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She started off as a temporary employee and turned in to Hidden Creek Golf Course's "most valuable asset." That success garnered Mary Longbotham, the lead food and beverage attendant, the 2013 Hidden Creek Golf Course employee of the year award. The honor was announced at the City's annual awards luncheon Dec. 10.

"Mary came to us at a time of turmoil," Andrea Blair, the course's food and beverage manager, said. "The golf course was just reopening after a long renovation, the restaurant had been rebranded, and we had just begun building a catering business from The Terrace kitchen. The small staff was overwhelmed."

Longbotham had no restaurant experience, but what she did have was a background in customer service.

"Her willingness to learn new skills was encouraging," Blair said. "She stepped in to a position she was unfamiliar with but did not falter."

Burleson is Longbotham's first municipal job. She decided to apply because she lives nearby "and I enjoy the growth and possibilities that are occurring in the city." The award winner is responsible for preparing and serving food for the lunch customers and golfers and at catered events. Her supervisors credit her with being instrumental in the growth and change as The Terrace becomes a full service restaurant. If you have sampled some of the golf course pies, thank Longbotham. She suggested building the golf course's revenue during the holidays by making and selling pies for customers to take to their celebrations.

"She has a great rapport with customers and keeps her calm even when the chaos of tournaments seems overwhelming," Blair said. "She takes her job seriously and is determined to develop new skills in the kitchen and has taken initiative with our inventory process. She has become a leader on our team."

The 26-year-old award winner is a graduate of Dickinson High School and earned a bachelor of science degree in biology at the University of Texas at Austin. She is one of three children in her family. Her father is a retired crane operator. Her mother is a high school math teacher. When she's not at work Longbotham spends her time painting, golfing and doing home renovation.