

FOCUS

News from and about the Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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Radiation Health inspector Berrier receives Bronze Star for role in Operation New Dawn

Retired from military in February following 18 years of combat duty

Steven Berrier is the first to admit he is not the typical face of warfare.

A grandfather who reenlisted in his mid-40s and served two tours of duty at the same time as his two grown sons, Berrier is part of the changing face of the United States military.

The experience gained over time, coupled with a steely resolve forged through years of training and life on the front lines has made Berrier a beacon of calm in the sea of change. His children, his troops under his command and his co-workers within the Radiation Health Branch of the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety have each sought his advice and leadership in times of crisis.

Berrier, a Master Sergeant with the 25th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, recently was awarded the Bronze Star for his service during Operation New Dawn during his two tours of service in Iraq. The Bronze Star is the military's fourth highest individual honor and Berrier's was earned through 'exceptionally meritorious service while assigned as the Camp Victory Operations and Force Protection noncommissioned officer in charge during Operation New Dawn.'

While in Iraq for his second tour Berrier was assigned to Camp Victory. Berrier was the operations sergeant for the camp but his extensive experience made him a natural candidate for additional duties, which he performed without hesitation.

"I was the contract officer. I was the security person. I also worked with security teams to make sure the classified materials were taken care of before they left the camp. And I was supposed to make sure all the contractors left when they were supposed to. I kept all these jobs going and I never dropped the ball," he



said. "Toward the end it was getting crazier and crazier because the military had never done (a transition to Iraqi self-rule) before. We were still technically at war so there was a lot of tension. We were still getting mortared and getting shot at. It was a crazy situation but you're trying to maintain your composure. You're trying to get out of there while still trying to get things done."

The honor was the final chapter to a military career with roots to the Vietnam War era. Berrier served on active duty from 1975-1990. He left the army that year for more than a decade to raise his children, before re-enlisting with the Kentucky National Guard in 2003, the year of the United States invasion of Iraq.

The life he returned to in 2003 after 13 years away was much different than the one he left in 1990 and a world away from the one he lived in when he joined for the first time in 1975. At the time the Vietnam War was winding down and the country, as well as the military, was in a state of transition after more than a decade at war.

"It was not popular to be in the military then," Berrier

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Many ways to overcome workplace negativity

Most every office has a “Toxic Tammy” of a “Bad-News Bill.” These are people who are unfailingly negative and constant complainers. They can only see the shortcomings in other people, and they can’t help but announce what is wrong with every idea.

Dealing with negative attitudes like this can be difficult. The worst thing about having toxic coworkers: Their bad attitudes are contagious. This kind of negativity can lead to poor staff morale and a decline in performance.

The trainers at DaleCarnegie.com offer five tips for overcoming workplace negativity.

Control your response to negativity. When your encounter it, don’t become a part of it. Stay positive with your comments, or just don’t say anything.

Look for opportunities. If coworkers are criticizing an idea or a project for the reasons it won’t work, take the time to figure out a solution that could help your customers and stakeholders.

Cultivate your relationships. Base your workplace connections on honesty and positivity. People who

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Anya Armes Weber



are negative are more likely to be discouraging, untrustworthy and explosive. Whenever you can, just avoid colleagues who have a negative outlook.

Argue the right way. The only real way to win an office argument is to avoid it. But when you are in a debate with someone who’s negative, remain respectful. Don’t ever say, “You’re wrong.” Instead speak in terms of what you think and back up your ideas with facts.

Agree to Disagree. You don’t always have to engage a negative person. Whether or not you speak your mind to them, try to see things from their point of view – even if they won’t budge from their position. You may get a new perspective on the issue.

Important changes to IT helpdesk procedure

For CHFS employees IT help has always been a phone call or email away thanks to the Helpdesk. Assistance is still available but only with a ticket generated by Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) first.

Unlike past issues which were handled directly by CHFS IT staff, users may no longer contact members of the IT staff directly. All orders and inquiries must now originate with the Commonwealth Service Desk, which will create a ticket and contact the proper IT staff to complete the order.

It is important to note that all IT orders are addressed in the order in which they are received and based on priority. To contact the Commonwealth Service Desk please call (800) 372-7434 or by email.



Deadline approaching for Humana Flex Spending reimbursements

Staff enrolled in the Kentucky Employees Health Plan who has remaining funds in their Humana flexible spending accounts (FSAs) have until March 31 to file for reimbursement.

Outstanding claims must be postmarked or submitted by fax by March 31.

To see remaining balances in your 2013 personal care account, health flexible spending account or dependent care spending account, log on to www.humana.com and click the “Coverage, Claims and Spending” link. You can download a claim form on that page. Have your Humana username and password handy.

BERRIER

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recalled. “People either spit on you or really didn’t look at you. I realized the first time I came home wearing a uniform that I shouldn’t do that again. It’s funny that the public goes through these stages that realizing the policies are the policies of leadership and not the policies of the soldier. I think people who have never been exposed to the military do not realize the disconnect. A couple times when I went down to Harpers Ferry and a couple other places I visited and we started talking about the military and I said, ‘When you say thank you for your service’ do you really realize what that means?”

Berrier said he understands the conflicted feelings soldiers in today’s military must face because he saw it a generation earlier with Vietnam War veterans and how they were shunned when they returned home. The images the public sees of United States operations in Iraq and Afghanistan capture only a small part of the overall mission. According to Berrier, the soldiers’ repeated exposure to highly stressful combat situations causes him to have concern for their wellbeing long after they leave the battlefield.

