

CHANGING THE LETTERS OF THE LAW

W POLICE MEN

Issues, benefits of being women in law enforcement

/Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer

It has been widely noted that the call to law enforcement is one that is unique.

But for a woman to embrace that call, she must be extraordinary if nothing. She must be willing to tote an AR 15, battle any drunk on the street and dress up as bait to catch would-be Casanovas all while maintaining her sense of femininity.

It is not an easy rope to walk.

"You don't have to give me anything extra, you don't have to give me the sweet assignment, you don't have to protect me, you don't have to do all this stuff to make me different than this one, I just want to be treated the same as this officer standing here," said Tiua Chilton, Kentucky State University assistant police chief. "Whether it be a male officer, whether it be another female officer,

whether it be a black officer, whether it be a Hispanic officer – I just want to be treated the exact same."

Women inherently are nurturers, motherly, compassionate and emotionally adept. These traits, some say, are what enhance the quality and resources of a department which employs them.

Their use of force statistically is lower. Their ability to talk themselves out of dangerous situations is part of their nature. They implement community-oriented policing and improve law enforcement response to violence against women.

For decades, these women have fought their way out of stereotypes and sexism from generations of a male-dominated career path. Many say that battle still rages on, especially >>

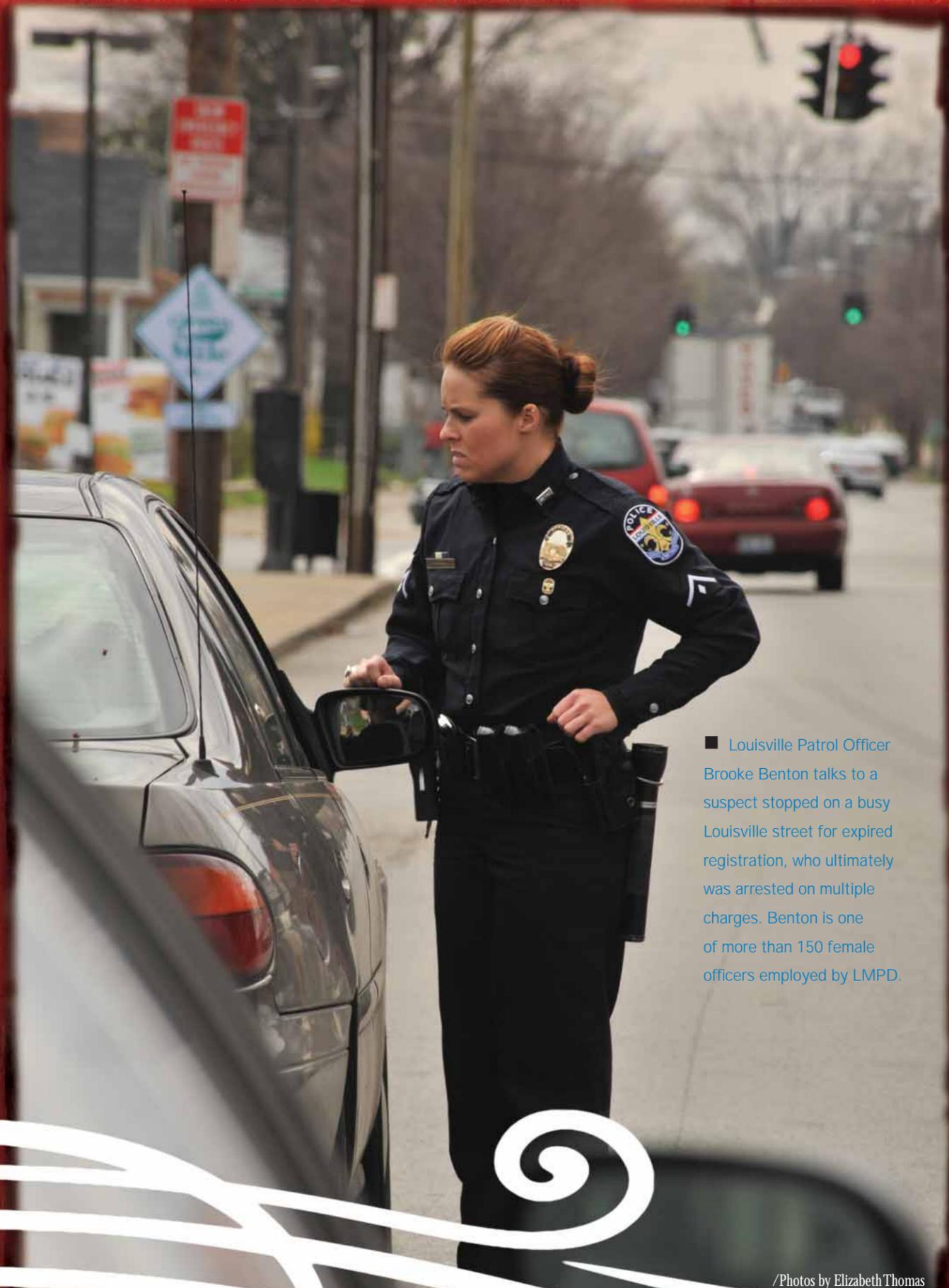
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■ Louisville Patrol Officer Brooke Benton talks to a suspect stopped on a busy Louisville street for expired registration, who ultimately was arrested on multiple charges. Benton is one of more than 150 female officers employed by LMPD.

/Photos by Elizabeth Thomas



in small-town Kentucky where southern values and mindsets are prevalent.

But what makes these women more than the stereotypes that struggle to define them?

Kentucky officers say it is their sense of passion, their commitment to the job and their willingness to risk everything to prove that the thin blue line is not drawn between genders.

On being tough

Asked about how their journey on the streets is different as females, the resounding response from officers across the state was that it never is enough to prove themselves once.

“You have to prove yourself over and over and over,” said Denise Spratt, Kentucky’s Crisis Intervention Team training coordinator and retired Louisville Metro Police lieutenant. “And some people, I don’t think you will ever change their minds.”

Women traditionally are viewed as the softer gender – the weaker sex, the ones needing protecting. So for the women who break out of those roles and into law enforcement, they not only have to have thicker skin, they also have to be more physically fit, more passionate and better educated to prove they can do the job.

Paducah Police Interim Chief Sandy Joslyn graduated from Murray State University with a bachelor’s degree in criminology, corrections and rehabilitation. But it took more than just her degree to help her earn the respect of the criminals, citizens and her co-workers.

“I think the most difficult thing about it was not being taken seriously in your career,” she said. “I had trained, I had gone to college to prepare for a career in this field and I had

gone to the academy and worked very hard. I felt when I came back that I was qualified for the position and I wanted to be accepted for that.”

