



The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>

Winter 2025 Issue



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings WCMEA Members and Happy New Year!

I hope this message finds you well. It certainly can be challenging transitioning into a new year but remember that with each new year comes newfound hope and excitement!

The WCMEA is certainly no stranger to challenges, and 2025 is no exception. Due to recent resignations and subsequent officer appointments, there have been some significant changes within the WCMEA Board of Directors (BOD) since the June 2024 election. The current BOD is as follows:

- Acting President: Jennifer Schroeter, Kenosha County
- 1st Vice President: Jennifer Schroeter, Kenosha County
- 2nd Vice President: Brooke Kaat, Dodge County
- Secretary: Tina Forrest, St. Croix County
- Treasurer: Rory Groessl, Kewaunee County
- Sergeant at Arms: Joe Morovits, Crawford County
- 3-Year Trustee: Jessica Blahnik, Marathon County
- 2-Year Trustee: PJ Schoebel, Dodge County
- 1-Year Trustee: Vacant
- Past President: Dr. Agnieszka Rogalska, Dane County
- Member at Large: Robert Smith, Monroe County

Though we need a bit of time to adjust to new roles, please know the BOD remains fully committed to serving the WCMEA.

The next BOD election will be held at the Annual Meeting in June. This is my challenge to you: Don't wait until election time to consider becoming involved. This is a wonderful time to reflect and contemplate what you can do to better serve the WCMEA. All of you have unique attributes that you bring to this field and your hard work and dedication will only help the WCMEA flourish. We are here to support each other and to learn from each other. Serving on the BOD has truly been a rewarding experience for me. I started out on a committee 16 years ago and loved being a part of the WCMEA and learning what goes on behind the scenes. I later decided to run for a BOD position and have had the opportunity to serve in several different positions over the years. The BOD has allowed me to form and foster relationships and friendships with so many of you, and I treasure each and every one of them.

The BOD positions that will be up for election are as follows: 1st Vice President, Secretary, Sergeant at Arms, and 3-year Trustee. Nominations will open in just a few short weeks. Please reach out to me if you have any questions about the positions and their respective roles/responsibilities. Now is **your** time!!

-Jennifer Schroeter, Acting WCMEA President

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	1
Conference Highlights	2
Washington County	2
Dr. Leah Schuppen-er	3
Skeletal Remains	4
Did you Know	4
WisclR	5
Interesting Deaths	6-7
Training Opportunities	8



January 2025 Conference Highlights

The 2025 Winter WCMEA Conference was held in Eau Claire at the Lismore Hotel January 27th through January 29th. There were approximately 70 registered attendees who enjoyed presentations on topics ranging from railroad fatalities and forensic anthropology to bloodstain pattern analysis and forensic toxicology. There was a total of 18.8 ABMDI credits available!



This conference proved to be a wonderful opportunity to highlight forensic experts that may be new to many WCMEA members, as well as provide important updates from NAME and Vital Records.

A special event, Leinenkugel's Brewery tour, was scheduled on the final evening of the conference. Attendees were able to take a bus ride to the historic brewery in Chippewa Falls for an opportunity to take in the sites. The Brewery has been described as a point of pride for the Chippewa Valley for 150 years, and the heartbreak over recent changes was palpable among the staff.

The WCMEA would like to thank Visit Eau Claire and the education committee (Jennifer Schroeter, Tina Forrest, Taylor Strunsee, Pattie Jo Forsberg, Marcie Rosas, and Tom Renz) for all of their hard work and commitment in putting together this seminar. Additional thanks to the staff at the Lismore Hotel, as well as the many presenters and exhibitors for their time, knowledge, and generosity.

The WCMEA would also like to acknowledge our generous sponsors: American Tissue Services Foundation, Cohero, Life After Disaster Strikes (L.A.D.S.) Western Division, and Versiti Organ and Tissue. Without their continued support, the WCMEA would not be able to continue providing training opportunities for its members.

Please mark your calendars for the next WCMEA training opportunity! The 2025 Summer Conference will be held in June. Stay tuned for more details.

New Medical Examiner for Washington County

Washington County recently appointed Washington County Chief Deputy Medical Examiner Debbie Stodola to serve as the new medical examiner for the county.

Debbie was appointed to the position by the Washington County Executive in December and began in her new role as medical examiner on the first of the year. She states that she is committed to upholding the highest standards in death investigation. Through her continued partnership with the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office for forensic pathology services, she will ensure that all cases are handled with thoroughness and compassion.



