

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



## KANE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE



CORONER DR. MONICA SILVA

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37W699 IL Rt. 38  
St. Charles, IL 60175

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# **The Kane County Coroner's Office**

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## **Mission:**

The Kane County Coroner's Office is responsible for investigating specific categories of death, often defined by their sudden, violent or suspicious nature. The Office is mandated to determine the cause and manner (natural, accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined) of deaths occurring in Kane County. State law requires when these certain types of deaths occur in Kane County, the Coroner's Office shall respond to the scene of the death to take control of the decedent's body and immediately commence an investigation into the death. The Office's investigation includes, but is not limited to; subpoenaing and reviewing medical records, conducting pertinent interviews with involved persons as well as medical & law enforcement personnel, taking photographs and X-rays, ordering toxicology (blood, urine, vitreous) and/or histology (tissue), and arranging autopsies to assist in making the determinations in these mandated situations.

## **Vision:**

To be the leader in providing compassionate, respectful, and efficient service to the people we serve while accomplishing our mission statement.

## **Purpose:**

The Kane County Coroner's Office operates 24-hours a day to maintain full investigative and supportive services. The Coroner's Office strives to maintain a high level of sensitivity with the next of kin of the deceased, while still keeping the family apprised of all steps of the investigation. The coroner assures that the proper scientific testing is conducted to assist the law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. The Coroner's Office, per Illinois law, has the responsibility to inform the public of any and all issues that present a death risk, and to provide educational programs to address preventable deaths.

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# Honor, Veritas, Servitium

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The Kane County Coroner's seal communicates the history and integrity of the office. Center on the image is a knight kneeling at a headstone, harkening back to the first coroners who were in service to the crown. Sunrays shining over the scene, which could be from a sunrise or sunset, represent the coroner's duties which cover all hours of all days. Along with "The Office of Kane County Coroner", the Latin words for **honor, truth, and service**, "Honor, Veritas, Servitium" signify the importance of those values to the Office of Coroner.

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## Origin of the Coroner's Office in Kane County

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On December 2, 2024, **Dr. Monica Silva** became the 31<sup>st</sup> person to hold the Office of Coroner, an elected position in Kane County for 188 years. The first coroner was elected on June 4, 1836, at Jim Harrington's Tavern & Inn, now the site of The Harrington Inn, Geneva, which then served as the County Courthouse. On that day, 180 men gathered to elect officials for the new county: three commissioners, a sheriff, a recorder of deeds, a coroner, and a surveyor.



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## Types of Cases Handled by the Coroner Office Coroner's Office

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The Coroner's Office has 3 categories of cases:

- Return to Medical (RTM)
- Sign Out (SO)
- Sign Out Unnatural (SOU)

### Return to Medical

- After thorough investigation, Deputy Coroners determine that this is likely a “natural death”
- A physician who is familiar with the medical history of the person is notified
- Family is in agreement, cooperative and credible, and can attest to the circumstances
- The death is not found to be a suspicious case and natural causes can be attributed
- The physician is allowed to sign the death certificate

### Sign Out

- In the course of an investigation, if no physician is available or is willing to attribute the death to anything he/she clinically managed for the deceased individual
- Medical records are reviewed and interviews are conducted
- Toxicology testing often undertaken
- An autopsy may be required and the decision to proceed is determined by several professionals

### Sign Out Unnatural

- Often an accident, homicide, suicide, or sudden death
- A physician does NOT sign the death certificate
- A more detailed & extensive investigation is conducted
- Medical records are subpoenaed and reviewed, interviews are undertaken, photos of the scene (and of an autopsy, if applicable) are completed, as well as x-rays in pertinent situations
- Toxicology tests conducted
- Autopsies likely performed

## Illinois State Statutes:

Responsibilities of the Kane County Coroner's Office related to the investigation of certain deaths, including determining the causes and manner of deaths occurring in Kane County, are mandated by Illinois State Statutes, **55 ILCS 5/3-3001-3045**. From swearing in Deputy Coroners to reporting specific kinds of death to performing mandatory autopsies, the Kane County Coroner's Office dutifully operates within these state-required parameters.