For some it takes years to earn that respect, to be taken seriously and to be seen as an officer and not a female in a class A uniform. Bowling Green Police officer of six years, Donitka Kay, said it takes at least one “lose your mind moment” for people to see that you are serious about your job. You have to be willing to take the ribbing, the cussing, the jokes and the disrespect and rise above it.

“I had a passion to be here and I had a passion to do the job and to do it well,” Joslyn said. “I think people will do to you what you allow them to do. I just always stood up for myself and moved forward and I think that’s the key to anybody surviving in the workplace, male or female. You have to stand up for what’s the right thing.”

And Kentucky’s women are up to the challenge.

“I want to be known for what I did,” said Debbie Marasa, a 20-year veteran officer with St. Matthews Police Department.

Sarah Stumler, a rookie Louisville Metro patrol officer agreed.

“Some people want to get into it for different reasons, but I just wanted to come on and make a difference for someone,” she said.

Louisville Metro Homicide Detective Leigh Maroni got into law enforcement because she saw her chance to make that difference. In the homicide unit, Maroni said she had to make a decision to be tough to keep pace.

“I just think everybody’s going to feel the new girl out when they come out on the >>

street,” Maroni said. “They’re going to see what you’re capable of doing and some of them will push you in terms of what they talk about in your presence. Or out on the street they’re going to see how you talk to people and they’re going to base their decision on whether they want to work with you or not. Same thing in the investigative unit. You get there, you’ve got to be able to hold your own and show that you can get a confession or you can lock somebody up for the same crime they can.”

On being girls

Most women over the years learn how to hold their own with their male co-workers. But, “it is not always good to be one of the boys,” said St. Matthews Assistant Police Chief Kathy Eigelbach, a 20-year veteran. Sometimes women who work hard to be tough and prove they can keep pace forget it is OK to maintain the femininity that makes them unique.

That is just one part of what the Kentucky Women’s Law Enforcement Network helps to prevent. The group also helps provide camaraderie among female officers.

Early in her career, Eigelbach said it was kind of lonely being one of the only women and not having any female mentors.

“There were many times that I would have liked to have had another female in this career just to talk to about issues unique to women in this career,” Joslyn said. “We didn’t have the Internet and all the resources you have today to network back then.”

Kentucky State University Police Chief Stephanie Bastin experienced a similar struggle in her early days at the University of Kentucky Police Department.

“There were not any females in administrative positions that I could go to, that I could watch, that I could talk to and say, ‘I’m having this problem, how do I take care

of this?’” Bastin said.

Today, Bastin sees mentoring her female co-workers as an important part of her job. And she also makes an effort to show them through her brightly painted fingernails and Prada handbags that nothing about her uniform makes her any less of a woman.

Louisville Patrol Officer Brooke Benton also has no qualms about being the strong female she is both on and off the clock.

“When I go to court they don’t recognize me if I am in civilian clothes,” Benton said. “I think sometimes people get confused when they look at us and they just see the uniform. They don’t understand we are mothers and daughters and sisters. I think sometimes a uniform blinds people to think that we’re not human beings. Yeah, we like to be girly-girls and we go out and we have our fun, too. It’s just a career choice that we made.”

On family life

Law enforcement often makes being a mother, daughter, sister or wife difficult tasks. There is shift work, holiday assignments, overtime and difficult days to deal with.

“The vast majority of women get in to law enforcement while they are still single,” said Chilton, a 14-year veteran.

Bowling Green’s Kay has sacrificed having a family because she is aware of the struggles she will face in the career she loves.

“You’re away from home – some chicks deal with that, some don’t,” Kay said.

“Especially if they get into it after they have a family. If it is a career change, that’s a big sacrifice that not every woman is willing or wants to make.”

Dating as a female cop can be difficult enough. Some men are not comfortable with a woman who carries a weapon and has the constitutional right to take a life. Others >>



■ Paducah Interim Police Chief Sandy Joslyn served the department for 25 years, retired, then returned to serve as chief in 2008. Administration is a good fit for females, Joslyn said.

Joslyn on “overcoming basic training obstacles”

“Physically it was very challenging for me, but I’ll never forget going over the wall, I had difficulty going over the wall and I spent a couple weeks banging myself against that wall trying to get over it until I stayed one evening to work on that and was just in there repeatedly not making it over the wall. There was an older man there that was the janitor and he was watching me and he finally came over and said, ‘Honey, you want me to show you how to get over that wall?’ I guess he saw people do it a lot and so he gave me some tips on how to get over that wall and by the next day I was the first one over the wall. I never knew his name but I always remembered that.”



become so fascinated with her choice of career that they fail to see the woman behind the badge. Even more struggle to find time to go on a date if they work late shifts and weekends.

For that reason, every Kentucky officer interviewed who was married – with one exception – married someone who they say gets it: other police or firefighters. The benefit of marrying another officer or a firefighter can help give police marriages that have a staggering failure rate a fighting chance.

Some women, like Bastin, whose husband is a retired officer, find it comforting to be able to talk to their husbands about what is going on at work and have them understand. Others appreciate having an understanding husband, but would rather keep work out of their home.

“We really try not to [talk about work] because when, I’ve been at work all day, I don’t want to hear any more stories,” Maroni said. “I have dated outside of law enforcement and that’s all they want to talk about – ‘Tell me some stories.’ ... But it’s nice to have the support of somebody who knows what the job entails. I can tell [my husband] anything I want to and vice-versa. We share the funny stories.”

Bastin said female officers have to be just as dedicated to their marriages as they are to the job. Because of shift work, Bastin said for years she and her husband communicated through notes left on the kitchen table.

“It is very hard balancing a family,” she said. “It is very hard to stay married. I have been married 28 years. I am very proud of that. I am very proud of the fact that together we raised two wonderful children. But that wasn’t easy.

“It is very difficult as a woman to come in, do your job, take control of a situation and have to be assertive,” she continued. “Sometimes you have to be aggressive. Then you go home and you’ve got to be a different person. You have to be a partner. You have to be a mother. And it is hard to turn that on and off. A lot of men have a very difficult time with wives who have that kind of personality.”

Chilton was married to an electrician before she decided to attend the police academy, she said. Her job became a problem for them even in the early days at the academy.

“I remember him making a joke ... when people would say, ‘So what do you think about having a wife who is a cop?’” Chilton said. “And it was funny – it’s still funny – but he would say, ‘Oh, now when I hear a bump in the night I make her go check.’

“It was a joke between him and me, but it got to the point where he had a hard time dealing with the type of work that I was doing,” Chilton continued. “And because I was a new police officer, I worked second shift ... [so] we didn’t have days off together unless he took a vacation day. So that certainly affected our marriage. Our marriage didn’t last three years after I got out of the police academy. That wasn’t the only reason why it didn’t survive, but it was a large portion of it, I think.”

