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the SOURCE

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SENATE APPROVES NEW OSBI COMMISSIONER

Governor Mary Fallin appointed Rick Stephens from Pryor to be a new member on the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Commission. The Oklahoma Senate has approved that appointment.

Sen. Sean Burrage (Claremore-D) sponsors Rick Stephens' nomination to the OSBI Commission in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee

The Commission is comprised of seven members, three represent law enforcement and four are considered lay persons. Even though Stephens worked as an OSBI agent for several years in the 1980s and 1990s, he represents a lay member on the Commission. Currently, Stephens owns and operates Stephens Memorial Chapel in Pryor. Stephens replaces out-going OSBI Commissioner Mike Wilkerson. Wilkerson served one term on the Commission. He, too, is a former OSBI agent.

Even as a lay member, Stephens brings many years of law enforcement to the Commission. At age 18, Stephens worked as a dispatcher and jailer for the Mayes County Sheriff's Office. A few years later, he took a job as a police officer in Pryor working his way through college. Stephens earned his bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Stephens will attend his first OSBI Commission meeting August 21st. Commissioners serve seven-year terms and are chosen based on Congressional districts in Oklahoma.

Other commissioners include Chairman Ted Fariss (lay member), Vice Chairman Stanley Glanz (sheriff's member), Russell Noble (lay member), Mike Fields (district attorney's member), Danny Ford (police chief's member), and Anne Holzerberlein (lay member).

Commissioners meet quarterly at OSBI Headquarters to discuss and review agency matters and statistics. For a list of the meeting dates and times, visit the OSBI website at www.ok.gov/osbi.

Working Together to Improve Forensics

By Robert Weston

More than 40 individuals representing ten different agencies and universities gathered at the OSBI Forensic Science Center January 20 for the first Oklahoma Forensic Science Consortium. The purpose of the Consortium is to provide a venue for forensic science practitioners, students, and educators to collectively address ways in which to improve forensic sciences in the state and in the nation.

Dr. Dwight Adams, Director of UCO's Forensic Science Institute, described a practical model by which forensic science students can partner with forensic science laboratories to conduct research into new techniques or methods that would ultimately be used in the analysis of evidence.

OSU's Department of Forensic Sciences Chairperson, Dr. Robert Allen, highlighted a successful partnership between OSU's Graduate Program in Forensic Sciences and the Tulsa Police Department in which a new sample preparation technique for DNA analysis was implemented. A presentation covering new drugs of abuse was given by Scott Schaffer, Assistant Managing Director and Clinical Instructor for the Oklahoma Poison Control Center.

Efforts of the Consortium will be to enhance communication between forensic science laboratories, to continue to encourage collaborative efforts to improve the forensic sciences and to provide discipline-specific continuing education opportunities for forensic scientists. Forensic science students will also have occasions to present their research at Consortium meetings. The next quarterly meeting of the Consortium will be held in Tulsa in April or May.

Bill Boosts Internet Crimes Task Force, Provides Investigators Another Tool

A bill that could tremendously help law enforcement with the fight against Internet crimes against children has been signed into law. Senate Bill 1016 will allow the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation to selectively provide state commissions to local law enforcement that are members of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

More than 60 police departments, sheriff's offices, and district attorney's offices are members with specialized training for such investigations. This statewide jurisdiction is vital since most investigations of cybertips go beyond local jurisdictions. The OSBI requested Senator Patrick Anderson (Enid-R) and Representative Jason Nelson (OKC–R) to run the legislation. They took on the cause with great enthusiasm.

The need for more investigators has dramatically increased as cybertips have risen exponentially in the past year. This increase is in part due to tips coming from MyYearbook.com and other new technologies.

Timing of this bill is crucial since federal funding for three of five OSBI Internet Crimes Against Children Agents and one Analyst could end in November. The Bureau is seeking more federal funding for these positions.

The bill goes into effect November 1st.

Citizens Join OSBI Ranks, Learn How Investigators Target Criminals

Agent Andi Hamilton explains how she interviews child victims of sexual abuse.

The OSBI invited 21 members of the community to participate in the eighth Citizens' Academy class — the first one in nearly three years. Many of the students are business leaders in their communities which range from Hydro to Stillwater.

During the five-week long class, agents and criminalists explain how they work delicate cases such as the sexual abuse of a child and how agents identify child predators who use the Internet to find their victims. Academy goers also step inside the Oklahoma Information Fusion Center located at OSBI Headquarters to learn how criminal analysts track terrorist activities around the world and determine if any have ties to Oklahoma.

The OSBI periodically hosts an academy to engage the public in the activities of law enforcement and teach people about the unique qualities of the bureau.

