Compassion and Tax Collection Really Do Mix

Compassion and tax collection are not usually associated in the public mind, but they go together very well in Tarrant County. The people who in the past year collected $502,966,931 in motor vehicle taxes and fees, including $371,869,955 in motor vehicle sales tax, and $3,274,809,035 in property taxes also reached into their own pockets and pulled out a hefty amount for charity.

For the first time, giving from the Tarrant County Tax Office exceeded $14,000. This is a remarkable achievement for an office our size and one in which all of us should be suitably proud.

We hold fund raisers large and small throughout the year. It may seem as though sometimes we start a new one before the last one is completed, but we do them because we understand the need to give back to our communities.

In the past year, tax office employees donated more than
Interested in helping a Veteran at Christmas?

Want to help military families or veterans here at home during the holiday season? According to an article on [militarybenefits.info](http://militarybenefits.info), consider helping a local veterans association residential home or hospital. There are also disabled vets in recovery at the local [VA hospital](https://www.va.gov/). They also suggest that you just pick up the phone and call a local veteran’s organization and ask how you can help. The need is tremendous.

Don’t forget about Tarrant County’s Veteran Services Department. Contact them for more information not only during the Christmas season but also throughout the year.

$1600 to the Tarrant Area Food Bank. This well known organization is the primary source of donated food for hunger relief charities and feeding programs in 13 North Texas counties, including Tarrant. It serves 50,000 individuals per week and 146,000 households each year. Since 1 in 6 people struggle with hunger issues, the food bank provides an essential service.

More than $3400 was raised for the 2015 Tax Office Charity, Meals on Wheels of Tarrant County. One of the most reputable charities in the county, Meals on Wheels delivered 919,680 meals to disabled people in their homes last year. More than 4800 Tarrant County citizens were helped by 5700 volunteers, and half of their funding came from non-government sources like the employees of the tax office. This is putting donated dollars where it really counts.

Tax employees also donated more than $5000 to the Tax Office Christmas Fund. Nine tax office employees in difficult circumstances received Ron’s Reindeer gift cards this year to help ensure a merry Christmas for their children.

And that’s just the normal giving. It doesn’t include the many volunteer hours tax office employees donate to worthy causes each year and the extra bit of help employees give to customers and each other from time to time. Whether it’s Daniel Taylor helping an elderly person into the building and a paraplegic into their car, or Tom Spencer writing a $2500 check to allow an elderly disabled couple to keep their home, it makes a great difference in other people’s lives and speaks volumes about the caliber of people in the Tax Office.

Thank you for all you do for the people of Tarrant County. God bless us, everyone! And merry Christmas!

Ron Wright

Merry Christmas from the Wright Family!
Susan Wright, George Wright, Ron Wright

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**Taxing News**

December 1, 2015

Merry Christmas from the Wright Family!
Armed Forces First

In keeping with the Armed Forces First Initiative in Tarrant County allowing uniformed service members to move to the front of any line, we’ve spotted a few service men and women in our offices. Thank you for your service!

The blue comment cards are an important tool for letting your Tax Assessor-Collector, Ron Wright, know how we are doing in all of the offices. Please complete a card at your next visit. The office with the highest percentage of positive comment cards each quarter wins the coveted Customer Service banner to display in their office for the next quarter!

Mission Statement

We will serve the citizens of Tarrant County with pride, courtesy, respect, and determination.

We will achieve excellence in what we do by providing accurate, efficient, and timely service consistent with the laws of the State of Texas and the highest ethical standard.

Thanksgiving Celebration

Downtown Property Tax

We would love to hear from you!!

Fill out a blue comment card and drop it in the box!

Logistics Specialist, Petty Officer 1st Class Kimberly Battle, US Navy

Personnel Specialist, Senior Chief Petty Officer Michael Jackson, US Navy

Col. Julio R. Lopez, Jr., US Air Force

Logistics Specialist, Petty Officer 1st Class Kimberly Battle, US Navy
Thank you to tax office employees for the successful fundraising campaigns to support your charity of choice, Meals on Wheels of Tarrant County! We raised over $3500: Jeans/Tennis Shoes $1926.02 and 50/50 Drawing $1626. Out of that comes $813 for the 50/50 Winner. Congratulations to Stephanie Henderson for purchasing the winning ticket! Meals on Wheels will receive more than $3400 thanks to our generous employees. Thank you to everyone who participated and supported Meals on Wheels.