Joslyn’s marriage has thrived in part because her husband of 25 years not only supported her career choice, but he never made an issue of her working hand in hand with other men on late-night stakeouts, overnight trips and long days in the field.

“My husband accepts this as my career,” Joslyn said. “He accepts the police department as my extended family, these are my brothers and sisters in law enforcement and >>

Weighted Physical-Agility Standard Proposed for POPS

The five-component test battery included in the Peace Officer Professional Standards’ physical-agility testing is under evaluation to determine if a weighted standard of scoring is plausible for Kentucky.

The Kentucky Law Enforcement Council has appointed a special committee to review these standards for possible modification, said Don Pendleton, Department of Criminal Justice Training director of training support and special committee member.

“The committee has recommended an evaluation to see if validity can be protected while implementing a weighted scoring of the five-test battery,” Pendleton said. “This would allow an individual who may be a little short on upper-body strength to make it up in other areas with a reasonableness implied, and an understanding of what range a person can improve in 18 weeks of training and successfully pass an exit test.”

As part of the evaluation, committee members intend to protect the advantages POPS provides Kentucky law enforcement while assessing the reliability of modifying the standards in hopes of ultimately expanding the applicant pool, Pendleton said.

“There has been discussion in the law enforcement community with chiefs and sheriffs for some time that the female pass rate on those tests has been less than ideal,” he said. “However, it remains critical that the POPS act provides quality applicants for law enforcement.”

Dr. Bryant Stamford, a professor, consultant, author and principal investigator for the 2001 study, which led to the latest POPS revision, has been contracted to evaluate the standards. Stamford’s previous experience and understanding of the issue is an important part of this evaluation process, Pendleton said.

“Dr. Stamford will seek to develop scalable cut-points that would present a scientifically supported rationale while conducting a review of current testing protocols,” Pendleton said.

Data should be available for the committee to review by late July.

To qualify for employment, potential officers on a state-wide level must be able to bench press 64 percent of their body weight, complete 18 sit-ups within one minute, finish a 300-meter run in 65 seconds, perform 20 push-ups and run 1 ½ miles within 17 minutes and 12 seconds under the current standards.

The special committee members are:

- Daviess County Sheriff Keith Cain, co-chair, KLEC chairman and past president of the Kentucky Sheriffs’ Association
- Alexandria Police Chief Mike Ward, co-chair, KLEC member and president of the Kentucky

Association of Chiefs of Police

- Ashland Police Officer Angel O’Pell, member of Kentucky Women’s Law Enforcement Network

- Kentucky State Police LTC Leslie Gannon, KLEC member

- Luke Morgan, KLEC member and Lexington attorney

- Independence Police Chief Shawn Butler, KLEC member

- Don Pendleton, director of Training Support, Department of Criminal Justice Training

- Louisville Metro Police Lt. Todd Motley, training unit

- Lexington Police Commander Kelli Edwards

BY THE NUMBERS

1905

Year the first woman was sworn as a police officer in the United States

15

Percentage of female peace officers in Kentucky (2009)

536

Number of certified female peace officers in Kentucky (2009)

63

Percentage of Kentucky law enforcement females who work for police departments. Twenty-one percent work for sheriffs’ offices

34

Number of years served by Kentucky’s current longest-certified, female peace officer

43

Percentage of female peace officers who graduated DOCJT Basic Training in the past 10 years who have a bachelor’s degree



he is very supportive of that.”

When the Joslyns had their second child, Keegan, he was sick a lot, she said. Joslyn came to a crossroads when she had to decide how to care for her son and keep up with her detective work. Luckily a co-worker allowed her to switch shifts with him so that she could spend the time with Keegan that she needed to and still enjoy the career she loved.

“My kids grew up around the police department,” she said. “You know, I carried a gun in my diaper bag.”

Having children and a husband to go home to was not only difficult for Joslyn, it also made her much more aware of making sure she went home to them after each shift.

“Ever since I came into this profession, my priority was to go home at night,” Joslyn said. “So, with that in mind, I tried to always make sure that I kept myself trained and used caution. That was a very important priority to me, especially having two young boys at home, and I’m sure it was a priority for my husband, too.”

For some, having children in itself became a policy issue at work. When Chilton became pregnant with her daughter while working at University of Kentucky Police Department, there was no policy about what she was to do, she said.

“They kind of said, ‘Oh, now what?’ and I said, ‘I don’t know, what do you all want me to do?’” Chilton said. “They said, ‘Well, we don’t want you to get hurt,’ ... So they put me on light duty as soon as I told them.”

“Now, the second time I got pregnant, I waited longer to tell them because I didn’t want to be pulled from the street yet,” Chilton continued.

The first time Marasa got pregnant while working at St. Matthews, she was pulled off the street and trained as a dispatcher and her police car was taken, she said.

“The second time I was pregnant, I worked in crimes against children all the way up until the day I delivered,” Marasa said.

At the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office, Sheriff Kathy Witt said she was treated very well when she became pregnant with both her children, who now are 21 and 17 years old. Witt, who is married to a fireman, said her children grew up around public safety just like she did, and she has seen the positive affects it has had in their lives.

“They both are committed to helping downtrodden people,” Witt said. “They are both very passionate about that, and I think that that comes with their exposure. When we take clothes to the Catholic Action Center or we feed the hungry, my kids are there. This last snow storm, my kids were knocking on doors. And I think that that has helped them develop the issues that they feel are very important for society to address.”

“I am just so thankful for the journey because had I not been in this role, and had my husband not been in his role and all the things he took them to with the [Fraternal Order of Firefighters], that might not have been fostered or developed within them.”

On stereotypes and the benefits of being female

“When I come to work everyday, I don’t feel like I am doing a man’s job,” said Ashley Farmer, a Russellville Police officer of little more than a year. “I feel like I am doing a job – the job that I love doing. Maybe some women think well, if I get this job, they are going to have bad stereotypes. Well, they are going to talk about you. They are going to say that you don’t like men – you get that every day. And they start talking about female this and female that ... I guess I would want to tell them, ‘Hey, if you are interested in law enforcement, do it. Who cares what people think?’” >>



■ From left: Louisville Patrol Officers Rachel Arroyo, Sarah Stumler, Homicide Detective Leigh Maroni and Patrol Officer Brooke Benton serve among the most highly female-populated agency in the state.

KWLEN – A Network of Support

In an effort to provide mentors and career networking for the women in Kentucky’s law enforcement ranks, the Kentucky Women’s Law Enforcement Network was created.

This year, the organization will celebrate its 10th anniversary, said its president, Bowling Green Police Capt. Melanie Watts. The goals and mission of the group remain strongly based in encouragement, training, advocacy and support just as they were in 1999 when Katherine E. Scarborough and

Linda Mayberry founded the network.

