

Observance Month Spotlight Series: '32 and Counting of Service'

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PANAMA CITY, FL – Naval Support Activity Panama City recognizes Sailors and civilians in a series of articles during special observance months. For the month of March designated as Women's History Month, the installation spotlights Support Services Specialist Melanie Warren, Command Staff, NSA Panama City.

Warren is a native of Bay County, Florida. Her father worked aboard the installation as an electrician. She began her career with Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division under their Worker Trainee New Hire Program in 1988.

She spent 15 years at NSWC before moving to Naval Support Activity Panama City in 2003.

Warren made the switch to the Administration Department when asked by the NSA Panama City deputy director. She was certified as a Protocol Specialist and started conducting base tours with the Public Affairs Department.

From there, she added on several other responsibilities, including command administration, human resources, correspondence and also serves as the Privacy Act Coordinator, Directives Administrator, Records Management Coordinator and Assistant Security Manager.

"I never know what I'm going to walk into when I come into the office every day," Warren explained.

Her priorities shift daily depending on the needs of the command. She works closely with the administration chief and executive officer, who pull from her 32 years of experience.

"You know that kitchen drawer you have, where you throw things you don't know what to do with. That's me," Warren remarked.

She said learning the style and preference of new leadership is key to adjusting to the constant revolving door of military personnel.

A few years ago, Warren worked from home three days a week, but she missed the interaction with people.

In March 2020, Warren began teleworking again. COVID-19 came on the heels of the hardest moment in her life. In January 2020, her husband, James Warren, unexpectedly passed away. They were married for almost 40 years.

"The hardest thing was the isolation of not having him," Warren sighed. "Then having to deal with quarantine."

Warren learned counseling and real friends could really change your life for the better having lost someone close.

"We don't want to get past the surface with people, because it's too uncomfortable," she explained. "It's not about how you feel, but how the person in the midst of grief feels. Staying away and not reaching out is the worst thing you can do (to) a grieving person."

Her spirituality gave her strength to overcome the heartfelt loss.

“God gave me peace and lots of grace,” Warren added.

On the flipside, there was a bright spot in her professional career that gave her and other women working in the federal government hope. The nation’s first female vice president rang in the New Year. Warren understands the significance of Kamala Harris being Vice President but said it’s a job, and like every job it should go to the most qualified person regardless of gender or race.

“Everyone wants equality,” Warren said. “And that’s the way it should be, but by putting a focus on race, gender and age, you’re not being equal.”

Warren has taken steps to move the needle of equality.

After working with teenagers at her church for 25 years, Warren has learned the value of not having preconceived notions about people. People respond to kindness.

“When a teenager shows up at church, I don’t know what situation or circumstance that child came out of that morning or the night before,” Warren added. “I just need to love them.”