

“Pennsylvania State Coroners Association Newsletter”

October 2023

“The Bare Bones”



Executive Board Members:

President: Jeremy R. Reese

Secretary-Treasurer: Charles Hall

Region 1 Vice President: Christina Rugh

Region 3 Vice President: Christopher Brighton

Region 5 Vice President: Tim Warco

Region 7 Vice President: Robert Ressler

Member At Large: Norman Wimer

Member At Large: Zachary R. Lysek

Past President: Charles E. Kiessling, Jr.

Executive Director: Scott M. Grim

Vice President: Scott E. Lynn

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer: Paul J. Sharum

Region 2 Vice President: Scott A. Sayers

Region 4 Vice President: Wendy Hastings

Region 6 Vice President: Jeffrey Lees

Region 8 Vice President: Dr. Stephen G. Diamantoni

Member At Large: Daniel Lynch

Solicitor: Timothy G. Uhrich, Esquire

Lobbyist: Michael Kriner

2023 Federal & State Holidays:

January 1st: New Years Day

January 2nd: New Years Day (Observed)

January 16th: Martin Luther King Day

February 20th: Presidents Day

May 29th: Memorial Day

June 19th: Juneteenth Day

July 4th: Independence Day

September 4th: Labor Day

October 9th: Columbus Day

November 10th: Veterans Day (Observed)

November 11th: Veterans Day

November 23rd: Thanksgiving Day

December 25th: Christmas Day



From the President's Desk.....



From The President's Desk October 2023:

First, I'd like to thank Jeff Lees (Cambria County) and Rusty Styer (Bedford County) for hosting another wonderful convention. The work and effort by Jeff, Rusty and their office teams was reflected in another excellent event at Bedford Springs. Getting to catch up with so many other friends who are member of the PSCA makes September one of my favorite times of the year. Getting to catch up on the front porch in a rocking chair or on the front lawn of the Bedford Springs by a campfire makes it even better.

Second, I want to personally thank those members who voted for me to be President for the upcoming PSCA business year. I truly look forward to leading this organization and continuing the momentum I have been able to be a part of for the past 2 years with Scott Lynn as President, and again I thank Scott for his 2 years of service as the President.

The end of convention correlates with the end of Summer, and while I am not typically a Fall person, I go into this Fall season motivated with a purpose of continuing to work strongly with our officers, committees, executive director, and government relations expert on a number of projects including but certainly not limited to the Coroner's education course and legislation, Corporate sponsorship in an effort to enhance revenue to the organization, along with the ongoing legislative efforts for privacy, JNET access, and Line of Duty death coverage.

While I have been grateful to meet many of you at some point since attending my first PSCA convention in Berks County in 2015, I wanted to share a few personal facts about me for those I either have not met, or those I may not have had the chance to chat with as much as others. I am a lifelong resident of Columbia County for 44 years. I reside in the very small Borough of Millville (pop 990) with my Wife Lori, 13 year-old Son, Michael and our K9 Barney. Given I come from a 6th class County, the Coroner role is Part Time, as such my Full Time job in Healthcare Disaster Preparedness working for Public Health Management Corporation which is based in Philadelphia. As Regional Readiness Coordinator for the Central Region Healthcare Coalition I am tasked with regional preparedness projects for Healthcare in a 14 county region that spans from Reading North to the New York Border, and Wilkes Barre West to Lock Haven. My hobbies include a very poor golf game, front porch sitting, and I serve as the Chief in our local volunteer Fire Company.

Again I look forward to working hard to serve all of you, I am focused on the areas of Legislation, Education, Financial Stability, and Disaster planning for the organization along with many others as we enter this new business year. Should you ever need any assistance, have questions, or just want to have a discussion, the best methods to reach me are via cell/text at 570-336-8078 or by email at coroner@columbiapa.org. Please consider joining us in-person or virtually for our Executive Board meeting in Williamsport in November.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Reese

President – PA State Coroner's Association

1. Important Dates:

- November 1st: Executive Board Meeting, Williamsport
- March 6th, 2024: Executive Board Meeting, Williamsport
- April 9th & 10th: Advanced Best Practices Seminar, State College
- June 5th: Executive Board Meeting, Williamsport
- September 15th – 20th: PSCA Annual Conference, Wind Creek Resort, Bethlehem

