



Jennifer Banek, MS, CRNA

Lake County Coroner

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TO: THE LAW AND JUDICIAL COMMITTEE
FROM: CORONER JENNIFER BANEK
RE: CORONER'S INVESTIGATION REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2021

Coroner's Monthly Report of Investigations conducted for the month of NOVEMBER 2021 ⁽¹⁾:

Non-Coroner's Cases ⁽²⁾	403
Coroner's Case: ⁽³⁾	64
Total Death Investigations:	467

Total death investigations for November 2020: 477

- Of the total Coroner's Cases for November 2021 (64), the Manner of Death (or suspected Manner of Death) is outlined in the following pages.
- Of the 64 Coroner's Cases a total of 51 had further forensic examination (Autopsy) conducted by the Lake County Coroner's Forensic Pathologist, Eimad Zakariya, M.D., in conjunction with the Lake County Coroner's Autopsy Technician and Deputy Coroner Investigators.
- The Lake County Coroner's Office Toxicology Laboratory conducted 45 toxicology tests and, as a result, 36 samples were sent to an outside laboratory for further quantitative/qualitative testing.
 - In addition, the Lake County Coroner's Office Toxicology Laboratory conducted 169 toxicology tests for various outside agencies including the Lake County Jail and Probation Services.
- The Lake County Coroner's Office Issued 299 Permits for Cremation to area funeral homes in November 2021.

(1) As forensic reports such as Autopsy Reports, Toxicology Reports and other investigative agency reports may take 4 – 8 weeks for completion, Coroner Banek is presenting statistical data that is more complete than more recent months data.

(2) Non-Coroner's Cases:

Cases reported to the Office of Coroner where Minimal Investigation is needed; primarily consisting of review of medical history, medical records, and discussion with health care providers involved in the case.

(3) Coroner's Cases

Thorough investigation as to the cause of death, with subsequent Case Conference to determine the manner of death (i.e., homicide, suicide, accidental, or undetermined). Where required and mandated by Illinois Statute by type of death, select cases may be sent to an Inquest by Jury.

