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Sally Ellertson
Public Information Officer
141 West Renfro
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261
817-426-9622
F: 817-426-9390
sellertson@burlesontx.com
www.burlesontx.com

Burleson Police Sgt. Brian O’Heren was awarded the Ray Ramon Award for Officer of the Year at the Texas Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association convention July 26.

Seven officers, statewide, were nominated. Ramon, the award’s namesake, worked with the Duncanville Police Department where he served as one of the founders of that department’s Citizen Police Academy.

O’Heren, an almost 12-year veteran of Burleson, took over the local program from a former Ray Ramon award winner in 2009. O’Heren has coordinated five basic and three advanced Citizen Police Academies.

The Citizen Police Academy provides a bridge between the officer in the car and the citizens in the field. O’Heren heads up the free basic 10-week academy each summer, then a 10-week advanced academy every other year. The Citizens Police Academy is open to men and women, 18 or older.

The basic academy topics include the department's organization, recruiting process, Texas Penal Code, criminal investigations, search and seizure, building searches, traffic law enforcement, narcotics investigation, SWAT, patrol procedures, and more. The classes are as "hands on" as possible. Instructors demonstrate techniques used to search a building for an intruder, then participants practice what they've learned. Participants also solve a homicide scenario by identifying evidence, using investigative techniques, and interviewing witnesses. Students ride along with an officer or monitor the communications office.

O’Heren was nominated by Police Chief Tom Cowan, Commander Chris Havens, and Burleson Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association representative Sherry Toomer.

“He is a tireless worker who inspires an extremely contagious dedication to the community as a whole and to the CPA in particular,” the chief said. “His sense of humor and dedication to the CPA and obvious affection for the CPA members and alumni has placed him firmly in the hearts of all who know him.”

Commander Havens said O'Heren "hit the ground running" when he took over the program in 2009. "His unselfish work ethic is top notch. His servant leadership style is very refreshing and his commitment to the program and the citizens are an example that all departments strive for. He is everything this award stands for."

Toomer, a 2008 graduate of the basic Citizens Police Academy and a 2009 graduate of the Advanced CPA, said the sergeant was responsible for the alumni association/Citizens on Patrol acquiring their first patrol vehicle. Under his leadership, the academies have grown to more than 30 students in the basic classes and 18-20 in the advanced classes.

"Sgt. O'Heren has compassion and good advice," Toomer said.

The award winner is involved in Founders Day, the Kids Safety Fair, American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Burlison, Fourth of July Parade, Christmas parade, the Honey Tour Bike Ride, Boo Bash, and the police department's annual open house.

O'Heren's department awarded him the 2009 Supervisor of the Year award for the guidance he provided on his patrol shift as well as for his work with the Citizen Police Academy. He was hired by Burlison in October 2001. Previously O'Heren worked with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office (1994-1997) and the Crowley Police Department (1997-2001). Chief Cowan promoted him to sergeant in October 2007 and in August 2010 O'Heren moved from patrol sergeant to the sergeant over the department's traffic unit.

The honoree is married and the father of three children.