

Deputy Fire Chief retiring after 24 years of service

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In a way, Robbie Blanford feels he blinked his eyes and 24 years passed before he realized it.

Now he is set to retire as deputy chief from the Bardstown Fire Department and the moment feels exciting and heartbreaking for the fire veteran.

"It's a weird feeling the closer it gets," he said. "I guess it really is going to happen. It seems so surreal."

In early March, Blanford, 44, found out, by chance, that he was eligible for retirement. The process to file the proper paperwork hasn't been hard, in fact the whole process has moved quicker than he realized.

"It's a bittersweet moment," Interim Fire Chief Marlin Howard said. "But, I'm so proud of him."

Most of all, Blanford said he is thankful for the time he's been able to work in a field near and dear to his heart.

"Not only has (Robbie) been a huge part of the department, he's been a huge part of the community," Howard said. "He's always there for anything that needs to be done."

To Howard, Blanford is an extraordinary person with a big heart, who often puts the needs of others in front of his own.

"Everything he does is because of that," Howard said. "He has the best interest in mind."

Back in 1988, when Blanford was new to the Bardstown Fire Department, he was ready to take the bull by its horns.

Essentially, playing with fire has always been in Blanford's blood. He had been around fire departments since he was 7 years old, his brothers were firefighters and his uncle was the former Bardstown Fire Chief for 30 years.

Now, Blanford is able to pass on what he knows to his nephew, Jonathan Mattingly.

"It's cool to pass it on to another family member," he said.

One thing that has stood out from his tenure as a firefighter is how no two days were the same.

"The daily challenge of it was that it was always something different," Blanford said. "When you're out there doing hands on stuff, that's the things I'm going to miss."

Another aspect that has a special place in his heart is the friendships he has built with people in his department, as well as the community over the years.

Blanford recalled a memory of when he was a volunteer firefighter for another department. During one instance, he ran into a man that looked very familiar.

The two men got to talking and Blanford realized the man was a person that he helped save from a precarious situation.

"(The department) didn't think he made it," he said,



JENNIFER CORBETT/The Kentucky Standard

Bardstown Fire Department Deputy Chief Robbie Blanford, in front, gathers with his fellow employees in front of a beloved fire truck for the last time. Blanford retired Friday after 24 years with the department.

adding that it was like seeing an old friend when they realized who each other were.

However, Blanford doesn't consider himself to be a hero. He's just a man doing his job.

"After you do (the job) for a while, you don't see yourself like that," he added.

Since he began working in Bardstown, Blanford has seen the fire department

grow into a workplace that incorporates more responsibilities and technology.

"It's grown leaps and bounds," he said. "When I came in it was a whole different department ... Now, we have guys that do low angle rescue and trench rescue. We do more than respond to fires."

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sauce had been in a glass of bourbon.

Floyd felt obligated to respond, but what came next had an inadvertent impact on public policy.

"As he went into session one day on the floor of the Senate, just before he went in, I stuck a sign on his back that said 'Kill My Amendment,'" Floyd said.

The amendment, which failed in the Senate amidst a flurry of necktie-muffled giggling, would have allocated each Kentucky citizen a free miniature horse, according to Higdon.

Discussions of how best to prevent another April Fools debacle initiated in January in the appropriations and revenue committee, which last April 1 authorized the allocation of state funds for a deep-sea diving academy, a Dodo Preservation Administration and 138 sapphire-encrusted teeth grills emblazoned with the seal of the Kentucky

Legislature.

The April Fools ban instituted Friday would extend beyond the walls of the Capital, outlawing any and all April Fools' Day activities "committed with the intention to or resulting in the incidence of libel, defamation, misinformation or confusion of the Kentucky public, the commission of which hinders the Constitutionally protected right to pursuit of happiness and besides which, just isn't funny anymore."

Shortly before the passage of the April Fools' Day ban Friday, Higdon and Floyd expressed their satisfaction with the terms of the legislation.

"We're going to do this to ban April Fools, because this is serious business. We're here doing the people's work and don't have time for such foolishness," Higdon said.

"Unless this in itself is an April Fools' Day joke," Floyd added. (Which it is. Gotcha! Happy April Fool's Day from The Kentucky Standard.)

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Barktown Rescue is a foster-home based dog rescue. The group is always in need of fosters and forever homes for rescued dogs. Visit the website to fill out an application or for more information on any of the adoptable dogs.



TODD

Todd is a loveable mutt — maybe a Lab/Australian Cattle Dog mix. He is about 1 year old and very sweet and playful. Todd is looking for a home without cats, but does well with other dogs and children



PUMPKIN

Little Miss Pumpkin is a 12 pound Dachshund who is about 4 years old. She is sweet and loves to cuddle. Pumpkin is looking for a home without children.



LULU

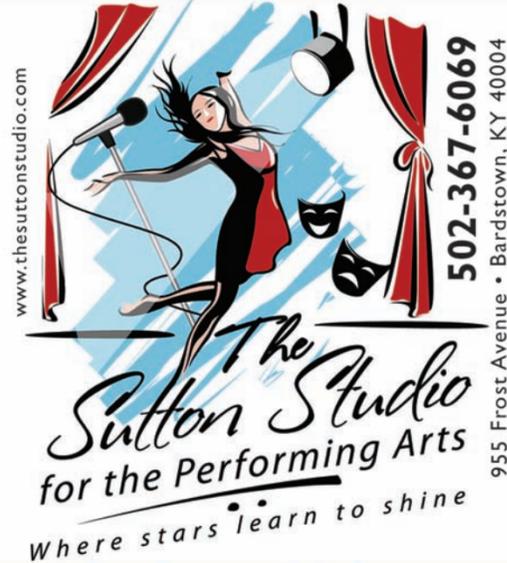
Lulu is a 14-week-old lab mix who has two siblings also available for adoption. She is full of puppy energy. She would do fine in a home with other dogs and children.



KOLBY JACK

Kolby Jack is a sweet little Lhasa Apso. He was shy at first but it starting to warm up in his foster home and is looking for a lap to call his own.

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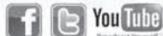


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