



# THE EXAMINER

www.wcmea.com

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Summer 2007

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings from Eagle River. Although vacation is meant to get away from it all, many of you understand that our position as Coroner and Medical Examiners require diligent attention regardless of our whereabouts. It simply is the nature of the beast. With that said it's still nice to get away from it all.

Things have been quiet since our June conference. There has been the continued work on the revision of 979; baby steps I suppose. When everything is said and done I believe that we will be heading in a much clearer direction as professionals. It will however not be without challenges. All counties will be required to meet minimum requirements for staff training, continuing education and certification. Although the exact standards have not been set you can expect the criteria to be consistent with ABMDI certification.

An opportunity will be provided at the January conference in Wausau to sit for the ABMDI examination. Please note that you must meet certain criteria before you will be allowed to test; this needs to be addressed now! You will not have to register for the conference to test. This will require early participation by individuals wishing to become certified by registering at the ABMDI web site <http://www.slu.edu/organizations/abmdi/> or call 314-977-5970. It requires a registration fee of approximately \$50 and an additional fee for the test itself. The cost of the test is dependent upon the number of applicants. I understand that many of you do not have education dollars provided by your counties however I believe that this is an investment in your future. As professionalism increases through certification then too will

wages, acknowledgement and respect. I hope many of you will choose to join the ever increasing list of Certified Medico-Legal Death Investigators. There will be more information to follow in the coming weeks, get registered.

Got to go.....time for fishing.

## FAMILY AFFAIR



Death investigation in Green Lake County is often a family affair. Darlene Strey has been served in the office for 21 years, the last 8 as Coroner. Her daughter, Shari Wahlers, has served as deputy coroner for 10 years.

Their service to the residents of Green Lake County doesn't stop there. Darlene has been an EMT for 27 years, Shari for 20. Darlene has worked as a C.N.A. for 9 years, and Shari as an L.P.N. for 8.

Green Lake County will serve as host of the 2008 Summer Conference.

*The Examiner is looking for other counties with similar situations. Please e-mail [jonhagen@aol.com](mailto:jonhagen@aol.com). Thanks.  
Summer Conference update*

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# SUMMER CONFERENCE UPDATE

About 65 WCMEA members attended the 2007 Summer Conference in Janesville. The total attendance was about 95 people, including presenters and exhibitors. 66 of Wisconsin's 72 counties belong to the Association.

Guest speakers included Dr. Rick Barney (Excited Delirium), Bryan Kastelic (Street Drugs), Dr. Robert Forey (Normal, Toxic and Critical Concentrations of Drugs and Metabolites Seen at Autopsy), Lori Shinstine (Approaching the Potential Tissue Donor Family), Peggy Peterson (State of the State Update), Dr. Russell Alexander (Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigations), Amy Michalak (Doll Reenactments), Rev. Wagner (Critical Incident Stress Management), Dawn Wolfcale (The Hole Story!) and Dr. Robert Corliss (Drowning and Immersion Deaths).

A board meeting was held on the evening of June 3, and the annual meeting was held on June 5. The following members were elected officers of the WCMEA:

President: Al Klimek (Brown)  
1st Vice-President: Laurie Parisey (Oconto)  
2nd Vice-President: Jenifer Keach (Rock)  
Secretary: Jon Hagen (Outagamie)  
Treasurer: Tom Wastart (Marquette)  
Member-at-Large: Kelly McAndrews (Washington)  
Past-President: Traci England (Oneida)  
Sergeant-at-Arms: Scott Rifleman (Portage)  
3 year Trustee: Mike Jesse (Shawano)  
2 year Trustee: John Larson (Marathon)  
1 year Trustee: John Stanley (Dane)

Education Committee Chair: Traci England (Oneida)  
Membership Committee Chair: Marc Playman (Columbia)  
Legislative Committee Chair: John Stanley (Dane)  
Merchandise Committee Chair: Laurie Parisey (Oconto)  
Web Site: Howard Fischer (Juneau)  
Newsletter: Jon Hagen (Outagamie)

An "indoor picnic" was held on June 4, with food sponsored by American Tissue Services Foundation and beverages by Puroclean Disaster Recovery. The banquet was held on Tuesday night, June 5. Many door prizes were awarded.