OSBI Lab Accepting Less Evidence, Staffing Shortage Cited

Due to staffing issues and an increase in case submittals from Oklahoma law enforcement agencies, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Criminalistics Laboratory will no longer routinely accept case submissions from the federal agencies Alcohol. Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) or the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The OSBI's Criminalistics Laboratory is a state-funded laboratory whose primary function is to provide forensic analysis for Oklahoma law enforcement agencies that do not have the resources to perform their own evidence analysis. ATF has its own forensic laboratory system, and ICE has personnel that perform fingerprint identification verifications.

In a time where our resources are spread very thin, the OSBI Criminalistics Laboratory must focus on providing services to the municipal and state-level law enforcement agencies of Oklahoma.

In the event of emergency or special circumstances, the OSBI is willing to accept cases from ATF and/or ICE. Please contact OSBI Laboratory Director Andrea Swiech or Criminalistics Administrator Jim Stokes (405-330-6724) should such a circumstance arise.

The OSBI may suspend this practice in the future, as staffing and workload allow.

OSBI Purchasing Agent Recognized

Natalie McNabb

Recently, Natalie McNabb was presented with the Oklahoma Professional Public Buyer of the Year award by the Oklahoma Association of Public Procurement. She will now be considered for the national Buyer of the Year award through the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing.

Natalie has worked for the state for 12 years, hiring on with the OSBI in July 2010.

Increasing Communication between the Laboratory and Customers

By Criminalistics Administrator Kevin Kramer

The Request for Laboratory Examination (RFLE) document has always been a method of linking evidence from individual agency cases to the OSBI's forensic laboratory. As types of analysis change and the capabilities of the laboratory continue to evolve, this document is a valuable communication link between the analysts examining the evidence and the officers requesting the analysis. This article seeks to explain the benefit of open communication.

The RFLE itself has not changed much over the years, but the amount of information requested has increased. The RFLE still requires the requesting and submitting officers' contact information. This information is used to establish chain of custody in the laboratory and provide contact information for analysts that have questions prior to or while examining evidence. It asks for basic case information such as agency case number, type of offense, subject information. This information is gathered to link the OSBI's case number to the agency case number and to ensure the evidence gets connected with any previous evidence from the same case. Subject information is used to further identify the case, but it is also used by units such as the Latent Evidence Unit and CODIS to search their specific databases. It is important to provide as much information as possible since individuals may have various spellings of their name and multiple birthdays or social security numbers.

Additionally, the RFLE requests an itemized description of the evidence. It is important to clearly identify each piece of evidence. Questioned samples should be clearly labeled and identified as to their source. For example, a blood stain from a suspected crime scene could be labeled "Swab of suspected blood from kitchen floor". A fiber recovered from a vehicle in a hit and run could be labeled "Possible fiber from 'vehicle descriptor' passenger side front lens cover." Proper labeling assists the analyst in knowing what test to perform. The location/description given in the labeling can be carried throughout reporting. This assists others in linking the evidence and results of testing back to where the item was recovered.

When submitting known reference samples, every package (i.e., swab box, evidence envelope) must be clearly labeled. For example, the labeling should state "Known sample from victim – John Doe". Labeling such as "DNA Swab", "Buccal swab from Scene", etc… cause confusion and could lead to evidence being erroneously processed. The term "buccal" should only be used to reference a known DNA sample collected from an individual's mouth/inner cheek.

The "Type of Examination(s) Requested" block is a small block, but it is one of the most important in communicating what analysis is desired. This block and additional pages, if necessary, should identify what questions regarding the evidence are to be answered. Officers should evaluate the evidence and request analysis that provides the most valuable results.

For example, a gun possibly involved in a crime is submitted for comparison to shell casings from the suspected crime scene. There may be multiple questions regarding this firearm. First, could the shell casings from the scene have come from this firearm? Second, is the victim's blood/DNA on the firearm? Finally, who could have possibly fired the firearm? Once you ask these questions, then the type of examinations requested may be documented. First, collect any blood observed on the firearms and submit separately requesting to "Compare the possible blood from the firearm to the known buccal swab from –'victim'". Swab the grooved area of the grips and the trigger for possible DNA and request "Compare contact DNA swabs from firearm to the known buccal swab from – 'suspect'". Next, "Examine firearm for latent evidence and compare to known prints from – 'suspect'". Finally, "Function check and compare the firearm to the shell casings". This detailed request will allow the analysts to know exactly what type of analysis is desired while clearly identifying which units should receive the evidence.

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The OSBI's Criminalistic Services Division desires to provide the best and most valuable analysis possible. This is accomplished through detailed communication and specific requests regarding the type of analysis desired. When this information is received at the time of submittal, analysts are able to begin analysis and report findings in a timely manner. Please, contact the laboratory if you have questions about evidence or types of analysis.