

Young Forensic Scientists Forum Newsletter



YFSF 2008 Special Session

After a year's worth of planning the 2008 Young Forensic Scientists Forum is now complete, and I'm proud to report that this year's session had record breaking attendance and participation! Registration for the YFSF Special Session was maxed out at 125 participants with a long waiting list of people who were unable to fit into the meeting space. While we are excited about the incredible turnout, we are also sorry that all of those eager to participate were not able to attend. We are looking into possibilities for expanding the number of participants for next year, but keep in mind that due to the limitations in room size it is always a great idea to get your registration forms in early for YFSF events to ensure participation!

The Tuesday Special Session kicked off at 8:00 a.m. with opening remarks by our YFSF President **Marrah Lachowicz**, followed by a welcoming address by the 2007-08 AAFS President **Bruce Goldberger** (shown above with Marrah Lachowicz, Jennifer Beach, and Arliss Dudley-Cash). The morning presentations began with **Michael Baden** detailing interesting historical facts about the forensic science field as well as the experiences he has had as a medical examiner. **Linda Kenney Baden** then presented on her casework from the viewpoint of a lawyer working criminal cases dealing with extensive amounts of forensic evidence. **Henry Lee** presented his experiences working hundreds of crime scenes throughout his career and emphasized the attention to detail and methodical processes that ensure successful

investigations. A presentation entitled "Forensic Anthropology: From Crime Lab to Crime Fiction" detailed how presenter **Kathy Reichs** has turned real life casework into popular fiction novels and television. The morning was rounded out by **Natalie Shirley**, the 8th Annual Emerging Forensic Scientist Award Recipient, presenting her research in age determination in forensic anthropology.

The morning session was followed by a delicious lunch that was enjoyed by all participants, for this a special thank you goes out to the Criminalistics Section for their continued sponsorship of the YFSF Special Session!

Leading off the afternoon presentations was **Dayle Hinman** with a look into the work that goes in to criminal profiling and how her work has helped solve cases including murder, sexual assault, and kidnapping. The work of a forensic toxicologist followed with **Robert Powers** presenting on the importance of both toxicological results and pathology in solving suspicious death investigations. Next up was **Lynn Kimsey** with a case presentation out of California where forensic entomology was used to help convict a suspect who obtained a rental car to drive cross country and commit murder. Her work was able to show that bugs found in the car's air filter were only present in certain parts of the United States, proving that the suspect did travel from the point of his alibi to the scene of the crime. The last presentation of the day was by former YFSF president **Allison Curran**, who shared her experiences in getting into the forensic science field as well as her current work using canines in forensic investigations.

A big thank you to all speakers for their fascinating presentations, to all participants for taking advantage of the YFSF activities, and to all YFSF organizers for their hard work throughout the year. The 2008 Special Session was a great success and we all look forward to another record

breaking year in 2009! If you have any comments or suggestions for what you would like to see next year or if you would like to help with YFSF activities please contact **Amanda Frohwein** at frohwein@dps.state.ia.us.

— *Amanda K. Frohwein, BS*
2008 YFSF Special Session Chair



Presenters/Chairs of the 2008 YFSF BYOS from left to right: Luis Martinez Villegas, Marco García, Mishel Stephenson, Charlotte Smith-Baker, Stephanie Karczynski, Erica Blais, Lisa Mokleby, Vasilios Stoukas, and Melissa Smith. Not present: Shannon Soltysiak and Michelle Egermann.

2008 YFSF Sponsorship

The 2008 Young Forensic Scientists Forum's Special session was very successful this year. As Sponsorship Chair, I would like to thank the following groups for their generous contributions: the AAFS Criminalistics Section, YFSF Lunch Sponsor; Virginia Commonwealth University, YFSF Breakfast Sponsor; and West Virginia University/National Institute of Justice, YFSF Poster Session Sponsor.