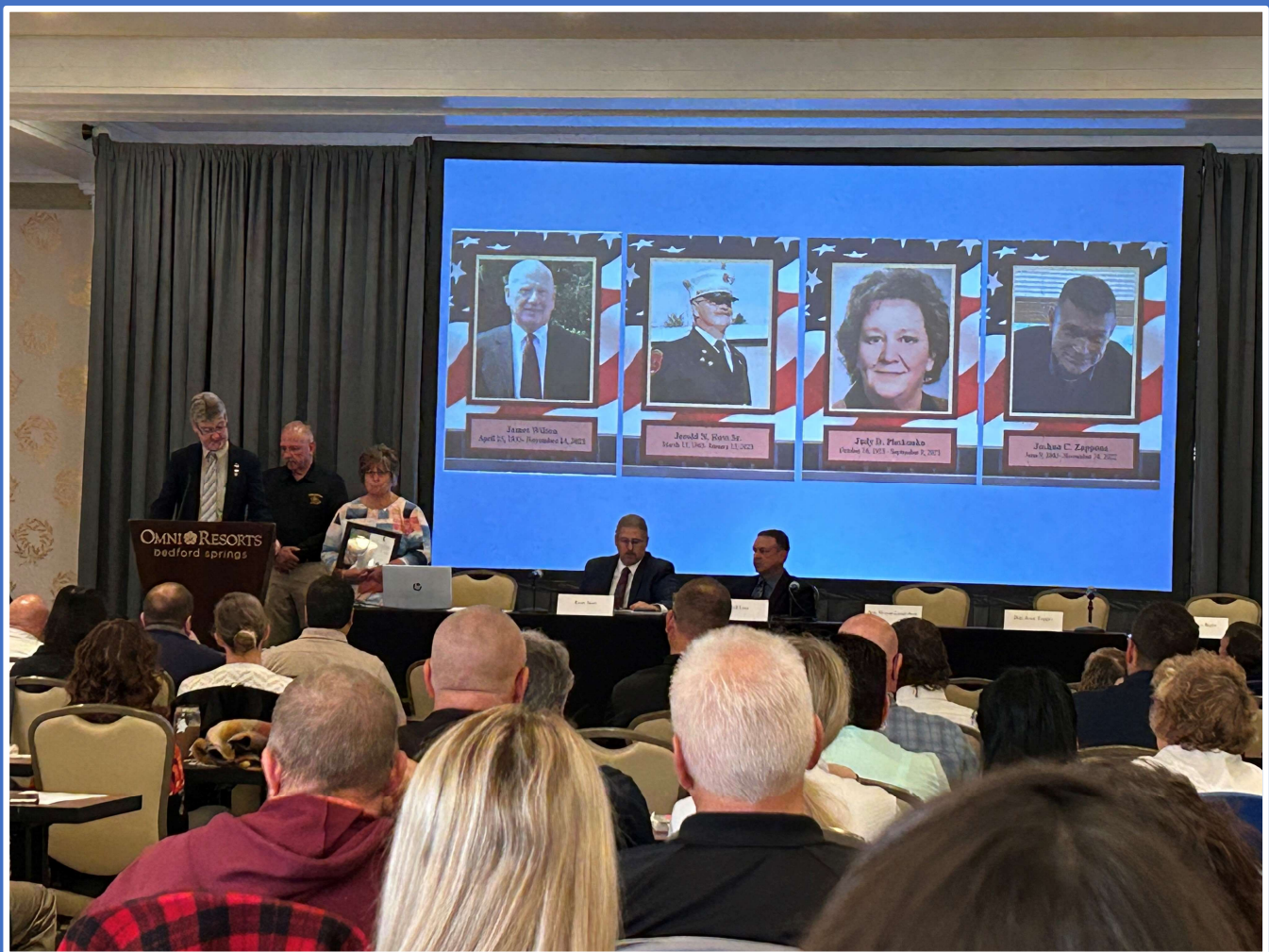
2. A huge “Thank You” to Rusty, Jeff and their staff for an outstanding conference, this year, at the Bedford Springs Resort. From the lectures and presentations to the networking with our colleagues and vendors to our dinners and hospitality room. Everything was well planned and excellent. Overall, I truly believe everyone had a great time!

