



Featured Forensic Leader

Dr. Terry Welke has been the Medical Examiner for several regions around his parish, and has held the Coroner position in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana since 1996. Dr. Welke listens and is open to the perspectives and information when collaborating with the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) to improve organ, tissue, and eye donation, and changed his position and practices to support pre-autopsy donation. Dr. Welke will postpone autopsies to allow for donation to take place first. He helped create the Coroner Sub-Committee at LOPA and continues to support and serve on this committee.

Prior to Dr. Welke's support, deceased military in the donation service area were sent to Oklahoma for autopsy, and thus donation could not take place due to time restrictions. Dr. Welke was the catalyst for creating change by connecting military leadership and LOPA so that now, deceased military personnel are released from Fort Polk and autopsies are performed locally, preserving the option of donation.

Dr. Welke also works with the Coroner of Vernon, helping in the release for potential organ, tissue and eye donations prior to autopsy. He has made strides in helping with inmate deaths, declared by neurologic criteria. Due to his efforts, these opportunities are not lost and donation is an option. He is also pro-active in the release of infant deaths for heart valve donation, and he encourages all research opportunities when available. Dr. Welke leads the state in reducing the rate of infant mortality through his office "*Safe Sleep Campaign*." He and his Chief Deputy, Charlie Hunter, provide countless educational opportunities for parents by hosting *Safe Sleep* education and giving away cribs for families of children in need. Calcasieu Parish is recognized nationally by *Cribs for Kids* as a leader in safe sleep. Their infant deaths have dropped 65% since the campaign started. Furthermore, for deaths where the parent was arrested in relation to the child's death, Dr. Welke has helped create a way for LOPA to gain access into the prison to provide the opportunity for approach of the parent for donation. His team also leads the state in MDI log referrals. MDI log refers all deaths in their parish to LOPA.

The quote for the Calcasieu Parish Coroner office when it comes to donation is "***Life Trumps Death Every Time***". Dr. Welke's office will assist LOPA in any need to ensure donation happens. He was nominated for the Forensic Leader of the Month because he is a dedicated and consummate leader in his field of forensic pathology, and he lives what he says "Life Trumps Death Every Time".