



The Examiner

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Fall 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Greetings to all,

It's that time again. Time for a new Board of Directors to be elected. There will be some familiar faces as well as some new ones. The last year has passed quickly for me and it was because the Board remained active.

During that entire time, the legislative committee was working on the changes to the 979 statutes. The Association first hired Lenzendorf & Winters as it's lobbyist to work with the legislators in Madison. Mr. Lenzendorf, Mr. Winters, & members of the legislative committee have been working so that a draft of the bill can be written.

As you know, the 979 legislation has been a long term goal of the Association. It is our goal to strengthen death investigation practices in the State, and the legislative committee will continue to work on this issue.

A smaller project, but one that generated probably as many calls, was when we started absentee voting for WCMEA officers. Were there bumps along the way? Sure.

Were there hanging chads? I don't think so. Will we survive? I think so. (For those of you who couldn't vote in 2000 & don't remember hanging chads, Google it. Just don't tell the rest of us).

I'd like to thank all of you for allowing me to serve as President of the WCMEA for the past year. I look forward to moving into the Past President position and remaining on the Board.

PJ

Wisconsin's Medicolegal Death Investigator Week !

October 21- October 25

Please take time to honor and celebrate all of the hard work and dedication put forth by you and your colleagues!

John Larson Retires

Marathon County Medical Examiner, John Larson, announced his retirement on August 8, 2013 following 26 years of service.



Larson, a Registered Nurse, began his career in medicolegal death investigation as an elected part-time coroner. He remained in office, and in 2001, his position as Marathon County Coroner changed to a full-time Medical Examiner position.

Throughout his tenure, Larson has been a community leader in education and prevention of teen suicide. John Larson has also been very active for Wisconsin and the WCMEA serving as long-time board member.

Larson's last day in office was August 30, 2013, and it was a day of celebration for John and his colleagues. Though he is no longer working for Marathon County, Larson plans to remain active in his community but will also devote time to some personal hobbies such as photography, kayaking, and canoeing.

The WCMEA extends its congratulations to John Larson on his well deserved retirement!

Proposed Child Death Review Legislation for Wisconsin

Did you know Wisconsin is 1 of 7 states without comprehensive child death review (CDR) legislation? Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin (Alliance), the Injury Research Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin (IRC) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) are working to introduce and pass enabling CDR legislation. The purpose of this legislation is to affirm the already existing CDR system.

Legislation is needed to establish a recognized CDR program for Wisconsin that promotes prevention, affirm the current ad hoc state CDR Council to provide advisory oversight and guidance, resolve barriers confronting local CDR teams, and protect the process and information shared at CDR team meetings.

The proposed legislation has the following key components:

- Allows local CDR teams to request, and be provided with relevant records to conduct child death reviews. These records include, but are not limited to, medical, dental and mental health, child welfare and law enforcement (with exceptions noted for special circumstances, such as pending investigations).
- Confirms all CDR information and records are confidential and not subject to subpoena or discovery and subject to a penalty for confidentiality breaches.
- Immunity from criminal and civil liability.



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Missing in Wisconsin

September 29, 2013, marked the first-ever Missing in Wisconsin event. Patrice Hall, Kenosha County Medical Examiner, spearheaded the event after receiving inspiration from a similar program in Michigan.

This event, made possible by generous donations and the help and hard work of over 30 volunteers, was held at the Madri-grano Marina Shores located in the beautiful city of Kenosha. During the course of the afternoon, seven Wisconsin families were able to ensure that their loved one's disappearance had been reported to law enforcement, and a profile had been created in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (www.NamUs.gov). Finally and most importantly, DNA samples were collected from the family members to be used for comparison.



Several participating agencies from Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin, including law enforcement agencies (Milwaukee and Kenosha Counties), fire departments (Kenosha), and coroner and medical examiner offices (Milwaukee and Will Counties), and the health department (Kenosha) provided education and resources to the general public. Children were measured, fingerprinted and showered with goodies!

