

Annual Report – Cold Case Task Force

To the Colorado House and Senate Judiciary Committees (Section 24-33.5-109(8), C.R.S.)

October 10, 2017

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

There are sixteen members of the Cold Case Task Force. The Senate President and the Speaker of the House each appoint two family representatives, as well as one chief of police and one sheriff. The Executive Director of the Colorado District Attorneys' Council (CDAC) appoints three district attorneys (representing rural, suburban and urban offices). The Governor appoints two representatives of statewide victim advocacy organizations and a forensic pathologist. The appointees to these positions are limited to serving two consecutive terms. Two positions are filled by statutory designation (Executive Director of the Department of Public Safety, or his/her designee; and the Attorney General, or his/her designee).

Current members:

- Laura Saxton** (Family Representative); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
- Sean Gruno** (Family Representative); reappointed by Senate President (second term 2015-2018)
- Chief Douglas Stephens** (Littleton Police Department); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
- Sheriff William Elder** (El Paso County); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
- Ramona Blee** (Family Representative); reappointed by Speaker of the House (second term 2015-2018)
- Rhonda Fields** (Family Representative); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
- Sheriff Bill Masters** (San Miguel County); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
- Chief Greg Testa** (Boulder Police Department); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
- Dr. Amy Martin** (Forensic Pathologist); appointed by Governor (first full term 2015-2018)
- Mark Hurlbert**, Assistant District Attorney, 18th Judicial District – (*Representing Urban District Attorneys, 2013-2016, 2016-2019 appointed by Exec. Dir, CDAC*)
- Vacant Position**, (*Representing Suburban District Attorneys – appointed by Exec. Dir. CDAC*)
- Jim Bullock**, District Attorney, 16th Judicial District (*Representing Rural District Attorneys, 2013-2016, 2016-2019 appointed by Exec. Dir. CDAC*)
- Dora Lee Larson**, (*Colorado Victim Organization COVA*) - appointed by Governor (serving an unexpired first term 2013-2016, first full term 2016-2019)
- Rob Wells** (*Statewide Victim Organization*) - appointed by Governor (serving an unexpired first term 2013-2016, first full term 2016 – 2019)
- Scott Turner**, Deputy Attorney General (*Statutory position*)
- Ted Mink**, Acting Director, Colorado Bureau of Investigation (Chair) (*Statutory position*)

COLD CASE TASK FORCE MEETINGS

10 am-Noon

690 Kipling St. Lakewood

November 4, 2016

February 3, 2017

May 5, 2017

August 11, 2017

Please join us – All are welcome!

To the living we owe respect, but to
the dead we owe only the truth.”

~Voltaire



TRAINING UPDATE P.O.S.T. Board Grants

The CBI continues to offer specialized Cold Case Investigation Training with funding obtained through the POST Board Grant.

The CBI Cold Case Analyst along with the instructors continue to review and update the curriculum as needed to ensure the course aligns with the best practices and the constant changes in technology regarding the testing of crime scene evidence. With the funds obtained from P.O.S.T. in 2016-2017, the CBI provided the following Cold Case Homicide Investigation Best Practices classes:

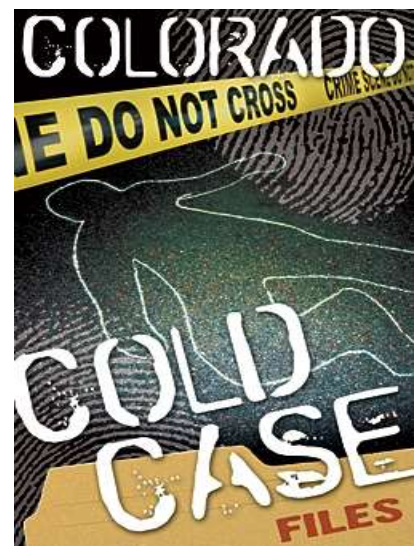
- Cold Case Training, Lakewood, CO - March 14-15, 2017
- NAMUS Training, Grand Junction, CO - April 27, 2017
- Cold Case Training, Arapahoe County, CO - June 14-15, 2017

Additional money was obtained again this year through P.O.S.T. to conduct two P.O.S.T. Cold Case training classes in 2017-2018. Upcoming sessions are scheduled:

- January 2018 – Denver, CO
- May 2018 – Fort Collins, CO

2016-2017 EFFORTS AND OUTREACH

- Colorado Missing Persons Day Event held February 3, 2017 at the state capitol. CBI coordinated the list of all those missing in Colorado.
- Members of the Cold Case Task Force participated in the Second Annual Missing in Colorado Event held on August 12, 2017 at the Lowry Conference Center. This Event was jointly sponsored by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Longmont Police Department. Law enforcement partners from across the state also attended.
- The Cold Case Task Force (members and attendees), along with other CBI staff and law enforcement officers from across the state, attended the Annual FOHVAMP Conference held Saturday, October 1, 2016 at The Brittany Hill in Thornton. The CBI provided an overview of the information addressed at the task force meetings.
- The Cold Case Task Force (Members and attendees), along with other CBI staff and law enforcement officers from across the state, plan to participate in the Annual FOHVAMP Conference, Saturday, October 21, 2017 at The Wells Fargo Building in Denver.