“KWLEN is important because it enables us to further develop ourselves as professionals in the law enforcement field,” Watts said. “Experience, advice, knowledge and support are all given and received by our members from across the state. We are a one-of-a-kind organization.”

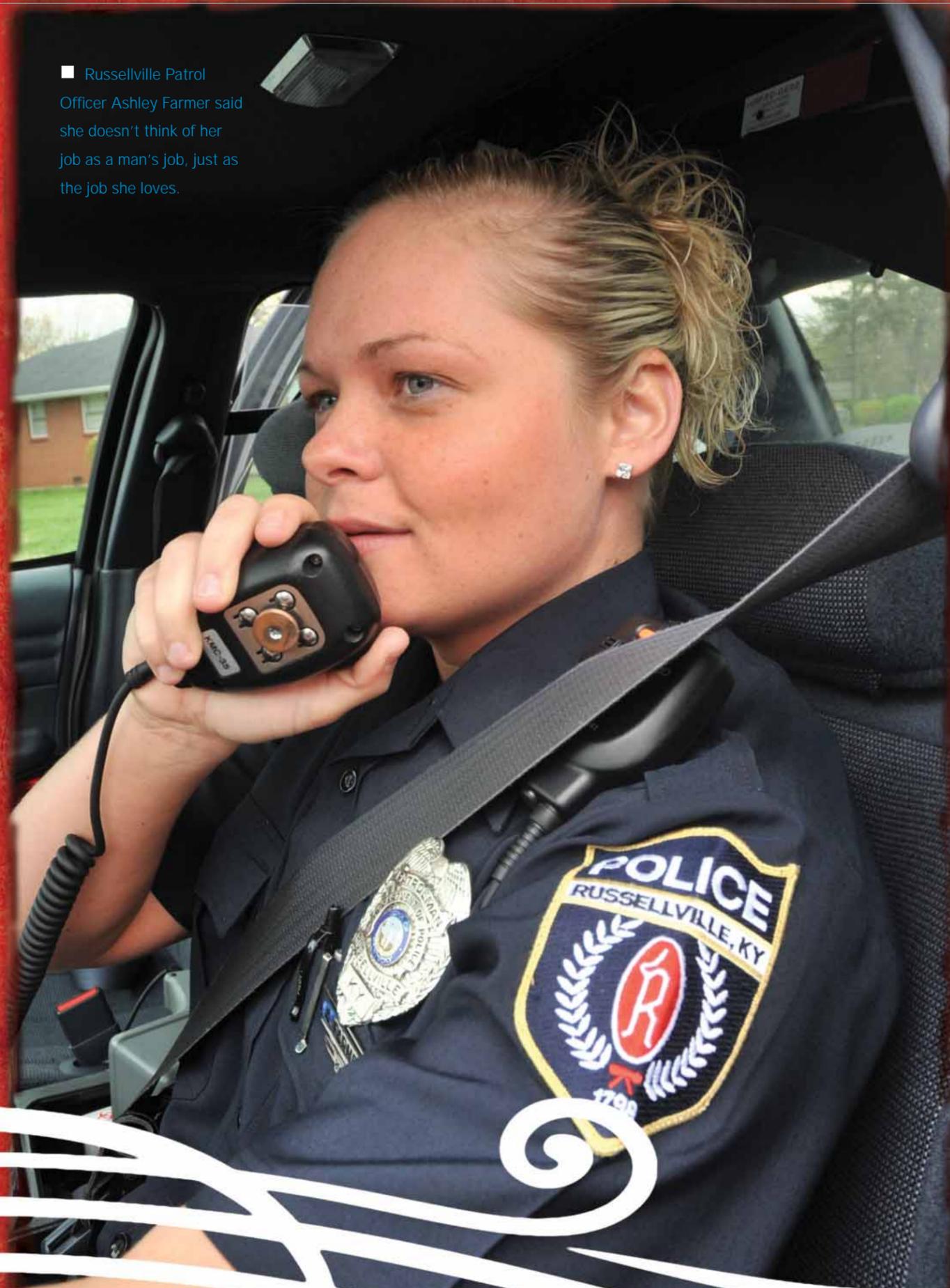
The group is open both to male and female officers as well as coroners, probation and

parole officers, criminal justice instructors, secretaries to law enforcement and more. Anyone interested in participating should visit www.KWLEN.com. Meetings are conducted every other month.

This year’s KWLEN conference will be Sept. 9 and 10 at the Department of Criminal Justice Training. The conference will feature hands-on, interactive training and team-building exercises. Anyone associated with law enforcement may attend. E-mail Watts at Melanie.watts@bgky.org for details.

■ Russellville Patrol

Officer Ashley Farmer said she doesn't think of her job as a man's job, just as the job she loves.



Things have changed a lot since Joslyn first began her policing career 29 years ago. If there is one thing she said she hopes has changed it is that many of the stereotypes she dealt with are gone or fading.

Lexington Police Detective Shannon Garner agreed.

"I think there is a different feeling now from when I first started," Garner said.

As a 14-year-old girl, Garner joined the police explorer program, which led her to a college job as a telecommunicator for University of Kentucky Police Department, later to employment as a UK officer and eventually to her position with Lexington Police. Garner said she never had a moment's thought that she should choose a different career because she is a woman.

Now with 23 years of law enforcement experience under her belt, Garner said the atmosphere she sees with women interested in policing is less of the old days of guiding girls into the career path and more of an expectation for them to perform immediately and equally.

"I think the younger girls, when they see us out there ... a lot of girls would show some interest," Garner said. "I think the more female officers that you see out and the more who are in high-profile positions, you will have more girls who feel like they can actually do the job."

However, some seasoned officers remember days when stereotypes were a bigger part of each day on the street.

Early in her career, Woodburn Police Chief Audrey Spies said she had a case pulled from her because her male co-workers told her it would "take her too long to get her makeup

on" to get to the scene. But it was stereotypes like that, Spies said, that pushed her even harder to prove she was not that kind of officer.

There still are jokes, like, "Are you in your husband's car?" said Kentucky State Police Trooper Melissa Alexander. A lot of that burly-hardened-female image comes with the uniforms, some say. Between shirts and pants designed to fit men, utility belts not built for smaller waists and bullet-resistant vests that are not shaped for a female figure, it can be difficult to feel feminine.

"My first five years I wore a man's vest," said Bowling Green Police Capt. Melanie Watts. "When you took it off and laid it down it was flat as the table."

"They didn't have uniforms for women," Joslyn said of when she started. "I was getting ready to graduate the academy and I didn't have a uniform."

Joslyn was so small when she started that she had to buy her pants at the little boys department at JC Penney's and have them and her shirts tailored. The agency could not fit her in a jacket or a gun belt, either.

