Serving country and community

DIANE STATON
BAPTIST HEALTH HARDIN

Veterans Day is a time to thank those who served in the military, sacrificing home, family and safety to protect our freedom. It is not a sacrifice undertaken lightly; it comes at a cost – the cost of separation from loved ones, the physical distance from home and the potential for dangerous and deadly situations.

For many veterans, service is a lifelong commitment, continuing on even when their time in the armed forces is done.

For three Baptist Health Hardin team members, the values learned in uniform continue to shape how they lead, care for others and serve the community today.

For Tom Carrico, Mary Bauer and C.J. Hayko, military service provided more than training and experience. It shaped the values that continue to guide their work, leadership and commitment to patients and the community.

Tom Carrico, the hospital's vice president of operations, joined the U.S. Navy after completing two years of college, seeking leadership opportunities and a greater sense of purpose. Following in the footsteps of his father, who also served in the Navy, he enlisted as a Data Specialist and was assigned to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in Norfolk, VA.

The experience was a positive one, and he appreciated the opportunity, as a young man, to travel to some of the world's most beautiful places, such as France, Spain, Italy and England.

During his four years of service, Carrico deployed during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. One memory stands out vividly. Just days before the end of what was expected to be a routine six-month Mediterranean deployment, his ship received orders to prepare for a potential conflict. Within 72 hours, its journey was underway – through the Suez Canal and into the Red Sea. Carrico said traveling through the Suez Canal was the only time he truly felt vulnerable. As the carrier moved through the narrow waterway for nearly 16 hours, he recalled feeling like a "sitting duck."

He also recalled a fellow shipmate sleepwalking off a platform and falling overboard into rugged waves. Though the man was rescued, it was an experience that Carrico never forgot.

Carrico's time in the Navy reinforced lessons that continue to influence both his professional and personal life.

"The discipline necessary to excel in the military, regardless of where you are, instilled in me that same discipline to excel and try to be as highly competent as possible," Carrico said.

He credits the military with helping him develop leadership skills early in life and says the same spirit of service that motivated him to serve his country continues to influence his work serving patients today.

Carrico was heavily involved in the construction of the medical complex at John Rowan Blvd. in Bardstown, as well as the Baptist Health Hardin Medical Pavilion, which opened in 2024. He was also instrumental in bringing the world's first-in-human clinical trials for 4D Mammography to the hospital, an effort that reflects his belief in serving something larger than oneself. By participating in groundbreaking research, Baptist Health Hardin is helping advance potential improvements in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment that could benefit patients locally and beyond.

Carrico, a 29-year Baptist Health employee who transferred to Baptist Health Hardin (then Hardin Memorial Hospital) in 2012, said, "I love the people here. That's what sets this organization apart. Our leaders think about how we enrich our culture and make people feel valued."

Unlike some service members, Mary Bauer, Behavioral Health manager, was not raised in a military family. However, her uncle served in the military and was shot down over Germany.

Bauer honored his memory at a wreath ceremony at the hospital last year, speaking of his bravery and sacrifice.

Bauer began her military service while attending college. She joined an ROTC program and earned a scholarship, launching a military career that would span 13 years.

As a young Army lieutenant, Bauer was responsible for approximately 130 soldiers, an experience that taught leadership lessons she still relies on today. She served in Saudi Arabia and Iraq as part of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Italy and Afghanistan, as well as Germany and Kosovo, where she served in leadership and logistics roles supporting military operations throughout Europe.

She remembered in detail, sitting in secure rooms while commanders from all over Europe coordinated activities that were still months away, and yet they considered every detail, every person, every family, every child.

Bauer believes that honoring the fallen is very important. "We also do that here at Baptist," she said, referring to activities centered around patriotic holidays and the hospital's Honor Walk program, which is available to families of veterans who pass away in the hospital.

