

March 6, 2006

Editor's note: This story was originally printed in the Jefferson County Attorney's Office internal newsletter, Insider.

85-year-old thrives in Child Support Office

Bette Rush's history is one for the books

By Bill Patterson

Bette Rush is not your typical public employee. First, there's the fact that, at 86, she continues to enjoy her position in the Jefferson County Attorney's Child Support Non-Support Division. What makes her truly unique, however, is the path that brought her to the Child Support Division in 1982.



It's a journey that's taken her to Europe, South and Central America, and New England, with the glamour and perils of show business before and during World War II.

Raised in a foster home, Rush struck out to make her way in life when she was 16. She went to New York, where she was befriended by two ladies who took her to a Spanish theater one evening. After the show, they went backstage to meet the troupe, and Rush met her future husband – a comedian with the company.

Her husband assembled a troupe of 36 performers – dancers, singers, chorus girls and comedians – and arranged for the company to tour in Spain in 1936. They married and set off for Spain, but shortly after their arrival, civil war broke out in that country, and their contract was canceled.

So it was off to South America, where they began their tour in Lima, Peru. They crossed the Atlantic by ocean liner, and Rush remembers being very seasick – except she wasn't.

"I was carrying a little girl, but I didn't know," she recalled.

In the beginning, Rush only knew ballroom dancing, but her husband taught her tap dancing, Spanish Congas and a variety of international dances.

"We lived out of a suitcase," said Rush. "And we traveled constantly – Chile, Argentina, Peru. Chile was my favorite. They were the friendliest people."

It was a glamorous lifestyle. Performing troupes were a rarity in most of the towns and villages they visited, and they were treated as stars. But the routine was grueling.

"We finished our shows at about midnight. Then we would eat," Rush said. "We would get in about two or three o'clock in the morning, sleep, get up, eat breakfast and rehearse. And then it was time for the show."

In addition, Rush made all her own costumes, and cared for their daughter. "We had a special suitcase for her," she said. "We put a pillow in the suitcase. And of course, I had 36 babysitters, because she was the only baby in the whole troupe."

The troupe was a close-knit family, but little by little, members of the company drifted off.

"The chorus girls were the first ones to go," said Rich. "The girls would find a rich guy, and they would leave the troupe. So little by little we started losing the chorus girls."

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Rush's husband was killed in a plane crash in Brazil. Contracts became more difficult to get, and the performers continued to leave the troupe.

"I was in Buenos Aires the day the war began," Rush said. "I was dancing in an outdoor café, and I was dancing a Mexican hat dance when the start of the war was announced. That was the end of it – we quit right then and there."



The U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru, needed bilingual clerks, so Rush and her daughter moved there, and she went to work for the U.S. Army, censoring G.I. mail.

"I cut the little holes out of the letters," she said. "When they got a letter that said, 'Dear John – I'm sorry,' that was me."

In 1945, Rush and her daughter returned to the United States and settled in Newport, Rhode Island, where she met and married a sailor from Kentucky. They moved back to his home in Kentucky and adopted a son, but after 18 years were divorced.

March 6, 2006

Some time later, she met Courier-Journal sports writer Ken Rush, and they married.

“By that time, my son was 8 years old,” said Rush. “Ken said, ‘You just take care of your son and take care of me,’ so I didn’t do anything for a while.”

When Ken retired, Rush volunteered at Democratic Party headquarters, and soon she was offered paid employment at the local unemployment office.

“I said, ‘I don’t want to work.’ But Fran Hayden asked me to try it, and I said okay, and then six months later Governor John Y. Brown laid a bunch of people off, and I was one of them.”

From there, Rush went to the Child Support Division, then located in the Kentucky Home Life Building. She’s been with the agency since then.

“I had the bug, and I said, ‘I’d just like to keep on working.’”

That was in 1982. Rush retired in 1991, but a year later, she was asked to return part-time.

“I like putting bad guys away,” said Rush, “because that’s what I do – I print out the forms for warrants, and I like the people I work for and with.”