It was announced that the 2008 Winter Conference will return to Northcentral Technical College in Wausau on January 7-8, 2008. A Board of Directors meeting will be held on the evening of January 6. The 2008 Summer Conference will be held at the Heidel House on June 1-4, hosted by Green Lake County. Chippewa County will host the 2009 Summer Conference, with dates and location to be announced later.

WCMEA would like to thank Rock County Coroner Jenifer Keach and her staff for all their hard work in making the conference a success. We'd also like to thank our exhibitors, speakers and sponsors, as well as the Holiday Inn Express – Janesville Conference Center.

## JOHN STEERS IN COSMO?

In the July 2007 issue of Cosmopolitan magazine, Jason Kersten wrote a story discussing the drowning deaths of two dozen men in the waters of the upper Midwest over the past decade. 7 of those have occurred in La Crosse alone during the past ten years. Kersten wrote, "The details of almost every story are chillingly similar. A young man heads out with his friends, engages in heavy drinking, and becomes separated from the group. Days, weeks, or even months later, his body is found in the water, and medical examiners determine the cause of death to be drowning. The trend has become so pervasive, residents have begun speculating that the deaths are not accidents at all but the work of a serial killer..."

La Crosse County Medical Examiner and WCMEA member John Steers was interviewed for the story. Steers said, "There is just no physical evidence" to support the theory that foul play was involved. Investigators attribute the drownings to heavy alcohol consumption.



Dr. Mark Witeck

# NEW FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST IN WAUKESHA

Dr. Brian Peterson has joined the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office as Associate Medical Examiner. He was previously president of Forensic Medical Group, Inc., a corporation providing autopsy services for 15 counties in northern California, and practiced in this group for 14 years. Dr. Peterson was in private practice with Forensic Medical Group following many years of service in the U.S. Navy where he was the Regional Medical Examiner on the west coast for the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's Office.



*Dr. Brian Peterson*

He grew up in Brookfield, Wisconsin, attending Marquette University and the Medical College of Wisconsin where he

graduated with Dr. Lynda Biedrzycki, Medical Examiner of Waukesha County.

Dr. Peterson is certified by the American Board of Pathology in Anatomic, Clinical, and Forensic Pathology. His particular interests include postmortem change / time of death and ballistics. His work experience has included a large number of high-profile cases (Laci and Connor Peterson, for example) and he anticipates more telephone calls at home from the National Enquirer regarding such things. He would like to help the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office become a regional resource providing service and training for more surrounding counties.

In his "spare time" Dr. Peterson enjoys reading, brewing beer, and exercising to excess. His extremely patient wife Jeanne has tolerated him for almost 26 years, and together they have two adult sons, Adam and Kevin, and an enthusiastic German Shepherd named Lancelot.

## DR. MARK WITECK

Dr. Mark Witeck is board-certified by the American College of Forensic Examiners and the American College of Forensic Medicine. After attending college in the Dominican Republic, he studied pathology at St. Luke's Medical Center in Milwaukee and forensic pathology at Wayne State University in Detroit under Dr. Werner Spitz. He also trained in Baltimore. He was born in New Mexico and was raised in California and Washington.

He finished his formal training in 1990. From 1990-1998, he served as the Medical Examiner in Kenosha County. He has been in private practice since that time, providing service to several counties in Wisconsin and Illinois. He performs 250-300 autopsies annually, and estimates he has done about 5000 cases in his career. He has been a member of WCMEA since 1990.



*Dr. Mark Witeck*

He lives on a six acre farm in Pleasant Prairie, WI. He enjoys hunting, fishing, gardening and making wine at his Pond View Winery. He grows a variety of fruits that he uses to make about 200 bottles of wine a year. He frequently shares the wine he produces with those attending WCMEA conferences.

Dr. Witeck is single and the father of one son. He annually hosts two foreign exchange students, and has hosted about 20 students altogether, from Germany, Holland, Mexico, China, South Korea and Denmark. He has since visited Germany and Holland to visit students he has met. He speaks German and Spanish.

Dr. Witeck enjoys serving a variety of death investigators. He stresses that communication is key to a thorough investigation.

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# AGE NO BARRIER TO DONATION OF TISSUE, ORGANS

## THE GIFT OF LIFE CAN BE GIVEN AT ANY AGE.

A common perception that organ and tissue donors must be middle aged and younger often prevents older people from indicating donor status on driver's licenses, and their families from consenting to donation when death occurs. That's according to Jeanette Potts, division manager for RTI Donor Services in Madison.

