The latest in DNA technology helped solve a 31-year-old murder case.

Sixteen-year-old Fawn Cox was killed in the bedroom of her home at 9th and Van Brunt while the rest of the family slept on July 26, 1989. Someone climbed up and broke into her window, sexually assaulted her and killed her.

The case has haunted KCPD members for more than 30 years. “This one touched a lot of people because she was an innocent child who was murdered in her own bed,” said Captain Ben Caldwell. Before his recent promotion, he served as supervisor of the Missing Persons/Cold Case Section. “It rattled detectives and officers who worked it for decades.”

Initially, two teenage suspects were charged in the murder. But the key witness recanted and admitted to being untruthful, so the charges against the juveniles were dropped. The initial detectives “worked the case into the ground,” Captain Caldwell said, running down every lead.

In 1989, those detectives didn’t realize how valuable some of the evidence crime scene investigators collected would become. CSI collected bodily fluids from a potential suspect. At the time, all they could do was attempt to compare blood types.

As technology evolved, KCPD’s Missing Persons/Cold Case section re-examined the case. They determined the initial investigation had left no stone unturned, and only science would solve Cox’s murder. In the first decade of the 2000’s, KCPD Crime Lab scientists developed a suspect DNA profile from the bodily fluids that were collected and stored in 1989. They uploaded this to the national CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) database. CODIS is the national criminal justice DNA database. There was no match.

As the years went on, KCPD detectives continued to meet with Cox’s family and explore any possible leads. As recently as two years ago, they re-interviewed the former juvenile suspects who had initially been charged in the case and got DNA samples from them. Those didn’t match, either.

Then this past summer, Operation LeGend came to Kansas City, pumping federal resources into the department to solve violent crime. Detectives brought up Cox’s case as a possible candidate for a new type of DNA identification: genealogical DNA testing. It allows law enforcement to compare the profile of the unknown suspect’s DNA to other national databases and build a family tree of that person, thereby creating a small pool of suspects. Genealogical DNA testing has withstood the scrutiny of courts and has helped solved such cold cases as the Golden State serial killer in California.

Captain Caldwell said he knew Cox’s case could likely be solved with this technology, but there are barriers with cost, protocol and manpower. The federal resources and expertise that came with Operation LeGend overcame those hurdles.

Using the genealogical DNA results, detectives narrowed in on a suspect, Fawn Cox’s cousin, who was about
Pandemic creates challenge for annual meals

When the pandemic began in the spring and continued on throughout the year, Laurie Horton, Real Time Section, was determined to find a way to continue her traditional holiday meal. For the past 21 years she has hosted on-duty officers in her home, providing a full home-cooked holiday meal on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Telling officers they wouldn’t have a holiday meal was not an option and she told officers as much.

After hearing there would be some sense of normalcy in the midst of the pandemic and summer protests, one officer told Horton, “Thanks Laurie, you made me smile.”

She knew this was going to be a bigger task than she could handle alone, so she enlisted the help of several from the department, as well as spouses. After discussing several options, they came up with the plan to take the home-cooked food to each division station. Spouses offered crockpots and chaffing dishes to keep food warm, and several volunteered their time to serve the food at each of the six division stations on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Taking it To the Streets, a local non-profit organization, reached out and said they were going to be cooking for officers on Christmas Day, as well.

In years prior, Laurie and her husband have cooked all of the food, paying for it out of their pocket. This year, several KCPD members surprised her with Fox 4’s Pay It Forward. In December, Laurie was sent outside of Police Headquarters to meet reporter Kathy Quinn from Fox 4 and was presented with $400 to help with food costs of feeding the officers. She was speechless.

The officers she cooked and fed this year, and in the years past, are beyond grateful for her heart to serve. But Horton insists she is the one who benefits. “I’m blessed to be allowed to share the holidays with the extraordinary people of this department,” she said.

