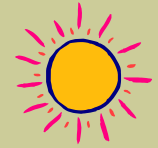




The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>



Summer 2011



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to summer! As I write this, the thermometer is approaching 90 degrees with 98 % humidity. Grandpa always said "Be careful what you wish for, you may just get it". Oh well...this sure beats the mid-winter freezing and a cold damp spring.

1 Things across the state have been pretty typical in the death investigation business. It seems that everyone is getting their share of interesting cases, yet no one has experienced "the big one" yet this year. This certainly is a good thing. With most of the summer still ahead of us, I am certain that a newsmaker is just around the corner.

2 Recently I have noticed a trend that seems to be presenting itself more often. The trend that I am speaking of is the ever increasing challenges or questioning of investigation practices and cause and manner of death determinations. This is not just happening in my counties, but across the state as well. Often I receive inquires via our website from concerned individuals questioning rulings despite the fact that a proper investigation was conducted, a forensic autopsy was performed, and a reasonable cause and manner of death was determined.

6 I am always cautious not to interfere with another county's business, rather I try to explain the dynamics of death investigation and the variables and difficulties that we encounter while performing our duties. Frequently this explanation goes a long way in helping families understand what has taken place and the conclusions that were

I don't know if this trend is a product of the many CSI- type shows that are on television, or if society is has just become more comfortable with questioning us as a profession. Either way, it is forcing us to remain sharp in our duties.

Stay informed. Keep current. Be honest and professional. Have a good summer and see you in Door County in October.

Al

DID YOU KNOW?

In Wisconsin, the summer season means motorcycle season.

According to the CDC, Wisconsin is ranked #47 in the nation for lives and money saved due to helmet use!

- The most effective way to save lives is enacting a universal helmet law vs. partial helmet law
- Helmets reduce fatalities by 37%
- Helmets reduce the risk of head injuries by 69%
- In 2008, \$3 billion was saved as a result of helmet use nationwide

A universal helmet law could save the lives of our Wisconsin residents, protect our families from tragedy, and free-up money for other priorities.



The WCMEA Website- A Status Update

The WCMEA Board of Directors (BOD) has been receiving many inquiries about the status of the WCMEA website and its plans for the future. I consider myself fairly computer literate, but I am nowhere near a “techy”, so I will give my best attempt at an explanation as to what is going on.

Several years ago someone came up with an idea to create a website that could be available to educate and inform our members as well as the general public. This of course would require “two sides” to the website, one of which was secure so that we could share sensitive information with each other and another side for general information. Howard Fischer of Juneau County eagerly accepted the challenge of development and, despite being a self-admitted website novice, established some of what is still present today. Eventually Howard hung up his keyboard and handed off the website to Marc Playman. Marc was able to take the website from its infant status to its teenage years. Despite server problems and the never-ending requests to remind people what their user names and passwords are, Marc really got the website to a new level. Not only were many of our members using it, but it was also getting several hundred hits from outside of our association.

Marc has since left the Coroner/Medical Examiner profession, but maintained management of the website on a part-time basis as an Associate Member of the WCMEA. Because of time constraints and the need to earn a living, Marc found it necessary to gradually pass along the duties to a hesitant but willing person.....Jon Hagen. Jon is also new to this sort of operation, as well as having a full plate, so he is in need of some guidance and assistance. Despite the good intentions of our members we have experienced a lull that has left our website in some disarray.

We have a decision to make in the near future. Do we want to continue to maintain our website through volunteerism, which most certainly will result in a product that does not reflect our true professionalism? Or, do we want to invest in some assistance by the way of a compensated “webmaster” that will hopefully provide a useful website so that we may continue to grow as an association? I think the choice is clear, but I am only one member. Please let your BOD know your thoughts on this so that we may address this at our next meeting this fall.

Al Klimek, WCMEA President

Introducing Mary Turner and Kasi Ewert to the WCMEA

In November 2010, Mary E. Turner was elected as coroner of Richland County, succeeding Ralph Shireman, who did not seek re-election. Mary served as chief deputy coroner from 1990-98. She holds a Master of Divinity degree and is also a registered nurse. She also served as chaplain for the Illinois State Police for 5 years. Richland Center is the county seat.

