



COLORADO CORONERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007

Presidents Message

It is exciting to be the president of the Colorado Coroners Association as we enter our 20th year of providing training, friendship, and support to all of Colorado's Coroners and their staff members.

It will also be a challenging year for your Board of Directors. Each year, for the past few years, the Board has struggled with the growth and direction of CCA. We have become a top notch teaching venue thru the annual conference and the outreach seminars. Additionally, other organizations have sought CCA expertise in their training programs. We have also established an influential presence at the State government level by advocating for Coroners and supporting related legislation. However, at each Board meeting we deal with the question of who are we and where are we going? And it remains unresolved. I am hoping that this year we resolve that question with realistic long and short range plans and goals, response to members' needs and a definition of the CCA.

I look to you, as members, to tell me what you need from CCA and what you would like to see changed or improved. **Tell me directly**, call, write or e-mail. Already I have heard second hand, that you want to know the results of the surveys we send out. Usually, they have been used for legislative ammunition and then dropped. You will now be informed of results.

If you have a particular interest and want to serve on a committee or work on a special project, talk to the committee chairperson. They are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

I humbly ask your help in making the 2007/2008 year a great 20th year for the CCA.

Sharon Morris
President

Next CCA Meeting:

September 15th, 2007 in Sterling at the Ramada.

The meeting will start as soon as the outreach class ends at noon. Please let Chris Herndon know if you are planning to attend the meeting so she can order food for lunch.

Be sure to check our website for upcoming training and other great information:

Coloradocoroners.org

Committee Reports

Education Committee

The Education Committee duties are to develop programs for the Outreach Seminars, June Conference and any other education programs offered by CCA.

Committee members are: Chris Herndon, Chair, El Paso County, Triena Harper, Jefferson County, Carlette Brocius, Fremont County and Joe Giadone, Prowers County.

Our 19th annual June Conference was a huge success, great topics and speakers and some lively entertainment. It's always great to see old friends and make new ones. Twelve people took advantage of our scholarships for the conference and rooms!

We're starting to plan next year's conference, it will be our 20th and we hope to make it extra special. We have booked the hotel, so mark your calendars and block out June 12th, 13th and 14th, 2008 at the Double Eagle Hotel in Cripple Creek. Dr. Bob Bux has promised to try to get some old friends, Dr. G (from the TV Show!) and Dr. DiMaio (the gunshot Guru!) to be guest speakers. **But...** we're gonna need some extra help. We have 2 people sign up to help but it would be great to have some others, so call Chris or Triena and volunteer, please!

The next Outreach Class will be in Sterling on September 14th and 15th at the Ramada. The line up and more information is on our website.

We need some more people to sign up so that we don't have to cancel the class.

The Outreach has been certified for 14 continuing education credits from ABMDI and we have been approved by POST for continuing ed credits.

Legislation Committee

The Legislative Committee duties are to monitor legislation during the legislative session, develop legislation when needed, seek Coroner opinion on legislation, work with the CCA lobbyist on legislative strategy, and organize testimony on legislation when needed.

Committee members are: Sharon Morris, chair; Park County; George Crocket, Jackson County; Chalmer Swain, Delta County; and Triena Harper, Jefferson County. This committee represents the various sizes of counties and state demographics well.

The Chairman has met with lobbyist Peg Ackerman to discuss upcoming legislation and evaluate the past legislative year. No legislation, affecting Coroners, as been developed to date. The 2006 /2007 legislative year was a good one as several bills we supported passed and several we opposed failed. We supported helmets for children under 18 riding motorcycles and we opposed a bill allowing advanced practice nurses to sign death certificates. The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act passed, in spite of opposition to the Coroner portion of the bill. Each Coroner in each county will have to sign donor protocols with their District Attorney and the donor procurement agencies.

A Donor Protocols Committee has been working on a protocol that can be used as a template for each county. The Coroner members on that committee are Sharon Morris, Dr. Dorothy Twellman, Tom Faure, Jim Hibbard, and Chalmer Swain. George Crocket is an alternate. Other committee members consist of representatives from the District Attorneys Council, Donor Alliance, and the Lions Eye Bank. Hopefully the protocol template will be ready soon and Coroners will be able to use it as is or to design their own protocols with their District Attorney. The completed template will be mailed to each Coroner.

Coroner Assist Team

The Coroner Assist Team coordinates requests for assistance and referrals from any Colorado County Coroner. The team maintains a list of available equipment, qualified personnel, and forensic specialists.

The Coroner Assist Team is Co-Chaired by Chris Herndon, El Paso County and Steve Stogsdill, Mesa County. Sandy Graeff, Elbert County is also a member.

Luckily no one has had the need to call on the Coroner Assist Team so far this year.

Certification Committee

The Certification Committee is responsible for keeping the records of Certified Death Investigators, including new applicants and continuing education.

Committee members are: Brenda Bock, Chair, Triena Harper, Jefferson County and Chris Herndon, El Paso County.

The new certification folders have arrived and they look great. I will try to do a mass mailing in September / October to current certified death investigators. The new folders contain the guidelines for re-certifying plus a place to keep detailed information that you will need to keep track of.

