

COVER STORY

CRIME-FIGHTING

MUSCLE

Thanks to BCI, Ohio law enforcement agencies now have more NIBIN sites available to connect gun crimes across the state and nation

Ohio law enforcement officers now have the benefit of expanded access to one of the nation's most powerful tools for solving and preventing violent gun crimes: the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network.

More commonly known as NIBIN, the database contains digital images of spent cartridge cases found at crime scenes or test-fired from confiscated weapons. Because all guns etch unique microscopic marks into the cartridge cases they eject, the database amounts to a vast library of ballistic "fingerprints."

"When it comes to getting repeat violent criminals off the street, information is power," Attorney General Dave Yost said. "Now, that power is accessible to a lot more agencies in Ohio."



The power of NIBIN: A case study

On Jan. 1, 2021, Cleveland police were called to a shooting scene where an assailant had fired multiple rounds into a car, killing the driver. Officers found dozens of cartridge cases but no weapon. From tips they received, police identified a potential suspect, 25-year-old Albert Toro. They couldn't connect him to the scene, however, because the cartridge cases they entered into NIBIN provided no leads.

Five months later, police in suburban Westlake responded to a call at a local hotel about a woman who turned out to be overdosing. An officer noticed that a backpack owned by the woman's boyfriend contained a bottle of CLP gun-cleaning solution in an outside mesh pocket. The man was Toro, but Westlake police had no idea that he was a potential suspect in the Cleveland homicide.

When asked where the gun was, Toro admitted it was in the backpack — a Glock 17, owned by his girlfriend, Tera Radesic, 23.

Soon after, Westlake police test-fired the weapon and entered the cartridge cases into NIBIN. A few days later, Cleveland police had the break they needed: The tool marks on the cartridge cases from the test-fire matched the marks on the cartridge cases found at the Cleveland homicide scene.

Toro pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter with gun specifications and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Radesic also pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to two years in prison.

Scan the QR code at right to watch the video on this case



Again this year on the first Thursday in May, the Ohio law enforcement community will gather at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy in London to honor the men and women who have given their lives to protect the people of this state.

It's a tragic reality that a civil society depends on the selfless sacrifice — sometimes, the ultimate sacrifice — of our police officers, deputies and troopers. It's also why we should never take their service for granted.

This year, at our annual Ohio Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony, we will honor 15 law enforcement heroes. Their names, like those of other fallen Ohio officers before them, will be engraved on the memorial wall at OPOTA.

Eight of the heroes died in the past several years. Clark County Deputy Matthew Yates was shot, Bluffton Police Officer Dominic Francis was struck by a fleeing car, Wyandot County Deputy Daniel Kin was in a car crash, and Akron Police Officer Kenneth Jones suffered a heart attack. Four others contracted COVID-19 in the line of duty: Medina County Drug Task Force Agent John Stayrook, Lawrence Township Police Patrolman Sean VanDenberg, Butler County Deputy Robert Mills, and Akron Police Officer Edward Stewart. (More information on the men can be found on the facing page.)

The mixed nature of their deaths underscores the wide-ranging dangers that law enforcement officers face every day. Some of these threats are inevitable. But COVID-19? Before the pandemic hit, who could have imagined it?

Yet the consequences have been devastating. For the past three years, COVID-19 has been the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths nationally, peaking in 2021 at 436 deaths. And the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, the source of this information, is quick to note that the numbers continue to grow as agencies document more cases in which officers contracted the virus on the job.

In this way, this year's memorial ceremony has a connection to an eerily similar global outbreak more than 100 years ago — the Spanish flu. Like



Fallen Officers Memorial Ceremony

When: 11 a.m., Thursday, May 4

Where: Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy
1650 State Route 56, London, Ohio 43140

COVID, the influenza scourge took a heavy toll on law enforcement and other public servants.

In reviewing their historical deaths in the light of COVID, the Dayton Police Department determined that six patrolmen died after contracting the flu while working: Troy Sine, Clement Francis, Emerson Glotfelter, Vinton Harsh, Edward Hennessey and Lawrence Graham.

These men and their colleagues had been ordered to close saloons that violated health orders, to staff ambulances, to keep crowds from gathering and to remove corpses. In all, more

than 700 Dayton residents died of the Spanish flu between October 1918 and January 1919, a story duplicated in cities nationwide.

