

Calloway County Coroner Candidate Offers Experience to Race

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There is little glamour in the real life activities of a coroner. Television shows like CSI and even the old Quincy series from the late 1970', early 1980's have made the modern day office of coroner an alluring profession. But drama aside, the science of coroner has developed into a whole new way of dealing with death. What hasn't changed and generally missing from television is the compassionate side of a Coroner

Judy Ratliff, a chemistry professor at Murray State University, recently filed as a Republican candidate for Coroner of Calloway County. "I decided to run for Coroner because I have had an interest in this particular community service as long as I can remember. It uses my interest in science as well as my interest in education," Judy said. "Beginning in high school and continuing through graduate school I helped out in nursing homes" She continued. "Through this experience I learned the importance of allowing the deceased and families of the deceased to maintain their dignity and privacy in dealing with the death of a loved one."

Ratliff says when circumstances require a death be investigated or when the family of the decedent has questions regarding the death, the coroner should be able to explain what has occurred with compassion and caring. "My science education allows me to comprehend any collected information and my background and certifications for teaching at the middle school through college level have taught me to be able to explain what has occurred with great clarity to varied audiences. I can explain scientific information in laymen's terms to family members and more technically as needed in our legal system."

The coroner's job in our nation is becoming increasingly involved with advanced scientific techniques. Her background as a scientist allows her to understand, recognize and explain what has led to a death when it is not obvious. Having a trained scientist as a coroner also provides greater protection for communities just as having a police force deters the commission of crime; a coroner who has earned doctoral degree in analytical chemistry will help safeguard our community.

"Initially I would like to try to win additional resources for the Calloway County Coroner's office and in the long run possibly expand the staffing to include a medical examiner," Ratliff said. "I would also like to work toward the development of our own local crime lab within the county.

Having a lab located within our community would expedite our processing of evidence and help Calloway County move forward. This could possibly be achieved by partnering with the local university and could provide a valuable service for our community and region. These changes will take time, more than the single term as a coroner; however, progress toward them can be made in a single term."

The economy within the state and our community does not allow for all of the materials needed to have to collect evidence at crime scenes that would help our police force and the coroner investigate wrongful deaths. Dr. Ratliff says she has been successful in writing grants to obtain materials and equipment in her current position. "I would like to work toward doing the same for the Calloway County Coroner's office. I would like to first make sure that I did not try to reinvent processes that are in place and work well."

The corner also works closely with the state regarding autopsies. There are 13 forensic specialists in Kentucky, including 11 pathologists who perform autopsies, conducting nearly 2,500 autopsies at offices located in Louisville, Frankfort, Madisonville and Ft. Thomas. Also, 250 examinations of living individuals, 90 percent of whom were children and may have sustained physical injury, were conducted to assist law enforcement or social services entities in investigations. The Toxicology Laboratory, a branch of the Office of the State Medical Examiner, conducts all post mortem tests.

Judy has a Bachelor of Science degree from Berea College, a Masters Degree from Eastern Kentucky University and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky in Chemistry.