Administrative Assistant Laurie Horton was recognized through Fox 4’s Pay It Forward for the annual holiday meals she provides to on-duty officers, a feat that was especially hard to pull off during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Fawn Cox’s attacker climbed into her second-story bedroom window.
For years, KCPD has been involved in hosting events with the community during the holidays. Due to the pandemic, officers had to get creative to stay within the current KCMO COVID-19 orders and still be able to serve the community. The Department hosted drive-through trunk-or-treat events at most patrol division stations, gave out holiday meals to families identified by KCPD social workers and sent officers to shop the Christmas wish lists of local kids. KCPD is thankful for the opportunity to serve the community over the holidays during this challenging year.
Kansas City Police Academy staff lent their expertise to the City's new Animal Service Division officers.

KC Pet Project was awarded the contract for animal health and safety for Kansas City in September. They took over on Dec. 1. In the time between those dates, they met with national animal control and welfare experts, and they had to hire an entire new staff for their new Animal Services Division, complete with 18 animal service officers, three managers – including a cruelty and compliance manager – five dispatchers and a director.

Tori Fugate, KC Pet Project's Chief Communications Officer, said they wanted KCPD's training for their officers because they wanted to prioritize a community-centered approach.

“We wanted a community-policing model,” she said. “We wanted training in how to talk to people, how to de-escalate, and how to know when to get out of a situation.”

In their full day of training, Academy staff also taught the animal service officers about writing citations, court etiquette, mandated reporter issues, diversity and inclusion and personal safety.

The primary instructor was Officer Kim Shaw-Ellis. She tailored the curriculum for the new animal service officers.

“I basically taught them tactical communication and de-escalation: the skill-set to apply when they come across folks who are challenging, upset, in crisis,” Officer Shaw-Ellis said. “They’re in an enforcement capacity but they’re not enforcement. It seemed very fitting to her that the division’s name has changed from Animal Control to Animal Services. She incorporated that problem-solving approach into her training.

“We talked about partnering with the community to find a solution instead of coming at the community as part of the problem,” she said. The animal service officers should serve their city well, Officer Shaw-Ellis said.

“I have not met many groups of people who stand out as much as they do for me in terms of passion, intention, and the desire to make a real difference in community,” she said. “I cannot say how I eager I am to work with people like that.”

Their desire to serve can be an example to police officers as well, she said.

Fugate of KC Pet Project said another reason for the training was to have a great working relationship with first responders.

“We want your officers to know ours and be able to depend on us for those calls when we’re needed,” she said. The new team is off to a strong start.

In just their first month of operation, the new Animal Services Division responded to 1,064 calls for service. That resulted in 19% of pets being returned to owners who were being returned to owners in the field instead of going shelter, 355 cruelty/neglect investigations and the distribution of hundreds of pounds of pet food, outdoor shelters, kennels and more.

They also worked with the ATF to recover five pets after the massive Waldo Heights apartment fire and reunite them with their owners.

They are available to assist police 24/7.
McCune retires with 47+ years of service

Mary McCune retired Dec. 29 as one of the longest-tenured employees ever to retire from KCPD with almost half a century of service.

Administrative Assistant Mary McCune retired Dec. 29 as one of the longest-serving members ever at KCPD with more than 47 years of service.

McCune started at the Department in September 1972 at the age of 18.

“I needed a job, and I saw the opening in the paper,” she said.

She began her work in the Computer Unit. In 1981, she moved to the assignment where she would spend the bulk of her career: Traffic. From 1987 to 1992, she served in the Safety Education Unit. She moved to the Accident Investigation Unit in 1992, and finally to the Traffic Investigations Unit in 1995, where she retired as the Unit’s administrative assistant. She was the last non-sworn member of the KCPD to have a 4-digit serial number, 9919.

McCune met her husband on the job at the old police station at 28th and Main. With her husband, she has one child, four step-children, 12 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren with a third on the way.

“I’ve really enjoyed the people I’ve worked with,” McCune said of her almost half-century of service to KCPD.

