

Madison County Chief Deputy Coroner Roger D. Smith Announces Retirement

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EDWARDSVILLE - Madison County Chief Deputy Coroner Roger D. Smith announced today that after 38 years of dedicated service to the citizens of Madison County, he will be retire on March 12, 2021.

In his public service career, Smith served as a police officer for Pontoon Beach, Illinois, a firefighter for Long Lake Fire Department, and an EMT with both Laughlin Ambulance Service of Troy, IL., and with Campbell's Ambulance Service, in addition to his service with the Madison County Coroner's Office.

Coroner Steve Nonn described Smith with the following: “Roger is a true professional in every sense of the word and will be missed by his co-workers as well as our partners in the fire, police, emergency response agencies, public health departments and medical communities throughout this region. We all wish him the best in his retirement.”

Roger became a volunteer deputy coroner in 1987 and then went to full-time status in 1989. During his 34 years with the coroner’s office, he rose through the ranks to become Chief Deputy Coroner in 2010.

In addition to his regular duties, he is also a former member of the St. Louis Major Case Squad and a founding member of the Illinois Child Death Review Team. He currently serves as an instructor/lecturer for the Illinois Coroners & Medical Examiners Association and the Southwestern Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, and conducts numerous local trainings with fire department personnel, reserve deputy coroners, and pre-prom presentations at area high schools.

Smith is an executive board member of the St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS) and is co-chairman of the Mass Fatality Committee.

Roger earned the distinction of holding Board Certified Fellow #004 of the nationally recognized American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, the most current member is #3068. He lives in Prairietown with his wife, Madison County Circuit Judge Amy Maher.

Nonn continued, “Roger is scary smart and one of the brightest minds I know. He is a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about many things, not just death investigation. He was our Google person before anyone ever heard of Google.” He is a without question one of the top medicolegal death investigators in this entire country and he is very generous with his knowledge and is always in teaching mode. He credits a lot of his knowledge and skill as a result of his working relationship with and tutelage by Dr. William Drake, retired pathologist for the Madison County Coroner’s Office and Forensic Pathologist Dr. Raj Nanduri, also retired.

The working relationship between Nonn and Smith was very smooth and they complimented each other with new ideas and innovations and constantly improving the coroner’s office with continuing education for investigators and the use of cutting edge technology.

“In the 20 years we have been together we worked as a team. I can say with certainty that it was very rare, if ever, that we weren’t on the same page on our vision for what this office should be professionally and how it would operate.” One specific goal that was achieved and has become a point of pride is the fact that every investigator is a

member of the nationally recognized and respected American Board of Medicolegal Investigators (ABMDI)

The hard work paid off and the office has earned the respect of first responders and the medical community throughout Madison County. Nonn remarked that the office is also recognized by many other county coroners who call our office and ask for advice on how to handle issues within their own jurisdictions.

In addition to his remarkable knowledge and passion for this job, Roger is also known for his quick wit and humor, including some spot on impersonations of both celebrities and local officials. In a job that deals with human tragedy every day, Roger was able to keep a balance between the seriousness and compassion that the job required with keeping the office atmosphere light and loose with his constant humorous banter and sometimes breaking into song, especially Christmas songs, at any time of the year.

The good news is that he still plans to be active with STARRS, mass disaster planning, and teaching. Roger will remain a volunteer reserve deputy coroner with Chief Deputy Emeritus status and has volunteered to make himself available whenever or wherever the need may arise.

"Unfortunately, due to the COVID19 restrictions we are unable to hold a reception to honor Roger for his years of service," Nonn said. "Once we have a safe environment to have such a reception, one will be scheduled to give Roger his proper honor and celebratory retirement party, so stay tuned. But for now, please reach out to him to wish him the best in his retirement via e-mail at rdsmith@co.madison.il.us or by phone at 296-4153."