Voters in Rusk County elected Kasi Ewert over incumbent coroner Annette Groetzinger. Ewert is likely Wisconsin’s youngest coroner at the age of 24. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice. She is a graduate of Bruce High School, where she is the girls varsity basketball coach and also is the varsity assistant softball coach. She is an EMT with Rusk County EMS and serves as a volunteer fire fighter with the Bruce Fire Department. She also works at her mother’s café. Kasi is assisted by two deputies, and she hopes to add to her staff. The Rusk County Coroner’s office investigated approximately 100 cases last year. Ladysmith is the county seat.



Mary Turner, Richland County Coroner



Kasi Ewert, Rusk County Coroner

Information and photographs submitted by Jon Hagen, Outagamie County Chief Deputy Coroner

WCMEA 2011 Spring Conference Update

Last year, the Board of Directors voted to change the former winter/summer WCMEA conference schedule to a spring/fall format. The 2011 Spring Conference was held at the Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids. Wood County (staff pictured at right) served as the host. Garry Kronstedt is the coroner of Wood County. We would like to thank Garry and his staff for their hospitality, including obtaining several gifts which were solicited from area merchants; these gifts were given to attendees during a drawing at lunch on Monday.



The conference kicked off with a Board of Directors meeting on Sunday evening, April 3. The conference was broken down into two areas, one for newer investigators and the other for more experienced examiners.



Conference speakers were Michelle Smith and Laura Ninnemann, who are the replacements for the recently retired Peggy "Mom" Peterson of the State Vital Record office. Dr. Vincent Tranchida, (pictured at left) the new chief medical examiner for Dane County, gave two presentations. Other speakers included Greg Young, Chaplain/Debriefing of the Germantown Police Department; Dr. Leslie Eisenberg, Forensic Anthropologist; Special Agent James Holmes of the Wisconsin Department of Criminal Investigation; Roberta Geiselhart, Supervisor of Investigations for the Hennepin County Medical Examiners Office; Dr. Anrua Jha, Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Research Assistant Professor for Veterans Affairs; Joyce Kratz of the Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin; Jon Hagen of the Outagamie County Coroners Office; Special Agent (retired) Thomas Fassbender of the Wisconsin Department of Criminal Investigations; Dennis Murphy, retired detective from the Milwaukee Police Department; and DCI Special Agent Liz Feagles (retired).

Approximately 70 people attended the conference, which was directed by Angela Hinze, RN, F-ABMDI. Angela is the chief medical examiner for Columbia and Adams County, and has run the last several conferences. She also serves the Association as 1st Vice-President.



The WCMEA is grateful to the many vendors at the spring conference (pictured at left). Each vendor was given time between presentations to speak to the group about their area of expertise and the services they offer. Many of the vendors donated raffle gifts and/or sponsored breaks or evening social activities. The Association thanks them for their

ongoing support to help make our conferences both fun and educational.

The WCMEA 2011 Fall Conference will be held at the Stone Harbor Resort in Door County, running from Sunday, October 2 through Wednesday, October 5. The 2012 Spring conference will be held in Appleton sometime in early April. Watch your mail, email, The Examiner newsletter, and website (www.wcmea.com) for more information.

We hope that you are able to join us at these upcoming events. We need membership input and participation to be successful in our endeavors!

Information and photographs submitted by Jon Hagen, Outagamie County Chief Deputy Coroner

Yell and Tell- Turning Fear into Courage one Child at a Time

Summer vacation is officially underway. Though the warmer weather presents opportunity for outside play, it also presents opportunity for dangerous situations. I have recently learned about a wonderful program called Yell and Tell . . . a program that turns dangerous situations into teaching opportunities. Some of the dangers addressed in the program include water safety (i.e. pools, rivers, and lakes), fire, poison, guns, and child enticement.

