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Incumbent Peggy Johnson seeks second term as coroner

Passion drives Peggy Johnson in her job as Vermilion County Coroner. It's a job she hopes to keep. Johnson spoke at Monday's Hoopes-ton Neighborhood Watch meeting, part of a series on candidates running in the Nov. 2 election. Serving as coroner is "a passion, a commitment," she said. "I'm absolutely passionate about what I do and the families."



JOHNSON

Johnson began working in the cor-ner's office in June 1993, after having spent 11 years with the YWCA Crisis Intervention program. Then-coroner Lyle Irvin asked her to join the office. "I didn't know how I'd be in the coroner's office because like a lot of you, I thought 'whoa, that's a dead person,'" she said. She decided to accept the position and in February 1999 was appointed coroner when Irvin resigned. In November 2000, she was elected to her first full term, the first woman to be elected coroner in Ver-milion County. "I'm pretty proud of that," she said. Johnson said she has two skills she believes are

Democratic challenger no-show

The Democratic candidate for Vermilion County Coroner was missing in action Monday night. Raymond Skidmore, who is challenging incumbent Republican Peggy Johnson, failed to appear at the Neighborhood Watch meeting where both candidates were to speak. Hoopeston police Sgt. Jim Dewitt, who hosted the meeting said Skidmore had not contacted him to can-cel. He could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

necessary in the job: communication and curiosity. "I consider our office to be the third eye," she said. "We look at things in a different way." This year, the office has handled nearly 500 cases including, for the first time, one that required DNA testing. That case stemmed from an accident Aug. 1 in rural Hoopeston in which two Hispanic men died. DNA testing was necessary to determine the identities of the victims, she said.

Such cases strain the department's \$145,000 budget, the second-smallest budget in county government. Only the auditor's budget is smaller, Johnson said. The budget covers salaries for Johnson, chief dep-uty coroner Mike Rortvedt and two part time deputy coroners to help answer calls on nights and week-ends.

Adding to budgetary strain is the number of autopsies that have had to be performed. Illinois law dic-tates some instances in which bodies must be autop-sied. For example, all children under the age of two must have autopsies performed, as do all homicide victims. Each autopsy costs \$1,600, a cost which is increased about five percent per year, Johnson said.

When estimating the budget, Johnson said she tends to figure low on autopsies. "I always pray that there won't be any homicides or little ones won't be taken away," she said.

Along with investigating deaths and ordering au-topsies, Johnson also oversees inquests, which are public hearings at which a coroner's jury rules whether deaths are accidental, suicide, of natural

See CORONER on other side

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Briefly

Picnic set

The Hoopeston Historical Society will hold its annual picnic at noon Saturday at the McFarland Museum. Please bring a covered dish and table service.

Well-Baby Clinic

The Hoopeston Well-Baby Clinic will be held from 9-11 a.m. Thursday at the Charlotte Ann Russell Medical Center, 801 E. Orange. It is a free clinic for children from birth to school age. Children will be examined by clinic nurses, weighted, measured and given immunizations as needed. Nutrition, diet, grown and general health information will also be discussed.

Coroner continued from other side

causes, homicides or undetermined. "We have very few undetermined deaths," she said.

The coroner has one other duty, one that Johnson has never fulfilled. As the county's highest-ranking law enforcement official, she is the only one who may arrest the sheriff.

One thing Johnson has not yet had to investigate -

For an appointment, call (217) 283-5644. Walk-ins are welcome. Free-will donations are appreciated.

Preschool screening

A free preschool screening for all three, four and five-year-olds will be held Tuesday, Sept. 21 at the First Presbyterian Church, 915 E. Orange, Hoopeston. The screening will determine each child's knowledge of general concept, hearing and vision, speech, language and motor skills.

Parents should bring each child's Social Security card, updated shot record and birth certificate.

To schedule an appointment, call (217) 283-6668.

Special speaker

Ashley Drollinger of Hoopeston will speak at the 10 a.m. worship service at First Christian Church, 502 E. Main. She will talk about her summer mission experiences in eastern European countries where she taught English and built Christian relationships. Everyone is invited.

Jr./Sr. bowling

Signup for junior and senior bowling leagues will be held from noon-4 p.m. Saturday at Pla-Mor Lanes. Leagues are for youngsters 8-18.

A parents' meeting for those who would like to help the league will be held at 4 p.m.

but expects to soon - is a methamphetamine-related death. "It's just a matter of time," she said. "That's going to be somebody blowing themselves up or taking someone with them or an overdose."

Johnson faces Democratic challenger Raymond Skidmore in the election.

Police News



A 62-year-old man reported Monday that someone took several items, including money, from a home in the 700 block of East Wyman.

Obituaries

CATRON - Mona Mae Catron, 79, of Jamestown, Tenn., formerly of Hoopeston died Saturday, Sept. 11, 2004 at Pickett County Care and Rehabilitation, Byrdstown, Tenn. Graveside services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Floral Hill Cemetery. Visitation will be 1:30-2 p.m. Thursday at the cemetery chapel. Hamilton-Orr Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Weather



Partly sunny today. High 85. Tonight, chance of thunderstorms. Low 63. Tomorrow, chance of thunderstorms. High 78, low 56.

For current weather conditions, call **Hoopeston Weather Service**, (217) 283-6221.

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AUCTIONS

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