A sampling of the Office's mandated responsibilities include:

55 ILCS 5/3-3013

Conduct investigations surrounding certain types of deaths

Assume control of the decedent's body on-scene

Secure blood/urine samples and conduct toxicology

55 ILCS 5/3-3015

Conduct autopsies

55 ILCS 5/3-3016

Investigate sudden infant deaths

55 ILCS 5/3-3017

Authorize cremations

55 ILCS 5/3-3018

Issue death certificates

55 ILCS 5/3-3019

Removal of bodies

State law (*55 ILCS 5/3-3013*) lists the **mandated instances** in which we are responsible for going to the site of the death and taking control of the body:

Every coroner, whenever, as soon as (he/she) knows or is informed that the (lifeless) body of any person is found, or lying within (his/her) county, whose death is suspected of being:

- (a) A sudden or violent death (suicidal, homicidal, or accidental) by drowning or suffocation, or as a result of domestic violence;
- (b) A death due to a sex crime;
- (c) A death where the circumstances are suspicious, obscure, mysterious, or otherwise unexplained or where, in the written opinion of the attending physician, the cause of death is not determined
- (d) A death where addiction to alcohol or to any drug may have been a contributory cause
- (e) A death where the decedent was not attended by a licensed physician

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# Kane County Coroner's Team

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The team at the Kane County Coroner's Office represents a wealth of expertise in medical, legal, investigative, and technical fields, ensuring a robust and multifaceted approach to death investigation and community service. The team includes a licensed chiropractor, licensed funeral directors/embalmers, individuals with extensive law enforcement and military backgrounds, and three board-certified forensic pathologists. Their specialized skills range from autopsy procedures to cold case investigations and forensic photography, ensuring comprehensive and compliant death investigations. Additionally, they actively contribute to task forces, committees, and professional organizations to enhance community education and public health initiatives.



## Kane County Coroner

Dr. Monica Silva - December 2, 2024 – present

*Coroner L. Robert Russell – January 1, 2024 – November 30, 2024*

## Full Time Staff

### Chief Deputy Coroner

Loren Carrera

### Assistant Chief Deputy Coroner

Becca Nielsen

### Administrative Staff

Hollie Burlack

Isabel Gonzalez

### Deputy Coroners

Lisa Kriegbaum

Derick Hayden

Steve Laker

Gabriela Allison

Rachel Hall

Kiarni Jones

Glenn Edwards

Yesenia Baez

## On-Call Staff

These are contracted, on-call, or volunteer positions that are not full-time employees

### Forensic Pathologists

#### **Mitra Kalelkar, M.D.**

Board-certified forensic pathologist with over four decades of experience in forensic pathology. She retired from Cook County as the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner and Co-Director of the Residency Training Program. After having served Cook County for over 30 years, Dr. Kalelkar continues to work part-time as a coroner's pathologist dedicated to Kane and DeKalb Counties.

#### **Dr. James Filkins, M.D., J.D.**

Physician and attorney, Dr. Filkins is one of the few forensic pathologists who has also litigated cases in court involving wrongful deaths. As a forensic pathologist with the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, he performed several thousand autopsies and has testified in court as an expert witness in forensic pathology over 300 times. He continues to work as a part-time coroner's pathologist for the DuPage, Kane, DeKalb, Kankakee, and Iroquois County Coroner's Offices and as an expert consultant in forensic pathology.

#### **Dr. Marta Helenowski, M.D.**

Dr. Helenowski is a licensed physician and surgeon with board-certification in forensic pathology. She brings extensive expertise in her field, having performed several thousand autopsies throughout her career. She currently serves as the Assistant Medical Examiner for the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office and also works as a part-time coroner's pathologist for Kane County. Previously, Dr. Helenowski performed private autopsy consultation and held the role of Forensic Pathologist for Lake County.

#### **Forensic Odontology**

Dr. David Wold, D.D.S.  
Denise Murmann, D.D.S., D-A.B.F.O

#### **Cold Case Unit**

Maureen E. Kelly, J.D., Investigator  
Gabriela Allison, Investigator

#### **Forensic Anthropologist**

Erin Waxenbaum, Ph.D., D-ABFA

#### **Morgue Tech\***

Madison Schueler

#### **Forensic Entomology**

Neal Haskell, Ph.D.

#### **Community Liaison\***

Victoria Foley

#### **Ophthalmology Pathology**

Richard J. Grostern, M.D.

