

Kathy Berg, Emergency Communications Manager

DEC start date and retirement date:
October 13, 1986 – November 1, 2019

Any other job titles while at DEC:

- On October 13, 1986, I was hired as a Communications Officer for the Bureau of Emergency Communications under the Department of Public Safety
- 1991, promoted to Assistant Communications Officer Supervisor
- 1996, promoted to Communications Officer Supervisor
- October 2006, promoted to Training Specialist
- January 2011, promoted to Program Manager where I served as the Operations Manager for the Department
- October 2015, assigned as the Accreditation and Professional Standards Manager

What are your most memorable occasions or events from your time with DEC?

My first memorable moment was beginning my journey with the department. I began my public safety career working in EMS, where I was an Emergency Medical Technician who responded to medical calls within the City of Richmond through a city-contracted service. I was able to calm situations and assist people in their time of need. I wanted to become a police officer, where I could utilize the skills I had developed working EMS, but I changed my path to communications and have never looked back.

Early in my career, I handled an in-progress B&E (breaking and entering) involving a young child who was at home alone. Crashing sounds, footsteps and other noises could be heard in the background, as the suspect had entered the residence. I was so scared something would happen to that child as I helplessly listened on the other end of the line. Using the skills learned from on-the-job training, my co-workers and EMS days, I calmed the child and gave her instructions to hide under a bed and remain calm. She quietly spoke (while hearing the noises of the perpetrator) and remained silent when the suspect came closer to where she was located. The police entered the residence and were able to apprehend the suspect (which all could be heard in the background). This child was an inspiration to me. She was frantic when she called, but I was able to calm her quickly using basic techniques, which also allowed me to guide her through this traumatic experience. It helped to mold me in the profession.



Kathy Berg participates in a Community Walk in the Peter Paul neighborhood, May 1, 2018.

The police and communications officers would meet after working the evening shift for choir practice in the parking lot across the street from the Public Safety Building until wee hours of the morning, building camaraderie.

While working on midnight shift at the old Public Safety Building located at 501 N 9th Street, we would play football with a roll of toilet paper to stay awake during the night.

What will you miss most? Best part of the job?

I will miss the relationships (good, bad, past and present) that I have had while employed within the organization. Each and every person that I have met has taught me something. Some lessons were more pleasant than others. I have learned to look at each person as an individual and to remember that no one is the same as me, and everyone brings their own qualities. Use what you can to develop yourself and leave the rest.

I have several best parts of the job depending on the position I was in:

- Communications Officer – The ability to assist someone in need during their most critical moments while leaving a lasting impression and making a difference in their lives (civilian and public safety).
- ACOS – Having the responsibility of overseeing platoon operations and a section of personnel while mentoring employees and their futures within the organization.
- COS – Commanding a platoon and its personnel making split-second decisions concerning operations while being fair and equitable with all personnel.

■ Training Specialist – Develop the training program(s) necessary to accurately train new (and tenured) employees on the required standards (DCJS/DEC). Develop and mentor all employees to ensure they are fully capable of handling emergency and non-emergency situations without hesitation based on the training they received in the Basic Dispatch Academy or in-service training. This creates people who will adequately assist public safety personnel and the citizens of Richmond in their time of need. Who could ask for more?

■ Program Manager – Oversee the Operations of the Department. Rely on the leadership of floor supervision (ACOS/COS) to make split-second decisions based on circumstances that may develop throughout the shift. Be an advocate for employees under my command and stand behind them when they make good business decisions and mentor them when they make not-so-good decisions, remembering that everyone learns from making mistakes.

■ Accreditation and Professional Standards Manager – I was not happy when I was placed in the position, because I did not want to write policy. But we can be placed in any position on any shift, so I decided to make the best of it. I enjoyed participating in the Christmas Parade the last two years, something that I will truly miss. My final goal for the organization was obtaining accreditation and with that completed, so am I.

What are your plans for retirement?

I plan to take a couple of months off and do nothing. I really do not have anything set in stone. And who knows what my future endeavors may have in store for me? I plan on keeping an open mind and letting the chips fall where they may.

Anything else you want to share?

Getting hired back in 1986 was a major milestone in my life. I strived to do all I could to excel in my new position. In the beginning, it was a struggle to learn everything required, but with determination and repetition, I was able to prosper. I have had some setbacks along the way (don't we all?), but I never let them define me or change the person I am. If you make a mistake, own up to it and move forward. As long as you do the best you can with what you have and treat everyone with dignity and respect, everything will work out for the best for you.

It was my honor and privilege to be a part of DEC for more than 30 years. Thanks for the memories.