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Campbell coroner helps families cope with tragedy

Responsible for determining cause and manner of deaths

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

FORT THOMAS - Mark Schweitzer is often the last public official some Campbell County residents deal with. He is the coroner.

Schweitzer or one of his two deputies, Laura Randall or Al Garnick, must investigate deaths where there is no attending physician or where there is suspicion of homicide, accident or suicide.

The coroner's office is responsible for determining the cause and manner of those deaths.

ADVERTISEMENT Schweitzer, 39, sees his job as providing a public service beyond completing paperwork.

"My primary strength is helping families gain control of an out-of-control situation," Schweitzer said. "You can't change the death, but you can help the family make decisions from that point on. Do they have to be autopsied? Do I have time to get people in town to have a funeral? I help answer these questions."

In Campbell County, the coroner's office handles about 280 cases a year. Approximately 100 of those require autopsies by the state medical examiner.

"I don't see the expected cancer deaths or the hospice deaths. I see the ones that are not expected and often tragic - many times young people or under violent circumstance. I'm dealing with families that are probably at their lowest point in their lives. I help them get a handle on that," Schweitzer said.

First elected in 1998, after defeating his Democratic rival and current deputy Garnick, Schweitzer is running unopposed this year.

"I had several goals that I outlined when I became coroner, and one final goal that I have is that I want to participate in a statewide reporting system for violent deaths. From a laptop at the scene, we could input information into a database that's at the University of Kentucky. That has been approved, now we just have to implement it," Schweitzer said.

Schweitzer, the youngest of eight children, grew up in Fort Mitchell. He graduated from Beechwood High School before



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earning a bachelor's degree at UK in human biology. After earning a doctor of chiropractic from the National University of Health Sciences in Chicago, he followed his father and great uncle to become the third generation of Schweitzer Chiropractic in Fort Thomas.

While attending school in Chicago, he interned in a clinic serving a housing project.

"When I saw people then, it usually was a crisis. I got to see a lot of things I will never see in my practice here. It was good experience for my work as a coroner," he said.

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