As a reminder, you can also donate through the Amazon Smile Program. A portion of the proceeds from your Amazon purchases allows Amazon to send Meals on Wheels a check on your behalf to help support their mission. There is no additional fee to designate them or use this service. Why not give it a try? You must sign up to associate the Smile Program to your account, but it can be changed at any time.

As a reminder, committee members include Cierra Hernandez, Suzan Waddington, Sonia Reyes, Denise Lindsey, Rebecca Fernandez, Shonda Johnson, Alicia Herrera, Mark Butler, and Charlotte Tackett.

Mission: “To do the most good we can each year for the citizens of Tarrant County”

Congratulations to the Southwest subcourthouse employees who won the pizza party for selling the most 50/50 tickets for this fundraiser!

A group from the Democratic Republic of the Congo visited with Ron Wright on November 4. The group is part of the US-Africa Leadership and Government Academy. The Academy was formed to provide training to political and civil leaders from that country.
What’s Been Happening….

V.G. Young Conference

Tax Assessor-Collectors and their staff, in all about 200, met in San Marcos for the annual conference on November 16—18, 2015. The host for the conference is the V.G. Young Institute of County Government.

On the agenda were classes on Red Flag Title Fraud Detection, Vehicle Registration Blocks, Dealer Licensing and Motor Carrier laws, and roundtable discussions for motor vehicle and property tax. There were also several opportunities to hear about legislative updates that will affect our offices in the near future.

In addition to the training and education, the Tax Assessor-Collector’s Association also awards certificates for CTOP and PCC certifications. Included in these awards were Amy Goldman, Kelly Starks, Dorothy Starr, and Vickie Doane (pictured below). Three counties—Dallas, Harris, Tarrant statewide received an award for processing 50,000 title applications through webDEALER. Dorothy Starr, Kelly Starks and Ron Wright accepted this award on behalf of Tarrant County. This is a major accomplishment that requires support from our dealers and we wish to thank those who have helped us implement a more efficient and faster way of processing title work.

Jeremiah Kuntz, Director of Vehicle Titles & Registration, presented interesting statistics on title transfers and registration renewals. In Texas, there have been over 7 million titles issues so far in 2015, and over 24 million vehicles registered. This is a great source of revenue for roads in the State of Texas! Kuntz also announced several new enhancements to the state Registration & Titling System used in our offices to process paperwork. The most notable of those enhancements includes the ability to look up records by owner name.
What’s Been Happening…. 

Happy 240th Birthday Marine Corps!

Judge Carr and Judge Salvant (pictured at right) host the annual birthday party for the Marine Corps. At least one member of the other services was represented at this celebration.

Southlake employees, pictured at right, dress in red, white & blue to honor our veterans on Veterans Day. Front Row: Billy O’Dell and Cindy Sherman; Back Row: Christina Sharon, Patty Medley, Maria Parral, and Michael Espinosa.
Annual Audit Conducted by TxDMV

Above, left to right: Mark Butler, Jeanna Gordon, Kelly Starks, and Duncan Hughes work together to complete an annual audit by Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV). Right: Jeanna Gordon, Field Service Representative with TxDMV, leads the annual audit of motor vehicle inventory and records in November.

Business Law students from David Janeski’s class at Fossil Ridge High School in Keller were led on a guided tour of the Tarrant County Administration Building by Ann Farmer, Community Resource Coordinator. They stopped in at the tax office to learn how the county obtains the money it uses to operate all of the services that the county provides.
We are in the middle of one of the busiest online shopping seasons of the year. Here are some tips from the experts for keeping your personal information safe when sending and receiving emails.

**Phishing**

**Overview**

Email is one of the primary ways we communicate. We not only use it every day for work, but to stay in touch with our friends and family. In addition, email is now how most companies provide online services, such as confirmation of your online purchase or availability of your bank statements. Since so many people around the world depend on email, it has become one of the primary attack methods used by cyber criminals. In this newsletter, we explain phishing, a common email attack method, and the steps you can take to use email safely.

