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**MANSFIELD WATER UTILITIES RECIPIENT OF 2014
AMERICAN WATER WORKS COMMUNICATIONS AWARD**

MANSFIELD, Texas – The City of Mansfield Water Utilities Department has been named the recipient of the American Water Works Association 2014 Public Communications Achievement Award to be presented at the AWWA national annual conference in Boston this June.

The award, given to three U.S. cities or municipal water districts based on population, recognizes “significant accomplishments in communication that educate the public, promote awareness and understanding of water issues, establish media relations, implements community involvement programs and inspire others to model behavior with the public that builds trust and credibility.”

“We are honored to have been recognized by our peers for our efforts in communicating with Mansfield residents,” said Joe Smolinski, director of utility operations for the City of Mansfield. “We have strived over the past several years to be innovative and creative as we help our customers understand the importance of water issues in our community and the impact those issues have on their lives.”

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“This is a significant achievement for the City of Mansfield,” said City Manager Clayton Chandler. “Our outreach efforts have given our residents, who are also our water customers, a greater understanding about what we do each and every day to provide them with superior service. We appreciate that the American Water Works Association considers us an example of successful public outreach.”

The AWWA award addresses several specific communication achievements by the Water Utilities Department. Among them the development and implementation of a proactive public relations campaign, support and expansion of volunteer programs, utilization of the department’s new mascot and hydration station vehicle and the redesign of the annual consumer confidence report.

Smolinski cites the department’s growing public education campaign at special events like Hometown Holidays as one of its successes. Water Utilities mascot H2Owen and the H2Oasis (hydration station) have become prominent fixtures at several community events and helped to promote issues such as conservation and clean water.

Collaborative effort was also a key factor in the department’s public communication plan. Water Utilities partners with the city’s Communications & Marketing Department on the publication of its annual Consumer Confidence Report, also known as the annual Water Quality Report. In 2013, the departments redesigned the publication into a calendar format, parodying reality television shows to communicate its message of water conservation, water quality and environmental awareness. The calendar garnered widespread support and positive feedback from residents.

“Our departments work well together, particularly when it comes to finding creative ways to present what could be considered very boring, but important, information,” said Belinda Willis, director of communications & marketing for the city. “Communications & Marketing had wanted to get our hands on the water quality report for years and Joe gave us

the opportunity to work with his team. And when we wanted to think outside the box, everyone was on board.

“The calendar accomplished our goal of generating interest among residents. It also gave our departments a chance to stretch our wings creatively. And it was a lot of fun for everyone involved,” Willis said.

Smolinski said Mansfield Water Utilities is taking a strategic approach to public communications because it is critical to the departments overall mission: providing the Mansfield community with a safe, sufficient supply of drinking water and sanitary sewer service.

“None of our department’s goals and objectives can be accomplished without effective communication,” he said. “We have made significant strides in these efforts in the last two years. It is gratifying to know that all our hard work is not only deemed successful but among the best in the country.”