“Coming in in 1975 and seeing several different wars from several different angles and talking with several different people – the newer generation has been exposed to more than the World War I and World War II generations because they have been off and on, off and on,” he said. “Back then the average World War II vet was in combat for a year and a half. These kids will do a year and a half, then come home for six months or a year, then go back for another year. They do this three or four times. You have kids that have been through four or five years of war and you tell them to turn the switch off. If you keep turning the switch on and off and eventually it’s going to break.

“It’s going to have an impact with how people are going to have to deal with this generation later on in life. Think about all the wounded soldiers who come back. There’s a list of all the soldiers who come home with physical wounds but what about all those who come home with mental wounds? It’s going to have a long-term effect on their health and how they look at war. Mentally you’re going to have issues long-term with how they deal with stress and you see more and more violence because they have gotten used to that. What used to be a fistfight is now a gunfight or even murder because they have been desensitized to the situation so much. They are constantly exposed to it.”

Berrier has his own stories to tell from the front line. The process of leaving it behind took him almost a year. Still, sudden popping sounds like the explosion of a transformer or an unexpected touch have triggered his defense



mechanism. Berrier says the longer he is in the safe environment of his everyday surroundings much of it goes away but there are some things that become second nature through a soldier’s training and it never goes away.

Life in the military has become a family decision, in both the figurative and literal sense. At one time Berrier was deployed to Iraq while his son Dean, 31, served in the navy and youngest son Keith, 28, also served in the army.



The experiences Berrier has enjoyed over the past four decades have helped shape his ideas and philosophy. The northern Ohio native grew up on a farm and only left the state twice before being inducted and stationed in then-West Germany for the first of two tours of duty in 1975. He experienced culture shock at first but soon immersed himself in the surrounding communities and learned a universal lesson about humanity from it.

“They were just like me. The farmers had their different cultural stuff and different ways of doing things but they still warmed to you,” Berrier said. “I was adopted by several villages. They wanted to hear about America and I wanted to hear about them so it was a good tradeoff. People really aren’t that much different when you think about the small things in life.”

Berrier retired in early February after 18 years of combat duty. During his time in the military he also lived in North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Alabama and Hawaii.

These days Berrier makes his home in Frankfort, just three blocks away from his job as an inspector for the Radiation Health Branch of the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety in the Human Resources Building on East Main Street.

The Radiation Health Branch has three different aspects, the first licensing and supervising nuclear materials. This includes nuclear sensor gauges used in factories, bottling plants, distilleries and paper mills. Berrier estimates there are between 650 and 700 licenses that are governed statewide.

The second inspects and regulates X-ray tubes used in hospitals, doctors and dentists offices. The other part of the agency is the lab which does analytical work.

“When you say radiation everybody jumps but there’s a lot more radiation in their daily lives than they realize,” Berrier said. “It’s trace amounts around you in almost everything you do. Smoke detectors, exit signs, blood banks use it to purify blood. There are tubes or industrial (radiation) in just about every county.”

The Radiation Health Branch also partners with other state and federal public safety and homeland security agencies for large scale events like the Kentucky Derby as well as public education programs. Berrier has worked with various state government agencies since 1999.

“I enjoy being an inspector. I can pick my projects but I can also get out of the office and do inspections and get to see different parts of the state,” he said. “Being from northern Ohio I never realized Kentucky was linked with Virginia until I got down into coal country and accidentally crossed the state line one time. I go into this small little town and went in the local store and asked, ‘Where am I at? I think I’m in West Virginia’ and he goes, ‘No. You’re in Virginia.’ I said, ‘Are you sure’ and he said, ‘Where are you from? Now who was your daddy?’ I loved that one.”



A veteran of more than 15 years of combat, Berrier said he was never concerned with his fate but his role as a parent made it much tougher not to worry about his children.

“The hardest thing for me was when both of my sons were deployed at the same time. My youngest had already been blown up once – he was in a tank so he didn’t get physically hurt.

But the first time when he got blown up I knew the unit was there, I knew through my grapevine that something happened but I didn’t know what was going on,” Berrier said. “So you’re waiting on a phone call to hear good news, not bad news. But you can’t let yourself think that because it’s still a phone call. It’s that kind of stress that you have to deal with. But physically when I was there I knew what I needed to do keep myself safe. But when you have your own children in that situation it’s a totally different stress.”



Are you or someone you know eligible for WIC (Women, Infants and Children)?

If you are pregnant, recently had a baby or have a child younger than 5 years of age, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) could help you.

What is WIC?

WIC is a short-term intervention program designed to influence lifelong nutrition and health behavior by providing nutrition information to help choose healthy food. To help support healthy fresh food the Kentucky Farmers' Markets and most local grocery stores support WIC. WIC is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture.

How do I know if I'm eligible?

To be eligible for the WIC Program, applicants must be categorically eligible and meet residence and income guidelines. To learn more contact our website prescreening tool; <http://wic.fns.usda.gov/wps/pages/start.jsf> or contact the WIC Program or Local Health Department serving your area, <http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/8DC586A4-6459-4296-AE02-CFD62BA977FF/0/LocalHealthDepartmentListingsandWICCoordinators12014.pdf>

If you have any questions please contact your State WIC Contacts at 502.564.3827.

WIC is an equal opportunity program



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Story ideas or comments? Contact Elden May.