The Kenosha law enforcement agencies wowed the crowd with both bomb squad and K-9 demonstrations. Guest speakers addressed the program attendees on topics ranging from NamUs and the Henning Foundation, to personal stories of heartache from first-hand experience on missing and exploited children.

The event ended with a slide show that highlighted just some of the missing children and adults from Wisconsin followed by a silent candle light vigil to honor the missing and their families.

Based on the success of the program, Patrice Hall is hopeful that the Missing in Wisconsin event will continue annually in order to better assist families statewide find their happy reunions.



Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....

- In **Dane County**- a 1986 cold case of a 20-year old male has been revisited with new hope of finding the decedent's killer. DNA evidence from a bandana at the scene was tested against the key suspect. The Wisconsin State Crime Lab found that the key suspect could not be excluded but there was not a definitive match either. Among the other damning evidence, the detective on the case will be submitting his reports to the Dane County District Attorney's Office to provide more evidence where before there was hardly any.
- In **Rock County**- a 37-year old male died after his home exploded. The decedent and his wife had just installed a new gas stove and were unaware that the gas line was uncapped. The decedent died from his injuries including second- and third-degree burns and smoke inhalation.
- In **Walworth County**- a 39-year old male was shot dead by deputies. The decedent had beaten his mother's boyfriend with a lead pipe and then approached deputies with a knife. A deputy fired his weapon several times, and the decedent stole the deputy's squad car, crashing it. He then got out of the vehicle with the deputy's shotgun and refused to drop the weapon. Three other deputies fired their weapons killing him
- In **Lafayette County**- a 9-year old male was one of four people riding a utility terrain vehicle (UTV) when it struck a pile of hay in a field. This caused the UTV to overturn, and the decedent was partially ejected. He died from his injuries.
- In **La Crosse County**- a man about 40-years old died in an apparent foundry accident. When police arrived, the decedent was found in a piece of equipment and working on a furnace. It is unclear if he was injured by the equipment or died from a medical condition.
- In **Fond du Lac County**- a 21-year old woman was found dead in her apartment. Drug use or foul play is not suspected in the death, but investigators are waiting on toxicology findings.
- In **Milwaukee County**- a 27-year old man was shot and killed after an apparent altercation. In the same night of his death, Milwaukee County also experienced 6 unrelated shootings injuring 9 more victims. These victims were all male and between the ages of 16 to early 40s.
- In **Racine County**- an 83-year old golf course worker was killed by a large tree branch. The man was on a riding lawn mower when the roll bar struck the tree's overhanging branch knocking onto him.
- In **Sheboygan County**- a 39-year old man was found floating a mile off the shores of Lake Michigan. The man had been missing for three weeks and no foul play is suspected.
- In **Lincoln County**- a 51-year old Milwaukee man was found dead in Smith Lake near an unoccupied boat. A witness reported the man had gone on the lake to fish by himself. There was also no life jacket found at the scene.
- In **Vilas County**- a 20-year old man died in a one-vehicle car accident after striking a tree. The man needed to be extracted using the Jaws of Life. Alcohol and excessive speed are thought to be potential factors in the case.
- In **Jefferson County**- a 76-year old Milwaukee man was found dead in the Crawfish River in the Town of Milford. It is suspected the decedent may have suffered a heart attack then fell out of the boat, capsizing it.
- In **Trempealeau County**-a criminal complaint was filed for a 22-year old woman for the first degree reckless homicide of a 22-month old toddler girl. According to the complaint, the Dane County Medical Examiner reported the child died from a combination of Oxycodone, diphenhydramine, and amitriptyline. There were also fractures in the girl's wrist and blood in the ear canals, which are consistent with "assaultive, inflicted injury".