In tribute to their long-overlooked service, the six Dayton cops will also have their names engraved on the memorial wall at OPOTA. A seventh historical addition, Perry County Deputy Herbert Minshull, who was shot in 1945 while serving a warrant, will likewise have his name added.

With the additional 15 names, the wall will honor 829 men and women dating back 200 years. And with the death of Springfield Township Police Officer Tim Unwin, who was killed in a crash on March 31, we've already begun the somber remembrance for next year's ceremony.

In the end, these officers are being remembered not for how they died but for how they lived. They set themselves apart in their commitment to public safety and their disregard for the dangers that come with it.

By the standards of this age or any other, they are heroes. They will not be forgotten.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

FOREVER REMEMBERED

This year's annual **Ohio Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony** will honor eight law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty in the past several years. Four died of COVID-19 contracted while on the job. Additionally, the names of seven officers from the 1900s will be added to the memorial wall.



DEPUTY DANIEL J. KIN | WYANDOT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE | EOW: Dec. 15, 2022

Deputy Kin had been with the Wyandot County Sheriff's Office for just more than a year when he died, but his personality was already a hallmark of the department. "He could walk into any room and brighten up everybody's day," Sheriff Todd Frey said. "He had a passion for this job. He had a positive outlook on life. He just got along with everyone so well." Kin was killed in a crash in Pickaway County while transporting a prisoner. He was 34 and had previously worked in the Seneca County Sheriff's Office and Carey Police Department. He is survived by his wife and two young sons.



DEPUTY MATTHEW E. YATES | CLARK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE | EOW: July 24, 2022

Deputy Yates followed his father into law enforcement because he believed "a good police officer could make a difference." He lived that philosophy during his 15-year career with the sheriff's office. Tragically, he was shot and killed when he and other deputies responded to a call of shots fired at a mobile-home park east of Springfield. He was 41. Sheriff Deborah Burchett remembered Yates as "a warrior" who "devoted his life to making his community better." He is survived by his wife, daughter and two sons.



OFFICER DOMINIC M. FRANCIS | BLUFFTON POLICE DEPARTMENT | EOW: March 31, 2022

Officer Francis was part of the fabric of his community, someone who touched a lot of lives in many ways. Besides his police work, he was a volunteer firefighter and helped at his high-school alma mater as a coach, substitute teacher and bus driver. A speeding car being pursued by Ohio State troopers fatally struck Francis as he was deploying tire-puncturing strips on southbound I-75 in Hancock County. He was 42 and had served in law enforcement for 19 years. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.



AGENT JOHN D. STAYROOK | MEDINA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE | EOW: Feb. 6, 2022

Agent Stayrook was passionate about enforcing the law and bettering the communities he served, family and co-workers said. "John was a true hero and dedicated his life to serving others and making Ohio a safer place for all of us," said Darren Stout, the task force director. Stayrook was 60 when he died of complications from COVID-19. He joined the task force in 2007 after serving four years with a similar task force in Wayne County. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.



PATROLMAN SEAN E. VANDENBERG | LAWRENCE TWP. POLICE DEPARTMENT | EOW: Dec. 25, 2021

Patrolman VanDenberg always found good in people, both on and off the job. "No matter what the call was, he always gave people the benefit of the doubt and did everything he could to put them in a better place," Lawrence Township Police Chief Dave Brown said. VanDenberg contracted COVID-19 after arresting a suspect with the virus. He died on Christmas morning at age 53, his eighth year with the department. He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.



DEPUTY ROBERT C. MILLS | BUTLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE | EOW: Sept. 12, 2021

Deputy Mills was a generous, kindhearted, disciplined and passionate person who treated everyone with respect. He fiercely loved his friends and family. "He was just a great, great person," Sheriff Richard Jones said. "He never forgot where he came from and always gave back till his last breath." Mills, 57, had been with the sheriff's office for 32 years when he died of COVID-19. He had retired in 2019, only to return several months later. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter.



