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Two Burleson Police officers make a point of reaching out to help those who are suffering from mental illnesses. The connections that they made and the training that resulted from that effort resulted in Officer Cameron Pilgrim and Officer Shayne Morrison to be selected for the department's 2015 Most Outstanding Community Policing award. The honor was announced at the banquet on Feb. 25.

"The award is so meaningful to me because I and Officer Pilgrim have had depression and MHMR related-issues with our own friends and family members," Morrison said. "I believe we both want to find the best possible avenues and alternatives for our department to deal with mental health issues because our department takes an enormous amount of calls from mental health related persons in need of help."

Pilgrim, 30, grew up in Burleson and was hired by the Burleson Police Department in May 2007. One of the toughest calls he has responded to in his career was to an address he recognized. It was the home of his cousin.

"It was September 2015. I was the first on scene after receiving a call about a possible suicidal female. I entered the house and saw my cousin Beverly, who was in her 50's. Her stepmother was performing CPR, at which point I took over," Pilgrim said. "Unfortunately Beverly had taken her own life. That had a very strong effect on me because I had no idea that anything was wrong. She was always a very happy person."

Morrison's heart took a hit a few years earlier. Morrison was the founding member/bass player for the country group Perfect Stranger. Richard Raines was his friend as well as co-founder of the band. Perfect Stranger played at Burleson's Good Life Days festival at Chisenhall Park in the mid-1990s.

"A few years ago Richard took his own life after battling depression for most of his life," Morrison said. "Needless to say, this has had a huge impact on me and how I view mental health issues. It was not until recently that I knew how this event could have a positive effect on me."

According to the nomination for the Most Outstanding Community Policing award, "Policing in today's society is beyond just law enforcement. We are called

to be caregivers for the community which involves identifying problems in the community and finding solutions outside of traditional law enforcement activities. Working with several state agencies and private stakeholders, these two officers have started a long-term relationship to find help for those suffering from mental illness and to provide training for officers who encounter the mentally ill. Their dedication to not only the department and profession but also the community deserves to be honored.”

Pilgrim said he “grew up in Burleson and wanted to serve the community.” He is familiar to many as a member of the department’s bicycle patrol that works community events. He is certified as a field training officer, officer in charge (officer who supervises his shift when there is not a sergeant on duty), and a mental health police officer. Pilgrim earned his intermediate peace officer license and is currently working on his criminal justice degree at Tarrant County College.

The honoree exchanged vows with his wife, Nicole, two years ago. His father, Kevin, is a safety official in the gas pipeline industry and his mother, Lisa, is an educator. Pilgrim’s brother, Keith, is a sergeant in the United States Army, 82nd Airborne Division.

Morrison, 50, is a native of Carthage, Texas. Before he pursued a career in law enforcement, he was a musician for 27 years. In 1997, Perfect Stranger was nominated for the Academy of Country Music New Group of the Year “but we lost to Lonestar. We had one giant hit, ironically enough, called ‘You Have the Right to Remain Silent.’”

Morrison had a key to the city before he had a key to the doors at the police building. Burleson Mayor Rick Roper presented Perfect Stranger with the “key” and declared it Perfect Stranger Day.

“I can remember thinking at that time, ‘I could live in this town.’”

It was 2010 when Morrison made Burleson his home. He married his wife Sheila, who was already a Burleson resident. He has a 17-year-old daughter Cassidy and his wife has a 15-year-old son Dylan “who are both a huge part of my life.”

In February 2014, Morrison joined the Burleson Police Department, after serving with the University of Texas at Arlington Police Department. Like Pilgrim, he is a certified field training officer. He is also a certified bicycle officer and a certified negotiator, although currently he is not on those teams.

Past winners of the Most Outstanding Community Policing Award include Officer Paul Lancaster (retired), Officer Robert Collard, Officers Jonathan Gomez and Mark Pate, and Sgt. Don Adams.