Among her most meaningful memories are participating in the 60th anniversary of D-Day commemorations and in the Memorial Day ceremony at Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial in St. Avold, France. Those experiences reinforced the importance of remembering the sacrifices made by generations of service members.

The military also helped shape her approach to leadership and excellence.

"The military taught me to strive for excellence, not average," Bauer said. Today, those same values influence her work at Baptist Health Hardin. Bauer was very involved in the Ambassadors of Excellence program, which recognizes nursing staff for excellence.

Bauer also helped launch the nurse residency program and led the efforts to develop the hospital's new Intensive Outpatient Program, which launched earlier this year. The program, created to provide additional support for people in recovery, helps to bridge the gap between inpatient behavioral health treatment and ongoing outpatient care.

"Seeing what the entire continuum of care is supposed to look like is really the inspiration for me," Bauer said. "If we have that entire continuum built, then we have a safety net for people."

For Laboratory Director C. J. Hayko, service remains an active part of his life.

He joined the Army at age 18, eager to see the world. Ironically, his first duty station was Fort Knox, "close enough (to home) that my mom was still cooking me breakfast on Sunday mornings!"

He later transferred to the Army Reserve and trained as a Transfusion Specialist. Through the Reserve, he has deployed five times, caring for soldiers injured while serving their country.

This year marks Hayko's 27th year in the Army.

While he is proud of his own service, he believes Veterans Day is about much more than recognizing those who wore the uniform.

"It is about remembering those who never made it home, honoring the sacrifices of their families, and appreciating the freedom that came at such a tremendous cost," he said.

"Freedom is never free," Hayko said.

Though their military journeys followed different paths, Carrico, Bauer and Hayko share a common belief that service is not defined by a title, a rank or a uniform.

Instead, it is reflected in a lifelong commitment to improving the lives of others.

As the nation observes Veterans Day, their stories serve as a reminder that the spirit of service can extend far beyond the military, strengthening communities, supporting patients and inspiring future generations.

JUDGE

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all legal requirements, although he did note that it would have been beneficial to have heard testimony from the notary.

In the motion, the Board again raises issues with the affidavit, stating that the petition committee members' own testimony giving different accounts of what happened – including who was present at the signing, where the signing occurred and if they were under oath at the signing – necessitates the affidavit being declared not valid.

"Because the Plaintiffs' own testimony requires the putative affidavit to be voided, the document's status as an affidavit is negated and it no longer had any legal efficacy to establish the statutorily required committee to commence any petition proceedings," the document states. "All subsequent acts which were presented at trial as 'petition proceedings' under KRS 132.017 were null and void as they were not undertaken by the statutorily required 'petition committee.'"

The Board also argued that calling the notary as a witness to verify the affidavit was a responsibility of the petition committee, stating, "there was no duty on the Board to give the notary an opportunity to rehabilitate herself once a putative affiant admitted the inaccuracy of the purported notarial act, and thereby admitted the document was not an affidavit as legally defined."

In the petition committee's response to the motion, Southworth said the first claimed manifest error asks the court to re-weigh testimony also weighed – an act not considered a manifest error.

Considering the three different committee members' accounts of the affidavit process, Southworth states "the only affirmative evidence about the oath, then, is that one was administered … the Board's argument also takes, 'I don't remember' as proof that an event did not happen. A witness' failure to recall an oath given more than a year earlier is not evidence that no oath was given. It is the absence of evidence and cannot overcome the notary's certificate."

She also argues that the burden of overcoming the notarial certificate was on the Board, as it was the Board's argument that the affidavit was invalid. Because of this, and the fact that she judged that the committee's testimony did not overcome the certificate, it therefore was not her responsibility to prove the Board's claim.

"A party carrying the burden on cannot shift it by complaining that the opponent declined to fill gaps in the proponent's own case," Southworth said.