"Not long ago, it was unusual for a person older than 40 to donate," says Potts. "That's just not the case any more. When the time comes to donate, the donor's general health and physical condition are what should be taken into consideration, not arbitrary criteria such as age."

Determining donor suitability on a case-by-case basis is especially important for donation of tissue, which includes bone, skin, heart valves, connective tissue, and veins. Used in more than 1 million surgeries routinely performed each year in the United States alone, tissue can be recovered within 12 to 24 hours of death and preserved for later use.

Potts says biomechanical testing and evaluation of tissue determine its usability and as a result—with just 8 percent of the tissue need being met—older people are more often accepted as suitable donors. "The ability to donate a loved one's tissue often helps families through the grieving process," she adds. "It's especially comforting for the family to know that even later in life, a person can still make a contribution."

In addition, she notes there is satisfaction of knowing that an elderly person's donation can help other seniors in need of tissue transplants. Studies show seniors comprise the largest single group of tissue transplant recipients. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, each year 300,000 Americans—67 percent of them age 65 and older—undergo total hip replacement surgery. And 72 percent of the 250,000 total knee replacement surgeries each year are performed on members of that same age group. Bone tissue is frequently used in these procedures.

Potts points out that older donors can make a significant contribution to the availability of quality tissue. Research—including data collected by Regeneration Technologies, a provider of innovations in bone and

other tissue—has shown that if there is no osteoporosis present, the strength of the bone does not degrade as the person ages.

Potts urges older people to investigate options for donation. She suggests that people speak to their funeral directors about including organ and tissue donation in their funeral pre-planning, and not hesitate to indicate their wishes on their drivers licenses.

"Donation is an option for people of all ages to give a wonderful gift," she says. "The most important thing is for people, regardless of their age, to share these decisions with their families."

RTI Donor Services is a not-for-profit tissue recovery network dedicated to serving donor families and the donation community in perpetuating the circle of life. In addition to offering families the option of tissue donation, RTI Donor Services supports their wishes as a responsible steward of human donated tissue gifts, and provides family services, as well as community information and awareness. RTI Donor Services may be accessed through the Internet at [www.rtidonorservices.org](http://www.rtidonorservices.org).

## BEST WISHES, TERRY

Terry Scheel, coroner of Adams County, suffered serious injuries in a June accident. Terry has a part-time tree trimming business. While working about 50 feet off the ground, he accidentally cut his safety line. He spent several weeks in the hospital at UW, and hopes to be able to return to "desk duty" later this summer. The Adams County coroner's office has been able to meet the needs of the public they serve, but appreciate offers for help as needed from Columbia, Marquette and Sauk Counties.



Terry Scheel

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# WISCONSIN UPDATES . . .

