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For the second time in three years, Vicki McElroy of Burleson was awarded the Thomas Windham Citizens On Patrol Member of the Year, a state honor presented by the Texas Citizens On Patrol Association. McElroy, who is the assistant coordinator of the Burleson COPs program, won the honor first in 2011 then again at the awards banquet in Decatur on Aug. 17.

The award's namesake was the Fort Worth chief of police for 15 years before he died in 2000. Windham hosted the first Citizen on Patrol in Texas. The award is presented to the Texas Citizen on Patrol Academy member deemed to have contributed most to the success of the COP program.

McElroy attended the Burleson Police Department's basic Citizens Police Academy in the summer of 2005. She became certified as a Citizen On Patrol member in 2006 and attended the advanced Citizens Police Academy in 2007.

"I became interested when I was working as the pool supervisor for the City of Burleson," McElroy said. "Since we occasionally worked with the police and fire departments, I decided to get more involved by first taking the Citizens Fire Academy, then later I took the CPA classes. I wanted to see how things worked."

After the basic Citizens Police Academy, McElroy got involved in the Burleson Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association where she raised funds for the police department. When former Police Sgt. Diron Hill started Citizens On Patrol, she attended those classes and began volunteering at the police department.

"I really enjoy volunteering and getting the chance to help out wherever needed," she said. "It is a great opportunity to get involved with your community."

McElroy has served with two coordinators, Hill and Sgt. B. O'Heren, the current coordinator. O'Heren has nothing but high praise for his assistant volunteer coordinator.

“She earned that title,” the sergeant said. “She has been a vital part of the COPs program since its inception. She handles updating information and posting duty assignments on the COPs website, makes sure events are covered, and she works just about every event.”

When the program acquired a COPs patrol vehicle (the former “Elkmobile” that was donated by MCMC and decked out by KMP Graphics), she assisted with the implementation of the new policies and procedures and spent her own money to make sure the vehicle had the things it needed to be patrol ready.

“She never fails to give 110 percent each and every year,” the sergeant said. “If Vicki weren’t such a faithful and dedicated volunteer, I am certain this program would have failed. She is a dependable leader and she does things simply because she cares. She never seeks recognition or acknowledgement of her efforts. She is a very humble individual and one of the most dedicated volunteers I’ve ever met.”

She also leads by example. The sergeant said McElroy “would never ask a member of the organization to do a task that she would not, has not, or cannot do herself. Vicki is a natural born leader.”

In addition to volunteering with the police department, the honoree and COPs members assist the municipal court by calling people who have outstanding warrants and trying to get those warrants cleared. She also trains new COPs members.

Police Chief Tom Cowan called McElroy “a tireless worker who motivates and mentors other COPs members to bring out the best in them. She is the perfect representation of a COPs member.”

Deputy Chief Chris Havens, who oversees the Citizens Police Academy program and Citizens On Patrol, said McElroy “is willing to stand up and make a difference in our community every chance she gets. Her enthusiasm, dedication and positive attitude is contagious to everyone around her.”

The Texas Citizens On Patrol Association was founded in 2008. It is a non-profit 5013c tax exempt organization formed to help Citizens On Patrol organizations across the state become more organized, better trained, and to be successful in their communities by reducing crime and supporting their law enforcement agencies through observing and reporting crime.