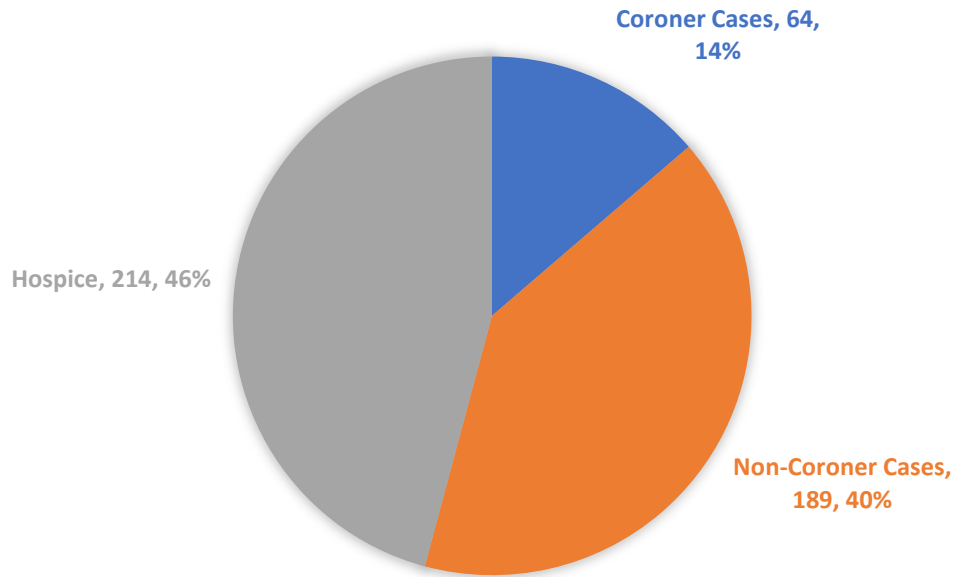


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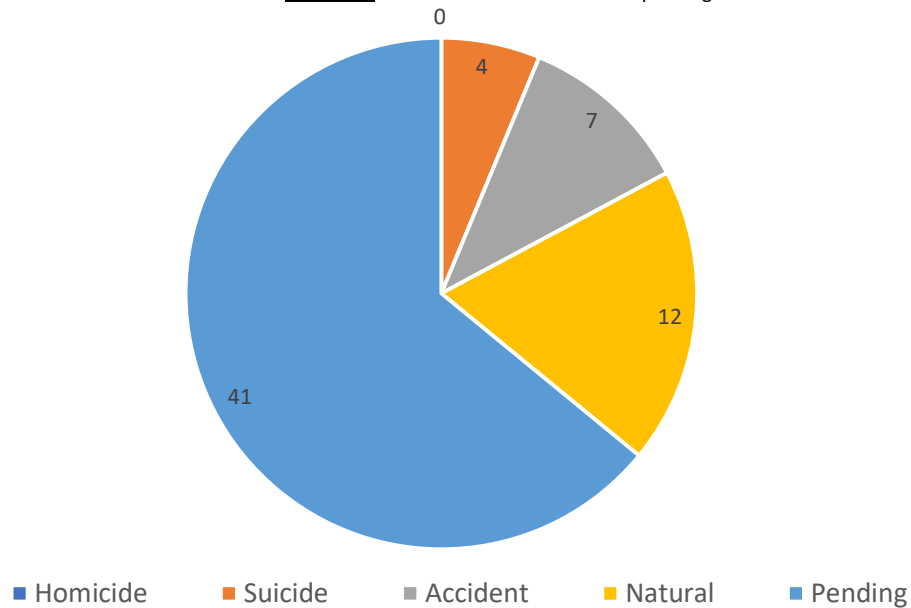
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NOVEMBER 2021 OVERALL CASES



NOVEMBER 2021 CORONER CASES

This data includes Suspected Manner of Death in Cases still pending finalization.



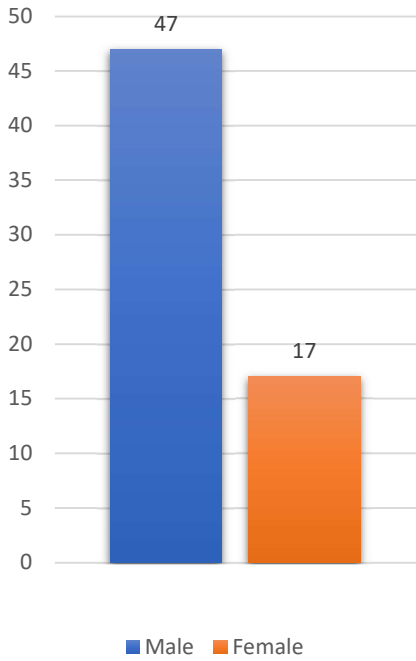


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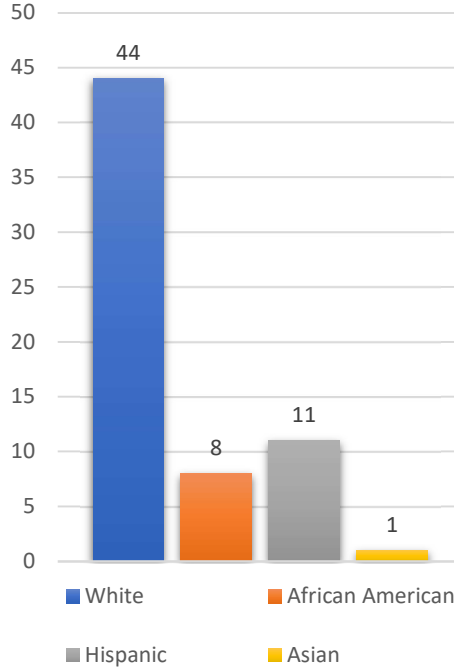
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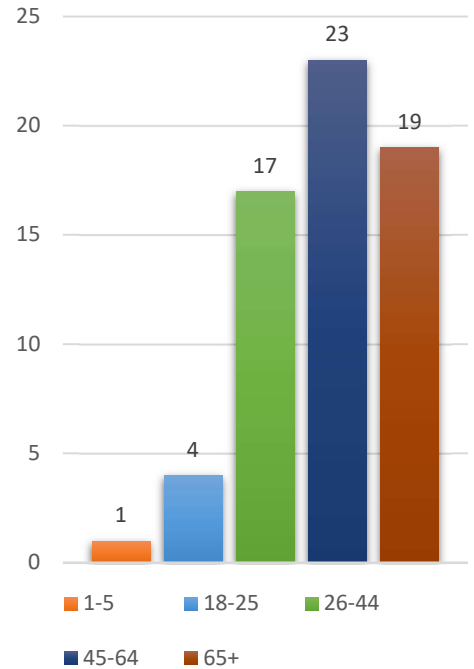
Coroner Cases/Gender