OFFICER EDWARD L. STEWART | AKRON POLICE DEPARTMENT | EOW: Feb. 12, 2021

Officer Stewart was quick to respond to colleagues needing assistance, even in the most critical moments. He was equally known for his devotion to his community and his kindness to everyone he met. Blessed with a unique thirst for knowledge, he welcomed the opportunity to share his insight and experience with others in the department, regardless of rank. The 27-year-veteran of the Akron Police Department died at age 60 after a long battle with COVID-19. He is survived by his wife and two sons.



OFFICER KENNETH C. JONES | AKRON POLICE DEPARTMENT | EOW: Nov. 7, 2020

Officer Jones "was literally the kindest person I've ever known," said Capt. Kris Beitzel, who joined the force with Jones in 1994. "That came from his faith in God. It came from just the general goodness of who he was." The 55-year-old died of a heart attack after trying to quell a domestic event that became violent. Friends and family described him as a big kid at heart, fond of Marvel comics, Star Wars movies and Cedar Point Amusement Park. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.



ON THE JOB
CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

On the Job is typically published four times a year by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

To offer story ideas, contact Editor Tom Rinderle at **614-644-5397** or **Thomas.Rinderle@OhioAGO.gov**. Sign up for the electronic edition at **www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/EmailUpdates**.

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Run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and populated by local, state and federal agencies, NIBIN gives law enforcement the technology to determine whether ballistic evidence from any given gun crime might be linked to other gun crimes in the state and nation.

Last year, Yost announced that the Bureau of Criminal Investigation would be significantly increasing the number of NIBIN stations at BCI labs in Ohio. At the time, BCI operated a single NIBIN station, at its Richfield site.

By late spring or early summer, BCI will have five additional stations online — a second unit in Richfield and two new units each at BCI labs in London (Madison County) and Bowling Green (Wood County).

NIBIN access in Ohio isn't limited to BCI; police agencies and crime labs in Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo have their own NIBIN stations. But for smaller agencies, especially rural agencies, access to NIBIN typically isn't readily available. BCI's NIBIN expansion will help their cause and generate more information for agencies across the country.

Besides adding more NIBIN stations, BCI has hired more scientists and technicians for the NIBIN labs and is working to develop a series of training videos for law enforcement. The first video — "Evidence Collection and Submission" — has been approved for .25 hours of continuing professional training (CPT) credit and is now available on OPOTA Online.

As part of the NIBIN expansion, Yost also announced a partnership with the ATF that will eventually shift some of the ballistic correlation work to the National NIBIN Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC) in Huntsville, Ala.

In those cases, technicians at BCI will enter evidence into NIBIN and send the 3D digital images electronically to NNCTC. The NIBIN software will automatically compare the images to those already stored in the database and generate a ranked list of possible matches. In most instances, auto-correlation is conducted at a regional level spanning numerous jurisdictions; when appropriate, though, it can be conducted nationally.

NNCTC will review the correlations and report on any potential leads to the submitting agency, often within hours of entry. When needed for court or other purposes, a BCI firearms examiner will conduct a microscopic examination of the actual physical evidence to confirm a NIBIN lead as a hit.

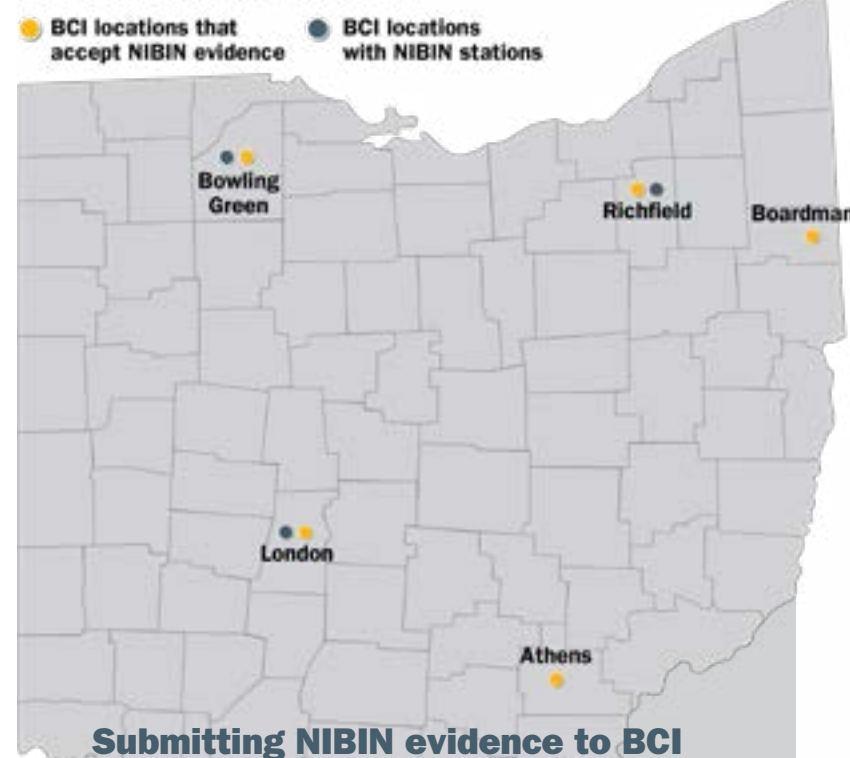
Besides speeding up turnaround time, the partnership with NNCTC will ultimately free up personnel and assets at BCI labs to handle more NIBIN evidence.

