



MEDIA RELEASE

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Knox County Regional Forensic Center IDs Another Decades-Old Cold Case

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Remains discovered in Knoxville more than two decades ago were recently identified through the use of advanced genetic testing and the hard work of the Knox County Regional Forensic Center, the Knoxville Police Department, the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Center, and others.

“I want to thank everyone involved, particularly our own Regional Forensic Center, which is an incredible county asset,” said Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs. “The staff is skilled and I’m grateful for the care they put into the job they do. They always work to make sure no one is forgotten or neglected”

On Nov. 30, 2003, a passerby discovered human remains on I-275 at the Woodland Ave entrance ramp near the railroad tracks. The Knoxville Police Department responded and an anthropology team from the University of Tennessee assisted in the recovery and examination of the remains.

Officials then in 2008 submitted a DNA sample to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, or NamUs, which is the only national repository for a missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons’ case.

The Knox County Regional Forensic Center took possession of the remains in 2017 to conduct its own investigation and evaluation. An RFC anthropologist determined the remains belonged to a white male estimated to be 5 feet to 5 feet 2 inches tall and between the age of 40 and 60.

The Knox County Regional Forensic Center in late 2022 contacted Othram, a company that specializes in cold cases through DNA analysis and traditional genealogy. Othram – with the help of a federal grant secured by U.S. Rep Tim Burchett – matched the information to a name: Brian A. Sanderson.

“We work diligently every day to try to identify every decedent and connect them with their next of kin, regardless of how long they’ve been here,” said Chris Thomas, the Center’s Chief Administrative Officer. “We want the families to have closure.”

The RFC, in conjunction with local law enforcement, helped identify dozens of cold cases – including one murder case stretching back three decades – during the past couple of years. In addition, officials each year identify hundreds of decedents from mostly non-crime related deaths.

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