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The Burleson Police Department's 2012 Most Outstanding Community Policing award went to Officer Robert Collard, a seven year veteran of the department. The award was presented at the department's annual awards banquet in January. Collard is the third officer to be honored with the award since 2011.

According to the nomination, "Officer Collard does an outstanding job on a daily basis by going into each call with a positive attitude and remaining open minded while seeking solutions to the public's problems. He is dedicated to duty. His display of the highest degree of ethical behavior to the department, the City, and the overall police profession makes him stand out."

When Collard was hired by Burleson in 2005, it was his first law enforcement job. A distant grandfather worked in law enforcement in Ellis County. Collard's family is a Texas pioneering family that served in the Texas Revolution. One served in the Siege of Bexar County and at the Battle of San Jacinto (his name is written inside the walls of the Alamo and on the San Jacinto Memorial). Another served in politics during the revolution and was later the justice of the peace for Montgomery County and a county commissioner. Another ancestor served on the Texas Appellate Court.

"It gives me a source of pride to serve as a Texas peace officer knowing that my ancestors were a part of the State's foundation," Collard said.

Collard grew up in north Fort Worth as the oldest of two. His sister is married and lives in Austin. His father is a retired metal worker and his mother is retiring soon from her job as a pediatric dentist office manager. Collard is married with twin teenage daughters and a son.

The 43-year-old award winner is a 1990 graduate of the New Mexico Military Institute. He earned a bachelor's degree in 1994 from Texas Wesleyan University. He served in the United States Army, 1994-1998, in the Infantry (Airborne). Collard served with the 3rd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, 1995-1998, in Fort Benning, Ga.

When a friend heard Collard was looking for a job, he told him about an opening with the Burleson Police Department.

“He told me that if he was to start over in law enforcement, he’d do it in Burleson because the city was growing, which meant it was a good time to get hired,” Collard said.

Since 2005, Collard has earned a spot on the department’s SWAT team, is a field training officer, mental health peace officer, is a TCLEOSE (Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education) instructor and has his advanced peace officer certification.

Collard is credited with engaging the public “in a non-intrusive way that gains their respect and their trust. This allows him to build new partnerships with our citizens and business owners throughout the city.”

Collard said the societal demands on officers are greater than ever. He said to be a successful community oriented police officer, “you have to wear many different hats. On top of actively seeking criminal activity with all that it encompasses - protecting the citizens, their neighborhoods, and their businesses - we often find ourselves acting as counselors and helping people with every day common problems. Is that part of the job description? Maybe not, but I believe it is. If an officer can get to the underlying source of the issue and address it, it just may solve the issue all together, keep the issue from getting larger, and sometimes prevent some offenses from being repeated.”

The award winner once had two neighbors meet in the street then he mediated between them as they aired their differences. In another case, he brokered a payment plan to have a propane tank filled last winter for a person who was dealing with mental health issues.

“When I train new officers I often ask, ‘If this call for service was for you or your family, what would you expect from the officer? And how would you want to be treated?’” Collard said. “Community policing is simply being the one who goes the extra step to see a problem solved. It’s having an internal dialogue of ‘why not me?’ versus ‘why me?’”