- In Marathon County, a man was charged with first-degree reckless homicide in connection with the January 12th death of a Marathon County Jail inmate. The man allegedly gave the inmate a prescription drug while the two were in jail.
- In Sauk County, a special needs child drowned after he wandered away from his family.
- In Wood County, an autistic boy drowned after he walked away from his home.
- In Dodge County, a man accused of killing his estranged wife in the lobby of the Fox Lake Police Department has been bound over for trial.
- In Dane County, a man was killed and several other people injured after he drove over the edge of a quarry, a fall of about 70 feet.
- In Fond du Lac County, four students at Fond du Lac High School died within two weeks of each other in two separate traffic crashes.
- A Kenosha County sheriff's deputy, Frank Fabiano Jr., an 18-year veteran of the department, was shot and killed while making a traffic stop. The suspect was arrested a short time later.
- In Manitowoc County, a jury convicted a 17-year-old of raping and participating in the murder of Teresa Halbach, a freelance photographer. Steven Avery, the boy's nephew, had previously been convicted of similar charges in the case.
- In Brown County, a high school senior was charged with first-degree reckless homicide in a case where he allegedly supplied methadone and marijuana to another student.
- In Chippewa County, a man drowned while trying to escape from police. He jumped into a lake after leading police on a three-mile chase in his vehicle.
- In Eau Claire County, a jury found a truck driver not guilty on all charges in a bus crash that killed five people returning from a high school marching band competition. The group was from Chippewa Falls High School. The driver had been accused of falling asleep at the wheel, causing his truck to overturn and then was struck by the bus on I-94 near Osseo. The crash happened in October, 2005.
- A former Dane County sheriff's deputy was expected to be charged with at least eight felonies in connection with a drunken driving crash that killed a mother and two of her children near Arlington on May 5.
- Three young Wisconsin track athletes died this spring, all collapsing during practice. All of the deaths were attributed to cardiac problems.
- In Walworth County, six people were found dead in a Delavan apartment. The case was ruled a murder-suicide.
- In Oconto County, a woman was shot to death at an Oconto church, allegedly by her estranged husband, who also suffered gunshot wounds. The woman had filed for divorce two weeks earlier.
- In Ozaukee County, a man pled no contest to three counts of first-degree reckless homicide accusing him of supplying drugs that caused the deaths of three people.
- In Chippewa County, a woman was found dead in her tent at Country Fest, a music festival. The death was due to carbon monoxide poisoning, the source of which was attributed to a generator from an adjacent campsite.
- In Dane County, a woman was charged with two counts of homicide after driving at 120 mph while intoxicated and then crashing into a car driven by a UW-Whitewater professor, killing Paula Poorman, 56.
- In Outagamie County, a retired Lawrence University professor was killed in a freak bicycle accident which occurred in Appleton's Telulah Park.
- In La Crosse County, a man pled guilty to two misdemeanors after several felony charges were dropped in the 2004 beating death case in which a terminally ill man was severely beaten while being robbed – for the second time in a week – of his pain medication.
- In West Allis, a man apparently committed suicide by forcing a police officer to shoot him. The man pointed a weapon at officers, challenging them to shoot him. Investigators later found a suicide note in the man's home.
- In Brown County, Green Bay police shot and killed a man in the parking lot of a downtown club after he appeared to point a weapon at officers.
- A plane carrying a transplant team from the University of Michigan crashed into Lake Michigan shortly after take off from Milwaukee's Mitchell field, killing all six people on board. Also lost in the crash were organs that had been harvested for transplant into a 50-year-old man. The man later did undergo a double lung transplant.

# WISCONSIN UPDATES . . . CONTINUED

- In Portage County, the body of a 37-year-old woman was found buried in a Portage yard. The woman's body was found in mid-June after her children told police she went missing around Memorial Day. Preliminary reports attributed the death to strangulation. Four people were charged with being party to first-degree intentional homicide.
- Dane County sheriff's deputies shot and killed an armed man who made "threatening moves" during a confrontation.
- In Brown County, police say a man was drunk when he hit two pedestrians, then drove about seven blocks home with the man's body lodged in his windshield. Hours earlier, a seriously injured woman was found lying in the street. The accident happened about six hours before it was reported.
- In Dane County, cellular phone signals were used to locate the body of a 22-year-old woman who had been missing for about two weeks. Homicide is suspected.

## 1000 SATURDAYS

*Author unknown*

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the kitchen with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it.

I turned the volume up on my radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning talk show. I heard an older sounding chap with a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business himself. He was talking about "a thousand marbles" to someone named Tom. I was intrigued and sat down to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but it's a shame you have to be away from your home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work 60 or 70 hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital." He continued, "Let me tell you something, Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities."

And that is when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles."

"You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about 75 years. I know, some

live more and some live less, but on average, folks live to be about 75. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me, Tom. I'm getting to the important part."

"It took me until I was 55 years old to think about all this in any detail," he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over 2800 Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be 75, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in my workshop next to the radio. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday, then God has blessed me with a little extra time to be with my loved ones...."

"It was nice to talk to you, Tom. I hope you spend more time with your loved ones and I hope to meet you again someday. Have a good morning."

Have a great weekend any may all Saturdays be special and may you have many happy years after you lose all of your marbles!

# THE DIVISION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

*The Division of Quality Assurance,  
a monitor on Health Care Agencies*

*Kelly McAndrews,  
Medical Examiner of Washington County*

In early 2006 I investigated the death of a 60 year-old resident at a local nursing home. She had a life-long battle with MS and several related conditions. One afternoon, during lunch, she started to choke. This was a known risk of her eating solid foods, since she was toothless and had swallowing problems. After facility staff performed the Heimlich, she was whisked to the privacy of her room where she was administered oxygen by nasal cannula. Although no food was expelled, she was left alone in her room and checked on a short while later. She died. Autopsy revealed the decedent choked on a string bean and carrot coin.

