

## ***“Librarian’s Shelf” by Melodee Pedersen***

Forensic Entomologist bringing program to Library

Fans of CSI, NCIS, and mystery lovers in general take note: the Friends of the Columbus Public Library and Central Community College-Columbus Campus have two exciting programs coming up that will be right up your alley. There will be a \$5 fee which includes refreshments. Pre-registration is required, and can be done by calling the Extended Learning Service Department at 562-1293 or 1-877-222-0780 ext. 1293.

The Maggot Road Show, complete with photographs, will be Sunday, July 25th at 2:00 p.m. in the Columbus Art Gallery and features Dr. Tim Huntington, a forensic entomologist. Forensic entomology is the use of insects in legal investigations, often to help determine the time of death. Dr. Huntington is the youngest of 15 forensic entomologists in the world. He has consulted on over 50 death investigations in several states and four countries, including the Casey Anthony case in Florida. Below is an interview with Dr. Huntington.

What brought you to Nebraska, and why did you decide to make Nebraska your home?

I came to Nebraska originally to attend Concordia University as an undergraduate, and when I finished my PhD there was an opening at Concordia for my current position, and I really love it there. Nebraska is a pretty great place to live, and things just worked out the way that they did. (Plus my wife is from Nebraska, so that probably influenced things too.)

When did you first get interested in this field, and how did that come about?

I heard about forensic entomology from a high school teacher of mine about the time that I started picking up bodies for a mortuary service when I was 16. I worked there for five years but I never really considered the field until my junior year of college, when I took an entomology class as an independent study and I structured my ecology class project as a forensic entomology experiment. The more I learned about insects the more I liked them, and I was hooked.

What advice do you have for others considering this field?

Be aware that because any field of forensic science is an applied area of a basic science, you first need to understand the fundamentals before you can specialize. In this case, you need to be an entomologist before you can be a forensic entomologist. Too many people try to approach things from the wrong direction, and they end up being frustrated when things don't work the way they think it should.

What do people learn from your talk that surprises them the most?

I don't think people have a real appreciation for just how important insects are to our everyday lives, so I hope that would be what they walk away with. Otherwise they certainly see just how important insects are to the decomposition process, and how efficiently they work.

What was the most exciting experience you have had that was related to your job?

I've been involved in a lot of homicide cases where I've given my estimate of when the victim died, and there's a sort of silence for a few moments from the investigators. Then they tell me that it matches up exactly with their evidence or witness statements, or whatever. I think it just blows them away when something so mundane like the bugs on a body can tell us so much about a case, and they can do it so accurately. That always gets me pumped up.

The second presentation will be mystery author Sean Doolittle on Sunday, August 29th at 2:00.