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WASHINGTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AWARDED FUNDING TO REEXAMINE 1994 COLD CASE HOMICIDE

*** **Note to media:** The victim's adult daughter is willing to do an interview about this case. Contact Stephen Mayer to make arrangements. ***

HILLSBORO, Ore- The Washington County District Attorney's Office has applied for and been awarded $14,000 from the Oregon Cold Case Investigators Association (OCCIA) to reexamine a 1994 cold case homicide. This funding will be used to conduct forensic testing as this office seeks to deliver justice for the victim and her loved ones.

On February 16, 1994, 85-year-old Veta Hardebeck was found deceased outside her home on a rural farm in Gaston, Oregon. Ms. Hardebeck lived alone and was initially believed to have died from a medical condition or accident. However, an autopsy later revealed she was the victim of a homicide. Despite extensive work on this case, it remains unsolved.

This inaugural OCCIA/Brother's Car Collection Cold Case Grant is administered by OCCIA in partnership with the Brother's Car Collection. The goal of this funding is to support local cold case investigative efforts on cases where funding has been a barrier to additional investigation. This funding will allow investigators to submit multiple items to a private lab for advanced DNA testing and analysis.

"Providing justice on unsolved murders is a priority," said Washington County District Attorney Kevin Barton. "No matter how much time has passed, we want victims and perpetrators to know that we will continue to work to solve these cases. We are very grateful for the support from the Brother's Car Collection and OCCIA to help make this happen."

In 2020, this office secured federal funding to launch the Cold Case Unit, which has been working to investigate and prosecute violent crime cold cases that involve identified DNA associated with a possible suspect. This team determined 14 homicides were eligible for review, including the 1988 unsolved murder of Deborah Atrops. After fresh investigative work, the victim's estranged husband, Robert Atrops, was indicted for and convicted of her murder. Senior Deputy District Attorney Allison Brown led this prosecution and also manages the Cold Case Unit. SDDA Brown says this funding will give investigators the resources they need to apply today's technology to a 31-year-old case.

“We are grateful to the Brother’s Car Collection and OCCIA for this award. Forensic testing capabilities have dramatically changed in the last 30 years, and we are hopeful this funding will provide new leads into Veta’s murder.”

Those with information about this, or any other cold case in Washington County, should contact law enforcement. Anyone wishing to remain anonymous can submit a confidential tip.

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