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You don't work for a City for more than 15 years without garnering some well-deserved praise from your co-workers. Paula Benjamin received just that when four of her fellow parks and recreation employees nominated her for the City's Employee of the Quarter award for the second quarter of 2015.

"I was very surprised, shocked and excited when I was told I was the Employee of the Quarter," Benjamin said. I appreciate people nominating me for this honor. It was very sweet."

The 55-year-old Benjamin is best known for her creativity and mentoring. She began her career with the City at Burleson's first recreation center as the center supervisor before it became Chisenhall Fields Sports Complex, and now as the supervisor at the Burleson Senior Activity Center.

"Paula has shown tremendous innovation at the senior center by creating such events as the Senior Luau, tea party and chocolate tasting party," David McDowell, assistant director of recreation, said in his nomination. "She has increased events and hours at the center with no increase to the budget. Overall, she is an exceptional employee who takes pride in what she does. The senior center is a better and more productive place with Paula at the helm."

Benjamin was one of 15 nominated for the second quarterly honor. The nominees represent the City's recreation, parks, golf, and library employees. The nominations are based on an employee's efficiency, transparency, honesty, innovation and customer service.

Benjamin was hired in February 1997 and Burleson is her first municipal government job. Her history includes working in recreation for Moral Welfare and Recreation (part of the Department of Defense, <http://bit.ly/MilitaryMWR>) in Keflavik, Iceland, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, and with the Saddle Back School District in Mission Viejo, California.

Allison Smith, the City's athletics and aquatics supervisor, said Benjamin "truly cares about the community as well as her fellow employees. She is always there to answer questions or help out whenever needed. She has started and

coordinated many City events such as Santa's Breakfast, Bunny Daze and the Valentine Dance. She is very deserving of Employee of the Quarter."

Santa's Breakfast, hosted at the BRiCk on the first Saturday of December, is Benjamin's favorite event.

Smith, along with Recreation Supervisor Jessica Mack, has been groomed by the award winner to take over several of the City's major recreation events.

"She is a great recreation professional who is always willing to share her knowledge as well as learn more," Mack said. "She is a positive role model for growing young professionals such as myself."

Charlene Logan, administrative secretary, has worked side by side with Benjamin on many projects, and said Benjamin "works extremely hard. The Senior Center has greatly improved programs and activities and senior participation since she became supervisor."

The Burlison Senior Activity Center is located at 216 S.W. Johnson Ave., next to the Burlison Post Office. If you are at least 50 years old, you are welcome to participate in the activities. The building was renovated in 2007-2008 to include an additional 5,400 square feet of new construction. For cool weather days, there are picnic benches and a shade structure outside. The Senior Activity Center hosts health fairs and a monthly dance for senior citizens. Twice a year, crafters fill the center for the Christmas in July Craft Fair and the Christmas Craft Fair. The center has a full-size kitchen for lunches and events; a main room that hosts games as well as large group meetings; a large room that includes a 52-inch TV; a quilting room; and a small game room. The center is available for rental for family reunions or any other special occasion.

The winner of the first Employee of the Quarter for 2015 was Burlison Police Department Investigator Larry Sparks. The 2014 quarterly winners include David Butler/fire investigator/inspector for the Fire Marshal's office, Amanda Cadenhead (formerly Goshey)/reference public services librarian, Lisa Key Edwards/utility customer services supervisor, and Paula Skundberg/executive assistant in the city secretary's office. Edwards shared the 2014 Employee of the Year honor with Butler.