The new guidelines will take effect January 1, 2008. So if you need to recertify this year, make sure to get your info turned into me soon. You can give me a call if you have any questions about your status.

For those of you who are not yet certified, now would be a great time to get your applications turned in.

Brenda Bock, Grand County

CCA Representatives to other Committees

This committee coordinates representatives to: Donor Alliance, Child Fatality Review, GEERC, SEMTAC, and any other council that asks for or require a CCA representative.

This committee is chaired by George Crocket, Jackson County.

There are several committees that have asked for Coroner representation but function outside the structure of the CCA.

SEMTAC, State Emergency Medical Trauma Advisory Council functions under the Colorado Dept of Health. James Hibbard of Adams County has stepped down as the Coroner representative to that committee and Zane Laubhan, Gilpin County has assumed the position. Zane's first meeting will be October 4.

GEERC, the Governor's Emergency Response Council has Dr. Mike Dobersen, Arapahoe County as its representative. Dr. James Wahe of Denver County is his alternate. Dr. Dobersen serves on a subcommittee consisting of Coroners, funeral directors and vital statistics personnel. They have developed a process and form for emergency death certificates. They are also working on contingency plans for burial, supplies and the practical considerations surrounding multiple deaths. Dr. Wahe serves on a pandemic flu subcommittee. Dr. Dobersen said the Governor is expected to attend the next meeting. He noted that this state committee has a wide range of resources available including the resources of the Attorney General's Office and the benefit of executive orders when needed.

Dr. Kelly Lear-Kaul, Arapahoe County and Dr. Amy Martin, Denver County, serve on the state Child Fatality Team. The group continues to meet and review cases that have been submitted from all areas of the state. They will continue to ask for Coroner reports and autopsy reports on child fatality cases. The committee remains active in supporting legislation that will help reduce child deaths. An annual report regarding the cause and manner of child deaths in the state will be published..

Ike Miller

The Ike Miller committee is responsible for managing the award process for the special award created by Dr. Ben Galloway, and any other awards that the Board of Directors deems appropriate.

Committee Members are: Dr. Earl Byrne, Chair, Teller County, Triena Harper, Jefferson County, and Sharon Morris, Park County

The Ike Miller memorial committee has funded one person to attend a major death investigation school. Cindy Eller of Grand County was chosen to receive this scholarship. She will attend the St. Louis Medicolegal Death Investigation class in October. The form for applying for Ike Miller Scholarships is being revised. A draft for CCA Board approval will be presented at the Sept. 15

Board of Directors meeting. The next cycle for scholarship applications will begin in the spring of 2008. The successful applicant will be announced at June conference.

Public Relations/Website/Marketing

This committee is responsible for the CCA website, providing information to the media and providing a selection of merchandise for members to purchase.

This committee is comprised of: Sharon Morris, Chair, Sandy Graeff and Mike Graeff, Elbert County.

Sandy and Mike Graeff outdid themselves with the selection of clothing and supplies at June Conference this year. They would like to hear from the membership if there are any special requests or suggestions for items. They are hoping to design some special 20th anniversary merchandise for next year.

CBI

This committee was formed in June, 2007 to meet with and discuss problems between Coroners and CBI. The first meeting was held in July and was very successful. One of the fruits of the meeting is that CBI will be contributing some articles for our newsletters and an Agent will be speaking at the outreach classes. We are also looking into CCA doing an outreach class for CBI agents. CBI will be voicing Coroner concerns to agents in the CBI regions.

Guest Column

Unidentified Decedent Reporting System

There is now a website (launched July 2007) that focuses on identifying unidentified decedents across the nation. The web address is www.identifyus.org. The site provides access to the Unidentified Decedent Reporting System (UDRS) and allows registered users (Medical Examiners and Coroners) to enter information about decedents who have yet to be identified through traditional means. Anyone can search the website, but certain case information is available only to registered users.

The following information appears in the "frequently asked questions" section of the website:

“The UDRS was developed in 2005-2006 as a public service project by the National Association of Medical Examiners, Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc. (ORAINC), and the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners. As of June 2007, funding for further system development and management is provided by the National Institute of Justice. The UDRS is currently operated and managed in the ORAINC office in Big Rapids, Michigan, under the aegis of the National Institute of Justice's NamUs Program and its www.identifyus.org web site.”

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) NamUs website (www.namus.gov), the NIJ assembled a panel of medical examiners and coroners to address the nationwide problem of missing persons and unidentified human remains. The consensus of the panel was that an overwhelming need existed for a central reporting system for unidentified human remains. There was also a recognized need for a national-level database for missing persons. This resulted in the NamUs Initiative, a 3-phase plan to create national databases for unidentified decedents and missing persons. The third and final phase will involve the release of a fully searchable NamUs system, which will link cases in the UDRS with a national missing person database in order to identify the unidentified. To learn more about NamUs visit the website at www.namus.gov/about.htm

There are currently (as of the date of this article) 418 cases listed on the [identifyus.org](http://www.identifyus.org) website. There is no fee for using the UDRS. Coroners and Medical Examiners can fill out the online registration form, and once approved (usually within 24-48 hours), can enter case information. The site allows you to enter as much information as possible regarding the decedent's physical description, clothing, jewelry, tattoos, scars, dental information, skeletal findings, scene circumstances, etc. It is also possible to enter a scanned image of the unidentified decedent's fingerprints that will be viewable by people accessing the site. Photos that can assist with identification can be uploaded, as well.