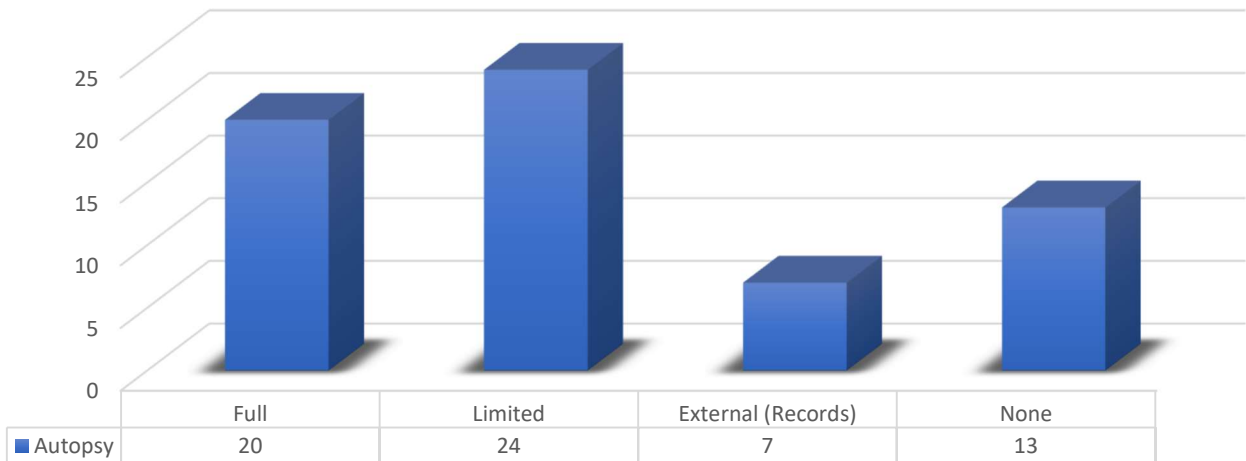
Coroner Cases/Race



Coroner Cases/Age



Autopsies November 2021



Autopsy Types:
Full – A complete external and internal examination is completed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
Limited – A Complete external, and in some cases limited internal examination, is completed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
External – No Physical examination is completed however medical records from an external agency (hospital, nursing facility or physician) are reviewed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
None – No physical examination or medical record review is necessary. Most of these cases are signed by the deceased's physician however family or physician information is not available at the time of death warranting a response from the Coroner's Office.