The Yell and Tell program was developed by Jean Davidson, the granddaughter of Walter Davidson, co-founder of Harley Davidson. Jean Davidson is a schoolteacher by trade, as well as an accomplished author. She is also a grandparent who suffered the tragic loss of her young grandson. The death was an accident- one that could have been prevented had another child called out for help. Jean decided to turn her sorrow into something meaningful. She developed a program with the mission to save the lives of children and prevent further tragedy.

Since its inception, Ms. Davidson surrendered the business aspect of running the not-for-profit corporation to elected President, Jeff Haig, and continues her efforts presenting and promoting the program to children. I had the opportunity to interview Mr. Haig regarding the program and its relevance to the medical examiner/coroner profession.

Haig is no stranger to public safety, as he served on the police force for 34 years before retiring as Police Chief for Elm Grove in 2005. He describes himself as a “rabid cheerleader” for the program and its mission. He believes that the Yell and Tell program could be a valuable resource to coroner and medical examiner offices statewide, especially to the local Child Fatality Review Teams (CFRT). Haig stated that any office with an established CFRT “chooses to be proactive in enhancing public safety” and would see benefit from promoting the program, as it covers most of the preventable causes of accidental child fatalities. He explained that Yell and Tell is simple (see illustration below), age-appropriate (K-3), inexpensive, and effective. Jeff Haig went on to say, “it is the only program . . . that focuses not on the victim child, but on the witness child. As such, it teaches youngsters that taking responsibility and action to save someone else is the right thing to do.” He informed me that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has endorsed Yell and Tell as a resource for schools under their Health and Safety criteria. Haig stated that, to date, the program has yielded 46 young “heroes.”



Observe something dangerous



Feel something is not right



Yell help



Tell the nearest adult

To learn more about the Yell and Tell program, please visit the website at www.yellandtell.com. Jeff Haig can be contacted via e-mail at jhaig@wi.rr.com, or 262-650-0005.

Jennifer Schroeter, Waukesha County Deputy Medical Examiner

Big Staffing Changes for Milwaukee County

With 2011 in full swing, the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office has made drastic staffing changes. Starting the year with one vacancy already, the office has since lost three veteran investigators as they left their positions to pursue other endeavors.

Gene Williams had been a forensic investigator for Milwaukee County since June of 1987. After nearly 24 years, Williams has retired. Joining Williams in retirement is Bob Kufalk. He began with Milwaukee County in November of 1988 following stints as a security officer, as well a private investigator.

Jeanne Wiedmeyer started as a forensic investigator in 1992 after working for the City of Milwaukee Police Department. Wiedmeyer received her nursing degree, and in February, accepted a position at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex as a registered nurse.

With the four job openings, the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office fortuitously hired fresh faces. Marissa Ordinans worked as an investigator for the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office for approximately 3.5 years before being laid off. After Wiedmeyer transferred to the Mental Health Complex, Marissa provided emergent assistance to Milwaukee County as a forensic investigator. After only two months, Ordinans was hired full-time. April proved to be a busy month for Milwaukee, as two additional vacancies were filled. Lesley Kenney and Michael Martin began their posts the week of April 18, 2011. Both Kenney and Martin are UW-Milwaukee graduates who had interned at the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office during the course of their studies. They both also worked as temporary, part-time deputy medical examiners for Waukesha County during the summer and fall of 2010 respectively to assist with staffing shortfalls.

Jason Rudelich filled the final vacancy in May 2011. Rudelich, a practicing chiropractor and volunteer paramedic for the Grafton Fire Department, also volunteered at the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office while completing his studies.

Though the Milwaukee County ME Office was saddened to see the veteran investigators move on, there is excitement for a new beginning with their talented, new staff.

Information provided by Amy Michalak, Forensic Investigator In-Charge for Milwaukee County

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Since its inception 30 years ago, the National Center for Victims of Crime and the Office for Victims of Crime has assisted communities nationwide in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW). This year, April 10-16 was designated NCVRW with the theme "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past" to recognize all victims of crime.