This is an exciting and promising development, and I hope every coroner's office in Colorado that has John and Jane Doe cases can take a few moments to register and enter them into this system. Their families may thank you for it.

By: Beth Conour, Med. Investigator, Boulder County Coroner's Office

From CBI

[Trace DNA Precautions](#)

[By The Colorado Bureau of Investigation Laboratories](#)

Have you ever thought about what happens to objects when you breathe on them, cough or sneeze near them, talk over them, or even adjust your glasses or wipe your brow while wearing gloves? All of these offer the potential to deposit your DNA on surfaces, usually unknowingly! Remember when we used to wear gloves and masks to avoid getting something from a body or scene? Technology has changed the way we need to do our business.

Our intent is to provide a brief overview of what can happen at scenes, in a lab, morgue or autopsy room, and what information can be obtained from DNA as analyzed at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

What are some precautions we can all take to minimize this “trace DNA” from ourselves? This is the classic two-edged sword. We have the sensitivity to get identifiable DNA from someone's finger touching a light switch or doorknob (such as a perpetrator); however, this same sensitivity can allow our own DNA to be found during an analysis! Since we are analyzing small amounts of DNA (125 cells may be adequate to get a full profile), there is also the potential of removing DNA from an item that may have significance to the case.

Let's address DNA concerns at the scene, in the lab, morgue or autopsy room and finally the information we can obtain from DNA analysis.

Scene:

The weapon such as the grip of a firearm, the trigger of a firearm, or the handle of a knife may have DNA from the person who handled that weapon.

The body of the deceased may have DNA from someone who has manually strangled the victim.

A ligature used to bind or strangle may contain DNA.

Clothing items may contain DNA of someone who has handled the clothing of the deceased.

Skin touched in the process of moving a victim in some fashion or dressing or undressing a victim may have foreign DNA. A suspect may also leave DNA if they happen to cough, sneeze, or spit accidentally (while talking) over or on the deceased.

The doorknob used to enter and exit the room or other objects that may be present in the path from the entry way to the body.

Morgue, autopsy room, or lab:

The items mentioned above need to be handled with caution if they do end up in one of these places, especially the clothing items. Remember the removal of DNA is as significant as the addition of your DNA to an object.

We need to think about the potential for contamination from previous deceased, autopsies, or evidence; even scissors that are used to cut clothing from one body may transfer DNA to a second body or object if not cleaned.

Results that may come from evidence analysis at CBI:

The presence of DNA from the victim/deceased where it might be expected.

The presence of DNA from someone other than the deceased.

A mixture of DNA from one or more individuals, sometimes as a major component and a minor component.

The presence of male DNA utilizing analysis of the Y chromosome (Y-STR).

Remember that there are many sources of DNA and blood is only one of them. Among the other sources are skin cells left on an object, other body fluids, muscle tissue, dental pulp, and marrow in long bones, for example.

What does the CBI lab need for known standards? A total of 4 buccal swabs that have been air-dried. Blood on a stain card. And then, while you're at it, 25 pulled head hairs and 25 pulled pubic hairs (if the blood and buccal do not work, the roots of hairs have also provided viable DNA profiles). It's that easy. If you have any questions, please always feel free to contact the CBI laboratory in your geographical region.

We heard from many of you at the June Conference that you were confused about the

requirements from the CCST Board. We asked for a clarification from Janet Larson, CCSTB coordinator:

The statute says that the Medicolegal Death Investigation certification (MLDI) may be offered by CCA or other vendor. The Board has decided to require that the training will be approved on a case by case basis. St. Louis and Albuquerque schools would be approved without question.

The confusion may be coming in part from the exceptions. The Board wanted to offer coroners who were already MDLI-certified a way to meet the statutory requirement without going to another school. Therefore, if a coroner can offer documentation of any of the four exceptions, they would be found to have met the statutory requirement. The trick was to find exceptions that would substantially meet the intention of the statute and closely mirror the substance of the 40-hour curriculums. You should reiterate though that this requirement only applies to coroners elected or appointed on or after July 1, 2003. They also have until January 7, 2008 to meet the requirement.

All coroners are affected by the 16-hour annual training requirement. They have to submit evidence of that training to me on the form I sent out, also attached. I would prefer that it be completed and returned by email with certificates scanned and attached. But if that is not possible, they can mail it to the address on the form. The electronic form is set up to be completed on the computer and will tab to the fields that need to be completed.

The annual training can be provided by CCA or can be any other training that relates to the job of coroner. It can also be partially met by teaching as long as that was instructional and not just a presentation to a community group.

Janet can be reached at 720-344-2762 or jl Larson@csoc.org to access the forms and for ???