As powerful as NIBIN is, the database could be an even more formidable crime-fighting tool if all agencies made regular use of the system. To that end, NIBIN relies on the close coordination of its partner agencies at the local, state and federal levels to compile their data and share intelligence about violent crimes. According to the ATF, NIBIN's success depends on four critical steps:

- **Comprehensive collection and entry:** Partner agencies must collect and submit all evidence suitable for entry into NIBIN, regardless of the crime.
- **Timely turnaround:** Violent crime investigations can go cold fast, so the goal is to enter evidence into NIBIN as quickly as possible to identify leads for investigators.
- **Investigative follow-up:** Linking otherwise-unassociated crimes gives investigators a better chance to arrest shooters before they re-offend.
- **Feedback loop:** Feedback from NIBIN partners improves the system's efficiency and success.

In the end, NIBIN's effectiveness depends on the legwork of law enforcement agencies on both the front end and back end: Agencies must first submit evidence for testing, then follow up on any resulting leads. Agencies needing help turning NIBIN leads into actionable intelligence can work with BCI's NIBIN analysts to determine next steps.

BCI-affiliated NIBIN sites



Submitting NIBIN evidence to BCI

Law enforcement agencies intending to use BCI to enter ballistic evidence into NIBIN should be aware that proper handling, packaging, sealing and labeling are essential before the evidence can be submitted to the bureau. Detailed submission policies are available at www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/NIBIN-evidence-submission. Here are some general guidelines:

- Agencies can submit NIBIN evidence to BCI through the bureau's evidence receiving departments in Athens, Richfield, Boardman, Bowling Green and London. Agencies need to submit evidence in person, but no appointment is necessary.
- Spent cartridge cases for NIBIN entry are limited to those from semi- or fully-automatic firearms or 12-gauge shotguns (no revolvers), and should not be associated with any known firearm.
- Law enforcement agencies are responsible for test-firing firearms recovered from a crime scene or found property — for example, an abandoned or discarded firearm. It is important to note that DNA sampling of the firearm should be done before test-firing. More information on DNA submissions is available at www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/DNA-evidence-submission.
- Agencies submitting cartridge cases from a recovered crime gun or found property must enter the firearm information into eTrace before submission. The information should be entered no later than 24 hours after the weapon is recovered. Agencies can request an eTrace account from the ATF at <https://etrace.atf.gov/etrace/>
- In order to efficiently submit evidence for NIBIN entry, agencies should use a software application on the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG) called "Pre-Log" to fill in their case information and print a packing label. This should be done before arriving at the BCI evidence receiving department. Contact OHLEGsupport@OhioAGO.gov to request the application if it isn't already part of your account permissions.

CPT program carries over into 2023 without interruption

For the second consecutive year, Ohio's sworn peace officers and troopers will have the opportunity to further their education and hone their skills through 24 hours of continuing professional training (CPT).

That's because the CPT pilot program that Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost launched statewide in 2022 has carried over uninterrupted into 2023, thanks to additional funding provided by state lawmakers at the end of last year.