Phishing refers to an attack that uses email or a messaging service (like those on social media sites) that tricks or fools you into taking an action, such as clicking on a link or opening an attachment. By falling victim to such an attack, you risk having your highly sensitive information stolen and/or your computer infected. Attackers work hard to make their phishing emails convincing. For example, they will make their email look like it came from someone or something you know, such as a friend or a trusted company you frequently use. They will even add logos of your bank or forge the email address so the message appears more legitimate. Then the attackers send these phishing emails to millions of people. They do not know who will fall victim, all they know is the more emails they send, the greater the chance for success. Phishing is similar to using a net to catch fish; you do not know what you will catch, but the bigger the net, the more fish you will find. There are several ways attackers use phishing to get what they want:

**Harvesting Information:** The attacker’s goal is to harvest your personal information, such as your passwords, credit card numbers or banking details. To do this, they email you a link that takes you to a website that appears legitimate. This website then asks you to provide your account information or personal data. However, the site is fake, and any information you enter goes directly to the attacker.

**Malicious Links:** The attacker’s goal is to take control of your device. To do this, they send you an email with a link. If you click on the link, it takes you to a website that launches an attack on your device that, if successful, infects your system.

**Malicious Attachments:** The attacker’s goal is the same, to infect and take control of your device. But instead of a link, the attacker emails you an infected file, such as a Word document. Opening the attachment triggers the attack, potentially giving the attacker control of your system.

**Scams:** Some phishing emails are nothing more than scams by con artists who have gone digital. They try to fool you by saying you won the lottery, pretending to be a charity needing donations or asking for your help to move millions of dollars. If you respond to any of these, they will say they first need payment for their services or access to your bank account, scamming you out of your money.

*Your best defense is common sense. If an email or message is odd, suspicious or too good to be true, it may be a phishing attack.*
Protecting Yourself

In almost all cases, opening and reading an email or message is fine. For a phishing attack to work, the bad guys need to trick you into doing something. Fortunately, there are clues that a message is an attack. Here are the most common ones:

- The email creates a sense of urgency, demanding “immediate action” before something bad happens, like closing your account. The attacker wants to rush you into making a mistake without thinking.
- You receive an email with an attachment that you were not expecting or the email entices you to open the attachment. Examples include an email saying it has an attachment with details of unannounced layoffs, employee salary information or a letter from the IRS saying you are being prosecuted.
- Instead of using your name, the email uses a generic salutation like “Dear Customer.” Most companies or friends contacting you know your name.
- The email requests highly sensitive information, such as your credit card number or password.
- The email says it comes from an official organization, but has poor grammar or spelling, or uses a personal email address like @gmail.com, @yahoo.com or @hotmail.com.
- The link looks odd or not official. One tip is to hover your mouse cursor over the link until a pop-up shows you where that link really takes you. If the link in the email doesn’t match the pop-up destination, don’t click it. On mobile devices, holding down your finger on a link gets the same pop-up. An even safer step is to copy and then paste the URL from the email into your browser or type the correct link.
- You receive a message from someone you know, but the tone or wording just does not sound like him or her. If you are suspicious, call the sender to verify they sent it. It is easy for a cyber attacker to create an email that appears to be from a friend or coworker.

If you believe an email or message is a phishing attack, simply delete it. Ultimately, common sense is your best defense.

NERC CIPv5 Cyber Security Training

Be sure to check out our free resources including the OUCH! newsletter, weekly blogs and Video of the Month. This month, we’re covering CIPv5: Operating Interconnected and Interdependent BES Cyber Systems. View the video at https://www.securingthehuman.org/u/8x9.

Resources

- OnGuard Online: https://www.onguardonline.gov/phishing

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Tina Horton was recently promoted to Manager at the Poly subcourthouse location. Horton has been employed with Tarrant County Tax Office for 20 years, and previously worked for 5 years at the Hood County Tax Office.

