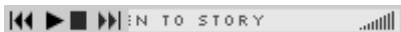




Riverside

Riverside police seek grant for more DNA testing in old cases



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By **JESSICA LOGAN**
The Press-Enterprise

Two empty beer cans left at the scene of a 1986 shooting that killed two brothers could help lead to arrests if the Riverside Police Department wins a \$500,000 grant for more DNA evidence testing.

Riverside police Sgt. Mark Rossi said the department expects to hear in November whether it will win a grant that could help detectives solve as many as 100 violent crimes that have languished for years.

"If we could get more than one or two cases, the more the better," Rossi said. "But the most important thing will be for our detectives to look back at the cases and use the new technology to bring closure to the lives of those who were hurt by these crimes."

The bulk of the grant will pay for DNA to be processed in private labs and under a special deal with the state Department of Justice, said Patty Tambe, a police employee who helped write the grant.

The Police Department hopes this will help circumvent the usual wait at the state Department of Justice labs, where DNA analysis for law enforcement is free but takes as long as 16 months to complete because of a backlog of almost 40,000 cases.

A private lab in Redlands charges \$1,195 per sample but returns results in 30 days.

The state Department of Justice lab agreed to test four cases a week for 18 months and return results in 30 days if the Police Department pays the lab \$128,840 for overtime.

Over the last two years, detectives had 12 old cases tested for DNA and made two arrests.

The Police Department applied for the same grant last year from the National Institute of Justice, but was rejected.

The institute said Rossi needed to explain how the Riverside County district attorney's office and other agencies would be involved with the work, Rossi said.

Faster Processing

The state Department of Justice processes DNA samples from law enforcement agencies that do not have DNA labs of their own, including Riverside.

The labs also process samples from convicted felons as mandated under a 2004 law. In 2009, every person arrested on suspicion of

a felony in California will have his or her DNA profile added to the system.

Blaine Kern, president of Human Identification Technologies, a private lab in Redlands that could be asked to test some of the DNA, said his lab can work faster because it does not have to clear as much governmental red tape on actions from hiring employees to purchasing equipment.

"It comes down to availability of resources," Kern said.

The lab has six employees and access to the national DNA database, and it is accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors -- a key to credibility in court.

If the Riverside Police Department wins the grant, the department plans to spend \$415,800 on DNA testing at the state and private labs. The remaining \$84,200 will be spent to hire retired investigators to perform 2,000 hours of work on the cases and overtime for evidence technicians, Tambe said.

"They will review old cases and determine which have DNA that could be tested," Rossi said.

Beer Can Case

Detective Greg Rowe has been working through cases before 1986 to make a list of all open cases. The beer cans may be key to one of them.

Two brothers, Isidro and Guadalupe Felix-Carrillo, were drinking beer in front of a home in the 7650 block of Evans Street in 1986, Rowe said.

Two men also drinking beer approached them. They shot the brothers to death, and also shot a third man who was with the brothers. They left a fourth person in the group unharmed, Rowe said.

The case went cold. Rowe can't find the witnesses. The only hope that appears to remain are two beer cans the killers left behind that may bear DNA evidence from their saliva, Rowe said.

Detectives hope the case can be solved before the criminals commit another crime.

Riverside County Deputy District Attorney Laura Ozols charged Justin Samuel Lowe with committing four sexual assaults over a three-year span.

Lowe was first charged with dragging a UC Riverside freshman into a bathroom on campus during her first week of classes and sexually assaulting her at knifepoint in 2006.

Investigators later had Lowe's DNA tested against older crimes. He has since been charged with three other sexual assaults in 2003 and 2004.

Lowe's attorney, Deputy Public Defender R. Addison Steele II, said he has not yet reviewed the DNA evidence. But he believes the technicians testing the DNA are biased because they knew the detectives wanted a match.

"They do not do these things blind," Steele said. "Their mission is to make a match."

Lowe is scheduled for trial on April 23.

Legal Challenges

Ozols has been put in charge of cold cases along with two senior investigators from the Riverside County district attorney's office.

Ozols said it is more convenient for one prosecutor to handle all cold cases because the prosecution can be complicated. For instance, people are prosecuted under the law as it existed at the time of the crime. In prosecuting old cases, she also has to know the statutes of limitations.

"There are challenges in prosecuting these kinds of cases because the age of the cases results in loss of witnesses whether it is through death or loss of memory," Ozols said. "But they are incredibly interesting to prosecute and incredibly rewarding for victims to get justice after so many years."

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