"We demand a lot of the men and women who have taken on the responsibility of protecting our families and communities," Yost said. "If we ever have to call 911, God forbid, we expect the cops who respond to be as well-trained as any in the country. CPT is an investment in them and in the welfare of our citizens."

According to the requirements set by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission, the state's 33,000+ sworn peace officers and troopers — full-time, part-time, reserve and auxiliary — must complete a total of at least eight hours in the following three categories in 2023.

- School Threat and Safety Training (three hours)
- Legal Updates (three hours)
- Arrest, Search and Seizure (two hours)

Each law enforcement agency will determine the coursework for the remaining 16 hours of required training, based on the jurisdiction's specific needs.

Courses offered by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy can be taken either online or in person — at the OPOTA main academy in London or at any of the five OPOTA-Regional Provider educational centers, located in Springfield, Cincinnati, Lorain, Warren and Nelsonville.

Law enforcement agencies also have the option of teaching the OPOTA-developed courses themselves. (The curriculums are posted on OHLEG, the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway). Additionally, agencies can develop and teach their own courses or contract with a third party, provided that the courses have been approved by OPOTA.

In a notable change from last year, the state will reimburse law enforcement agencies 100% of their officers' base hourly rate of pay for 24 hours of CPT completed. Last year, agencies were compensated 50%.

The General Assembly is currently considering CPT funding for the next two-year fiscal cycle, 2024-25, which begins July 1. AG Yost, however, is looking even further down the road by working with legislators to come up with a permanent, sustainable source of annual CPT funding that isn't tied to the budget process and, therefore, wouldn't be dependent on the vagaries of the economy or the General Assembly.

"It's time we got this done," Yost said, "and I'll be working like hell to see that it happens on my watch."

AG arranges school-response training for tactical officers

Continuing his efforts to improve school safety, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost has unveiled a pilot program to provide high-quality, standardized training to law enforcement tactical team officers responsible for responding to an active shooter or other dire threat.

The ultimate goal is to have all 2,500 Ohio tactical team officers trained within the next two years, at no cost to law enforcement agencies. School safety grant funds from the Attorney General's Office would cover the full cost of the two-day training.

The initiative complements the school-threat assessment training that

► **Contact training@otoa.org to register for this course.**

Yost launched in 2020 for school resource officers, and the Ohio School Vulnerability Assessment, which provides funds to improve building safety.

Under the new program, tactical officers will complete 16 hours of in-person, physical and classroom training taught by the Ohio Tactical Officers Association (OTOA). Because officers will be learning the same thing from the same source, the training will be consistent across the state.

OPOTA has approved the curriculum for continuing professional training (CPT). The credits can be applied one of two ways: as 16 hours of general CPT, or as three hours of school-threat safety training and 13 hours of general CPT.

Seven training sessions will be presented across the state through June 2023, with 24 spots available per session.

OTOA is providing the training at \$600 per officer, but law enforcement agencies can be fully reimbursed by the Attorney General's Office by submitting course-completion certificates and grant request forms signed by each officer and his or her chief.

‘We can all do it together’



Robert Earl Sanders



Theodore ‘Teddy’ Long

Identification of two longtime John Does underscores value of collaboration between BCI, local law enforcement agencies

For more than three decades, two sets of unidentified human remains were stored 180 miles apart in separate cities in Ohio. As the investigations stalled, the John Does were given little attention except from a few members of the investigating agencies: the Youngstown Police Department and the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office.

The long-standing cold cases were unrelated, but they ultimately became linked — and by late February of this year, the agonizing wait for the families of both had ended.

With help from modern DNA technology and the can-do efforts of BCI, local law enforcement agencies and others, the identities of Robert Earl Sanders, 23, of Youngstown, and Theodore ‘Teddy’ Long, 19, of Toledo, were restored at last.

“These two cases reinforce the incredible power of collaborative investigative work and the will of those involved to honor these victims,” Attorney General Dave Yost said. “The Bureau of Criminal Investigation’s Cold Case Unit can help provide case-breaking assistance to local law enforcement, and we encourage agencies across Ohio to lean on the talents of our experts.”

A haunting memory

The Youngstown chapter of the story began in September 1987 when a grandfather and grandson discovered human remains — later identified as Sanders — while hunting in a wooded area east of the city. At the time, police estimated the bones had been in the woods for three to five years.

