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Jae Berg wanted to change the negative attitude that some citizens have toward law enforcement in general. That's why he joined the ranks in February 2007. His peers at the Burleson Police Department are impressed with his progress. They selected Officer Jae Berg as Rookie of the Year for 2008.

Berg was one of five nominated for the honor.

"The Burleson Police Department has set a standard of hiring the most professional law enforcement personnel to serve our community," Burleson

Police Commander Cindy Aaron said. "This is clearly seen in Jae Berg. He is thorough in his investigations and treats citizens with the utmost respect. He is always seeking the best way to handle situations. We feel fortunate to have recruited him."

Burleson Police Commander Doug Sandifer agrees, saying, "Jae is very deserving of this award. He has shown during his short time here that he is a team player and he is constantly striving to learn and improve as a police officer."

Berg, 37, is the first person in his family to enter the field of law enforcement. He spent the first five years of his life in Korea, then moved to a small town in Minnesota. He graduated from high school in Minnesota and moved to Dallas when he turned 21. Through a work transfer, he moved to California two years later, then to Hawaii. Berg returned to Texas in 1999 and earned an associates degree at Tarrant County College. Just before Berg joined the local police force, he worked as a private investigator and insurance claims investigator.

One of his earliest memories is of a deputy sheriff in Minnesota who stopped by to visit Berg's parents.

“I was so impressed with the deputy, his level of officer presence, and his partner Barron, the police dog,” Berg said.

But, later the honoree had some not-so-positive contact with the police.

“I only got a couple of traffic tickets, but I felt that I was treated like a punk criminal,” Berg said. “I felt that I was demeaned and treated with no respect. But, as I matured, I decided that if I became a police officer I would not hold any grudges against law enforcement personnel and that I would do my best to change the attitudes. So far, it seems to be working. I have actually had citizens say ‘thank you’ after they receive a ticket. They also express how professional the Burleson Police Department was during the arrest and booking process. I contribute that positive feedback from the citizens to not only be about the individual police officer, but as a compliment to the agency and how they train their officers.”

The Burleson Police Department sent Berg through the police academy at the North Central Texas Council of Governments in Arlington. When he hit the streets of Burleson, Berg was trained by officers Jody Trumble, Shaun Kellum and Mike Alley.

It was in Berg’s second or third week on the streets with his field training officer that he experienced one of his most memorable experiences. The two officers had made a traffic stop. They were talking to the driver and the passenger when they looked in the back seat and saw several new packaged items. The merchandise was from the business the suspects had been seen leaving from at a high rate of speed at about midnight.

“Before we knew it, the driver slammed the vehicle in drive and sped off,” Berg said. “They almost ran over my feet. We, along with other officers, followed the driver in to Fort Worth near Campus Drive where he finally pulled over. The funniest part was he told me that he gave up and pulled over because he noticed that the new V8 Hemi Dodge Chargers were behind him and he couldn’t get away. Nobody, including the suspects, was injured in the pursuit.”

The husband and father of two says he is “extremely proud of being a Burleson police officer. I enjoy the unpredictable events of each day. I am a patrol officer, the sergeant at arms with the Burleson Police Officers Association, and a member of the Burleson Honor Guard.”

The Rookie of the Year aspires to become a field training officer, a bicycle patrol officer, and a member of the department’s SWAT team. And, “with further growth and experience, I hope to move up to the ranks of sergeant,” he said.

Berg said he has been very fortunate in his short career with Burleson.

“I have been involved in many felony arrests, have been able to get drugs off the streets, and remove violent offenders from situations where they could further

injure their victims. What keeps me motivated most is the thought that I can go home every day and feel that I have made a positive impact on society.”

For more information about this release, call the public information officer at 817-447-5400, ext. 286.