“I enjoy [working] immensely. We’re family here, and we really care. They days that I am off, I look forward to coming back. “My doctor says it’s a good reason for me to get up and comb my hair – I asked him ‘What hair?’”? Rush’s daughter is now 67 and an administrative associate in the Modern Language Department at the University of Louisville. Her son is now 45. She has three grandsons, two step-grandsons, and 11 great-grandchildren.

One grandson, Chuck, is an IT technician for the Child Support office.

She drives to the Child Support Office from her home in South Louisville and plans on working “as long as they feel I am contributing.”

Judging by that criteria and the opinion of her “second family” in Child Support, Rush will be working for a long, long time.

Birdwhistell Encourages Social Work Students at Rally

By Anya Armes Weber

About 150 people attended a rally for social workers last Wednesday in the Capitol rotunda to kick off Professional Social Worker Month in Kentucky

Cabinet Secretary Mark Birdwhistell read a proclamation from Governor Ernie Fletcher and gave the kickoff address at the rally.

Birdwhistell told the group -- mostly social work students from state colleges and universities – that state social work is evolving.

“In the last several months, we’ve been concentrating on how we modernize our delivery system

in our Department for Community Based Services,” he said. “We know that social work has to change and the delivery has to change. Social workers in the field have to have the technology. They need the laptops, the cell phones.”

“Share your concerns with your lawmakers,” he told the group. “Support me on the technology issue. Social workers need the tools of the trade to keep up with the times.”

Sen. Ken Winters, R-Murray, applauded the students’ enthusiasm.

“One of the really exciting things about today is having all you here,” he said. “We can look at all the positive things we see for the future for our state and for the field of social work.”

Winters is the former president of Campbellsville University and brought the Carver School of Social Work to that campus from Louisville’s Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1998.

Rep. Jim Wayne, a Louisville Democrat and the only active social worker serving in the General Assembly, told



Social work students listen to speaker Hank Cecil, president of the Kentucky Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. The group sponsored the rally.

March 6, 2006

the students they should consider running for the state legislature.

“The more social workers we have shaping policy, the more humane, the more loving, the more compassionate our state government will be.”

Birdwhistell Thanks Social Service Workers

To the Cabinet’s 1,470 social service workers, I would like to take this opportunity to pass along my sincere gratitude for your continued exemplary service to our customers.

As we celebrate Social Work Appreciation Month this month, it’s important you know the influence of your efforts to help vulnerable children and adults every day.

Your jobs aren’t easy. You work with families in crisis, and sometimes your work takes you to environments of questionable safety. There is no such thing as a “typical” day for you.

Though you may be often close to human tragedy, the rewards of your job can be great. You may see the joy in the eyes of children who have found their “forever families” or sense firsthand the comfort of senior or disabled Kentuckians who finally receive the daily care they require. You are able to assess the needs of these customers and, in concert with our community partners, help fill them.

Many of you know I earned my undergraduate degree in social work at Georgetown College. I apply the skills I gleaned there to my everyday work with lawmakers, health care administrators and of course, our coworkers and Cabinet clients.

The nurturing temperament of a social services worker, paired with a strong commitment to service, compels you to improve your abilities and find more resources to meet the basic human needs of our clients.

You put your hearts into your work, and you can be assured that it’s appreciated at every level of the Cabinet. Without you, many families wouldn’t be as safe, as self-sufficient or as unified. Remember that the positive impact of your involvement can last for many generations.

Thank you all for your contributions to making the quality of life better for countless Kentucky families.

CHFS Wellness Ambassador

Name: Angel Walker

Age: 30



Administrative Specialist II/Travel Reimbursement Branch

2 children, including a toddler at home

Health objective: Stop smoking

As a little girl, Angel Walker used to “borrow” cigarettes while her mom was sleeping. Twenty-one years later, Walker doesn’t want her 2-year-old son to follow in her footsteps.

“I do not want my son sneaking around behind my back smoking or stealing cigarettes from me,” she said.

That’s the main reason Walker is making her third attempt to quit smoking since she picked up the habit at age 9.

