

STAFF REPORT

<b>BOARD MEETING DATE:</b>	January 7, 2025
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**CATEGORY:** Regular Calendar 6

**SUBJECT:** Adopt a proclamation which designates January 19-25, 2025, as "*Coroner and Medicolegal Death Investigator Appreciation Week*" in Shasta County (Sponsored by Supervisor Kelstrom).

**DEPARTMENT:** Sheriff

**SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT #:** All

**DEPARTMENT CONTACT:** Mike Lindsey, Deputy Director - Administration, (530) 245-6000

**STAFF REPORT APPROVED BY:** Michael L. Johnson, Sheriff-Coroner

<u>Vote Required?</u>	<u>General Fund Impact?</u>
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Simple Majority Vote

No Additional General Fund Impact

**RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a proclamation which designates January 19-25, 2025, as "*Coroner and Medicolegal Death Investigator Appreciation Week*" in Shasta County (Sponsored by Supervisor Kelstrom).

**DISCUSSION**

The week of January 19-25, 2025, has been chosen as National Coroner and Medicolegal Death Investigator Week. The chosen week falls close to January 29th, which is the date Thomas Baldrige, a Maryland colony resident, was appointed by King Charles I as the first Coroner in what is now the United States.

Death investigators perform a critical and often overlooked function in our society. Our Deputy Coroner Investigators respond to a variety of calls; 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The Shasta County Coroner's Office primary mission is to conduct complete and objective medicolegal investigations of unattended, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths in order to determine the cause, manner, and circumstances of death. This duty is important to the family members of the deceased individuals, the safety of our community, and the pursuit of justice. The results of medicolegal investigations are categorized by Public Health and used to shape public health policies.

Shasta County utilizes five Deputy Coroner Investigators (DCI) responsible for covering all of Shasta County, which is over 3,800 square miles. They work closely with the Redding Police Department, Anderson Police Department, Shasta County Sheriff's Office, California Highway Patrol, Cal Fire, Redding Fire Department, Park Rangers, funeral homes, and other county agencies.

In addition to death investigation work, DCIs are also trained in and perform the assigned labor-intensive task of providing hands on assistance to the Pathologists during postmortem examinations. During examinations, these duties also include securing tissue samples, sending and receiving toxicology samples, and procuring medical records. Perhaps unique among the California jurisdictions, our DCIs also are responsible for transporting decedents from scenes (a labor-intensive job), processing decedents to prepare them for examination, and performing all death notifications. The DCIs do all of this is behind the scenes while also helping families navigate the process involved when losing a loved one.

In 2024, our Coroner's Office investigated a total of 904 deaths, 364 of which were deemed to be Coroner's cases which require extensive investigation. Of the remaining 504 deaths, 337 of those cases were deemed *Medical* cases, which also requires an investigation and inquires sent to local physicians and health care facilities and mortuaries. The remaining cases are comprised of

*Information cases, Notifications, and Out of County cases, which range in scope and complexity. During 2024, the Coroner's Office continued providing autopsy services, case assistance, and support in the postmortem field to neighboring Northern California counties. On top of these case numbers, personnel of the Coroner's Office continued providing professional service while navigating personnel challenges and a high-volume caseload.*

In August of 2024, the Coroner's Office established a new relationship with a forensic genetic genealogy company to help shed light on cold cases. Since December, promising new leads have emerged, and the Coroner's Office intends to maintain its collaboration with this allied agency on future suitable cold cases. Additionally, the Shasta County Coroner's Office has worked with County Counsel and the funerary industry to procure court ordered exhumations to help obtain identities for "J. Does". A Mission and Values statement was created outlining the fundamental goals and principles of the Project Doe Initiative. In October of 2024, the Coroner's Office personnel participated in the Healthy Shasta Walktober step challenge for the fifth straight year, and while they did not win, they still enjoyed promoting healthy exercise habits to our community.

We are appreciative of our dedicated group of Last Responders, aka the staff at the Coroner's Office, for fulfilling a job that is difficult both physically and emotionally while having courage, compassion, and great reverence for life.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Board may choose not to adopt this proclamation or postpone to a future date.

#### **OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

The Recommendation has been reviewed by the County Administrative Office.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Costs associated with preparing and processing this proclamation have been included in the Sheriff's Office and Clerk of the Board adopted budgets. There is no additional General Fund impact.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1: Proclamation