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Adding two major projects, in addition to her regular daily duties, to her plate in 2015 earned Kelly Mearns the City of Burleson's Employee of the Year honors. The award was announced at the City's annual awards luncheon Dec. 10.

The executive assistant for the City Manager's Office was part of a two-person team that took on the project of redesigning the City's website. That project started in the fall of 2014 - nonstop with training, design, and content management – until the website redesign reveal in July 2015. Since then the team has been putting the finishing touches on what will be the City's first mobile app.

While Mearns was working on the CivicPlus website redesign project, she was doing double duty spearheading a new software program, Agenda Quick, for creating agendas for City Council, Planning and Zoning, and City boards/committees. That project also involved training City directors and managers and working with the vendor to work out issues along the way.

"Kelly can always be counted on," according to her nomination. "She can find answers to just about any question, which makes her a standout when it comes to customer service. She is one of those rock steady employees whose work behind the scenes continuously makes the City look good."

Mearns was one of four vying for the City's top honor for 2015. The Employee of the Year nominees/2015 Employee of the Quarter winners are Burleson Police Department Investigator Larry Sparks; Burleson Senior Activity Center Supervisor Paula Benjamin; Alton Fore, senior crew leader for the pavement maintenance division of the public works department; and Mearns.

Sparks is assigned to the STOP Special Crimes Unit. He was praised for his work ethic, jumping in and helping when a patrol shift is shorthanded, mentoring young officers, and for being "one of the most driven narcotics officers I have met," according to the nomination.

"He makes himself available to every street officer and detective in Johnson County to answer questions, review arrests, or come to a scene and conduct

interviews or investigations. It doesn't seem to matter if it is 2 p.m. or 2 a.m., he is available."

Benjamin is best known for her creativity and mentoring. She transitioned as the parks department's first recreation center supervisor to supervisor at the senior center where she and her staff are continually creating new activities. When she was at the recreation center (now the BRiCk), Benjamin started and coordinated many City events, including Breakfast with Santa, Bunny Daze, and the Valentine Dance.

"She has increased events and hours at the center with no increase to the budget," according to her nomination. "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."

Fore and his crew not only repair and overlay streets and do concrete repairs, but he also assists other departments, including with traffic control, when needed. The community knows him best for his special assignment work – setting barricades for parades and 5K runs, helping with the set-up for the Hot Sounds of Summer concerts, and working the Household Hazardous Waste/Electronic Recycling/Paper Shredding events, Boo Bash, and the Military Veteran Tribute.

"Alton leads by example and shares his knowledge willingly to all who wish to learn all they can about pavement operations," according to his nomination. "If Alton is given a task, you can rest assured it will be done and done correctly."

Kelly Mearns, who will mark her 19th anniversary with the City in January 2016, joins a list of honorees that dates back to 1976. Those past Employee of the Year winners include the following.

2014

David Butler, fire marshal's office

Lisa Kay Edwards, utility customer service

2013

Brandi Rendon, public works

Guadalupe Fajardo, parks

Mary Longbotham, golf course

Kristina Johnson, administrative services/internal services

Kim Peckler, administrative services/external services

2012: Paul Faulks, public works

2011: Tammy Harrison, the BRiCk

2010: James Reed, information technology

2009: Humberto Ramirez, streets

2008: Michael Owen, police department

2007: Mark Stubblefield, public works

2006: James McDonald, public works

2005: Joe Smith, information technology
2004: Jeff Scott, parks
2003: Cathy Bourg, city secretary's office
2002: Rodney Schlotzhauer, facilities
2001: Mark Crawford, fire department
2000: Otis Hicks, public works
1999: John DeLozier, public works
1998: Debbie Keese, public works
1997: Charles Bray, public works
1996: Gilbert Rodriguez, equipment services
1995: Ann Clark, finance
1994: Vera Lowrey, utility customer services
1993: Dorothy Estep, support services
1992: Teresa Holley public works
1991: Joda Buckley, public works
1990: Wilburn Streger, parks
1989: Steve Bell, public works
1988: Sherry Warren, library
1987: Bob Douglas, police department
1986: No award given
1985: Otis Hicks, public works
1984: Dave Stringer, public works
1983: Ginger Allen, human resources
1982: Bill Davison, public works
1981: J.D. Roach, sanitation
1980: Freeda Wells, utility billing
1979: Rick R. Crowley, city manager's office
1978: Mary Douglas, city manager's office
1977: Charles Bray, public works
1976: Bob Douglas, police department