Walker is taking a whole-body approach to her health goal by increasing her level of exercise to avoid the unwanted pounds that often accompany smoking cessation attempts.

“I walk downstairs on both breaks,” she said. “Like others who have tried to quit, I find it easier not to smoke at work because we can walk on our breaks.”

Smoking had become a controlling influence in Walker’s life. Few minutes out of her day did not in some way revolve around smoking.

“I always want a cigarette - when I wake up first thing I put on my jacket and hat and go outside to light that cigarette, no matter how cold it is,” she said. “I have to have one when I get in my car, when I get out of the car, before I go in the store, when I come out. It really is becoming a nuisance to dig in my purse for the lighter just to have a few puffs on a quick trip to the store.”

Nicotine patches and regular chewing gum are helping Walker deal with her cravings. She said even though having a cigarette is her first thought on waking, the patches provide a measure of relief to overcome those thoughts. When things get really tough, a stick of gum seems to take the edge off.

Support and encouragement from co-workers and friends also help Walker sustain progress toward her goal.

Still, it’s the health advantages to her son and the example she wants to set for both her children that pack the biggest punch in Walker’s habit-kicking arsenal.

“I have decided that being a non-smoker is going to be my way of life, whether I like it or not,” she said. “I want to be



March 6, 2006

a healthy mom and I don't want my son to grow up watching 'mommy moke'."

***Editor's Note:** This week, CHFS Focus is excited to bring you a new, monthly feature, Volunteer Vibes. The column will run the first Monday of the month, and will answer questions about volunteerism and how to get involved in your community. If you have a question about volunteering in your community, e-mail Eileen Cackowski.*

Volunteer Vibes: Defining Volunteerism

By Eileen Cackowski, Director, Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service

I have seen the letters KCCVS around the CHR building. Who are they and what do they do?

KCCVS stands for the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service. They have a Governor-appointed commission and a staff of six. They monitor and support the Kentucky AmeriCorps programs while offering training and technical assistance to non-profit organizations who utilize volunteers.

How do AmeriCorps members differ from volunteers?

AmeriCorps members "enlist" for one year of service or 1,700 hours in exchange for a living allowance of \$10,600 and an educational voucher worth \$4,725. The educational voucher can be used for college or to pay college loans. AmeriCorps members recruit volunteers who serve for one time only events and/or a few hours a week or month.

Why do people volunteer?

In Kentucky, people volunteer because it is a part of who we are. When I first came to Kentucky many people told me they did not volunteer because they were too busy "helping out" at school, in church and in the community. That "helping out" is volunteerism. In the 1800s the English novelist George Eliot said, "What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other." Kentuckians know it feels good to volunteer and we know that there is something for each person to contribute to the greater good of the commonwealth.

What constitutes volunteering?

Volunteering can be learning a new skill, building on a current one and generally doing something one really likes to do. You can volunteer from home, knit blankets for babies and children for Project Linus; go into the community to be a photographer for special events; join a team helping in times of a disaster or do an assortment of things for a local school. You can volunteer once a year, monthly or weekly. You have a lot of control over the times and the volunteer opportunity.

Feel free to talk to the folks at KCCVS (502) 564-7420 to answer your specific questions. You can also send questions to KCCVS@ky.gov and watch this spot for answers each month.

Focus on Wellness

The CHFS Wellness Committee has put together several articles about eating healthy in recognition of March as National Nutrition Month. The weekly articles will focus on a food group and offer helpful hints about how to incorporate healthier foods into your diet. This week, the committee toasts good health with a few words on fruits and vegetables..

Fruits and Vegetables Provide Limitless Benefits

Only one in five Kentucky adults eat the minimum of five total fruits and vegetables each day, a startling fact considering these foods offer limitless benefits to improving health.

Fruits and vegetables are important to the diet to provide needed vitamins, minerals and fiber. The average person only eats three servings of fruits and vegetables each day and needs to double consumption to meet recommendations.