#### **Chaplain**

Reverend Tim Perry, President of Nationwide Chaplain Services

#### **Toxicology**

NMS Labs

#### **Six Para- Deputies – part time position**

#### **Histology**

Tissue Techniques Pathology Lab

\* Positions funded grants awarded to the Kane County Coroner's Office

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# 2022 – 2024 Statistics

## A 3-Year Review

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Year	2022	2023	2024
Total Reported Deaths	3979	3664	3628

Case Type	2022	2023	2024
RTM	3441	3183	3169
SO	265	205	219
SOU	273	273	240
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3937</b>	<b>3664</b>	<b>3628</b>

Manner of Death	2022	2023	2024
Natural	3706	3388	3386
Accident	203	209	167
Suicide	48	38	51
Homicide	12	16	12
Could Not Be Determined	10	13	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3979</b>	<b>3664</b>	<b>3628</b>

Method Within SOU	2022	2023	2024
Other	169	175	148
Suicide	48	38	51
Motor Vehicle	44	44	29
Homicide	12	16	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>240</b>

Organ Procurement	2022	2023	2024
Organ Referrals	215	228	246
Tissue Referrals	208	278	266
Organ Donors	13	13	13
Tissue Donors	55	63	61

# 2022 – 2024 Statistics

## A 3-Year Review

### General Cause within Manner of Death

Accident	2022	2023	2024
Drug/Alcohol Intoxication	100	104	59
CO Intoxication	3	2	1
Chemical / Other Intoxication	0	0	0
Fall	43	47	64
Motor Vehicle	44	44	29
Aspiration	3	2	7
Asphyxia	3	3	0
Drowning	1	4	5
Electrocution	0	2	0
Exposure	5	1	0
Industrial	1	1	0
Surgery / Post-Op	0	2	1
Exsanguination	0	0	0
Gunshot Wound	0	0	1
Train vs. Pedestrian	0	2	0
Driving Accident	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>167</b>

Suicide	2022	2023	2024
Gunshot Wound	14	15	12
Hanging	22	15	22
Asphyxia	0	2	2
Drug/Alcohol Intoxication	3	5	4
CO Intoxication	1	0	1
Chemical/Other Ingestion	2	0	0
Fall from Height	0	1	2
Pedestrian vs. Train	4	0	3
Motor Vehicle	0	0	0
Exsanguination	1	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>

Homicide	2022	2023	2024
Gunshot Wound	8	13	7
Stabbing	3	3	5
Assault w/ Blunt Object	1	0	0
Strangulation	0	0	0
Asphyxiation	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>

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# 2022 – 2024 Statistics

## A 3-Year Review

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Opiates	2022	2023	2024
Total Opiate-Related Deaths	78	71	21
Deaths Involving Xylazine	0	5	4
Deaths Involving Bromazolam	0	4	5

Age Birth to 17 Deaths	2022	2023	2024
Natural	16	26	16
Suicide	1	1	1
Homicide	0	1	0
Accident	4	8	2
Undetermined	5	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>21</b>

*In-Custody Deaths	2022	2023	2024
Natural	No data available	No data available	0
Accident	No data available	No data available	0
Suicide	No data available	No data available	0
Homicide	No data available	No data available	0

*Officer-Involved Deaths	2022	2023	2024
Natural	No data available	No data available	0
Accident	No data available	No data available	0
Suicide	No data available	No data available	0
Homicide	No data available	No data available	1

\*Open cases are not reportable\*

	2022	2023	2024
Cases Receiving Investigation	3979	3664	3630*
Cases Requiring On-Scene Investigation	456	440	372
Bodies Transported	460	458	381
External Exams	470	458	458
Partial Autopsies	0	0	0
Full Autopsies	342	336	278
Hospital Autopsies Under KCCO Jurisdiction	0	0	0
Cases with Toxicology Performed	400	371	326
Unidentified Bodies	0	0	0
Unclaimed Bodies	21	8	11
Exhumations	0	0	0
Cremation Permits	2618	2474	2448
FOIA Requests	579	605	540

\*Includes cases where remains were determined to be non-human

### Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Kane County Coroner's Office is a public body. As such, it is subject to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 ILC 140/1, et seq. Under FOIA, members of the public can request and receive records that are kept in the coroner's ordinary course of business.