She has three children and six grandchildren. She says she loves the Blues, travelling, and watching her grandchildren play sports. Congratulations Tina!

Cindy Sherman was recently promoted to Manager at the Southlake subcourthouse location. Sherman has been employed with the Tarrant County Tax Office for 14 years.

She loves gardening and is working towards becoming a Master Gardener. She says she enjoys riding motorcycles, traveling, and working with Shelter to Rescue, a rescue group for rural Texas animal shelters. Congratulations Cindy!

New for 2016:

- Share info about a favorite book
- Trivia question each month
- Computer tip each month
- News to Use—for employees only

Our Vision:

We are a professional team of positive and dedicated individuals who serve with integrity, tenacity, and compassion in an innovative and inclusive environment.
Kudos

Holly, Downtown PT: “Service and commitment was excellent.”
Jane, Downtown MV: “Very helpful! Was able to explain required paperwork and what other info I needed to gather. Excellent experience!!!”
Taylor, SW: “I have always had a very good experience at this office and recommend it to everyone.”
Karina, NW: “Very polite, professional, courteous, patient!”
Krystal, Christi, Tryleshia, NE: “Coming from New York, all your employees were very friendly, helpful and a joy to interact with.”
Donna, Mansfield: “There was no wait. Clerk was friendly & explained things in detail.”
Joan, Arlington: “Great customer service.”

Customer service is not a department, it’s everyone’s job.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to these employees who will be recognized in
Commissioners Court in December: Tiffany Eubanks…..10 years
                                                                                           Elizabeth Wall……..10 years

December Birthdays

Carolyn Blanchard..................5     Samantha Neal......................13
Judy Lee ..................................6     Donna Coleman....................15
Janet Carter-Harvey...............6     Alan Arnold.........................15           Leah Lewis ......................28
Andree Johnson .....................8     Cindy Sherman.....................17           Krystal Albert ..................29
Jayne Lackey-Kraatz ............11     Jana Jenkins.......................22           Daniel Taylor ..................29
Pamela Jenkins ..................12     Lydia Medina......................23           Gloria Ross ....................31
Carina Hernandez ................13     Lisa Anderson.....................27           Becky Fernandez ................31
**Tarrant County**  
**Tax Office Locations**  
*Hours: Monday—Friday*  
*8:00 am—5:00 pm*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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| Main Office Building | 100 East Weatherford St.  
Fort Worth, TX  76196 | 817-884-1100    |
| Arlington       | 700 E. Abram St.  
Arlington, TX  76010 | 817-548-3935    |
| Mansfield       | 1100 E. Broad St.  
Mansfield, TX  76063 | 817-473-5127    |
| Northeast       | 645 E. Grapevine Highway  
Hurst, TX  76054  | 817-581-3635    |
| Poly            | 3212 Miller Ave.  
Fort Worth, TX  76105 | 817-531-5635    |
| Northwest       | 6713 Telephone Rd. Rm. 101  
Lake Worth, TX  76135 | 817-238-4435    |
| Southlake       | 1400 Main St. Suite 110  
Southlake TX  76092 | 817-481-8141    |
| Southwest       | 6551 Granbury Rd  
Fort Worth, TX  76133 | 817-370-4535    |

**CONTACT US**  
817-884-1100

Email Property Tax Department at:  
**taxoffice@tarrantcounty.com**

Email Motor Vehicle Department at:  
**mvf@tarrantcounty.com**

Questions about the newsletter may be directed to  
Vickie Doane at  
**Tax-SDC@tarrantcounty.com**

Visit our website at:  
**www.tarrantcounty.com**

Registration renewals may be purchased at your local Carnival, Fiesta, Kroger, Minyard and Tom Thumb stores in Bedford, Hurst, Keller, Mansfield, Southlake, Arlington, Grapevine, and Fort Worth. Check our website for a list of locations at [www.tarrantcounty.com.](http://www.tarrantcounty.com)

Be sure to bring your renewal notice, proof of insurance, vehicle inspection report and an acceptable form of ID such as a Texas Driver’s License or ID card.

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**Email Tax-SDC@tarrantcounty.com to subscribe to our monthly newsletter distribution list.**