

## **Great Game of Huddle Notes December 11, 2018**

### **Traveling Huddle: Greene County Medical Examiner**

Tom Van De Berg, Chief Forensic Investigator, led a tour of the Greene County Medical Examiner's Office, located at 916 North Campbell Avenue, Springfield. Some of Mr. Van De Berg's current responsibilities consist of engaging in death investigations, assisting with autopsies, testifying in court, as well as supervising staff at the Medical Examiner's Office. The new building, along with the Greene County Public Safety Center, was funded by a bond and opened in 2014. A Department of Justice grant helped with the purchase of a second cooler on-site, an X-Ray machine, as well as a refrigerated trailer that is capable of holding up to 27-bodies, which has only been used once to assist in the Branson Duck Boat tragedy.

The Greene County Medical Examiner's Office is currently searching for a full-time Forensic Pathologist; however, for the past year, they have been contracting with private pathology group which allows Dr. Keith Norton to perform the pathology services. It was reported that there are less than 500 forensic pathologists across the country. Other than Mr. Van De Berg, the office only has two other full-time staff: Teresa Wallace, Administrative Assistant, and Mike Lamphere, Forensic Investigator. The office also employs three part-time investigators, who assist with afterhours and weekend availability.

Dr. Norton's main duties include conducting the autopsy, signing the death certificates, as well participating in the initial investigation/exam. It is noted that an autopsy is not performed on every case that is referred to the Medical Examiner.

#### **Missouri Statute 58.720 directs the Medical Examiner to investigate the following deaths:**

- Violence by Homicide, Suicide, or Accident
- Thermal, Chemical, Electrical, or Radiation burns
- Criminal Abortion, including self-induced
- Hazardous and Contagious Disease which might constitute a threat to public health; or when any person dies
- Suddenly when in apparent good health
- When unattended by a physician preceding death
- While in custody of the law, or while an inmate in a public institution
- In any unusual or suspicious manner
- Deaths involving drugs or alcohol

#### **So far in 2018, The Greene County Medical Examiner's Office has received/completed:**

- 3,500 deaths reported to them
- 124 autopsies performed
- 350 accidents cases
- 24 homicides
- 132 toxicology tests
- 67+ suicides
- 72 drug overdose cases
- 600 death certificates signed out