Under a separate statute, the Coroner's Office has the authority to charge a fee in exchange for the copying of these records, 55 ILCS 5/4-7001.

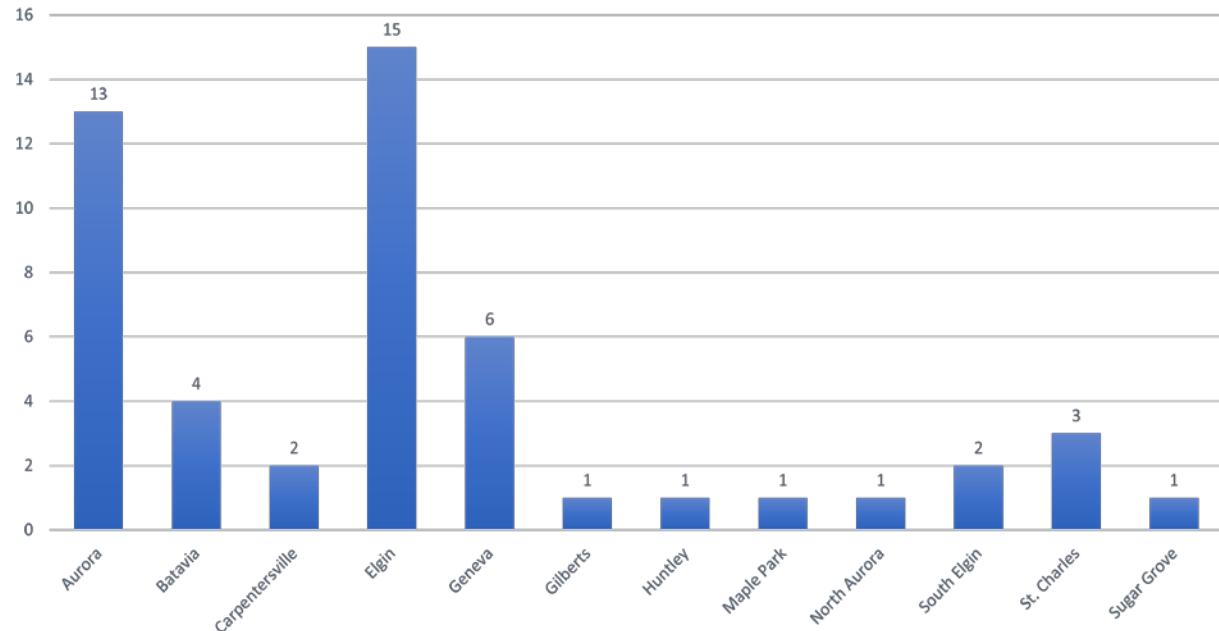
Autopsy Reports: \$50. <sup>00</sup> Toxicology Reports: \$25. <sup>00</sup>	Coroner's Reports: \$25. <sup>00</sup>	Transcript of Sworn Testimony: \$5. <sup>00</sup> per page
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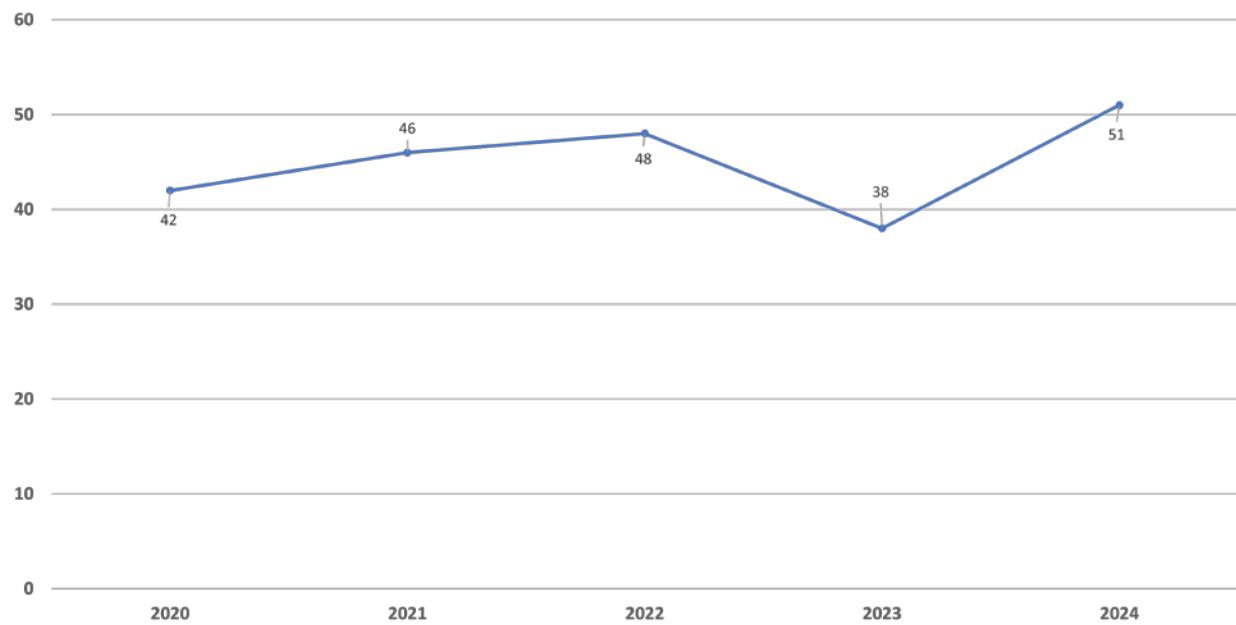
# Suicide Deaths