The Rock County Coroner's Office observed NCVRW by launching the "Remember Me" program to help residents grieve the loss of their loved ones. The program was developed as part of the coroner's mission to provide compassionate and professional death investigations. The "Remember Me" program kicked off with community donations of approximately 600 comfort objects, including stuffed animals, to the coroner's office. These items will be distributed to grieving children and adults on a case-by-case basis, or as requested.

To learn more about NCVRW, or to start your own program/observance, please visit <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>.

Honoring Documented Donation Decisions

Wisconsin coroners and medical examiners oftentimes are the individuals talking with families about a loved one's death and can play a vital role in facilitating tissue and eye donation. Upon making a referral to a recovery organization, the coroner, ME, or recovery agency themselves will approach the family about the decedent's opportunity to donate. When a recovery organization feels a candidate is eligible for donation, the first step is to determine whether the individual has already documented his or her donation wishes.

Many individuals have already had the donation conversation with their families and are aware of their loved one's decision on donation, which may put them more at ease when consenting to donation for their loved one. Additionally, many now ensure their donation wishes will be honored by having them documented through the online Wisconsin Donor Registry and/or through an advance directive.

On March 29, 2010, the state of Wisconsin launched a new online donor registry at www.YesIWillWisconsin.com. It only takes a few minutes to complete the online registration process on the new registry, but by doing so, an individual could save up to eight lives through organ donation, give sight to two people, and greatly improve dozens of lives through tissue donation. Anyone older than age 15½ with a Wisconsin driver's license or identification card can register either through the online registry or while applying for or renewing a driver's license or ID.

Most advance directives also contain a section pertaining to anatomical gifts where end-of-life decisions can be expressed including a decision to donate organs, tissue and eyes. Advance directives may be used in conjunction with signing up on the online donor registry. It is also helpful that the advance directive is shared with one's family and registered at a local health care facility.

When coroners and medical examiners give those they serve the option to donate, they are honoring a decision to donate, allowing an individual to gift the gift of life.

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, provides family services, and offers community information and awareness.

RTI Donor Services has established relationships with medical examiners, coroners and justice of the peace professionals to ensure that donor families can fulfill their wishes for donation while ensuring that donation will not interfere with the death investigation.

For more information on donation, or how an individual can designate his or her wishes, please visit the Donate Life America website at www.donatelife.net. RTI Donor Services may be accessed through the Internet at www.rtidonorservices.org.

Information submitted by Jessica Schrauth with RTI Donor Services

Upcoming Training Opportunities

Masters 14 Conference for Advanced Death Investigation. Sponsored by Saint Louis University School of Medicine. To be held in St. Louis, MO. July 25-28, 2011. Contact Mary Fran Ernst or Julie Howe. 314-977-5970 or <http://medschool.slu.edu/masters>

Basic Facial Reconstruction Sculpture. To be held at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK. October 3-7, 2011. Contact: Betty Pat Gatliff 405-321-8706

John Teggatz Forensic Science Conference. Sponsored by the Milwaukee Medical Examiner's Office. November 1 & 2, 2011. The focus of the conference will be Jeffrey Dahmer.

More information to follow.

Year-round education. West Virginia University Online Continuing Education Forensic Courses. Contact: Robin Bowen 304-293-6214 or <http://www.elearn.wvu.edu/continuing/index.htm>

Interesting cases handled by Wisconsin's death investigators.....compiled by Jon Hagen.