While I was investigating, I then examined the controls in place to make sure the nursing home's involvement was examined. Prior to my arrival, staff attempted to have rescue discontinued, and this death was being attributed to natural causes by the facility. I wondered how often deaths like this went unreported?

The fact is that unless you respond to each and every death, there is always a slight risk that such a death will go unreported. Education and training help negate this possibility. We routinely train nursing home staff on death reporting procedures. High staff turnover rates in care facilities ensure a constant need for training.

Although, Medical Examiners and Coroners may wonder how to enforce reporting requirements and policies in residential facilities, there is a way to accomplish compliance. The Division of Quality Assurance is the regulatory agency that ensures state and local reporting requirements. Regional contact information can be found on [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/rl\\_DSL/bqa.htm](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/rl_DSL/bqa.htm). The website also links to WI Statutes and DHFS Administrative Regulations.

Nursing Homes and residential facilities have a required, but voluntarily followed, reporting process regarding fall related and other non-natural deaths through the Division of Quality Assurance. Families, unhappy with treatment of their loved ones can also file complaints with the

Division of Quality Assurance. The Division of Quality Assurance is readily willing to investigate and enforce reporting regulations and resolve care related issues. The Division of Quality Assurance prefers that Medical Examiners and Coroners be proactive, rather than having contact initiated via a family complaint. Plainly put, they want to know about the death before the family files a complaint.

When I notice patterns of non-reporting, have a severe injury that leads to death, have concern about lack of staff training, or have family complaints about facility treatment I contact the Division of Quality Assurance to report. To determine the appropriate regional office to direct a complaint to the Division of Quality Assurance can be contacted at 608-266-8481.

The Division of Quality Assurance is responsible for safety, welfare and health issues in health and community care provider organizations. Agencies are required to report deaths related to the use of restraint/ seclusion, psychotropic medications or suicide. Failure to comply with this and any other DHFS regulation may result in a citation of noncompliance.

## UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's office has announced the dates of their 19th annual conference, now named in memory of the late Dr. John Teggatz. The seminar will take place on November 7-8, 2007. Dr. Vincent DiMaio is the keynote speaker and the Steven Avery case will be discussed, among many other topics. More information will be mailed this fall.

August 22-23, Governor's Conference on Highway Safety, Stevens Point

The Saint Louis University School of Medicine (314-977-5970) will be holding Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Courses on the following dates:

- Oct. 1-5, 2007
- Jan. 21-25, 2008
- April 21-25, 2008
- October 6-10, 2008

WCMEA Winter Conference in Wausau, January 7-8,

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## OFFICER'S NAMES ADDED TO STATE MEMORIAL

On May 18, the names of several officers were added to the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Memorial, located outside of the state capital in Madison. Those added were Eau Claire County deputy Steven Hahn, who died in a traffic accident in 2006, Sawyer County deputies Carl "Cully" Johnson and Fred W. Scott, who were killed in a shootout with a robber in 1939, and Calumet County deputy sheriff Charles Hanson, who died in an automobile crash during a pursuit on July 14, 1968.

Calumet County sheriff Jerry Pagel said Hanson died when he collided with a vehicle on State 57 while chasing a suspect. A mother and two children who were on their way to a parade in New Holstein also died in the crash. Three surviving children of that family planned to protest Hanson being added to the Memorial, telling the Appleton Post-Crescent, "The facts are that Officer Hansen did not die in the line of duty because he was not on duty when he sped through the stop sign at the Highway 57 intersection and crashed into our brother's vehicle. Calumet County's own insurance company's investigation included these facts in his report dated July

16, 1968." The paper went on to report "the county's insurer settled the case for \$28,350, although the county admitted no liability." The county filed a counterclaim against the driver of the private vehicle.

Calumet County officials denied allegations that Hanson was driving improperly but instead was following state statutes for emergency vehicle operation at the time of the crash. Insurance investigators estimated the officer's speed at 61 mph in the 65 mph zone, and the family's vehicle at 37 mph. The county did acknowledge that "no one had knowledge of what emergency, if any, officer Hansen was proceeding to." A suspect was never identified in the case.

Since 1844, more than 220 law enforcement officers have been killed in the line of duty in Wisconsin. Two of those were Calumet County officers; Chilton police chief Anton Steffes and Lt. Jeffrey Williams.