COLD CASE REVIEW TEAM

The Cold Case Review Team continues to be a “best practices” effort. The participation of the team members (who volunteer their time) continues to be remarkable. The value of this effort comes from the breadth of knowledge and experience of the members. The experts include individuals from the CBI Forensic Laboratory and CBI Investigations, the Coroners’ Association, detectives and investigators from police and sheriffs’ departments, representatives from the Attorney General’s office, Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA) and the FBI, as well as forensic pathologists and prosecutors. The team meets 2-4 times per year. When cases are presented for review by the investigating jurisdiction, it is important that both current and past investigators, the DAs, and any laboratory personnel attend. If the case has ties to more than one jurisdiction, investigators and prosecutors from each jurisdiction are encouraged to participate. The foundation of success for this review process is the generous sharing of knowledge and expertise by the members who represent the various disciplines. The Review Team members and their agencies are contributing many hours to these efforts. CBI and the Cold Case Task Force members continue to encourage agencies to take full advantage of this resource available to cold case investigations. Agencies that have presented to the team have been very pleased with the process

The Review Team met three times this year. The dates and presenting agencies are listed below:

January 6, 2016

FBI – History of Scott Kimble
Westminster Police Department – Katrina Powell

December 6, 2016

Boulder County Sheriff’s Office – Ryder Johnson

May 9, 2017

CBI Pueblo – Pueblo Police Department - Kelsie Schelling
Boulder County Sheriff’s Office - Betty Lee Jones

CBI DATABASE UPDATE

Updating the Cold Case database has been a priority. Each year, more cases fall into the “at least three years old” criteria. The CBI has created a procedure that provides calendar year-end contact with all Colorado law enforcement agencies, requesting the submission of additional cases that have aged to three years. Just as it is critical that cases are added, agencies have also notified the CBI when cases have been solved and arrests have been made.

It is important that the database remain dynamic so it provides the best available information. During the past year, improvements and additions were made to the database ensuring that as much detail as possible is available, with revisions to victim demographics, photographs and case narratives. To that end, and in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance on September 25, 2017, the CBI created a press release focusing on the victims in these cases and requested families to review the database to ensure the information available is both accurate and complete. <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cbi/news/september-25th-marks-national-day-remembrance-murder-victims>)

The CBI database currently lists 1,744 cases (1,346 Homicides; 367 Missing Persons; 29 Unidentified Remains, and 2 “Other” [pending determination by the law enforcement agency as to whether the case is a missing or a homicide victim]). Because of the possibility that individuals who are listed as “missing persons or “unidentified remains” may be victims of homicide, the Cold Case Task Force supported the addition of these categories to the CBI database. While Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons (FOHVAMP) also maintains a database, there will always be a disparity between the two as CBI does not include out of state cases or ones that have been determined to be suicide by the coroner.

COLD CASE PLAYING CARDS/POSTERS

The Cold Case Playing Card Program has been active in Colorado since October 2014. In 2017, the CBI again was able to distribute another 10,000 decks of playing cards to replenish the existing playing card program. There are currently four different decks of Cold Case Playing Cards in circulation.

The additional decks of playing cards were distributed to both the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) and nearly all local detention facilities across the state. The CBI continues to receive tips through the tip-line on a weekly basis. We are hopeful that as these cards continue to circulate through state and local detention facilities information will be obtained to aid in resolving these cases.

The Cold Case Posters created last year continue to be distributed to local law enforcement and district attorneys' offices statewide. We hope that as these posters are displayed in offices across the state that more people in our communities will see them and notify law enforcement or the tip-line if they are able to provide information.



DISCUSSION TOPICS; ON-GOING ISSUES

A significant amount of collaboration has taken place to share issues and concerns among the Task Force participants. The members and attendees have had the opportunity to better understand the challenges and perspectives of others; the co-victims, law enforcement and prosecutors. But there are still several items that are discussed on a regular basis:

- CBI staff members (Investigation Section and Forensic Laboratory) continue to consult with law enforcement agencies on their cold cases in a variety of ways. These discussions provide additional avenues for case resolutions. The partnerships that have been developed over the past nine years will only improve outcomes.
- Fully funding the "Cold Case Unit" at CBI that was authorized in the 2007 legislation has never come to fruition. Since then we have seen a dramatic change in the allocation of resources dedicated to cold case efforts in our state. The Task Force will continue to examine best investigative practices, as well as successes in other states, so the Task Force or its individual participants might provide information and recommendations to legislators regarding the need for additional resources at the state level.

REQUESTS FOR CBI ASSISTANCE

The statute (Section 24-33.5-425(3) (a) and (b), CRS), provides that local law enforcement agencies (on their own initiative or at the request of family members) can request CBI investigative assistance with cold homicide cases. In the past year, the CBI has received 25 requests for assistance with the investigation, analysis, case organization, and forensic evidence review of cold cases.