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PHOENIX - The Arizona National Guard congratulated its newest brigadier general at a promotion ceremony for the state's joint staff director here June 7.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Kerry Muehlenbeck now wears the rank commensurate with her duty to direct Arizona Army and Air Guard joint operations, special staff agencies, and joint policies and programs. Humbled by her promotion's significance, she said she will approach her job with a perspective that served her well during her 22-year military career.



Senior Airman Rashaunda Williams

U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Kerry L. Muehlenbecklaughs with the audience during her promotion ceremony June 7, 2014, at the 161st Air Refueling Wing, Phoenix." The military is a big part of me – but it's not all of me. I've tried to balance all aspects of my life over the years," said Muehlenbeck.

"For me, this is another opportunity to do something new, broaden my scope, and contribute," said Muehlenbeck, a judge advocate, or attorney, by trade. "It's another opportunity to either succeed or fail. I prefer success, but you can't be afraid to fail, especially if you learn from it. You've got to go out and try. That's what my parents

Muehlenbeck, a native of Saginaw, Michigan, began her career as an active duty judge advocate at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. She transitioned to the Arizona Air National Guard in 1997 and has since served in the legal offices of the 161st Air Refueling Wing at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport – the site of her recent promotion ceremony – and at the Arizona National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters also located in Phoenix.

Most notably, she developed and instructed the Air National Guard's contemporary base issues course, a course well-known in Air Guard circles nationwide for preparing commanders and their support staff to face command and legal issues as a team.

"She's taught thousands of commanders, chiefs and first sergeants about how to handle very complex issues," said Master Sgt. Lori Jung, who assisted Muehlenbeck with the CBI course for nearly a decade. "She has a sharp sense of humor and she's the best teacher I've seen. She's by the book and knows how to find the answer to anything."

"She's been the most incredible mentor I've had in my entire life and I'm ecstatic that she is now a general officer. Though she never thought so, I always knew someday she would be a general. We're very lucky to have her," said Jung who continues to serve as the law office superintendent at the 161st.

In her civilian career, Muehlenbeck is a professor at Mesa Community College and an adjunct faculty member at Arizona State University. As a teacher she works with a diverse cross section of students that, she said, keep her people and management skills uniquely honed for service as a military leader.

For the new general, success as a civilian and as a Citizen-Airman is achieved through finding equilibrium among her various roles – never placing her entire identity into one basket.

"The military is a big part of me - but it's not all of me. I've tried to balance all aspects of my life over the years," said Muehlenbeck. "So, as much as I may be a brigadier general, I am as much a daughter that values what my parents tell me, and I am as much a sister that still teases her sibling. The key is to find that balance and learn not to take yourself so seriously."

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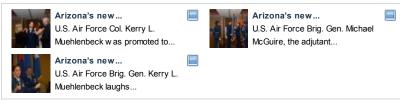
Muehlenbeck is the first woman in the Arizona National Guard to serve as a general officer. While it is yet another label she gladly accepts, she maintains a practical point of view on being the first

"If I succeed or fail, it's not because I am a woman, it's because I did or didn't do a good job," she said. "I am not a pioneer. There were certainly pioneers within the generations of women who came before me, and those are the shoulders I've been standing on throughout my career. They fought battles that I didn't have to fight."

The general's fresh perspective and legal background are expected to play a key role within the Arizona National Guard's senior leadership cadre as they shape a post-war future for Guard members, their families, and all Arizonans. Promotion and the responsibilities that come with it, Muehlenbeck said, cause her to reflect on many factors.

"Gratitude," she said. "Gratitude is most important because there are many people who have the talent and qualifications to be where I am. I am very thankful for the opportunity."







Ed Balaban

Heartiest congratulations and very well earned.

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