- In Milwaukee County, a 17-year-old boy died after being shot and driving his SUV into a utility pole.
- In Calumet County, a 14-year-old boy died at high school track practice. The boy collapsed after he became dizzy from running. His death was cardiac-related.
- In Outagamie County, the body of a 78-year-old man was discovered in the parking lot of a shooting range. After the investigation and forensic autopsy, it was determined the man had shot himself.
- In Wood County, a body was discovered inside a car which apparently caught fire after it struck a church. Authorities identified the body as a 23-year-old man.
- In Marshfield, a 21-year-old motorcyclist died after losing control of his cycle, hitting a curb before striking a guardrail. He was not wearing a helmet.
- In Milwaukee County, the driver of a moped died when he crashed into an SUV which turned in front of him. Police believe the SUV was trying to beat a yellow traffic light. The moped driver was 29.
- In Douglas County, two people died in a head-on crash. Killed were the driver of one car, a male whose age wasn't released, and a 25-year-old female passenger in the other vehicle.
- In Columbia County, a 19-year-old man died after crashing into the back of a school bus.
- In Waukesha County, a 78-year-old man was allegedly killed by his 17-year-old grandson during a Mother's Day gathering. Police said the grandson has schizophrenia.
- In Eau Claire County, a 40-year-old woman died while she was an inmate at the county jail.
- In Marathon County, a 57-year-old man committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with a pneumatic nail gun. He first shot himself in the chest with a 3" nail, but that didn't kill him.
- In Brown County, DePere police shot and killed a man who refused to put down his weapon when ordered to by officers.
- In Racine County, a 37-year-old man died after being in a bar fight; a man was taken into custody.
- A man accused of driving drunk and killing a 21-year-old man and his 67-year-old grandmother in a Rock County crash, escaped from UW Hospitals where he was being treated for his injuries. Police were not guarding the man, as they felt he wasn't a risk to flee. Police did find the missing man's wheel chair and walking boot.....and the man was captured a few days later.
- In Dodge County, an 18-year-old motorcyclist died after colliding with a mini-van.
- In Monroe County, an 84-year-old woman died in a house fire.
- In Wood County, a 51-year-old male died after he was struck by a train. The death was ruled a suicide.
- In Sheboygan County, a 68-year-old man was killed when a vehicle driven by a man, 59, crossed the center line and struck the older man's vehicle. Police said the man who caused the crash was intoxicated.
- In Washington County, a motorcyclist and his female passenger died after a car pulled out into their path. Neither cyclist was wearing a helmet.
- In Milwaukee, a 31-year-old man was shot to death and his brother critically wounded after they drank the shooter's beer at closing time in a tavern; police arrested a suspect in the slaying.
- In Calumet County, a 42-year-old motorcyclist died after being struck by a pick-up truck which ran a stop sign.
- In Iowa County, a 58-year-old man died after his truck hit a tractor which was pulling a wagon on the highway. The man's truck burst into flames; he died at the scene.
- In Columbia County, the body of a 29-year-old man was found at the bottom of Gibraltar Rock. He was found 100 feet below the crest of the formation.
- In Milwaukee County, police were investigating the death of a 10-month-old child.
- In Milwaukee County, a man died and many others were injured in a two-vehicle crash in the city.
- In Brown County, a 67-year-old man died of his injuries suffered weeks earlier after crashing his experimental aircraft at a small airport.
- In Washington County, a 27-year-old man died when a gust of wind caused his small boat to capsize.
- In Walworth County, the body of a 20-year-old college student was found at the base of a quarry. The man was last seen leaving a party; authorities believe he fell to his death.
- In Shawano County, a 49-year-old man and his 41-year-old wife died when the man lost control of their vehicle, which then rolled over and ejected both of them.
- In Outagamie County, a 95-year-old woman died after she was struck by a car in a church parking lot.
- In Jefferson County, a 24-year-old man died after he was struck by a train while walking on railroad tracks.
- A body was recovered from the Menomonee River on the Wisconsin-Michigan border. The man, 48, was believed to have fallen into the river while fishing from shore.
- In Trempealeau County, a 59-year-old man died after the vehicle he was driving crossed the center line and a hit a hay bine which was being pulled by a tractor. The man's vehicle then caught fire.

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!!Race into Action!!



The Examiner is looking for interesting case investigations, as well as special WCMEA members to highlight in the Fall 2011 publication.

Please forward any case reports or personal entries by September 26th to editors Patrice Hall or Jennifer Schroeter via e-mail:

phall@waukeshacounty.gov or jschroeter@waukeshacounty.gov

If you prefer, mail your entries via USPS to:
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