In addition to their contributions, the Criminalistics Section recognized the accomplishments of the YFSF at their annual business meeting. Thank you for having us! We appreciate the support that we receive from these groups, as well as the guidance and support provided by Sondra Doolittle of the AAFS. If you would like to become more involved with the Young Forensic Scientists Forum as a sponsor or as a representative of your section, contact **Robin Bowen** (Robin.Bowen@mail.wvu.edu). It is our goal to present the YFSF membership with the diversity of sections represented in the AAFS.

— *Robin T. Bowen, MA*
2008 YFSF Sponsorship Chair

2008 YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Session

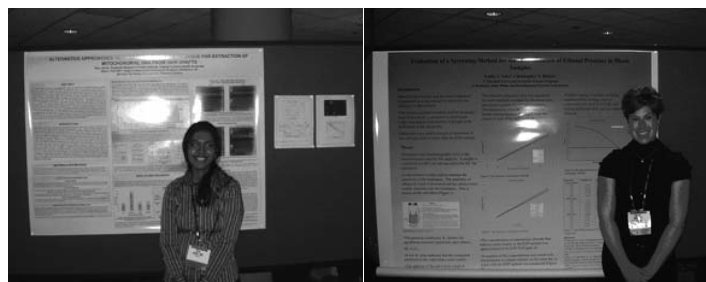
This year's YFSF Bring Your Own Slides was successful and filled with great presentations! Erica and I would like to extend our many thanks to **Vasilios Stoukas, Stephanie Karczynski, Lisa Mokleby, Shannon Soltysiak**, Michelle Egermann, Charlotte Smith-Baker, Luis Martinez Villegas, Mishel Stephenson, and Marco García for their informative and enthusiastic presentations. We would like to also thank all of the YFSF chairs and co-chairs for their support; our session's volunteers, and the Academy for their support of newcomers to the field of forensic science. Most of all we would like to thank all of those that attended this year's BYOS sessions. Your attendance is one of the basic elements that keep this event returning every year. Next year will be even better, so start thinking if you would like to participate either by presenting or becoming more involved with the Young Forensic Scientist Forum. Both are great experiences and certainly an adventure.

— *Melissa E. Smith, MSFS*
2008 YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Chair

YFSF Poster Session

The Poster Session for the Young Forensic Scientists Forum was a success. We had 39 participants this year with a wide range of topics. This was quite an achievement over the 25 posters of the past year. The YFSF Poster Session is almost doubling every year and I would like to thank everyone that participated and everyone that came to look at the posters. I would also like to thank AAFS for always providing us with a great location. We had many AAFS members in attendance which gave the participants great feedback on their work. We had much more diversity within the topics presented and many more Universities were represented. We hope that we can increase the number of posters again next year. A special thank you goes out to West Virginia University and the National Institute of Justice for their sponsorship of the poster session. If you are interested in presenting next year, don't hesitate to email the YFSF 2009 Poster Chair **Anthony Sutter** (yfsfposter@gmail.com).

— *Arliss I. Dudley-Cash, BA*
2008 YFSF Poster Session Chair



Elsa Jacob (left) and Emily Ashy (right) with their posters at the 2008 YFSF Poster Session.

YFSF Breakfast Session

YFSF Newsletter cont.

The 2008 Annual YFSF Breakfast was a great success. We would like to thank our sponsor, the VCU Forensic Science Department, again for hosting such a wonderful event. The breakfast provided a more relaxed environment for YFSF session participants to engage the speakers with questions. We had several speakers from the top of their respective fields including **Bruce McCord** who was the proud recipient of the 2008 Paul L. Kirk Award, the highest award that can be given by the Criminalistics Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Dr. McCord's work has led to several key advancements in the field of forensic DNA analysis. We also enjoyed lessons from a forensic engineer **Peter Alexander** who reminded us that the cases we see in the field may not always be as clear cut as they seem. His lessons on accident reconstruction reminded us the importance of understanding the science and physics behind collisions. **Roderick Kennedy** also addressed the group. Judge Kennedy is internationally known for his expertise in the interface between law and science, and is a published author and lecturer on the subject. His engaging discussion on the role of ethics interfacing with science and the law is a topic which all emerging forensic scientists should take heed. Judge Kennedy plans to continue programs within the Criminalistics Section regarding many of the issues discussed during the breakfast session. Finally we heard from an expert in the field of forensic chemistry focusing on the DEA methamphetamine profiling program internationally. Steven Toske is currently a Senior Research Chemist with the Drug Enforcement's Special Testing and Research Laboratory and his expertise was well received at the breakfast session.