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Interesting Deaths..continued from page 4

- In **Polk County**-at a tavern, a fight with injuries was reported to law enforcement. A woman was found unresponsive in the parking lot after apparently being struck by a vehicle as it left the lot.
- In **Rusk County**-an elderly man died after falling off of a dock at Lake Flambeau.
- In **Outagamie County**- A 34-year old man was killed in a crash. A pick-up truck was traveling west on State 76 when it crossed the center line and struck an eastbound dump truck. The driver of the pick-up truck was killed in the collision, while the driver of the dump truck received only minor injuries.
- In **LaCrosse County**- A 22-year old male beat and stabbed his 18-year old girlfriend at his apartment after she ended their two year relationship. He then posted two graphic photographs onto his Facebook page and told followers in a vulgar posting how much he “loved her with everything in my being” before turning a shotgun on himself.
- In **Marinette County**- A 37-year old man accidentally drowned while camping alone. Deputies received a 911 call that someone had fallen from some rocks into the water while taking photographs at Twelve Foot Falls County Park. Witnesses pulled the man to shore and tried to resuscitate him, but were unsuccessful.
- In **Marathon County**- A 27-year old female died following bizarre traffic incident. The driver of the truck told Marathon County authorities that he fell asleep and awakened in the ditch to find his girlfriend missing. The driver reported that he turned the truck around and located the woman lying in the intersection of State Highway 49 and 153 near Elderon. He claims that two men helped him put his injured girlfriend back into his truck, and then he drove her home. The driver called 911 from his house after realizing how severe the woman’s injuries were.
- In **Kenosha County**- A 4-year old boy died after falling from a second story window. The child had been playing at his home when he fell. He was taken to a local ER and was awaiting transport to Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin when he died. There was no evidence of foul play.
- In **Winnebago County**- Two people are dead following a crash. Officials say that a car traveling west on Larsen Road missed a stop sign and hit a home at County Highway T. Both the driver and passenger, ages 27 and 21, were killed.
- In **Sauk County**- A 3-year old girl drowned at Devil’s Lake State Park. County Dispatch received a 911 call from the south shore of the park. DNR rangers arrived shortly after, and found that the girl had been pulled from the water by family members and was unresponsive. Three park visitors performed CPR until EMS and later a Med Flight helicopter arrived on scene. The girl was later pronounced by the Med Flight doctor.
- In **Dane County**- A 59-year old male was fatally shot after he aggressively came at officers with a knife while they were responding to a report of domestic violence. According to police, a 911 dispatcher had said that the man had cut his wife in the stomach with a knife and had gone outside, suicidal and armed with the knife. Officers unsuccessfully tried to subdue the man with a stun gun. The man was shot after he ignored commands and came at the officers.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 35-year old man was pulled from the Milwaukee River. The man was found by divers and Marine Unit officers. The man had been with a 30-year old woman who had been rescued from the river the previous evening. The woman was not injured and appeared to be intoxicated, though the incident remains under investigation.
- In **Racine County**- A 47-year old man was struck and killed by a train. The California man was in the area visiting family. He was walking on the Union Pacific tracks between Hwy 11 and Braun Road when he was struck by the oncoming train. The man was pronounced on-scene, and his death has been ruled a suicide. This marks the third train-related suicide this year.
- In **Rock County**- a 62-year old former police chief was waiting in stalled traffic because of a car accident that had happened. While waiting, a semi-truck rear-ended the decedent’s vehicle killing him. A total of seven vehicles were involved in this second car accident with two other injured. There is an investigation looking into driver fatigue.

Dane County Medical Examiner's Office Hires New Pathologist

September 9, 2013 marked the first day for Dr. Kristin Roman as Dane County's first Deputy Medical Examiner. Roman comes to Dane County from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in New York City where she has worked since 2004.



Dr. Vincent Tranchida, also from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in New York City, began his post as Dane County Medical Examiner in February 2011 after Dane County transitioned from an elected coroner to an appointed medical examiner. Tranchida's office has investigated over 1300 deaths in 2012 and is approaching 400 autopsies for the current year. Dr. Roman had been job-sharing on to assist Dane County with the overflow and was the sure choice for the Deputy Medical Examiner Position.

