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Board Bulletin

Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards

By Tom Wingate, TBCJ Member



Tom Wingate

On April 15, the Texas Board of Criminal Justice was privileged to host the 2016 Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards ceremony.

Volunteers have a strong, positive impact at the agency, helping TDCJ achieve its mission to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society and assist victims of crime.

TDCJ volunteers provide guidance and support to both offenders and crime victims while promoting positive personal growth. Since 1995, the Governor's Volunteer Service Awards have been presented to a select group of notable and outstanding citizens who unselfishly donate their time and effort to help the agency achieve its mission.

The positive effect of volunteers is tremendous. Today, TDCJ has more than 22,600 approved volunteers assisting offenders in areas such as literacy, life and job skills, parenting skills, drug and alcohol rehabilitation,

faith-based activities and other programs that help offenders transition from agency supervision to society. TDCJ volunteers also help support crime victims by sharing their insight and personal experiences of victimization. During fiscal year 2015, these individuals gave more than 362,000 hours of valuable service.

The annual Volunteer Service Awards ceremony is our way of honoring volunteers for their work in aid of agency operations. On behalf of the Board, I want to express our appreciation and thanks not only to the fifteen individuals and six groups who were recognized at the award ceremony, but to all who assist in our efforts to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society and assist victims of crime.

Among the most prestigious of these honors is the Carol S. Vance Volunteer of the Year award. The recipient of the Vance award for 2016 is Mr. Bill Shehee who has, for many years, worked with an innovative faith-based program at the Beto Unit. His activity level is extraordinary and he strives to give the offenders hope while teaching them of their own personal value.

Included among the award winners are two agency staff members whose efforts were recognized during this year's ceremony and deserve special mention.

This year, the TDCJ Employee Volunteer Award was given to Lieutenant Travis Morris who began volunteering at the Gurney Unit in 2007 where, for eight years, he taught the Celebrate Recovery Class. The offenders continue to respect, trust and listen to him.

Warden Tommie Haynes has honorably served the Gib Lewis Unit for several years and has received the 2016 Criminal Justice Administrator Award. He has been a committed, dedicated and faithful professional who continues to motivate and challenge agency staff to achieve higher levels of professionalism. Warden Haynes helps reduce the recidivism rate among offenders by providing support and encouragement to the chaplain's work providing classes which help in the moral rehabilitation and spiritual transformation of offenders. He is well respected by staff members and offenders alike.

The names of all 21 award recipients honored at this year's event are listed below. In-

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formation on each of this year's recipients is available on the TDCJ website.

In recognition of their valuable service, I ask that each of you join me in expressing genuine appreciation to those who volunteer at TDCJ. Their hard work helps improve our agency and our communities. With sincere gratitude and great respect, we honor their dedication and commitment to making the great state of Texas a better place to live for all. ●

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Award</i>
Deborah Hartman	Chaplaincy Department
Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders	Correctional Institutions Division
One Man's Treasure	Reentry and Integration Division
Rickie Bradshaw	Nancy Hees Award - Parole Division
James Duncan	Private Facility Contract Monitoring/Oversight Division
Gordon Lindley	Religious Service
Marleah Baird	Religious Service
Michael Lynn Selzer	Health Services Division
Jennifer Gilbert	Pathfinder Award - Victim Services Division
Garrett Stanley	Judy Burd Award - Windham School District
Welcome Back Tarrant County	Restorative Justice
Trae Kendrick	Susan Cranford Award – Female Offender Program
Cynthia Drawhorn and Jamie Essex for Life in Focus	Most Innovative Program
Freedom in Jesus Ministries	Community Service
Central Texas Hospitality House	Best Family Program
Thomas Crouch	Leonard Davis Award for Most Hours Served
Robert Harcrow	Extensive Travel
Travis Morris	TDCJ Employee Volunteer
Tommie Haynes	Criminal Justice Administrator
Bill Shehee	Carol S. Vance Volunteer of the Year