Seeking help in identifying the remains, the Youngstown Police Department turned them over to a Youngstown State University anthropology professor, who provided the race, sex and approximate age: a Black male 30 to 44

years old. With no further evidence available and no leads panning out, the remains stayed at YSU for decades.

At some point in the early 2000s, YSU student Alisa Yelkin saw the remains in a box in her forensic anthropology class, an experience that left an indelible memory. As fate would have it, two decades later, in August 2021, she came across a newspaper article about Detective Sgt. David Sweeney and the cold cases he was overseeing for the Youngstown Police Department. She called him up, told her story, and urged him to investigate the remains.

“I wondered forever who he was,” Yelkin said of the John Doe. “He haunted me.”

Because of Yelkin’s call, “a case that had been cold for 34 years was now warm again,” said Capt. Jason Simon, who leads the Detective Bureau for the Youngstown PD.

Sweeney turned to BCI’s Cold Case Unit, which partners with local law enforcement agencies to take a fresh look at old, unsolved homicides and sexual assaults using a team approach that includes veteran investigators, criminal intelligence analysts and forensic scientists.

With the help of Theresa Gaetano of the Mahoning County Coroner’s Office, the remains were transferred from YSU to the BCI Laboratory in London, where scientists were able to obtain a DNA profile and enter it into CODIS, the FBI’s database of DNA collected from crime scenes and convicted offenders.



AG Yost at a press conference in February, announcing the identification of Sanders (with the bust created by BCI forensic artist Sam Molnar) and Long

But no hits came up.

Meanwhile, the Cold Case Unit began work re-creating John Doe’s face. To make the bust, BCI forensic artist Samantha Molnar first had a CT scan taken of the skull, then fed data from the images into a 3D printer to create a plastic replica, which served as the base for the facial reconstruction.

On Aug. 25, 2022, Youngstown PD and BCI held a news conference to reveal the bust of Youngstown John Doe and to request the public’s help in identifying him.

In late December, a Cincinnati man called Sweeney to tell him that the bust depicted Teddy Long of Toledo — and that Long was white, not Black, with red curly hair. “You have it wrong,” the man told Sweeney. “It’s my buddy Teddy.”

A break for Fayette County

Fayette County John Doe was pulled from a creek in November 1981 with multiple gunshot wounds, and the case evidence was submitted to BCI’s lab soon after. Although deputies released crime-scene photos of the victim and diligently worked the case, their efforts yielded no leads.

The case remained static until 2014 when, because of the advances made in DNA analysis, the county coroner’s office and BCI Criminal Intelligence Analyst Lisa Savage submitted evidence to a specialized lab at the University of North Texas so that a DNA profile of the John Doe could be entered into

Leading the charge for crime victims’ rights

The Ohio Attorney General’s Office will present the 31st annual Two Days in May Conference on Victim Assistance on May 8-9 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.



Empowering Survivors to Rebuild Lives

MAY 8-9 | Greater Columbus Convention Center
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/TDIM

At its core, the conference is an opportunity for crime victim advocates to learn from experts, share best practices and celebrate successes. More broadly, Two Days in May is about continuing to redefine what justice for crime victims should look like, and about empowering survivors to rebuild their lives.

“There was a time in our nation’s history, no so long ago, when crime victims and the aftereffects they suffered were largely overlooked by our judicial system,” Attorney General Dave Yost said. “Who could they turn to for support and guidance? Who was there to ensure their rights? The rise of victim advocacy helped balance the equation.”

The 35 conference workshops will cover wide-



Ruth Bowdish



Tony Porter

ranging topics, including trauma response and services, financial exploitation, elder abuse, credentialing for advocates, K9 therapy, male survivors of sexual violence, ethics in advocacy, victims with mental illness, Marsy’s Law, and tips for wellness and self-care.

Conference participants also will have the

opportunity to have questions answered about VOCA/SVAA grants and the Ohio Crime Victims Compensation Program during drop-in sessions with staff members from the Attorney General’s Office.

In addition to AG Yost, featured speakers will include Ruth Bowdish and Tony Porter.