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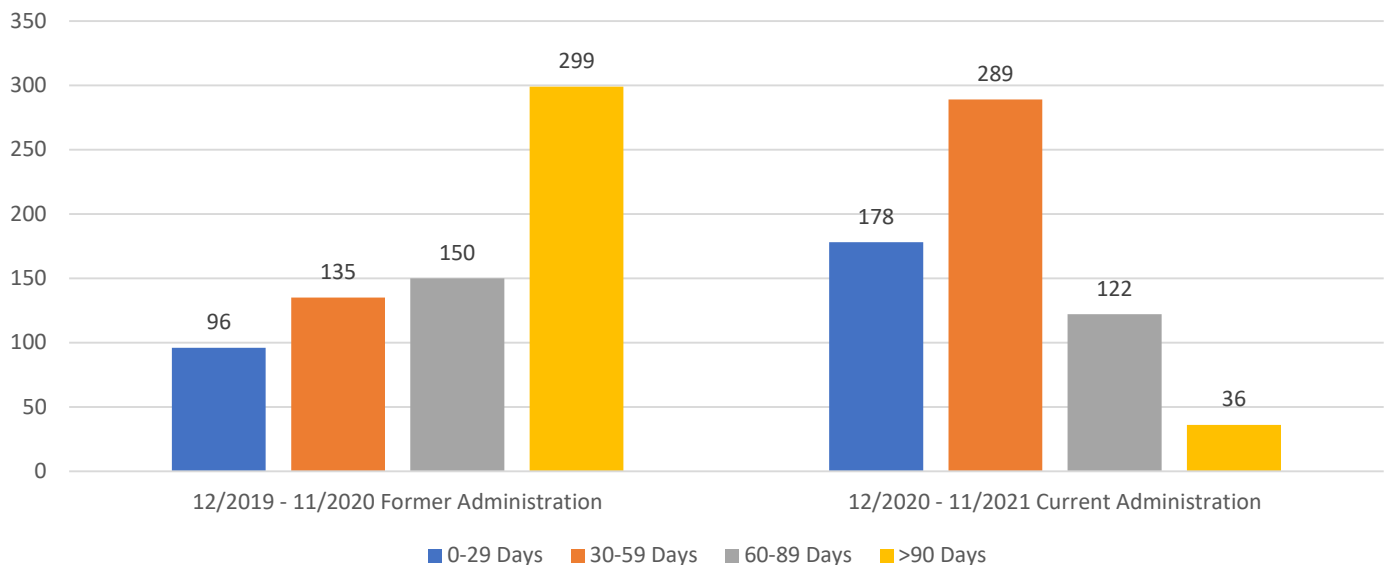
A YEAR IN REVIEW

Coroner's Case Closure Rate December 1 – November 30:

- The chart below demonstrates the case closure rates as compared from December 1, 2019, through November 30, 2020, (Previous Administration) and December 1, 2020, through November 30, 2021 (Current Administration)
 - December 2019 – November 2020 (Previous Administration)
 - Of the total cases only 34% were closed within 60 days, leaving 66% open for more than 60 days. Of the total cases, **43% were open over 90 Days.**
 - December 2020 – November 2021 (Current Administration)
 - Of the total cases 75% have been closed within 60 days, leaving 25% open more than 60 days. Of the total cases, **5% were open over 90 days.**

Under the leadership of Coroner Banek, through the implementation of policy and performance measures, case closure rates have been positively impacted. As seen in the graph below, most Coroner's Cases are now being closed within 60 days, where under previous administration many cases remained open more than 90 days, causing delays for families and funeral homes.

Case Closure Rates by Days



****There are currently 53 cases pending closure for the specified time frame. Of these 53 pending cases 32% are within 60 days.**



