

## Community pride motivates 2011 city employee of year

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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### **Corey Cooper likes how people care about Gothenburg.**

The pride people take in Gothenburg makes Corey Cooper's job, and that of others on the city crew, much easier.

Cooper, the 2011 recipient of the city-employee-of-the-year award, said if the community didn't care, there wouldn't be a lot of incentive to clear the streets of leaves, branches and even snow.

"It's easier for you as a public servant to do your job and gives you a boost and pride toward your job," he said during a break on a frigid Monday afternoon. "What we do is easier when people appreciate what we do."

The team leader of the water and sewer crew is a hard worker and a good person to work with, according to city services director Shane Gruber.

Cooper was surprised when given the award during the city employee recognition dinner last Friday at the city shop.

"I felt honored and surprised because there were good people on the ballot," he said.

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City employees nominate and vote on the recipient of the award which is narrowed down to the top three nominees before another vote is taken.

Cooper is a self-professed gypsy—because of all of the moving around he did while growing up—who graduated from high school in Aurora.

He received a general agriculture degree in 1988 from what was then called the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

A job at D&D Feeding brought him to Gothenburg where he met and married Cindy Janssen, a 1989 Gothenburg High School graduate.

The couple moved to Scottsbluff, Grand Island and Ainsworth where Cooper was a brand inspector.

To be closer to Cindy's mother, who was ill at the time, and because both Corey and Cindy found jobs, the family returned to Gothenburg in 2005.

For a couple of years before Cooper was hired by the city in 2007, he worked at Baldwin Filters.

Initially he applied for the newly formed parks department. But when Tim Lauer—who worked in the city water and sewer department—got the job, Lauer's former position was offered to him.

His job description, he said, is maintenance of the city's water and sewer systems.

“We keep things flowing,”

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Cooper said about the responsibility of himself and two others in the department. "When things need done, we

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