

Don't Let Iowa's Cold Case Unit Fade from Existence

by Eileen Meier

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The funding for the Iowa Cold Case Unit, established with a \$500,000 National Institute of Justice grant and \$194,000 federal Community Oriented Policing Service grant, is due to expire in November, and with it my hopes that the unit would be given a substantial chance to make a difference for Iowa families waiting for justice as mine has waited 40 years in my sister Valerie's case.

I remember countless silent hours over the years looking at the linoleum floor of the Division of Criminal Investigation building in Des Moines meeting with agents who had no definitive answers. If the unit ends after such a short existence, I and others will hear the deafening silence for cold-case victims' cases creep again through the DCI hallways, leaving only empty echoes of what could have been realized in time.

Evidence examination techniques have advanced exponentially in the last 20 years and hold keys to new information to assist in solving cases. Examination of case file information can be linked with technology not available in the past.

The financial continuation of an Iowa Cold Case Unit with investigators who focus solely on cold cases and use forensic advancements could make an immense difference for victims and their families. Iowa's elected officials, law enforcement and victims' groups could take pivotal steps to develop model best-practice standards for evidence procedures and storage, examination of cases and superior outreach to cold-case victims'

families for exemplary support similar to Denver and Arizona.

Iowa's elected officials must find ways to fund the Iowa Cold Case Unit, and begin the work to create model best practices for cold cases. Iowa has the ability to give the evidence and information from cold cases a voice silenced over years to be loudly and skillfully articulated through the work of Iowa's Cold Case Unit.

— Eileen Meier, Manson