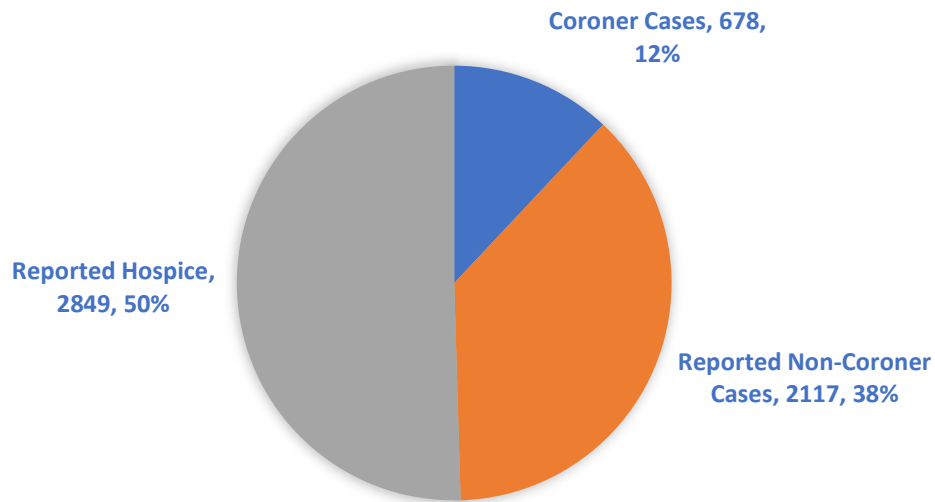
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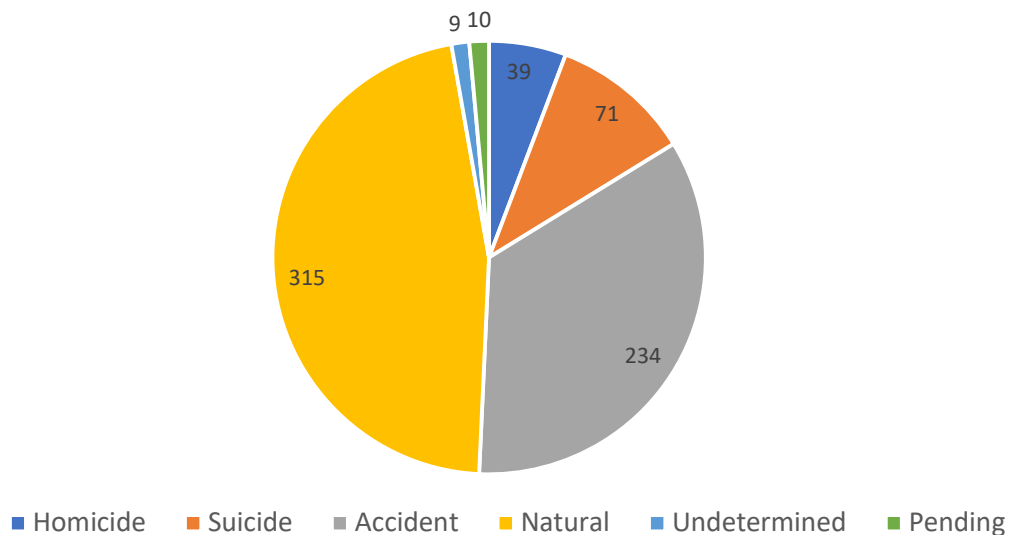
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A YEAR IN REVIEW

NOVEMBER 2021 OVERALL CASES



DECEMBER 1, 2020 - NOVEMBER 30, 2021 CORONER CASES





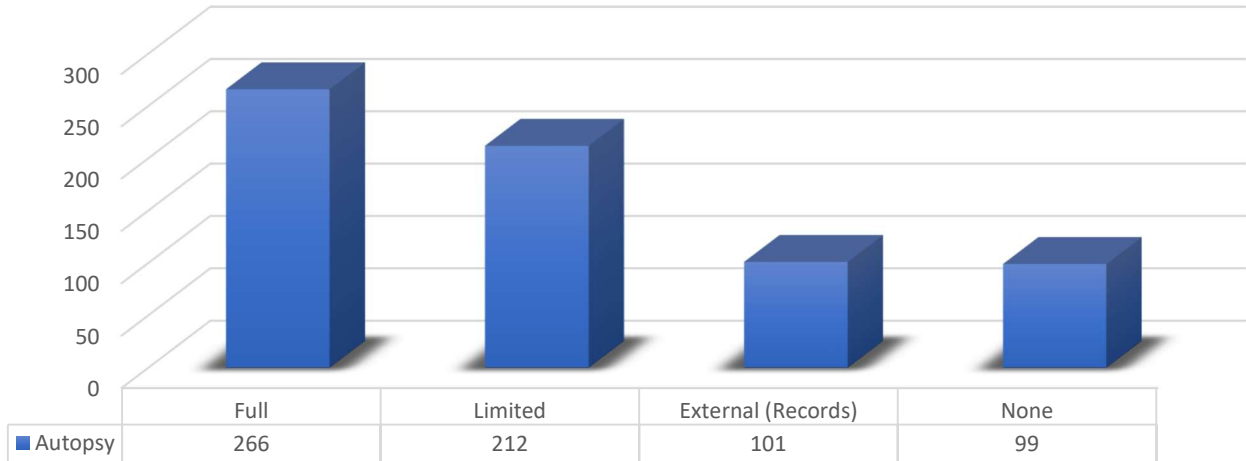
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A YEAR IN REVIEW

Autopsies December 1, 2020 - November 30, 2021



Autopsy Types: **Full** – A complete external and internal examination is completed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
Limited – A Complete external, and in some cases limited internal examination, is completed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
External – No Physical examination is completed however medical records from an external agency (hospital, nursing facility or physician) are reviewed by the Forensic Pathologist with a written report.
None – No physical examination or medical record review is necessary. Most of these cases are signed by the deceased's physician however family or physician information is not available at the time of death warranting a response from the Coroner's Office.

