



#I AM **Richmond 911** Michael Sweeney

“Say what you mean, and mean what you say.” That phrase envelops everything, Michael Sweeney says.

An emergency communications officer with the Richmond Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) since June 2017, Michael is the #IamRichmond911 honoree for December 2019.

His family taught him the importance of the phrase.

“To say what you mean is to the point and factual, while to mean what you say is to back it up with the right action and tone,” he said.

It is important in his personal life, as well as at work, where he helps to teach in the Basic Dispatch Academy and is working toward becoming a Certified Training Officer, he said.

“I want to help influence the department in a different way and to share my experience with new people,” he said. “Clarity is everything. ... I want everyone to be on the same page and aware of the same things and to have as much information as possible.”

Having all of the necessary information is critical when getting help to the public, Michael said.

“The more information we get, the better help we can be,” he said. “We are looking to help callers in the best way possible. We are working while they are talking and we are talking to make sure they get the help they need from the closest emergency unit that could assist them. ... They

need to understand that it takes some time. It’s not as immediate as they might see on TV.”

Communicating and passing along the necessary information is also very important.

“I try my best to get them the help that they need and look out for the best for our fellow emergency communications officers and first responders. We have to make sure that everything is passed along at once in the way that it’s supposed to be.”

Outside of work, Michael understands the importance of everyone “being on the same page,” as well. He plays the snare drum and tenor drum with two Pipes and Drums groups, Old Dominion Firefighters Emerald Society and Metro Richmond Police Emerald Society.

He attend practices every week and performs about 24 times a year, including at Celtic and Irish festivals, Richmond Flying Squirrels games, inaugurations, funerals, parades, and public and private events.

He started playing drums in school, where he was in marching band in high school and wind ensemble at Lynchburg College.

“I wanted to remain musically involved,” he said. “I enjoy being able to express myself and learning new skills, such as flourishing techniques, spinning the mallets and doing crazy tricks I learned on my own.”



Richmond Department of Emergency Communications

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