— *Marrah E. Lachowicz MFS, GCCP*
AAFS Section Liaison

An Experience That Changed My Life

I entered the Medical School of the University of Patras, Greece, in September of 2003. In Greece, like all over Europe, medical programs last six years and all the candidates are being admitted directly to the medical schools. Unlike most of my colleagues, I was dedicated to forensics even before graduating from high school, strongly believing that justice is the greater commodity of human kind. My fascination with the orphic universe of forensic medicine and pathology became even stronger during the first three years of my medical studies, which resulted in spending three months in the U.S. rotating at the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office (OCMEO).

I began to spend my elective forensic pathology observership at the OCMEO in Pontiac, Michigan, during the fall of 2006. I was assigned a comfortable private office equipped with a computer, telephone, bookshelves, microscope, etc. The administrator at the OCMEO, Robert Gerds, provided me with all the necessary technical instructions upon my arrival.

The agency had a medical library (*Dr. Tom Petinga, Sr. Memorial Library*) well-supplied with general medical textbooks and major medical journals, as well as with a teaching optical and digital microscope with two projection screens. There was also an auditorium (*Dr. John Burton Memorial Auditorium*) where formal lectures and larger conferences were taking place.

My observership program consisted of daily routine activities that started at 8:00 a.m. with morning rounds and a review of the daily caseload with the OCMEO staff, continuing with observation of the forensic autopsies performed by the on-duty forensic pathologist. This activity was followed by the noon-time review of the daily case docket with all the forensic pathologists, rotating doctors, medical students, toxicologists, family counsellors, and investigators in attendance. The workload was exceptionally intense, and I was able to supplement my pathological knowledge with a wide spectrum of deaths due to natural disease, trauma due to motor vehicle accidents, as well as crime related deaths. The afternoon hours were usually used for histopathology reviews. When I was available I accompanied the investigators and police to the crime scenes, and I attended lectures given by the forensic pathologists at the area teaching hospitals or at the law enforcement training programs. Moreover, when criminal cases came to court I attended when forensic pathologists testified. This gave me a wonderful insight into how highly technical evidence could be distilled in such a way so as to be meaningful to a lay audience (e.g., the jury). Late morning on Fridays was generally reserved for neuropathology and brain examination conferences, while early afternoon on Fridays was generally reserved for pending cases' reviews. In general, the office activities were decreased by 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. except for the doctor on call, the investigators, and the family counselors. While students had no obligations to be in attendance during weekends and holidays, I was welcome to attend at my wish the activities of the duty doctors.

I was also strongly encouraged to work on a publication with the Chief Medical Examiner, **L. J. Dragovic**, during my stay at the OCMEO. This project ("*Sudden Deaths from Eosinophilic Coronary Monoarteritis*") was presented at the last meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, at the YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Session.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the professional staff of OCMEO, and especially the forensic pathologists, **Kanu Virani**, Ruben Ortiz-Reyes, and Bernardino Pacris, as well as the Chief Forensic Toxicologist Gary Kunsman. I have to reserve my most sincere gratitude for **L. J. Dragovic**, who acted, and continues to act, as my mentor. Dr. Dragovic's succinct and insightful comments were instrumental in helping me to broaden both my professional and medical horizons. His unwavering support, patience and confidence in my ability to meet this challenge helped me throughout this process of my induction into the enchanting cosmos of forensic pathology.

— *Vasilios S. Stoukas*
Medical student and AAFS Student Affiliate (Pathology/Biology)

Editor's Note: *Vasilios Stoukas presented at the 2008 YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Session. We are pleased with his eagerness to share some of the experiences he has had in forensic science and we hope to bring more real life forensic experiences to our readers in the future. If you have an experience you would like to share, please submit it to Jennifer.W.Mercer@gmail.com for consideration for future newsletters.*