Here are a few shots of some of the activities:



Just prior to the conference, we lost a great associate and a wonderful friend and person to many of us, her community, co-workers but more importantly to her family. Judy Pleskonko, Centre County Chief Deputy Coroner. Not only was Judy very involved with her family and Office, she was an intricate part of our Association and community. Judy will be truly missed. Our Association has a guardian angel looking over each and everyone of us.

At the start of the conference, we held a memorial for the four friends and colleagues we lost for the past year.



Dr. James (Jim) Wilson

Retired Coroner from Tioga County

Jerold Ross, Sr.

Lycoming County Chief Deputy Coroner

Judy Pleskonko

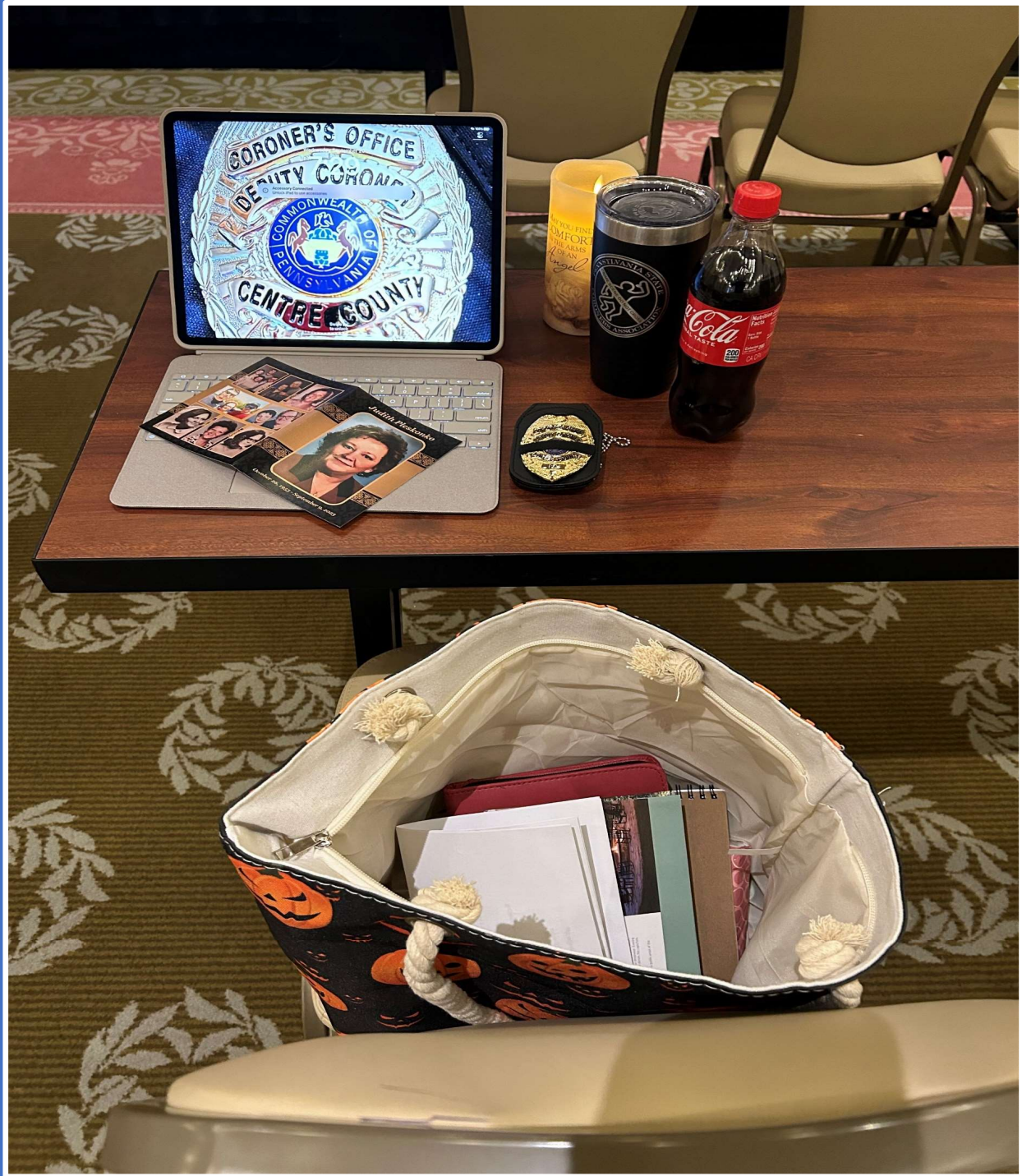
Centre County Chief Deputy Coroner

Josh Zappone

Westmoreland County Deputy Coroner

“May they rest in peace”

In Honor Of Judy, her typical seat was still reserved for her.....