25-Year Rings

Officer Matthew Drinkard  
Detention Officer Syed Hasan  
Detective Daniel Kaat  
Officer Daniel Watson

Retirements

Officer Derrick Akers  
Supervisor Ali Aramjoo  
Detective Mario Cathy  
Sergeant Brian Davis  
Officer Ross Davis  
Detention Officer Patricia Doolin  
Officer Matthew Drinkard  
Sergeant Garry Eastwood  
Sergeant Keith Ericsson  
Computer Services Specialist Anita Gee  
Sergeant Robert Gibbs  
Master Patrol Officer Donald Hubbard  
Master Patrol Officer Kevin Hulen  
Sergeant Jeffrey Jennings  
Administrative Assistant Corliss Jones

Officially Speaking

Officer Kevin Jurgielski  
Detective John “Andy” Keil  
Officer Christopher Lein  
Chief Criminalist Supervisor Kathryn May  
Administrative Assistant Mary McCune  
Master Detective Timothy Mountz  
Sergeant Tamara Pronke  
Sergeant Jay Pruetting  
Sergeant Brian Rawley  
Sergeant Eric Roeder  
Officer Christopher Romero  
Officer Jason Schulz  
Captain Christopher Sicoli  
Master Patrol Officer Gregory Smith  
Sergeant Timothy Smith  
Major Gregory Volker  
Deputy Chief Shawn Wadle  
Sergeant Jason White  
Detective Paul Williams

Retired Civilian Patricia Carson  
Retired Officer Leroy Day  
Retired Sergeant Robert Dickerson  
Retired Detective Rita Dysart  
Retired Sergeant Henry Hamilton, Sr.  
Retired Civilian Donald Hannon  
Retired Major Clarence Hoffman  
Retired Sergeant John Meyer  
Retired Sergeant Merle Mitchell  
Retired Officer Randal New  
Retired Detective Charles Owen  
Reserve Officer Charles Scott  
Retired Civilian Mary Sousley  
Retired Sergeant William Strub  
Retired Sergeant Stephen Untrif

Obituaries

Retired Sergeant James Aliff  
Retired Officer Gerald Bailey  
Retired Captain Mickey Bartow

The Informant is a publication of KCPD’s Media Unit  
(816) 234-5170  
www.kcpd.org
Canovi gets 1st community policing award

A KCPD officer was the first to receive the Commerce Bank Community Police Award at the Greater Kansas City Crime Commission’s Officer Appreciation Banquet on Sept. 25.

Like so many other things in the pandemic, the awards banquet was virtual.

The “community policing award” was created to recognize a law enforcement officer who has demonstrated the ability to resolve a potentially violent or crisis situation using de-escalation techniques and problem-solving skills, or by partnering with mental health and social services to achieve the best outcome. The recipient of the first-ever award was KCPD officer Marc Canovi.

Over the past three years, Officer Canovi has been an asset to KCPD’s Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). His duties include following up with chronic or dangerous emotionally disturbed persons, assisting with CIT training classes, and working with various community providers and organizations.

Officer Canovi coordinates the Homeless Outreach Team for KCPD. He conducts outreach and visits various camps weekly with support from the V.A., ReStart, Truman Medical Center and others. Officer Canovi is often called to help de-escalate situations involving emotionally disturbed persons. He has used non-traditional policing methods to resolve high risk situations with no force or injuries.

Three recent events showcase Officer Canovi’s de-escalation abilities:

The first incident was a woman threatening to jump from a 4th floor balcony. Officer Canovi immediately had officers create distance from the scene, and he established a dialogue. He was able to get the woman’s social worker to respond to the scene, and they determined the issue stemmed from lack of food and provisions. He was able to convince her to leave the balcony, and he got her to safety. He then worked to get her food and groceries to solve what precipitated the crisis.

On the second occasion, a man was planning to create a suicide-by-cop situation. Instead of directly confronting the man, Officer Canovi was able to get a family member to assist and connect him to in-patient treatment.

And on the third event, Officer Canovi responded to a man threatening to jump from a bridge. During his contact, the man began to jump, and Officer Canovi was able to pull him to safety. He then engaged the man in mental health services.