceptional: IT Director Gary Bates wrote to thank Park's Casey Brazzil, Duston Wilson and John Leivan. Gary wrote, *"I want to recognize and express my sincere appreciation for the exceptional support provided by Casey Brazzil, Duston Wilson, and John Leivan during the recent A/C failure that impacted the server room."*

The compressor fan on the unit catastrophically failed and snapped off the motor. Because the compressor continued running, the system began pushing hot air directly into the server room, causing temperatures to rise rapidly and creating an immediate risk to critical

IT infrastructure. Casey, Duston, and John responded without hesitation. They quickly brought additional fans to stabilize airflow, worked with us to engineer a temporary solution by attaching an external fan to the compressor system, and coordinated directly with an A/C service company to ensure the unit was properly repaired as quickly as possible. Their fast action allowed us to cool the room and maintain safe operating temperatures until the repair technicians were able to fully restore the system. Their responsiveness, resourcefulness, and teamwork directly prevented potential equipment damage and ensured there was no interruption of IT services to City employees. Their efforts made a measurable difference in a high-risk situation.”

Crystal Thomas Supports: Library’s Angie Sabino wrote to give a kudos to Library Administrator Crystal Thomas. Angie wrote, *“Kudos to Crystal Thomas for being consistently helpful, supportive, and uplifting—not only to me, but to everyone she works with. Crystal is a strong leader who is genuinely invested in growing our team and brings a positive vision to serving our community and patrons. I feel very fortunate to have her as part of our team.”*

Bambi Basinger is Amazing: A citizen wrote in to thank PD’s Sgt. Bambi Basinger. The citizen reached out to court staff and informed them of Sergeant Basinger’s professionalism and courtesy toward him during a recent traffic stop. He stated, *“I wanted to compliment the officer who stopped me. She was very professional and courteous and was a pleasure to speak with. I wanted to let the PD know she is amazing at her job and kept me informed during the process.”*

Jude Songui Makes an Impression: PD Officer Jude Songui recently received a thank you letter from a citizen. The citizen stated, *“I just want to let you know that I was impressed with Officer Songui when he stopped me for not coming to a complete stop at a stop sign. He was very courteous and friendly, which is not the same with a lot of the police. I wanted to let you know that he deserves recognition for the manner in which he conducts himself.”*

Zully Reyes is Willing to Help: City Engineer Kristina Ramirez wrote to thank Finance’s Zully Reyes for her assistance with a TCEQ inspection. Kristina wrote, *“Thank you so much for your assistance gathering this regulatory information for tomorrow’s TCEQ inspection. Your willingness to help on such a short timeline is truly appreciated.”*

Houston Johnson Gets it Handled: A citizen wrote in to show their appreciation for Assistant to the City Manager Houston Johnson's work on the City's social media. She wrote, *"I wanted to reach out to you and say what a fantastic job whoever handles social media is doing. They always go above and beyond whenever I address an issue or even respond in a respectful way about anything with the City of Harker Heights. They truly are an outstanding employee and member of your team. I just wanted to make sure that they were recognized for their outstanding customer service and professionalism."*

John Fox and Tyrin Godfrey Ace the Test: Last month I left off two critical partners in the success the City had on a recent TCEQ inspection. Those two employees were Public Works Street Sign Supervisor John Fox and Heavy Equipment Operator Trainee Tyrin Godfrey. A big thank you to them and the entire team that helped in the inspection of which the City aced!