Complete List of Conference Vendors

2023 PSCA Annual Conference

Bedford & Cambria Counties

Vendor Listing

1. **Quincy Tech**
Dennis Desrochers
VP/General Manager
866.835.6493
d-desrochers@quincytch.com
2. **Aftermath**
Matt Tanis
Law Enforcement Relations Manager
443.742.4719
mtanis@aftermath.com
3. **Forensic DX**
Dr. W. Ashton Ennis
814.509.6563
Ashton.ennis@forensicdx.com
4. **VertiQ Software**
Cheryl Rossi
Sales & Marketing Manager
408.778.0608, ext 3016
sales@vertiq.com
5. **Steel Fusion Toxicology Laboratory**
Amy J. Reisinger
Chief Executive Officer
724.691.0263
amy@steelfusionlabs.com
6. **Bio-One Crime & Trauma Scene Cleaning**
Nick Phelps, Owner
412.414.3101
info@pittsburghbioone.com
7. **Gift of Life Donor Program**
Leif Henry
Medical Examiner/Coroner Liaison
215.479.4110
lhenry@donors1.org
8. **NMS – National Medical Services**
Nicole McNutt
Account Manager
445.216.9282
Nicole.mcnutt@nmslabs.com
9. **D.A.S.H. Trauma Scene Cleanup**
Craig J. Delaney, CBRT
Owner
724.926.8724
Dash.911@verizon.net
10. **Milestone Medical Technologies**
Thomas Isbell
Territory Account Manager
571.325.6061
t.isbell@milestonemed.com
11. **PA Department of Health**
Craig L. Costigan, MPA
PDMP Program Administrator
717.562.5838
crcostigan@pa.gov
12. **PA Department of Health**
Suzanne Hoedemaker, MSW, LSW
PAVDRS Program Administrator
717.787.5900
shoedemake@pa.gov
13. **PA Department of Health**
Christina Phillips
Public Health Program Administrator - CDR
717.547.3383
christphi@pa.gov
14. **PA Department of Health**
Melissa Smith, MSW
PAVDRS Program Administrator
717.787.5900
melissasm@pa.gov

2023 PSCA Annual Conference
Bedford & Cambria Counties
Vendor Listing

15. PA Department of Health

Susan Singer
Program Coordinator
717.736.7305
susinger@pa.gov

22. Body Sealer

Craig Maltz
Sales Manager
516.665.8323
craig@bodysealer.com

16. Shiva Shade

Craig Maltz
Sales Manager
516.665.8323
craig@shivashade.com

23. Advanced Detection Solutions

John Hedrick
Regional Manager
443.564.1874
John-hedrick@verizon.net

17. Valor Technical Cleaning

Chad Vail
Market Leader
855.476.4911
cvail@valortechnicalcleaning.com

24. COMEC

Collaborating Office for Medical Examiners &
Coroners
www.cdc.gov/nchs/comec
mdi@cdc.gov

18. Molecular DX, LLC

Frederick W. Fochtman, PhD
Laboratory Director
814.361.6997
ffochtman@molecdx.com

19. Stop the Judgement Project

Sherry Jo Matt
President & Founder
724.612.2911
contact@stopthejudgement.org

20. Randox Toxicology

Pankaj Sinha, MBA
Vice president of Sales
866.472.6369
Pankaj.sinha@randox.com

21. Cohero Case Management

Matt Groft
Product Specialist
858.815.5022
matt@cohero.com

In Review: Statute 16 P.S.C.A. § 1219-B: Autopsy, Inquests and Reports

In Review:

In this edition, we're going to take a review Statute **§1219-B: Autopsy, Inquests and Records**, it states:

(a) Autopsy.--If, after investigation, the coroner is unable to determine the cause and manner of death, the coroner shall perform or order an autopsy on the body.

