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Allen caregiver honored by state association

Chipango recognized for compassion, dedication to job

Garrett Cook, gcook@starlocalmedia.com Jun 17, 2016



Gwen Chipango is officially a Texas Hero.

OK, she's not quite Stephen F. Austin or Davy Crockett, but Chipango is the sole recipient of the 2016 Texas Hero Award given by the Texas Assisted Living Association to recognize employees in assisted-living communities who go the extra mile, give award-winning performances and are considered heroes for what they do daily.

For the past nine years, Chipango has brought compassion, kindness and an unprecedented level of care to the residents at Mustang Creek Estates of Allen, an assisted living community for retired residents.

"I wasn't expecting this," the McKinney resident said of the award. "When they first told me I had won, I was shocked. Tears just started coming out of my eyes. I never would have thought it would happen to me."

Her colleagues at Mustang Creek weren't shocked at all by the win; they nominated her for the Texas Hero Award and also named her the 2015 Employee of the Year for Mustang Creek Estates of Allen.

"She always makes sure people feel like they can do more than they can do," said Angella Horton, executive director of Mustang Creek Estates. "She makes all the staff members and the residents feel warm. She helps in any way that she can."

On Friday, Mustang Creek held a reception for Chipango in which guests, community residents and staff attended to honor their colleague and friend.

Tegjula Hilburn has worked with Chipango for the past three years and in that time has witnessed go beyond what's required of her to form personal relationships with Mustang Creek residents.

Chipango has fun with them, too, Hilburn said. She can often be found singing or dancing with the people she calls her friends in the community.

"I have watched how she loves on the residents, how much the family members appreciate that," Hilburn said. "These family members can't take care of their loved ones so they depend on Gwen to take care of them. She has a big heart for the residents."

Otis Clark, one of those residents, would agree.

"She gave me so much encouragement," he said. "I realized she's my friend and she tried to make me a better person. I thank God for her."

Renee Ramsey, CEO and co-founder of Mustang Creek Estates, presented Chipango with a \$1,000 check at Friday's reception.

"We're constantly looking for ways to encourage our employees to grow themselves personally and professionally, and Gwen is the perfect example of someone growing in her role as our communities continue to grow," Ramsey said.

Prior to coming to Mustang Creek, Chipango said she worked for 25 years at a factory in McKinney before it went out of business. After that, she worked several jobs but her heart was never in any of them.

Nine years ago, Chipango found her calling as a caregiver.

"I just love coming to work every day and caring for these residents," she said.

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Gwen Chipango, Mustang Creek Estates of Allen employee