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2024 Kane county suicides



Kane County Suicide 5 Year Trend



# State, Regional, and County Involvement

Partnering to Investigate and Prevent Abuse and Preventable Deaths

The Kane County Coroner's Office proudly serves on the following teams, taskforces, and associations:

## *Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association (ICMEA)*

The ICMEA is a not-for-profit corporation for the purpose of uniting the members of the organization and upgrading the Office of Coroner and professionalizing it through the exchange of ideas and development of educational programs to the end that Coroners will be better equipped to discharge their statutory duties and thereby better serve the public to which their primary responsibility lies.



## *Illinois Fatality Review Team Advisory Council (FRTAC)*

The oversight body for the regional At-Risk Adult Fatality Review Teams (FRTs) is the Illinois FRTAC. The Illinois FRTAC ensures that data, results, findings, and recommendations of the FRTs are used in a timely manner to make any necessary changes to policies, procedures, and State statutes to protect at-risk adults; collaborating with the Illinois Department of Aging to develop any legislation needed to prevent unnecessary deaths of at-risk adults.

## *Illinois Child Death Review Team*

The purpose of Illinois Child Death Review Team is to reduce the number of preventable child deaths in Illinois. When a child dies, the response by the State and community must include an accurate and complete determination of the cause of death, the provision of services to the surviving family members, and the development and implementation of measures to prevent future deaths from similar causes. Multidisciplinary and multi-agency reviews of child deaths assist in developing a greater understanding of the incidence and cause of child deaths, methods for preventing those deaths, and identifying gaps in services to children and families.

## *Region 2 Adult At-Risk Fatality Review Team*

The Region 2 Adult At-Risk Fatality Review Team (FRT) investigates abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of persons 60+ years old and adults with disabilities aged 18-59, living in a domestic setting. As a regional interagency group, the purpose is to assist local agencies in identifying and reviewing suspicious deaths of adult victims of alleged, suspected, or substantiated abuse or neglect in a domestic living situation. Findings are then reported to the Illinois Fatality Review Team Advisory Council, who then makes recommendations that may help to improve the investigations of deaths of at-risk and increase prosecutions, if appropriate.

# State, Regional, and County Involvement

Partnering to Investigate and Prevent Abuse and Preventable Deaths

The Kane County Coroner's Office proudly serves on the following teams, taskforces, and associations:

## *Illinois Division International Association for Identification (IDIAI)*

The IDIAI is a not-for-profit association that serves as a regional division of the larger International Association for Identification, one of the oldest and largest forensic associations in the world. IDIAI is comprised of forensic scientists, investigators, crime scene investigators, evidence technicians, and others involved in forensic investigation of crime and strives to further the profession of forensic identification. IDIAI strives to further the profession of forensic identification and scientific crime detection by promoting research, scientific techniques, and standardization through training and communication.