- In addition to toxicology testing that is performed through the course of a death investigation, the Lake County Coroner's Office Toxicology Laboratory conducted 1,619 toxicology tests for various outside agencies including the Lake County Jail and Probation Services.
- Throughout the course of the year the Lake County Coroner's Office Issued 3,450 Permits for Cremation to area funeral homes.



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A YEAR IN REVIEW

- ***During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 an over-flow site was established that the Waukegan Airport in a hangar that house 3 refrigerated trailers that were capable of housing 93 additional decedents.***
 - The rental for the Hangar at the Waukegan Airport was an expenditure of over **\$13,000/month** that was paid by Lake County through the Cares Act funding.
 - After review of this arrangement, it was determined that other means could be available and that could result in a per month savings of over \$13,000.
 - A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was drafted to utilize an over-flow storage site with a local funeral service, in the event it is needed, with no cost upfront, and minimal costs in the event of a mass fatality incident.
 - ***The Coroner's Office worked with State and Local Emergency Management Agencies to decommission the Airport site which was successfully closed on March 12, 2021.***

- ***Suicide Survivor Care Boxes.***
 - Working with community partners, a second round of an additional 10 boxes were assembled including various comfort items and bi-lingual support services brochures. These boxes and the contents are at no cost to Lake County and provide families of Suicide Victims basic care items and valuable resources. ***Grief boxes have been distributed to family members when the Coroner's Staff responds to scenes of suicides.***

- ***Missing Pieces Partnership.***
 - Coroner Banek initiated a meeting with the organization Missing Pieces. Missing Pieces partners with Chicagoland organizations to support people after a child dies. Following the death of a child, The Lake County Coroner's Office submits a referral to Missing Pieces who then reach out to the family and provide them with a multitude of resources. To date the Lake County Coroner's Office has submitted 9 referrals since the partnership was formed. ***The Coroner's Office has submitted numerous referrals to Missing Pieces since the inception of the partnership.***

- ***Cook County Ecumenical Indigent Burial.***
 - Coroner Banek, Chief Deputy Coroner Newton, Senior Deputy Coroner Mayer and Deputy Coroner James joined the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, attended, and participated in the 30th Indigent Burial held in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Chicago. At this ceremony 323 Indigent persons were laid to rest in a respectful service that honored their lives. ***The Coroner's Office is in the planning phase to adopt an Ecumenical Indigent Burial Service in the coming year.***



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A YEAR IN REVIEW

- ***New Beginnings North Chicago.***

- The Lake County Coroner's Office partnered with the North Chicago Police Department and other community partners in the first meeting of the New Beginnings Community Resource Center, a grant-based service. Chief Deputy Newton will be the Coroner's Liaison in this partnership. The mission of the New Beginnings Community Resource Center is to provide instantaneous community care for those experiencing opioid and other drug addiction.

- ***Compassion Funeral Service.***

- Based on meetings held in past months that addressed removal service issues, the Lake County Coroner's Office along with the Lake County Purchasing Department entered into an agreement with a secondary removal service, Compassion Funeral Service, in order to increase efficiency, decrease wait times, and provide service to our community.

- ***Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County***

- Coroner Banek and Chief Deputy Newton met with the Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County to discuss the services they offer and how they could be beneficial to families of Veterans who die within Lake County.

- ***LEAD***

- Coroner Banek and Chief Deputy Newton met with the CEO and CAO from LEAD (Linking Efforts Against Drugs) to evaluate opportunities for the organization and the Lake County Coroner's Office. LEAD™ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to parents and other adults and their role in the promotion of healthy family relationships and the prevention of alcohol, drug use, and other risky behavior by youth. LEAD has served the Lake Forest, Lake Bluff and Knollwood, IL communities for nearly 30 years, and now conducts trainings, workshops, and presentations for both youth and adults all over the country. Lead is also a part of the "TextForHelp.app", The only youth-focused mental health crisis text hotline in the country that is available 24/7, fully anonymous, and staffed by licensed mental health counselors.