

# Cold Case Project of Monterey County

## MEDIA RELEASE

Photo: Christina Williams Memorial Site

### **Nonprofit Formed to Sustain Cold Case Investigations in Monterey County**

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Monterey County is home to more than 600 unsolved homicides, each one leaving a ripple of heartbreak – families without closure, communities left in fear, and justice delayed. Each cold case holds the potential to unlock the truth, but without the resources to investigate, too many stories remain untold.

“Behind every cold case is a human story – a family, a community, a victim whose life mattered,” said Ann Kern, Board President of The Cold Case Project of Monterey County, a nonprofit organization created to ensure that the critical work of solving cold cases continues, even as public funding has become challenging. “We can’t let funding gaps determine whether a case is solved. Every life deserves justice, and that’s why we’re here.”

Since 2020, the Monterey County District Attorney’s Cold Case Task Force has made remarkable progress, solving 19 cases and identifying 10 human remains. However, the federal grant funding that enabled this work is no longer available, and all resources have been exhausted or appropriated. No dedicated funding remains to sustain these vital efforts.

To ensure this critical work continues, a new nonprofit has been created – The Cold Case Project of Monterey County. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run by an all-volunteer team, the organization is dedicated to raising the funds necessary to keep cold case investigations moving forward – ensuring that cases aren’t left unresolved because of financial barriers. The organization has established a fund through the Community Foundation for Monterey County, giving local residents, businesses, and supporters the opportunity to directly contribute to solving cold cases.

In addition to unsolved homicides, the organization will fund investigative leads on long-term missing persons, unsolved sexual assaults and Unidentified Human Remains(UHR) cases in Monterey County.

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"When we solve a cold case, we don't just find answers that have been too long in coming; we restore hope," said Michael Bruno, an Assistant Chief with a Monterey County law enforcement agency and board member for The Cold Case Project of Monterey County. "We need the community's help to keep this vital work going."

While advanced forensic techniques, including DNA analysis and investigative genetic genealogy, offer unprecedented potential to solve cold cases, their prohibitive cost often prevents agencies from utilizing them. Without ongoing support, critical investigations will inevitably stall, denying families, friends, and the community the closure they desperately need.

"We may never know how many more lives can be saved by solving a single case," added Bill Clark, retired Assistant Chief of the Monterey Police Department now serving on the Board of Directors for Cold Case Project of Monterey County. "This work isn't about the past – it's about protecting the future."

Why this work matters:

- Science can help solve these cases. Advances in DNA technology and forensic analysis have revolutionized cold case investigations, but the cost to access testing can be prohibitive.

- Answers matter. Behind every unsolved murder or long-term missing person case is a family in pain, desperately seeking answers. Solving these cases brings justice for those who can no longer speak for themselves and provides a vital step toward healing and closure for the family and the community.

- Solving cold cases makes our community safer by preventing future crimes. Holding perpetrators accountable sends a clear message to potential offenders that justice will be served. With repeat offenders identified, they are prevented from committing further crimes.

"Every cold case has a story to tell, waiting for someone brave enough to listen"  
(The Book of Cold Cases, Rachel Anderson)

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