"The holsters weren't designed for women, so the equipment was very uncomfortable to wear," she said.

While the stereotypes, jokes and uniforms can be a funny, yet disheartening part of the job for females, some say that is not what it is about.

"I know they meant well," Bastin said of her male co-workers, who made jokes and tried to coddle her. "I know they were being protective, but I just wanted to do my job."

And while there may be disadvantages to being a female in law enforcement, there is an >>

POPS-Certified Women Employed by Kentucky Law Enforcement Agencies*

76 employ only one female officer

33 employ two female officers

15 employ three female officers

27 employ four or more female officers

Bowling Green Police Department employs **11** female officers

Jefferson County Sheriff's Department employs **28** female officers

Lexington Division of Police employs **48** female officers

Louisville Metro Police department employs **154** female officers

*numbers accurate as of Feb. 19, 2009

More than **270** of Kentucky's **427** POPS certified agencies do not employ any females.

>> equal hand of benefits.

"A lot of people are not as intimidated by a woman as they are a man," Farmer said. "Kids are not going to talk to a man as they would to me ... they are going to want to talk to somebody who is sensitive."

Louisville's Maroni is called in regularly to interview and search females, she said.

"I'm one of three women in the homicide unit and when I first got there I was the only female, and I was called all the time," Maroni said. "Same with patrol, 'Can you come over here and search this female?' Or if we have a female witness in, 'Would you go in, she might feel more comfortable with you.' Or 'This guy is really breaking down, could you go in and try and nurture him a little bit?'"

"There is no ego involved in it," Maroni continued. "You just do what's required to get the job done. I don't take offense to it because I need them. And I'm not afraid to use them

when I need to, to get the job done."

Benton said she finds more contraband on women simply because she is more comfortable looking for it. Western Kentucky University Police Officer Mandi Johnson said she usually is the first called to a sexual assault case. Bowling Green's Watts said as a supervisor, she, too, has intentionally called in females for sensitive cases when she knows they will do a good job.

When it comes to intense situations that could lead to a use of force, Watts said women also do better to talk their way out of a lot of things.

But sometimes the benefit to being female is just seeing a little bit of extra courtesy.

"There is still some chivalry out there," Spies said. "I've had them even in handcuffs try to open my door for me. Sometimes people who might want to take on the uniform, when they see the actual female ... they become a lot more docile. Sometimes it blows the other way, too. They say 'Oh, this is a female' so that's when you get to jump in and show them that 'Oh yeah, I can do it too.'"

Regardless of the struggles, Witt said it is important for females in law enforcement to keep their chins up and remember what they are here for – to do the job and do it well.

"If I was treated differently I didn't know it," Witt said. "I never thought there was anything I couldn't do. I am not sure how people view me ... I don't ever dwell on that. I think the most important message is to be yourself. Whatever is inside of you, let that grow and be yourself. Fully develop yourself, always believe in yourself, be good to yourself, value yourself."

"I chose to be here and when I chose to be here I didn't stand back and say, 'OK, do I see any women.' That was never on my list of consideration," she said. "It was an opportunity to make a difference, it was an opportunity to have a great career. It is just priceless. And I just love this place. I love it." J

THREE KENTUCKY WOMEN Killed in Line of Duty

GWENDOLYN MALONE DOWNS Patrol Officer, Louisville Police Department

Louisville dispatch sent word to Louisville Police Patrol Officer Gwen Downs and her partner that they were to meet a man in the parking lot of a White Castle Restaurant in downtown Louisville. It was May 16, 1977. Downs, a three-year veteran of the department's criminal investigations division, was on duty with fellow detective Edward Wegenast at the time.

At about 10 p.m., a vehicle pulled into the parking lot where Downs and Wegenast were waiting. It was Downs' estranged husband, fellow Louisville Officer Claude Downs. During their first year of marriage, Claude and Gwen separated and Gwen recently had consulted the department's internal affairs about problems she faced with her new husband.

Claude Downs motioned his wife to his car and the two began talking. The conversation escalated to yelling before several shots were fired. Upon hearing the fired rounds, Wegenast ran toward Claude, but before Wegenast could stop him, Claude pulled the trigger on himself.

Gwen Downs was 25 years old when her watch ended. She left behind two young daughters, Michelle and Alice. Gwen was the first female Kentucky officer to be killed in the line of duty.

PATRICIA ROSS Vocational Instructor, Kentucky State Penitentiary

The Kentucky State Prison in Eddyville offered a good salary and location close to home for Patricia Ross, a young mother of one. Ross taught inmates life skills and was a leader in the Kentucky Council on Crime and Delinquency, helping to raise funds to support programs for victims of spouse abuse and juvenile delinquency.

Late afternoon on March 1, 1984, a routine check of the facility revealed an unlocked door near the inmate

cafeteria. Upon further investigation by a prison guard, Ross' body and another critically wounded inmate also were found.

Ross died from head injuries she suffered after being lured into the storeroom by an inmate. The inmate propositioned Ross, and when she refused, he attacked her with a 10 pound commercial can opener.

The inmate who attacked Ross, Fred Grooms, was serving a 10-year sentence for first-degree assault. After a trial, death sentence and overturning of that sentence, Grooms later pled guilty to the crime and was sentenced to life in prison without parole for 25 years.

REGINA WOODWARD NICKLES Patrol Officer, Harrodsburg Police Department

A suspicious subject had been seen in the parking lot of the Trim Masters Corporation factory in Harrodsburg on Oct. 14, 1998. Harrodsburg Officer Regina Nickles had just begun her midnight shift and responded to the scene with fellow officer Erick Barkman.

Upon arriving at the business, Nickles shone her flashlight on a man who was lying in a field across from the parking lot. Nickles asked him to stand, and when he did, he pulled a gun and began firing at her, hitting her twice. Barkman fired back at the suspect, wounding him and ultimately placing him under arrest.

Nickles had served the Harrodsburg department for more than 15 years when she was killed. She was the first woman ever to serve the department. She also was running for the office of Mercer County sheriff at the time of the shooting.

She was 45 years old when her watch ended and left behind two children and four stepchildren.

Information provided with permission from Dr. Billy Wilbanks, criminology expert and author of "True Heroines, Police Women Killed in the Line of Duty in the U.S., 1916-1999."



Stephanie had become disillusioned with her academic major and considered policing something to do while she figured things out. Kathy needed a job with good benefits.

Sandy found her passion for criminalistics in an abnormal psychology class. Audrey and three of her siblings followed their father into law enforcement.

Like most in the law enforcement field, their paths up the chain of command are varied – paved with achievements, milestones and hard times. But Kentucky's top ranking women share a passion for doing what is right and doing what it takes to move their agencies forward.