Debbie previously served as the chief deputy medical examiner for Washington County since September 2023. Prior to that, she worked as a forensic investigator for the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office. Her educational background includes Criminal Justice, Forensic Science and Death Investigation courses.

Meet Dr. Leah Schuppener

In August 2024, Dr. Leah Schuppener joined forces with Dr. Elizabeth Douglas in Brown County. Dr. Schuppener was kind enough to share a little about herself. Please take a few moments to read and learn more about her!

I was born and raised in Wausau, WI and attended DC Everest High School in Schofield, WI. I have two sisters, and I am the middle child. All of my family still live in the Wausau area. I currently live in Green Bay with my husband and two boys, ages 6 and 8. I love to read, run, and hike.

I attended UW-Platteville for a double major in Criminal Justice with an Emphasis in Forensic Science and Biology, Pre-Medicine. I started out as a CJ and Chemistry major with the goal of working in a crime lab, but then I shadowed an autopsy while writing a paper for one of my undergrad CJ classes and decided that is what I wanted to do for a living. I switched my science major from chemistry to biology and the rest is history!

I then went to Des Moines University in Des Moines, IA for medical school. Following obtaining my medical degree, I completed a 4 year, combined anatomic and clinical pathology residency at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I then completed a 1-year subspecialty fellowship in Forensic Pathology at the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office in Minneapolis, MN. After fellowship I served for 4 years on active duty with the United States Air Force. My family and I decided we wanted to return to the Midwest and so after honorably discharging, I sought jobs in the Midwest region. The Brown County MEO had recently transitioned from a lay medical examiner into an in house- forensic pathologist left office and has been the perfect fit! I'm also a life-long Packer fan so the location was pretty solid as well.



The biggest challenge I anticipate in my career is finding fulfillment in practicing my medical specialty at the same time as maintain work/life balance. It can be a lot to juggle, but with a supportive Chief Medical Examiner and office support staff, I think I can make it happen. 😊

I am most looking forward to working in an office where I have the ability to make positive change. I hope to continue to elevate the standards of death investigation for the communities within our jurisdiction and eventually aid our office in obtaining NAME accreditation. I love to teach and hope to become more involved in community outreach, working with other county agencies, undergrad students, medical students or residents, etc.

An Interesting Skeleton Remains Case—Washington County

On 11/03/2024, the Washington County Medical Examiner's Office was notified by the Germantown Police Department of skeletal remains located in a home. The residence was occupied by a mother and a daughter (aliases will be used for the purpose of this summary). The daughter, Janet, had a prolonged hospitalization at Froedtert Wauwatosa and had died earlier that morning. The death was seemingly natural. Family friends went to the home in Germantown, WI to attempt to locate a will or any pertinent paperwork for making funeral arrangements. In their search of the home, they entered a bedroom and located skeletal remains in the bed. The remains are presumed to be that of the Janet's mother, Nancy. According to the family friends, Nancy had not been seen by them in many years. The mother and daughter lived together, and the home was in a serious state of hoarding.

The skeletal remains were assessed by Dr. Amy Sheil with the Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office and Dr. Janamarie Truesdell, Forensic Anthropologist. Some left sided rib fractures in various stages of healing were noted, but no other significant trauma was found. DNA is pending for a scientific identification. The skeletal remains had dentures in her mouth, but her last name was misspelled. We have been unable to find any recent medical records from the area hospitals. With much persistence we located a niece and a nephew living in the area. They had last seen Nancy in 2008 through the window of the house, but she refused to see them in person. Coincidentally, an undisturbed receipt was noted on the bedroom floor which was also from 2008. Welfare checks had been called in by neighbors or the daughter, Janet's, workplace over the years. In August 2012, she told officers that she was grieving her mother who had died a month prior. Additional testing is being done to try to determine how long Nancy may have been deceased. We will have to report back with an update!

Submitted by Debbie Stodola, Washington County Medical Examiner

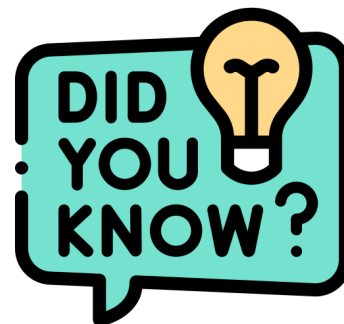
Black History in Forensic Science

February is Black History Month and a perfect time to celebrate Black influences in forensic science.