## *Kane County Opioid Taskforce*

Spearheaded by the Kane County Health Department, this coalition of local leaders, law enforcement agencies, healthcare professionals, treatment center representatives, and advocacy groups meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss opioid-related issues within the county.

## *Kane County Major Crimes Taskforce (KCMCTF)*

The KCMCTF provides additional expertise, manpower, and equipment to member agencies involved in a major investigation. Major Crimes can include, but is not limited to, homicide, serial sexual assault, serial arson, major arson and bombing, non-parental kidnapping, complex violent crimes against people, heinous crimes, and complex crime scene processing and evidence collection. The primary administrator or designee or any member agency may request KCMCTF assistance upon the discovery of a qualified incident.

## *Kane County Fire Investigation Task Force (KCFITF)*

The KCFITF develops and implements strategies to investigate and prosecute responsible individuals through mobilizing public and private resources, coordinating responsibilities, and integrating the efforts of agencies, groups, and persons who are involved, or should be involved, in such a strategy. The KCFITF works closely with all fire and law enforcement agencies within Kane County. When called to do so, the Task Force assists and/or augments a fire investigation as directed by the Incident Commander at the scene. Each case presented to the State's Attorney's Office since the inception of the KCFITF in the year 2000 has resulted in a successful prosecution.

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# State, Regional, and County Involvement

Partnering to Investigate and Prevent Abuse and Preventable Deaths

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The Kane County Coroner's Office proudly serves on the following teams, taskforces, and associations:

*Kane County Chiefs of Police Association (KCCPA)*

The KCCPA works to provide continued support for the following Kane County Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Kane County Major Crimes Task Force
- Arson Task Force
- Bomb Squad & Bomb Dog
- Auto Theft Task Force
- Kane County Accident Reconstruction Team
- Kane County Honor Guard



Each of these support services is available to every police department in the county 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year basis, providing highly trained, technically proficient tactical officers and specialized equipment to each of our communities; which otherwise are unaffordable to a single community or Police Department.

*Kane County DUI Task Force*

The DUI Task Force is a local anti-crime program created to enhance public safety by aiding law enforcement agencies in the apprehension of drivers impaired by alcohol and/or other drugs, thereby reducing the threat of DUI-related traffic crashes, fatalities, and injuries posed by impaired drivers.

# Educational Community Outreach



The Coroner's Office participated in Kane County's National Night Out event at the Sheriff's Office. We provided educational materials to residents to raise awareness.

Staff from the Coroner's Office joined other agencies and businesses for a morning of fun hosted by the Elgin Fire Department.



# Supporting the Community



At the Kane County Coroner's Office, caring for our community is at the heart of everything we do. Whether it's standing alongside the Kane County Sheriff's Office at "Cop on Top" to support our friends at Special Olympics, or providing a dignified resting place for the unclaimed in our care, we are here to serve with compassion and commitment.



# In the News



The Kane County Coroner's Office applied for, and received, funding for the new in-house lab—a joint collaboration between the Coroner's Office, State's Attorney's Office, and Sheriff's Office. Congressman Bill Foster included the funding request in the federal budget and presented the check for \$963,000.

(Pictured left)



Installation of Narcan machines throughout Kane County. A project funded, in part, by a grant awarded to the Kane County Coroner's Office.

(Pictured left)

# New Coroner is Sworn In



Born and raised in Aurora, Dr. Monica Silva has always carried a deep love for her community. A licensed chiropractor and longtime public servant, she spent 13 years on the Kane County Board working to uplift the voices of residents and strengthen local services. In 2024, she was elected as Kane County's 31st Coroner, becoming the first Latina to hold this office. Dr. Silva's journey is not only one of professional achievement but also a testament to representation, resilience, and her lifelong commitment to serving others with compassion.



“A voice for those who can no longer speak for themselves.”

-The International Association of Medical Examiners and Coroners

**The Kane County Coroner’s Office dedicates this publication to those who lost their lives in 2024, and to those affected by their death**



The Kane County Coroner’s Office, investigates deaths and provides critical services to surviving family members, relatives, and friends with compassion and dignity. Should you have any questions regarding this Annual Report, or this office, please do not hesitate to contact Coroner Dr. Monica Silva.

630-232-3535

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<http://www.kanecountycoroner.org/>