SANDY JOSLYN
Paducah Police Interim Chief

/Photos by Elizabeth Thomas

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Kentucky's top ranking women broke barriers to achieve top posts

/Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer

SANDY JOSLYN

Paducah Police Interim Chief

Sandy Joslyn's career is peppered with accomplishments, high-profile cases and commendations. But just trying to get hired as a police officer in 1980 was an obstacle, she said.

"I went to the chief's office and asked to put my application in and he told me they weren't taking applications. So I asked him, 'Would you just take it and file it for when you do have an opening?' And he said, 'Sure.' So he took my application and he wadded it up and threw it in the trash can and he said, 'It's filed.'"

Joslyn was disheartened but did not let that stop her. She applied for a job with the Madisonville Police Department and was hired. While waiting for an academy date, Joslyn discovered the chief who treated her so poorly had left Paducah and she applied again. This time, she was hired.

"I was the only female in the class," Joslyn

said. "There was another female in one of the other classes and she was the female that took my place at Madisonville. ... I was a novelty being a female. I think we were very much scrutinized, we were watched very closely to see how well we would perform. The female that was there in the other class, she was my roommate and we made a pact that we were going to get through it and actually found most of the men in the class very supportive."

Once Joslyn hit the streets in Paducah, she said the novelty continued. For the first six months of her career when she was walking a beat in the downtown area, she said most citizens who approached her asked her for bus schedules.

"It's a male-dominated field," Joslyn said. "So the perception for the public was they were expecting to see a male police officer. And if you showed up at a fight call, sometimes I'd get this look like, 'What are you going to do?'"

Joslyn also felt some resistance from her co-workers to her being on the force initially, but time overcame it, she said. By 1984, Joslyn traded her patrol car for plain clothes and a detective's badge.

"I didn't come into this career wanting to be a police officer," Joslyn said. "I had other aspirations of things I wanted to do, but after I got here and the bug hit me I really enjoyed it. I decided I wanted to be a detective."

At the time, Joslyn said most detectives earned the role by being the next guy in line when someone else left. Joslyn challenged that, asking the chief to create a test which officers could take to determine the best candidate. Soon after she suggested it, Joslyn's idea received a green light.

"He set up a testing procedure and I tested and was able to get into [investigations] early in my career, and spent the rest of my career in that division," Joslyn continued. "That was just my niche. I really enjoyed it. I was just

definitely in my element there."

During that time, Joslyn worked the first DNA case in western Kentucky and the first multi-state DNA database case, which resulted in the arrest and indictment of a serial rapist.

Within the detective's unit, she advanced in 1989 to detective sergeant and then in 1996 to detective captain. In 1997, Joslyn became the department's background investigator and developed the first background investigation procedure for hiring recruits.

After serving Paducah for 20 years, Joslyn was named assistant chief, responsible for criminal investigations in 2000. It was a role Joslyn said she was well-suited for. As a mother of two boys, Ian and Keegan, and wife to Doug of 16 years at that time, Joslyn said she had specific management skills she brought to the job.

"Women in general – we're busy, we are raising kids, we're running households and

being in management is very much like running your household.," Joslyn said. "You've got to give everybody the equipment they need and the training they need to do what they need to do. You've got to be able to step back and allow them to do it and then you've got to be able to address it if they don't."

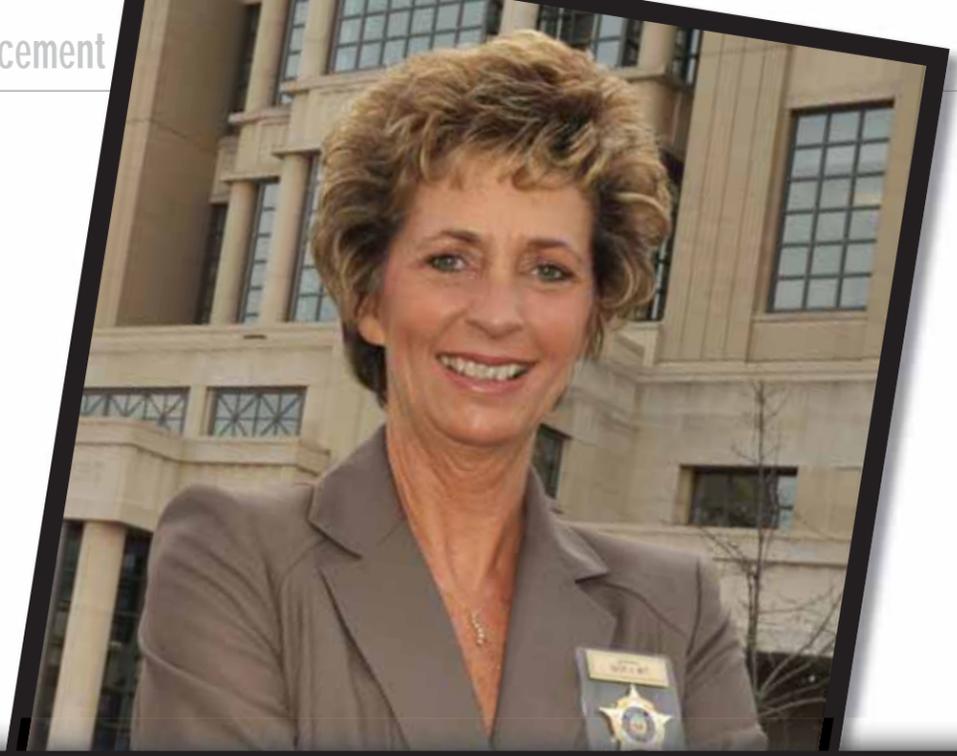
For five years, Joslyn served in one of the department's top roles before she decided to retire from the career she loved. But she didn't get to stay retired long. The department was experiencing some turmoil. When the chief resigned from his post, Joslyn's phone began ringing off the hook.

She resisted at first. Joslyn had just bought a kayak and was looking forward to lazy days with her family. She had been doing investigations for the Office of the Inspector General on a contract basis – just enough work to keep her busy, she said. But after 25 years with Paducah, Joslyn had a desire for helping get the agency back on track.

"It was like stepping back in time when I came back. ... I just kind of came in having to just pick up, so I think I was the right person at the right time to take this interim position because I had been at the department, grew up in the department, I knew some of the issues that the department had been going through, so I was able to step in and begin working."

Joslyn was sworn in as interim chief in August of last year and expected to stay three to six months while a nationwide search was completed to find a permanent chief. Her stint as chief was a little longer than expected, but Joslyn will step down again in July when her successor, James Berry of Connecticut, takes the department's reigns.