Bessie Blount Griffin was an inventor and pioneering forensic scientist. She began her forensic science career in 1969 with law enforcement becoming (by 1972) the chief documents examiner for their laboratories. Griffin was also a founding member of the American Association of Handwriting Analysts.

Dr. Elmer Gordon was a trailblazer in the world of forensic toxicology. He developed a national reputation as an expert in poisons and their detection as a forensic toxicologist with the Monroe County Medical Examiner's Office. Gordon was one of only 100 toxicologists licensed by the American Board of Forensic Toxicologists during his time.

Dr. Joye Carter served in the US Air Force from 1989-1992 and worked for the Armed Forces Medical Examiner Department in the Walter Reed Army Hospital as deputy chief medical examiner. Following her military service Dr. Carter became the chief medical examiner for the District of Columbia, making her the first black female chief medical examiner in the history of the nation.



Support for Unidentified Human Remains Cases: Wisconsin Identity Resolution Team Services

The Division of Forensic Sciences (DFS) and the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), through the Wisconsin Identity Resolution Team (WisclR), offer comprehensive support for cases involving Unidentified Human Remains (UHR). Composed of experts from both DFS and DCI, WisclR serves as a valuable resource, offering guidance and acting as a liaison for agencies seeking assistance. This collaborative team provides access to a wide range of services, from crime scene investigation to Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG), including case review, forensic anthropological evaluations, DNA extraction from bones, SNP analysis, and genealogy services to help identify remains. IGG combines genetic testing with traditional genealogical research to generate leads for a subset of unsolved cases. Funding may be available for IGG depending on case eligibility.



For more information and detailed guidelines please visit: https://wilenet.widj.gov/sites/default/files/public_files-2024-04/figg_uhr_evidence_submission_guidelines_03-26-2024_0.pdf. Or contact: wiscir@doj.state.wi.us

Submitted by Dr. Jordan Karsten, Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory Division of Crime Scene Response

Attention WCMEA!

The Examiner is in search of interesting case investigations, as well as WCMEA

members to highlight in future publications.

Please submit your case reports or personal entries to:

Jen Schroeter: Jennifer.schroeter@kenoshacountywi.gov



Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....



- **In Barron County-** A 17-year old boy died following possible drowning. Authorities received multiple reports of people screaming for help on Kirby Lake in the Town of Maple Plain. They learned that there were two people in the water from overturned kayaks, and a 17-year old male had not resurfaced. After searching the lake with sonar, authorities sent divers down who found the teen. Life saving measures were taken and the teen was taken to a medical facility in Minnesota where he later died.
- **In Brown County-** A 27-year old man was hit by two different vehicles while trying to cross I-43. Deputies responded to I-43 southbound in Denmark after reports that a pedestrian had been hit by a vehicle. The preliminary investigation showed that a vehicle driven by a 37-year old woman was heading south on I-43 when she hit the man who was trying to cross the southbound lanes. After the initial collision, deputies say the 27-year old was also hit in the southbound lanes by a different vehicle reportedly driven by a 50-year old Illinois man. The pedestrian was pronounced dead at the scene. Both drivers remained on scene and were cooperative. The crash remains under investigation.
- **In Dane County-** A 22-year-old man was killed in a shooting. Madison Police Department officers responded to Parkcrest Apartments where they found a man suffering from a gunshot wound in the parking lot. Despite resuscitative efforts, the man died on scene. According to authorities, two teens, ages 16 and 17, were also shot and taken to the hospital. One teen was in stable condition, while the other was released.
- **In Dane County-** A 15-year old girl opened fire in her school, killing a fellow 14-year old student, and 42-year old substitute teacher. The suspect injured 6 others before killing herself. The shooting happened inside a study hall classroom full of students from mixed grades. Detectives are still working to identify a motive in this shooting.
- **In Door County-** Two people died in the town of Nasewaupee in two separate fires. A 64-year old woman died in a house fire. The fire took place at a single-family residence. Two other individuals were able to escape the home and received medical attention. Hours later, there was another house fire. One resident was able to escape, but a 27-year old man was pronounced dead on scene. Both fires remain under investigation.
- **In Dunn County-** A Dunn County Corrections Officer was hit and killed by a suspected drunk driver. The officer was on his way to work when a driver failed to stop at a stop sign, and collided with the officer's vehicle. The driver has been charged with Homicide by Intoxicated Use of a Vehicle.
- **In Juneau County-** A manhunt ensued for a suspect in a triple homicide. A 47-year old man shot and killed his 33-year old girlfriend, his 12-year old stepdaughter, and the girl's 13-year old friend. The bodies of all three victims were found in the New Lisbon residence of the suspect's mother. Federal agencies joined local law enforcement in the search for the suspect.

