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Twenty-seven-year-old Kevin Hunter has worked at three fire departments and has a lengthy list of certifications to boot but it is initiative that earned him the Firefighter of the Year honor at the Burleson Fire Department's annual awards banquet Jan. 14.

Hunter's lieutenant, Jeremiah Lozier, said Hunter "goes beyond the normal duties that are given. He and his fellow firefighters handle medical reports, assist with bunker gear, do pre-plans at businesses, and handle inspection duties. Not only does he complete what is required of him, but he and the crew take on extra projects that will better the whole department."

Hunter is a Burleson native. He graduated from the Northwest Regional Fire Academy in 2006. The award winner worked for the South Padre Island Fire Department in 2007, the Liberty Hill Fire Department (2007-2009), and then was hired as a career firefighter for the Burleson Fire Department in April 2009.

"This is where I am from and all of my family is from," Hunter said. "I knew Burleson was a great department with a lot of growth."

Two cousins are in the firefighting field. Brandon Whitney is a firefighter/paramedic with the Plano Fire Department and Bryan Whitney is an engineer/paramedic with the Hurst Fire Department.

"Brandon is the one who got me into firefighting," Hunter said. "He helped me through the fire academy and EMT school. He is also the one who gave me advice and helped me through the testing processes."

Hunter is certified as an EMT-Intermediate, intermediate firefighter, swift water rescue technician, driver/operator, fire instructor 1, and rope rescue operations.

The award winner and his wife, Laura Hunter, have a 1-year-old son, Aiden Hunter.