



Yellowjacket Heroes – Michael Ruff – class of 1986

PPE. Three letters that stand for Personal Protective Equipment. Really important stuff to protect our first responders such as Michael Ruff (class of 1986), a Paramedic in Butler, Missouri. Sometimes, however, the urgency of the situation makes it difficult for paramedics to be fully protected. Such an incident put Michael into a fourteen-day quarantine recently due to exposure to COVID-19 while treating a patient having a life-threatening emergency. Thankfully, he got through the quarantine period with negative test results and is now back on the job.

Michael's passion for Emergency Medical Service began with a chance meeting with a MAST paramedic during a class at UMKC during his junior year. As they talked, Michael was invited to do a ride-along to see what the EMS world was really like. He was hooked. He changed his academic direction, took some classes and got his first EMS job in Clinton, Missouri. He has explored other career options over the years but has always come back to EMS.

COVID-19 has changed the job – making the use of protective equipment even more important than ever. Michael and his fellow paramedics live with the fear that they may be exposed and spread the virus to family. "Gowning up" on each and every call is becoming a habit, though as described above, is not always possible. Michael's message to his fellow Yellowjackets – "This pandemic is real! Be cautious."

Michael's mantra in life is to "do one tiny thing every day to make the world better". Helping those in medical need gives him plenty of opportunities to do just that.

Thanks to Michael Ruff and all our Yellowjacket Heroes for their service and caring for our communities.