Cold Case Project of Monterey County



MEDIA RELEASE

Photo: Christina Williams Memorial Site

CSUMB Student David Orta Wins Challenge Coin Design Contest, Boosting Monterey County Cold Case Awareness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONTEREY, Calif. — September 28,2026 — A California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) student is helping provide a lasting symbol for an initiative with a deeply personal mission: ensuring Monterey County's cold cases are never forgotten.

David Orta has been named the winner of the Challenge Coin Challenge, a collaborative campus initiative hosted by the Cold Case Project of Monterey County (CCPMC). The competition invited CSUMB students, faculty, and staff to design a commemorative medallion reflecting the dedication required to seek answers for long-unresolved cases. The custom-manufactured coins will be presented by CCPMC as a token of deep gratitude to individuals making significant contributions to cold case resolutions, including financial donors, dedicated volunteers, investigative experts, and community advocates.

Engaging the university campus brings a new generation of fresh perspectives, modern skills, and creative talent into an issue that reaches far beyond the classroom. Student involvement plays a vital role in keeping these unresolved investigations, and the victims at the center of them, in the public consciousness.

“For victims and families, there are no cold cases,” said Ann Kern, President of CCPMC. “Loved ones continue to live with unanswered questions every single day. Partnering with CSUMB students gives us a meaningful way to honor those families while encouraging a new generation to understand the power of persistence, compassion, and the pursuit of justice.”

The initiative bridges academic talent with local community service, giving students a tangible outlet to see how their skillsets can impact real-world advocacy. The design contest's $250 grand prize and the physical manufacturing costs of the winning coin were generously funded by an anonymous donor.

"I know what it is to have your heart break over someone you love and spend your life trying to protect. Cold cases are a feeling with no ending. I designed the coin with hope for those families (the tree, the water, the light coming back) because no one should be forced to suffer such an unjust and great loss. There are no cold cases in a house, only someone who has not come home yet," Orta told Kern.

The CCPMC Board of Directors extends its sincere thanks to CSUMB leadership for their enthusiasm and structural support of this community service project. The organization would like to give special recognition to:

Andrew Lawson, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs
Suzanne Zivnuska, Dean, College of Business
Bude Su, Chair, School of Computing and Design
Kaci Turpin, Director of New Student Programs
Gracie Sanchez, Senior Brand and Marketing Strategy Lead
Jennifer Andrew, College of Business Marketing Specialist
Walter Ryce, University Communications, Public Information Officer
Shyam Kamath, Founding Dean & Professor Emeritus, College of Business

ABOUT THE CCPMC CHALLENGE COIN

The rolling agricultural fields honor Monterey County's rich farming heritage and deep roots, while the iconic Monterey cypress standing above the Pacific waves represents strength, perseverance and endurance. High above, the radiant sun shines down as a beacon of hope, bringing long-sought light and clarity into the shadows of unsolved cases to ensure no victim is ever forgotten.

At the center, Lady Justice with her scales and sword embodies the unwavering pursuit of truth and accountability for victims and their grieving families. Flanking her are the scientific pillars of modern investigation: the DNA double helix, representing state-of-the-art forensic genetic testing used to identify suspects and restore names to unidentified remains, and the fingerprint, honoring the foundational forensic tools that continue to connect crucial clues across decades. Together, they symbolize how relentless dedication and cutting-edge science unite to ensure no cold case victim is ever forgotten.

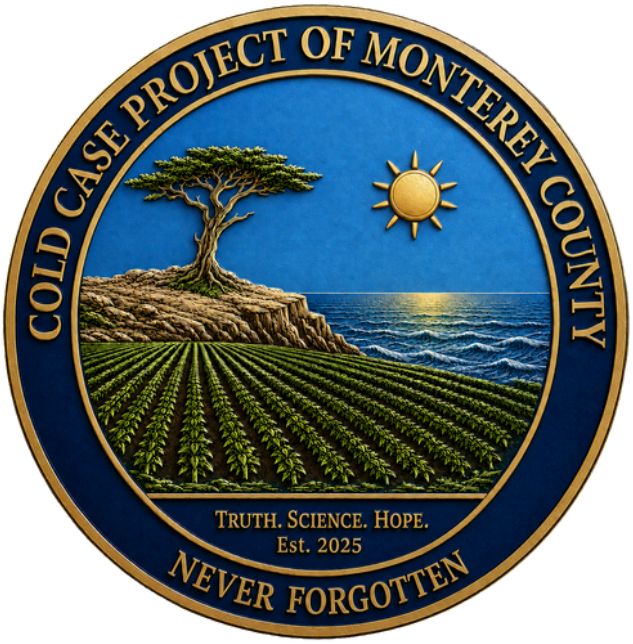
Monterey County, together we make a difference speaks to the desire and support of our community to stand with the CCPMC and to help bring resolution to cold cases throughout Monterey County.

ABOUT THE COLD CASE PROJECT OF MONTEREY COUNTY

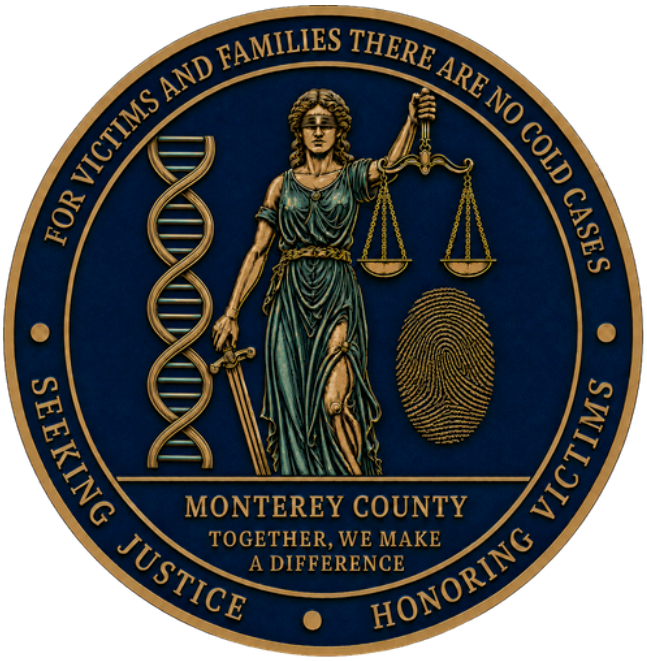
The Cold Case Project of Monterey County (CCPMC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing justice for victims of unresolved violent crimes. In partnership with local law enforcement, CCPMC supports the investigation of unsolved homicides, sexual assaults, missing persons cases, and unidentified human remains by funding advanced forensic technologies and modern scientific methods. Through donor support, the project helps bring answers, accountability, and hope to families and communities still waiting for resolution.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MONTEREY BAY

In 1994, a group of educators, elected officials and community leaders established Cal State Monterey Bay on an inspiring coastal section of Monterey Bay that was once the Fort Ord Army base. The university is now recognized for innovative programs reflected in our 33 undergraduate and 10 graduate degrees that prepare our students for success and help power the regional economy. Eighty-nine percent of our students receive some form of financial aid, and more than 50% are part of the first generation of their families to attend college. Learn more at csumb.edu.



Front of Coin



Back of Coin

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