



#I AM Richmond 911 Kathy Berg

A child was home alone when a burglar entered her Richmond home in the late 1980s. Fortunately, she called 911, and Kathy Berg answered. She was able to keep the child calm and safe until police arrived to apprehend the suspect.

“Crashing sounds, footsteps and other noises could be heard in the background,” Kathy said of that call early in her career as a communications officer with the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications (DEC). “I was so scared that something would happen to that little girl, as I helplessly listened on the other end of the line ... Using the skills that I had learned from on-the-job training, my co-workers, and my earlier EMS days, I was able to calm the caller, provide instructions, and keep her safe until the police arrived and apprehended the suspect.

“This little girl was an inspiration to me. She was frantic when she called but was calmed quickly using basic techniques, which allowed me to guide her through this very traumatic experience. This call helped to mold me in this profession,” she said.

The August 2019 #IamRichmond911 honoree, Kathy was hired on Oct. 13, 1986, after beginning her public safety career as an emergency medical technician in Richmond through a city-contracted service.

“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 never looked back,” she said.

“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 kept going to the next level where I could be the voice that made the difference.”

Over 33 years with the DEC, Kathy served in multiple roles, including

communications officer supervisor, training specialist, program manager and operations manager, and her final position as the accreditation and professional standards manager.

“No matter where you come from, if you are honest with yourself and others, have integrity, are sympathetic and empathetic, you too could be a 911 dispatcher,” she said. “Overall, I’ve had a good career at the DEC, but it’s time for me to move on to the next phase of my life and let others make the difference.”

In 2019, she was instrumental in helping the DEC achieve national Public Safety Communications Accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies Inc. Requiring the modification and development of multiple policies, procedures and practices, accreditation is earned by less than 2 percent of all emergency communications centers.

“Accreditation demonstrates to the public that we operate and are accountable to a higher level of standards, and that we provide an exceptional level of service for their needs,” she said. “This was my final goal for the department and with that completed, so am I.”

After her Nov. 1, 2019 retirement, Kathy hopes to do even more work with her church, Woodland Heights Baptist Church in Richmond, where she has attended since childhood and serves in various volunteer roles.

“Vacation Bible School and our fall festival are big community events for our church, and I just try to do my little part to assist,” she said. “It’s a way for me to give back to the community and hopefully assist people in knowing there is somewhere they can feel safe, come to when they’re in trouble, and assist them in finding their spirituality.”