Roman completed her pathology residency at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York. She has expertise in sexual assault and motor vehicle fatalities, and is a certified hazardous materials technician. With the knowledge and experience she brings to the table, Dr. Roman's partnership with Dr. Tranchida will further enhance the services they provide to the Dane County community.

Dr. Roman is no stranger to the WCMEA having provided exceptional training sessions for both the Summer 2010 and Fall 2012 Conferences. On Behalf of the WCMEA, congratulations to Dr. Kristin Roman on her new position . . . and welcome to Wisconsin!

Waupaca County Coroner Honored with Star of Life Award

Barry Tomaras, Waupaca County Coroner and founder of Waupaca Area Ambulance (WAA), was honored with the Stars of Life award presented by the Professional Ambulance Association of Wisconsin on September 18, 2013. The Stars of Life award recognizes and honors the dedication of ambulance service professionals that stand out in every area of their field.



Tomaras was honored for his role as one of the pioneers of EMS in the state of Wisconsin. Because of Tomaras' leadership and dedication, WAA has grown over the last 30 years from six employees one ambulance, and 500 runs to 30 employees, five ambulances and 2400 runs. WAA has recently merged with Gold Cross Ambulance, making a remarkably strong partnership due to Tomaras' drive and perseverance.

Barry Tomaras was appointed Waupaca County Coroner in 1994 by then-Governor Tommy Thompson and has remained in office for 19 years. Congratulations to Barry Tomaras on this outstanding achievement and years of dedicated service.

Proposed CDR Legislation Continued . . .

- Open records/meetings: Exempts local CDR teams from open meetings and public record compliance obligations when reviewing cases to ensure confidentiality.
- Clarifies permitted disclosures related to public health for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability. Also includes reporting vital events, such as birth or death, and the conduct of public health surveillance, public health investigations, and public health interventions.
- Recognizes local CDR teams through recommendation by state CDR Council and approval by DHS. Recognized teams will have access to the protections of the legislation and assistance from the state CDR Council.

The current legislation is being sponsored by Sen. Luther Olsen (R) and Rep. Amy Loudenback (R) and there is no fiscal note attached to this legislation. In the near future, the Alliance will be asking for the support of WCMEA and your local CDR team. For more information, contact Abby Collier, Injury Prevention & Death Review Project Manager for Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, at ajcollier@chw.org or (414) 292-4016.

Governor Walker Appoints New Coroner

On July 26, 2013, Governor Scott Walker appointed James Rassbach to serve as the Rusk County Coroner. This appointment followed the resignation of Kasi Ewert who left office on May 8, 2013 to devote more time to her job and community.

Rassbach has worked in the Coroner's Office since January 2011 as Deputy Coroner, Chief Deputy Coroner since May 2013, and has been an Emergency Medical Responder since 2006.

Rassbach has made great strides since taking office in modernizing and streamlining the case management for Rusk County with the full support from his county board. He states that he "looks forward to working with great people, four deputy coroners, county staff, and law enforcement."



The WCMEA offers its congratulations to James Rassbach on his new position!

Upcoming Training Opportunities

National Association of Medical Examiners

2013 NAME Annual Meeting - Beer, Baseball and Bikes!
 October 11-15, 2013 in Milwaukee, WI
www.thename.org for more information

Medicolegal Death Investigator Training

Saint Louis School of Medicine
 January 13-17, 2014

www.medschool.slu.edu/mldi/ for more information

WCMEA—Fall 2013 Conference

October 14-16, 2013
 Holiday Inn, Manitowoc

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner—New York

Medicolegal Investigation of Death Course

January 20-24, 2014

For more info: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocme>

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MAKE NO BONES ABOUT IT!



The Examiner is looking for interesting case investigations, as well as special WCMEA members and colleagues to highlight in upcoming publications. Please submit your case reports, bios, or personal entries to editors Patrice Hall or Jennifer Schroeter by **November 29, 2013**.

Forward submissions via e-mail:

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Or via USPS to:

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