Continued Page 7

Interesting Deaths Continued

- **In Marathon County-** A 3-month old baby died. Police say that dispatchers took a 911 call for a child who was not responsive. The child was vomiting and limp when the call was received. Deputies and emergency medical personnel were dispatched to the scene, and transported the child to a local hospital for treatment. The child died two days later. Investigators say that the cause of the death is suspicious. A 27-year old man is facing charges of first-degree reckless homicide in connection with the death.
- **In Marquette County-** An 82-year old man died after falling through the ice. The man had been ice fishing on Lawrence Lake. Authorities believe the ice conditions were not stable where he was fishing. According to the Marquette Co. Sheriff's Office, crews responded Lawrence Lake on reports of a fisherman who fell through the ice on an ATV. First responders attempted to revive the man, but he was ultimately pronounced dead.
- **In Milwaukee County-** A 40-year old woman was found dead in a garbage cart. The body was found by a resident who did not know her in an alleyway behind a church and several residences. The woman had been shot to death. No arrests have been made, and the police are looking for anyone with information to come forward.
- **In Ozaukee County-** A missing 37-year old Green Bay man was found dead in a heavily wooded area in the town of Belgium. The search for the man began on November 29th, the day his vehicle was found abandoned on the shoulder of I-43. Deputies used a police dog and a foot search took place in the area where the vehicle had been found. His body was found in a swampy and heavily wooded area that was difficult for investigators to access. The investigation is ongoing with the Brown County Sheriff's Office.
- **In Price County-** A 28-year old woman was found dead along State Highway 13 in the Town of Hackett. The cause of the woman's death is being investigated as being related to a domestic violence incident. Investigation shows that the woman was killed in the City of Marshfield. A 38-year old man has been arrested in connection to the death and is currently being held on the suspicion of 1st degree intentional homicide.
- **In Racine County-** A 44-year old man is dead after being hit by a car. Police reported that the man was found on the street lying between two parked vehicles near a curb. Minutes after the man's body was found, a 19-year old woman called police to confess that she hit someone in the same area. The man was transported to a local hospital where he later died.
- **In Racine County-** A 35-year old inmate was killed following an assault. According to the Racine County Sheriff's Office, the assault occurred in the day room, a common area shared by inmates. The inmate accused of the assault has since been charged with intentional homicide.
- **In Waukesha County-** A man died in an electrical accident at a manufacturing company. The man was an employee of Prolec Energy in Waukesha. Authorities found the man's body atop a transformer several feet in the air. The company stopped production immediately and employees at the Prolec Energy manufacturing company were sent home early. Police are investigating to find out what led up to the incident.
- **In Waukesha County-** A 5-year old boy was hit and killed by a school bus. The elementary student was hit by a bus while transferring to another shuttle on the way to school. Following this tragedy, the district announced the end of the "bus buddy" system and will also be adjusting traffic patterns at the school to enhance safety during pick-up and drop-off.

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Training Opportunities

Annual WAHI Training Seminar
4/29-5/2/2025
Kohler, WI

<https://wi-homicide.com/conference-registration>

AAFS 2025
Baltimore, MD
February 17-22, 2025
<https://www.aafs.org/annual-conference/registration-information>

Forensic Entomology Workshop
April 14-15, 2025
San Marcos, TX
<https://www.txst.edu/anthropology/facts/workshops/taphonomy.html>

Death Investigation Academy
Online Training
[Death Investigation Academy
\(ditacademyonline.org\)](http://ditacademyonline.org)

Hoarding Death Investigation
Online Training
<https://www.dhforensics.com/courses>

Suspicious Death Investigations
February 24-25, 2025
Lacombe, LA
<https://ncjtc.fvtc.edu/trainings/TR00007329/TRI1895407/suspicious-death-investigations-finding-the-right-eliminating-the-wrong-and-avoiding-the-undeterm>