Looking back, Joslyn said she doesn't see the stereotypes as much now as she did in the early 1980s, but she sees that there still is a long road ahead for women in law enforcement. >>



KATHY WITT
Fayette County Sheriff



STEPHANIE BASTIN and TIUA CHILTON
Kentucky State University Police Chief and Assistant Chief



“When I grew up, you were a nurse, or a teacher; if you were glamorous you were an airline stewardess or you were a housewife,” Joslyn said. “And that was pretty much it. ... I think they finally ... have broken that stereotypical mold and now they realize that they can be anything they want to be.”

KATHY WITT
Fayette County Sheriff

In 1983, Kathy Witt was working full time while she attended classes, studying for her biology major when she first was approached about a job in law enforcement.

“The business I was working for was getting ready to go out of business and one of the clients there said, ‘Kathy, you need a real job with real benefits and I think you should come and work at the jail.’ And I said, ‘What?? I’m a biology major!’”

Ultimately, Witt took the advice from the jail’s then-assistant director, Ray Sabbatini, and found herself working third shift at the Fayette County Detention Center.

“There has only been a time or two that I’ve wanted to walk over and punch him in

the arm,” Witt said. “Most all the time I would go over and thank him for encouraging me. Because I guess he saw something in me that I surely didn’t see and never considered.”

The experience Witt gained working at the jail’s booking window was priceless, she said.

“Back then of course we were in a glass, concrete at the bottom, glass at the top cubicle, and so we just had a bird’s eye view of everything coming and going and we booked the offender in and had to learn those KRSs really quickly because we had to be really fast at booking that offender index card and had to help when they found narcotics on them get the PDR (Physician’s Desk Reference) book out and so forth, so it was an awesome learning experience.”

After awhile, Witt began doing some dispatching and then was able to start a communications center for the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office.

“I just sort of transitioned over,” she said.

By 1998, Witt had served in every position in the sheriff’s office – except sheriff.

“When it was clear that [the] sheriff I was working for was really going to retire, my husband, who was a firefighter, and I sat down and I said, ‘I’m a little concerned about where this is going,’” Witt said. “And he said, ‘Well, I know who would be a really good sheriff, but I think that you should go and talk to these people whose names we heard were going to run and see if you could work with them.’”

Witt was passionate about the direction the sheriff’s office was going and had seen a lot of change under three other sheriffs. After talking to the other potential candidates, Witt said she and her husband prayed about the decision to enter the race for Fayette County sheriff.

“I felt a tremendous peace and I decided to run,” she said. “I never gave it a second thought, I never looked back and it was a great journey.”

So the young, female, biology major from Frankfort with no political experience or background began knocking on doors and hearing from the people about what they wanted from their sheriff.

“Maybe I was naïve, but I thought you

know what, I really know this job,” Witt said. “I have been given a lot of opportunity and I had asked for a lot of opportunity – let me have a chance at doing a domestic violence program, let me have a chance at writing a grant. ... But I just gained a lot of experience that I didn’t realize at the time was preparing me for this.”

Witt is responsible for 14 courts on a daily basis, the safety of the judiciary, service process, transporting prisoners and bringing fugitives back to face the courts and much, much more. After 24 years in the sheriff’s office and nearly 11 in its top post, Witt said she is proud to now be among the nation’s 42 female sheriffs.

“This is a great role for women,” she said. “Because I think women, innate in them, they are multi taskers, they are flexible, they just are. I think that is just the way we are made. I think we get it. We know that to be effective in law enforcement we have to be compassionate to the needs of our community, we have to show genuine support to victims of crime, but we also have to be tough and hold those accountable who want to perpetrate crime on other people. And so I think we are

wholly built for roles like this.”

Not only are women effective in law enforcement leadership roles, but also Witt said it is important that law enforcement be a template of our society.

“I just think that things are probably best delivered when we have diversity, and that does mean bringing women to the table to head law enforcement agencies. We need to represent our country. They are all not men. And they are all not women. They are all not white. They are all not African American.”

STEPHANIE BASTIN and TIUA CHILTON
Kentucky State University Police Chief and Assistant Chief

As a college student, Stephanie Bastin had become disillusioned with her social work major at the University of Kentucky and was at a crossroads about deciding her future. She had grown up in a law enforcement family with a father who served as a Kentucky State Police trooper. So when a friend mentioned that UK was hiring police officers, Bastin thought it might be something fun to try until she fig-

ured out what to do with her life.

“And 30 years later, I’m still here,” Bastin said. “I guess I found my niche. It was fun.”

It was 1977 when Bastin graduated from Basic Training Class No. 76. She worked all three patrol shifts, then investigations and then went into crime prevention and physical security. It was about that time that the Clery federal crime reporting act was established, which became Bastin’s specialty.

“Initially what started it was when my daughter was born,” Bastin said. “She was born with sleep apnea, which meant she would quit breathing when she went to sleep. I was going to quit work because she had special needs and they asked me not to quit. The [university] told me they would accommodate me in any way they could and that’s how I ended up staying and specializing in that.”

Bastin continued climbing the ranks to assistant chief of the UK Police Department, where she stayed until she retired in 2006. But she couldn’t stay out of the field long.

In 2008, Bastin was hired by Kentucky State University to lead the department as chief, reorganize the agency and gear its goals >>



AUDREY SPIES
Woodburn Police Chief

“There is always going to be a need for peace officers and I know, because I’ve done it, that women can do a bang-up job. And we can do just as well if not better as men at some things.”



and mission toward community policing.

“It was a natural transition,” Bastin said. “We are very community-oriented and that is what I wanted to bring to [KSU’s] campus. That is what the president was looking for.”

Among the first things on her to-do list in her new position was to hire an assistant chief.

“I had checked with a lot of chiefs and a lot of mentors that I have had about what I wanted to do for an assistant chief – what qualities they should have, what attributes I should look for – and they told me I needed someone who thought the way I thought, who had the same basic morals and values and someone I could trust,” Bastin said.

There were several applicants, but Bastin kept going back to Tiua Chilton, an officer who also had worked for University of Kentucky police since 1995. She was serving as the second-shift patrol lieutenant when she heard about the job opening at KSU.

“I knew it was going to be an unprecedented move hiring her because we were both female, and there is no other female chief and assistant chief in the state of Kentucky,”

Bastin said.

Chilton’s experience made her a good fit for the community population of about 3,000.

“It takes a special type of police to police on a campus,” Chilton said. “I have never worked in a city or a state, but people who have done both tell me that this is much more specialized and it is a very different environment. We understand the structure as far as how the university is laid out as far as deans and faculty and vice presidents.”

Bastin agreed.

“It takes a higher-caliber officer to deal with an educational environment,” she said.

Not only is the KSU department led by two women, but the department also employs a higher percentage overall of women than any other department in the state, which is something Bastin is proud of.

“We have a 10-officer department, five of them are women and two of them are black females,” Chilton said. “We are not your norm.”