(b) Inquest.--If the coroner is unable to determine the cause and manner of death following an autopsy, the coroner may conduct an inquest upon a view of the body as provided by law. At the inquest, the coroner's duty shall be to:

(1) Ascertain the cause of death.

(2) Determine whether an individual other than the deceased was criminally responsible by act or neglect and the identity of the individual who may be responsible.

(3) Examine further evidence and witnesses regarding the cause of death.

(c) Recording.--The proceedings at the inquest shall be recorded, at the expense of the county, in a manner to be provided by the county commissioners.

(d) Retention and disposal.—

(1) The coroner may retain a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) specimen for diagnostic, evidentiary or confirmatory purposes.

(2) Retained tissue, organs, blood, other bodily fluid, gas or another specimen from an autopsy are medical waste and shall be disposed of in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.

(e) Liability.--A coroner who, in good faith, orders or performs a medical examination or autopsy under statutory authority shall be immune from civil liability for damages for ordering or performing the examination or autopsy.

Let's take a look at each of the points. The law clearly states that if the Coroner cannot determine the cause and manner of death, even after the investigation and view of the body, he/she **SHALL** perform or order an autopsy. There's that command word again. In reviewing this part, regardless of the type of death you are investigating, if a cause and/or manner cannot be determined an autopsy must be performed regardless of costs or budgetary issues. I know everyone tries to be fiscally prudent and budgetary sound, but there will be times where the cost of an autopsy cannot be avoided and the autopsy **shall** be performed. I know firsthand about dealing with Commissioners and financial issues, but at the end of the day, the bills are paid! Please remember never lessen the integrity of an investigation over a dollar!

Now, let's talk about section b, Inquests. According to this part of the Statute, the law states, if you are unable to determine a cause and manner of death, even after an autopsy was performed and the investigation has been completed, you may conduct or convene an inquest. This is completely up to your prerogative in convening one or not. (There is a complete statute for inquests, 16 P.S.C.A. § 1228-B: Inquest and Jury). One thing I was always concerned with in conducting an inquest, you can prevent the public attending the proceeding however, you have to let the media attend. Remember, you are having an issue with the investigation in determining the cause and manner of death, so everything you are discussing and witnesses are testifying to becomes public knowledge almost immediately. One way to circumvent this, was working with my District Attorney, we presented several cases before the sitting Grand Jury, which as you know, is

confidential. And based on their questions and recommendations, I was able to render a Cause and Manner of Death.

Again, this is your choice and your authority to convene an inquest. So, if you do decide to conduct an inquest, part of the jury's responsibilities is:

1. Based on testimony, they need to determine a cause and manner of death;
2. Determine if another individual(s) is criminally responsible for the death and then identify that individual(s);
3. Review and examine all presented evidence and testimony;
4. This inquest proceeding **shall** be recorded and all costs **shall** be paid by the County.

We can review 16 P.S.C.A. § 1228-B: Inquest and Jury, at a later time.

In closing, conducting forensic autopsies are just as important as examining the body at the death scene. You only get one chance to do it right for the family, community, but more importantly for the decedent.

I said it earlier in this review and I'll say it again; "Never lessen the integrity of an investigation over a dollar!"

Thank you.

October 7, 2023

• Observances for November:

- *Native American Heritage Month*
- *American Diabetes Month*
- *Lung Cancer Awareness Month*
- *Epilepsy Awareness Month*
- *Military Family Month*
- *Home Care, Hospice and Palliative Care Month*
- *November 11th: Veterans day*
- *November 14th: World Diabetes Day*
- *November 16th: Great American Smokeout Day*
- *November 23rd: Thanksgiving*

• Observances for December:

- *Seasonal Depression Awareness Month*
- *Safe Toys & Gifts Month*
- *December 1st: World AIDS Day*
- *December 7th: National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day*
- *December 10th: Human Rights Day*
- *December 21st: Winter Solstice Day*
- *December 25th: Christmas Day*
- *December 31st: New Year's Eve*

Remember, this is your newsletter, if you want to contribute an article or recognize one of your staff for doing an outstanding job or doing something unique, send it to me and I will add it to our next edition.

As we move towards the end of 2023, we accomplished a lot this past year, and we have more work to do. Some topics you learn hear more about in the coming months, is our new "Corporate Sponsorship" program, education and training.

Respectfully,

Scott M. Grim, D-ABMDI

Executive Director