Fruits and vegetables are full of essential vitamins (mainly Vitamin A, beta-carotene, and Vitamin C), minerals, fiber, and disease-fighting phytochemicals (plant chemicals). These plant chemicals can help reduce your risk of numerous diseases including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cancers of the digestive tract.

Plant chemicals help to protect our health. Phytochemicals are usually related to color. Fruits and vegetables of different colors — green, yellow-orange, red, blue-purple and white — contain their own combination of phytochemicals and nutrients that work together to promote good health.

Fruits and vegetables are low in calories and provide a lot of fiber, meaning they fill you up. This helps with weight control.

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be an easy snack for people on the go. Many grocery stores provide snack packs of fruits and vegetables that make this an easy option. Or, you can buy fruits and vegetables in bulk, and create your own snack packs. These foods provide energy and nutrients to keep your body healthy.

Source: www.5aday.gov

March 6, 2006

Frankfort Employee news

New Item in Focus

CHFS Focus is pleased to announce a new feature showcasing CHFS staff members caught in the act of improving their health.

Whether taking the stairs, walking during breaks, making healthy meal and snack choices or engaging in other health-promoting activities, CHFS employees will be caught in the act by a staff photographer and their photos will appear in the new Focus feature, Caught in the Act.

Because our photographer can't be there every time a good health choice is made at work, we invite CHFS employees to submit photos of colleagues caught in the act of improving their health.

Send your photos with subjects' names and office to: [Lisa Wallace](#). This is one time when you can be proud to be Caught in the Act.

Get Ten-ure information

The Ten-ure table will be set up on the first floor at CHFS on Wednesday, March 8, with information concerning the state organization.

Employee News

DPH Sanitarian Honored by Colleagues

Kenny Ratliff, manager of the Division of Public Health, Protection and Safety's Public Safety Branch, received the "Outstanding Sanitarian of the Year" award this year from the Kentucky Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians, or KAMFES.



KAMFES is a professional association composed of state and local health department environmental public health officials; food, dairy and environmental industry groups; academia and other groups interested in public environmental health in Kentucky. This association identifies one outstanding registered sanitarian or environmental public health specialist each year who has garnered recognition for service to state and local environmental public health programs, and support for the association.

Ratliff received this prestigious award in Louisville at the KAMFES annual meeting Feb. 22.

CHFS Health Tip of the Week: Teach Children to Start Day Off Right

This week is National School Breakfast Week

By Anne Parr, R.N.

Breakfast is the first, and most important, meal of the day. A healthy breakfast provides energy, clear thinking and a wholesome start to a busy day.

Children who start their day with a balanced, healthy breakfast perform better in school and are more prepared for the active day ahead. When a child skips breakfast, the overnight fasting period is extended and blood sugar level declines, triggering a stress response that disturbs alertness and memory.

A healthy breakfast doesn't have to take a lot of time.

Good breakfast choices include:

- Eggs
- French toast, waffles, or pancakes (try wheat or whole-grain varieties)
- Unsweetened cereal with low-fat milk and fruit and a glass of 100 percent fruit juice
- Hot cereal, such as oatmeal or cream of wheat (try some dried fruit or nuts on top)
- Whole-grain toast, bagel or English muffin with cheese or peanut butter
- Yogurt with fruit or nuts
- Fruit smoothie, such as a [strawberry smoothie](http://kidshealth.org/kid/recipes/recipes/straw_smoothie.html)

Try to avoid breakfast bars, sugary cereals, crisps or chips, soft drinks and juice drinks. These items contain more sugar than your child needs.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Employee Enrichment is a weekly feature for CHFS staff. These tips for making work better focus on team building, customer service and personal development.



Dale Carnegie was a pioneer in personal development and has helped countless people improve their work relationships and boost their careers through his public speaking and book sales.

In his book "How to Win Friends and Influence People," published 70 years ago, he details the steps he recommends for getting what you want by making people like you. They key, he said, was to focus not on your

March 6, 2006

desired outcome, but on your customer. Here are Carnegie's tips.

- Become genuinely interested in other people.
- Smile.
- Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
- Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
- Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
- Make the other person feel important -- and do it sincerely.