“But I think I have seen a decline in the

female applicant pool,” Bastin said. “I know there are differences in the generation. Law enforcement is not an easy career for women. It is a male-dominated field and a lot of them may think, why bother? They don’t have to put up with what we have tolerated to make the money, because anybody in public service is not in it for the money.”

“It takes a certain person,” Bastin continued. “Certain personality traits. But I think any career you choose you have to be passionate about it.”

Last year, the Kentucky Women’s Law Enforcement Network honored Bastin with their Leadership of the Year Award, something she said was very special.

“I feel like this is part of my responsibility, to mentor [women] and bring them along,” Bastin said. “To give women the opportunity that ... I did not have. And show them, not just show the female officers, but to show other women that we can do this. This is how you do it.”

AUDREY SPIES
Woodburn Police Chief

From an early age, Audrey Spies knew a career in law enforcement was in her future. She briefly considered the military, but “policing won over,” she said. “I have enjoyed every bit of it,” she said.

Spies began her career as the first female officer with the Tyler [Texas] Police Department in 1978. She, too, was passionate about her new career, but found stumbling blocks in some of her female co-workers.

“When I first started, a lot of women in the police department in Tyler were [Equal Employment Opportunity] implants,” Spies said. “It made my job hard because I got into it wanting to be a full-fledged police officer, not just a female officer.”

Spies gave examples of times when her female co-workers complained about breaking their nails and hid in the floorboard of a cruiser when an intense fight broke out, leaving a male officer to fend for himself.

Spies continually had to prove to her male counterparts that she was more than a federally-placed pretty face.

“Every time I would get in a fight, I would be just as dirty and torn up as he was,”

Spies said.

In 1987, Spies’ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives-agent husband was transferred to Bowling Green, Ky. Spies joined the Western Kentucky University Police Department, where she served for 10 years. In 1997, she had the opportunity to serve for one year as an officer with the Warren County Drug Task Force.

Spies felt a calling to serve on a crisis response team and began pursuing that dream after joining the Bowling Green Police Department in 1998.

“That was one of my lifetime goals to be on a SWAT team,” Spies said. “Of course, back in the 70s when I first started, women were just starting in law enforcement. So as far as being on a SWAT team, it was kind of like, ‘Yeah, right.’”

But Spies pursued it and eventually became the first female to serve on Bowling Green’s CRT team.

“I really enjoyed it,” she said. “It was hard work. You can’t just join a team and say, ‘I can’t carry the shield because it’s too heavy.’ I was religiously working out two hours a

day, building my muscles and trying to stay with the team and doing my runs. It was awesome.”

After five years with Bowling Green, Spies retired from policing. But like most, she couldn’t stay out of the field.

In September 2005, Spies was hired as chief of the Woodburn Police Department – a single-officer agency in a community of a little more than 300. Her CRT days are long gone, but Spies works hard to maintain the professionalism of her department and show the community the strengths of having a female lead its police department.

“There are a lot of things that we actually can do [because of our gender],” Spies said. “Rape victims feel more comfortable talking to a female; we kind of display that motherly image. Sometimes we can help calm a situation more. It is a wonderful career to be in. There is always going to be a need for peace officers and I know, because I’ve done it, that women can do a bang-up job. And we can do just as well if not better as men at some things.” J

Eighty-year-old CCSO puts a new face on Scott County court security



GUN-TOTIN' GRANNY

Abbie Dorst, Program Coordinator

The adage you can't teach an old dog new tricks certainly does not apply to Mary Lou Walker. Scott County's most recently certified court security officer turned 80 years old on May 3.

"I have really learned a lot – everything was new to me, but I met an incredible bunch of people that just included me in the group, even among 27 year olds," said Walker, who worked most of her life as a registered nurse in a hospital and private doctor's office. "I've been blessed with good health and an ability to learn new things."

As a member of CCSO Class No. 8, which completed training on March 27, Walker trained with people young enough to be her grandchildren, yet still excelled in the necessary components of the class.

"She has a God-given ability to shoot," said CCSO Instructor James Sanders.

But for Walker, that ability came as a complete surprise.

"If I had known the training for this job would involve shooting at the range, I probably wouldn't have done it," she said. "I had no idea I could shoot like that."

Walker was capable of landing nearly every round into the 'coke bottle' area of the target. Despite her ability to shoot well, the firearms portion of the training was the most grueling and challenging part of the 80-hour course, she said. Though most firing positions are standing, during the training students must shoot proficiently from

two kneeling positions – one that requires the CCSO to fire, kneel down, reload and fire again and another requiring the CCSO to kneel and fire five rounds from behind a barrier of 15 yards. These positions posed physical difficulties for Walker.

"Just getting up and down and then staying within the time limits for the timed trials was hard," she said. "This has been the biggest accomplishment of my life. I have to give a lot of credit to the Lord for getting me through."

On the day of the shooting evaluation, Walker said she was nervous, but knew things would work out if they were meant to.

"I prayed and prayed," she said. "I had half of Scott County praying. I was ready to cry when I saw that 72 showing I passed. I started jumping up and down and shouting."

A natural people person, the switch from nursing to law enforcement as a career was not a difficult one for Walker. Her part-time position in a doctor's office was coming to a close and she had heard the sheriff's office was expecting to hire court security officers. One day she received a call about the position and went to work the following Monday, she said.

"She came down here wanting to work and I said, 'Golly, Mary Lou, you've got some age on you,'" Scott County Sheriff Bobby Hammons said. "She said, 'Don't let age bother you, I can do it – I will do it.' So, I went on and put her to work. It has worked out perfectly. She knows nine out of 10 people that come through there.

She's a talker and gets along great with everyone."

"I hope to do this for six to 10 years," Walker said. "My goal is to be the oldest court security officer in the United States."

Hammons is pleased with Walker's performance over the past year.

"She's worked out excellent," he said. "She's here on time, an hour beforehand sometimes, and stays late whenever we need her to. She comes in on her off days when someone calls in, they'll call Mary Lou and she says, 'I'll be right there.' She's been great to work with and does her job right to a T."

"If you can't get along with her, then there's something wrong," Hammons added. "I don't care if you go over there and tell her, Mary Lou, you have to clean this machine, or clean the windows when you are not doing anything, or mop the floor, she'd want to know, 'Well, where is the mop and bucket? I'll do it.'"

Born in Scott County in 1929, Walker moved to Paris shortly after marriage with her husband where she worked at the hospital. Now a widow, Walker has one daughter and one 7-year-old granddaughter.

"My family is really supportive of what I'm doing," Walker said. "They are very proud of me."

"I have enjoyed every bit of this," Walker added. "I think that everybody should enjoy life to the fullest and use their God-given abilities. This has all been really exciting." J