The Board's second issue is with preserving its objection to continuing the trial after it was discovered that the clerk's office had failed to produce all the records relied upon by the Clerk to verify signatures. In his ruling, Judge Simms states that he had denied the request for several reasons, including that the trial was already in progress, it was obvious that the Clerk had meticulously reviewed the signer's information and signatures, and because a person who had a driver's license with a different LaRue County address than their voter registration would still be allowed to vote.

In their post-trial brief, the Board argued that the rule that governs the admissibility of certain evidence and allows copies or testimony to be accepted in place of original documents is only applicable in certain circumstances: if the originals are lost or destroyed, cannot be obtained or were in possession of the Board and failed to be produced. In this instance, the Board is arguing that no specific exception applied and therefore the clerk should have produced all documents.

"Based on the Board's preserved, on-going objection during both days of the trial regarding the Clerk's testimony concerning the contents of documents which had been withheld from the parties and which had not been offered into evidence, no putative petition signature should have been counted which was allegedly verified by the Clerk's office on the basis of signature, address, or other information on documents which were never produced and were never introduced into evidence," the Board states.

Southworth argues that a preserved objection the court has already ruled on is an issue for appeal; it does not entitle the party to a second ruling from the trial court on the same objection, on the same record, after judgment. She also contends that state statute limits the court's review to the validity of the county clerk's determination – not the documents she used to make that determination.

"A determination is the result of a process. The Clerk testified to what that process was: how she and her deputies checked each signer against voter registration information, what they looked at, and what they concluded. She is the official responsible for that process and for the registration records it uses. Her testimony about how she verified signatures proves what she did. It does not offer the contents of any single document as the thing to be proved."

"The Board's real complaint is that the Clerk did not produce a printout of every screen her office viewed while verifying more than 1,000 entries. KRE 1002 does not require a public official to reproduce every reference she consulted in order to describe how she did her job," Southworth said, "Had the Board pointed to one discrete record whose specific contents were at issue, the analysis might differ … the Board cannot rely on testimony and allegations about registration records when they help it and involve KRE 1002 when they do not."

She also argues that the Board does not identify a single signature that was verified only through an unproduced document nor does it show which signatures its proposed rule would exclude or that the remaining count would fall below the required 731. Instead, its ask to "expressly exclude every putative signature" verified by no document in evidence without identifying which signatures those are would "require the Court to reopen the record and re-verify the petition, which is a new trial in substance and not an amendment to correct a manifest order."

The Board's third issue is with the court's order of "an election to determine whether the voters of LaRue County are for the levy of the property tax rate … in accordance with KRS 132.017(2)(j)." The Board argues that this order causes it to lose its right to cancel the election by adopting a lower tax rate, which is given to it in the state statute.

"While the Board does not, by making this motion, express one way or the other whether such an action might be taken, the Board wishes only to preserve all its statutory rights in relation to the tax levy and recall process."

Southworth contends that the Board's argument is merely an attempt to change the statutory deadline that requires it to officially lower its tax rate from 15 days after the petition is found to be sufficient to at the end of appellate review, which would "hold the election in suspense for as long as the Board chooses to litigate."

"To be clear, the petition committee has no objection to the Board lowering its rate under subsection (2)(j). That outcome is exactly what more than 1,000 LaRue County voters petitioned for. The committee objects only to moving the statutory deadline."

In closing, the Board has asked the court to 1) find the petition committee's affidavit was legally deficient, thereby rendering all subsequent acts by the committee legally ineffectual, 2) exclude every signature which was verified by the Clerk's office using a document which was not introduced into evidence and 3) modify the judgment to clarify that the Board retains its rights under state law to cause the cancellation of an election following the finality of the proceeding, including appeals. Adversely, the petition committee argues that the motion asks the court to re-weigh testimony it already weighed, re-decide an objection it already overruled and rewrite a statutory deadline – things they do not believe are manifest error of law or fact and therefore should be denied.

Attorneys for the case will return to the courtroom at 1 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 16 to discuss the motion. No further information is available as of press time.

