Overview of the Donation Process

Western Carolina University accepts whole body donations for decomposition research, forensic anthropology education, and human remains detection dog training. To donate your body to the WCU Forensic Osteology Research Station (FOReSt), a bequeathing form must be signed by the person donating and also by two people who witness the donor signing the form. The donor will need to pre-arrange several services with a funeral home as well. These services include transporting the body to WCU, creating and filing the death certificate, and keeping the body in cold storage until the death certificate is complete. The cost of these services is the responsibility of the donor. If a family wants to donate someone who has recently died, or who is not able to donate him or herself, a donation form can be signed by the next of kin and notarized. The family is responsible for arranging and paying for the same services mentioned above.

There are a few reasons we might not accept a donated body. We do not accept anyone who had an infectious disease at the time of death, nor do we accept anyone weighing over 250 pounds at death. We also do not accept bodies that have been embalmed. We will accept cremated remains and this is a route people sometimes take when they do not meet the weight limit or the infectious disease criterion. We have special instructions for the crematorium regarding the level of processing we accept.

Questions and requests for donation forms can be directed to:

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