


FORENSIC SCIENCE DIVISION


Labyrinth – Quarterly Newsletter

June 2024

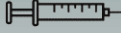


Biology


 Welcome Emily Tuck & Amy Howl, our new DNA analysts who will start DNA training this summer! This program takes 9-12 months.


 We are using a computer modeling system called STRMix that will aid in mixture deconvolution. DNA reporting will be in chart format and Likelihood Ratios will be used for statistical analysis. A memo and information explaining this change has been sent out to user agencies.


Chemistry

 The Chemistry Unit wants to provide excellent service to all of our submitting agencies. To keep our backlog and turnaround times manageable, we can only analyze each case's most important evidence and cannot analyze every item. In cases with two or more suspects, we want to be sure to analyze at least one item from every suspect. Please put the name of each suspect on the evidence packaging of every item.


Evidence


 If you don't know what items of evidence to submit or what type of analysis to request, please call us!

 Please package chemistry evidence in plastic, and make sure all openings are completely sealed and initialed.


 Do NOT put evidence tape on the outside of shipping containers, ONLY on the outside of evidence packaging.

Firearms

 In May, Firearm Examiner Doug Lançon assisted in a Shooting Incident Reconstruction course taught by Mike Haag in Great Falls. Several Montana investigators were there to learn how to properly process shooting scenes. Mike hopes to plan more classes in Montana. Please contact the Firearms Section if you're interested or would like more info.


 The Firearms Examiners just attended the AFTE Annual Training Seminar in Anchorage, Alaska.


Latent Prints

 The Latent Print Section does not preclude requests based on the category of the offense. Whether it is a property crime or person crime, please submit any evidence you would like analyzed for impressions.


We are proud to announce that the Montana State Crime Lab was awarded the Foresight Maximus Award for the 4th year in a row.


Toxicology

 We will be moving to all-electronic case records in Toxicology in June. Our turnaround times will be longer as we learn the system. Thank you for your patience as we navigate this transition!

 In the upcoming months, Intoxilyzer training will be taking place at Glacier National Park and Malmstrom Air Force Base, in addition to the Montana Law Enforcement Academy.

Miscellaneous

 Primer Gunshot Residue Acceptance Guidelines have been added to our website under the Evidence Collection Resources tab.

 How are we doing? Please provide feedback using the [survey](#) link on our website.

Labyrinth - continued

Deputy Medical Examiner Dr. Deland Weyrauch joined doctors from the Armed Forces System and Mayo Clinic to discuss the public health value of the forensic autopsy as part of an international webinar series presented by the Center for Forensic Science Research. He also spoke with high school students at the Billings Career Center about pursuing careers as forensic pathologists and medical examiners.



Congratulations Kendra O'Neal and Tonya Shaffer, who were jointly named as FSD's Employees of the Year for 2023! They are both Autopsy Assistants at the Billings Lab.

Employee Spotlight 1

Tonya Shaffer was born and raised in Billings, where she lives a full, adventurous life with her husband, four children, two dogs, two ferrets, and a gecko. Her impressive resume includes work as a Certified Medical Assistant, Certified Phlebotomy Technician, Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Nail Technician, Eye Recovery Technician, and Accountant, and has been a Diener at the Billings Crime lab since 2018. In her spare time, Tonya enjoys competing in powerlifting and Spartan races, waterskiing, camping, and motocross.



Employee Spotlight 2

Gavin Lawson is the lab's Employee of the first Quarter for 2024! Gavin has been employed in the Toxicology Section of the lab since 2016, after earning a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from the University of Montana. His job includes testing biological samples for the presence of drugs and alcohol, as well as assisting with various technology issues at the lab. Originally from Great Falls, Gavin has settled in Missoula with his wife, Taylor, where he enjoys playing games (video and board), home improvement, fixing computers, and camping with family and friends.



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Please take the survey on our website.