Bowdish, an author, life coach and chemical-dependency counselor, will discuss “The Science of Happiness: A Look at Positive Psychology in the Service of Others.” Porter, CEO of the national nonprofit A Call to Men, will talk about “Promoting Healthy Manhood and Gender Equity.” He is the author of “Breaking Out of the Man Box” and the visionary for the book “NFL Dads: Dedicated to Daughters.”

CODIS — but again, no luck.

Years passed, and Fayette County John Doe was no closer to being identified. Then, in April 2022, the sheriff’s office and BCI’s Cold Case Unit teamed up to review the case for potential leads.

In Youngstown, meanwhile, Detective Sgt. Sweeney knew that the tip from the Cincinnati caller didn’t apply to his case but might be useful in another case. So he passed the information to BCI Criminal Intelligence Analyst Jennifer Lester, who realized that the description of Teddy Long given by the tipster fit the appearance of Fayette County John Doe. Sweeney also called the Toledo Police Department, which located fingerprint cards and a booking photo for Long and sent them to BCI.

In January 2023, BCI confirmed that the Toledo fingerprints matched those of Fayette County John Doe — the breakthrough that Sheriff Vernon Stanforth and his team needed. Finally, after four decades, Teddy Long had his name back, thanks to the work of Stanforth’s office and the help of the Youngstown PD, Toledo PD, BCI, and two concerned citizens whose actions indirectly helped solve the mystery of his identity.

Long’s connection to Fayette County remains unknown.

A last, best hope in Youngstown

With a bust of their John Doe in hand but nothing else to go on, Youngstown investigators, meanwhile, shifted their focus to genetic genealogy research as their last, best hope. They sent bones from John Doe to Othram Labs in Texas, where, in January of this year, scientists extracted enough material to develop a DNA profile that was compatible with genealogy databases.

The Porchlight Project, an Ohio nonprofit that helps families of missing persons and murder victims, played an essential role. It not only provided funding to pay for the work done by Othram Labs, it conducted the genealogical research that ultimately revealed Youngstown John Doe to be Robert Earl Sanders.

Genetic genealogy involves comparing a John Doe’s DNA to DNA that has been submitted voluntarily by members of the public to commercial databases such as GEDmatch. The more genetic variations, or markers, that any two people share in their DNA, the nearer they are on the family tree. Subsequent research using public records allows a genetic genealogist to fill in the branches of the tree and, if all goes well, to connect the John Doe’s DNA to a family with a missing person.

In announcing the breakthrough, Youngstown Police Chief Carl Davis credited the “remarkable

work” of law enforcement officers as well as DNA advances for allowing those involved “to provide some answers to family members after their decades and decades of tribulation.”

Sanders had been reported missing on Aug. 13, 1976. His cause of death is listed as undetermined.

At a Feb. 27 news conference announcing the identification of Sanders and Long, AG Yost praised the teamwork of the Youngstown Police Department, the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office and the BCI Cold Case Unit.

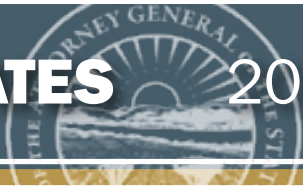
“Cases like these are why I created the unit three years ago,” Yost said. “It’s to put the pieces together and assist local law enforcement so they can help bring closure to loved ones.”

Capt. Simon, head of the Youngstown PD detective bureau, said the two men’s identities were restored as a direct result of the partnerships among law enforcement agencies, state and local governments, private entities, the news media and the public.

“No one of us can do it alone,” he said, “but as you can see, we can all do it together.”

The cases remain active investigations.

“This isn’t the end,” Yost said. “What we have with these results is the starting point where we can begin to pick up the trail and move closer to a place of justice.”



Mark Your Calendar

Coming in October



2023 Law Enforcement Conference

Oct. 24-25, 2023 | Hyatt Regency Columbus

Mark your calendar to attend Ohio's preeminent gathering of state, county and municipal law enforcement. (Look for registration materials in August.) And be sure to submit your nominations for the Ohio Distinguished Law Enforcement Awards. Nominations are open in seven categories: Lifetime Achievement, Mark Losey Service Award, Group Achievement, Victoria Allen Civilian Leadership Award, Training, Valor, and Community Service. The deadline is May 19. The nomination form is available at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/LEC

ON THE JOB

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