

PRESIDENT'S

DNA

INITIATIVE

Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology

National Missing Persons Program

August 21, 2006

Project Jason
Attention: Kelly Jolkowski
3425 N 48th Street
Omaha, NE 68104
(402) 932-0095

Dear Kelly and all State Campaign for the Missing Volunteers:

The UNT System, Center for Human Identification's (CHI) mission is to provide identification and forensic analysis of human remains, establish a basis for future identification of persons reported missing and provide educational services to the medico-legal community. Our facility provides collection kits for family reference samples and submission kits for unidentified human remains at no charge to law enforcement agencies, medical examiners and coroners across the country. Since the center became operational, CHI has an identification percentage of 32% for human remains analyzed using nuclear and mitochondrial DNA methods and uploaded into the FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). DNA analysis using nuclear and mitochondrial methods is the most accurate method available today for identifying remains.

In addition to the DNA testing provided by the CHI, anthropological services are provided through a forensic anthropology laboratory directed by Dr. Harrell Gill- King, a nationally known board certified forensic anthropologist. The anthropological services include examination of skeletal remains, trauma analysis, estimation of date of death, physical abnormalities of remains, expert testimony, along with determination of the manner and cause of death.

CHI has received samples from 40 states which include over 700 sets of unidentified human remains and over 1,600 reference samples from family members with missing loved ones. Virtually all of the remains samples received are from victims who died under suspicious circumstances, with the vast majority being homicides. The identification of these remains, in most instances, provides the first real lead in the search for the perpetrator of the crime. Our facility encourages cooperation from law enforcement agencies, medical examiners and coroners from each state with the collection and submission of all remains and reference samples. By increasing the numbers of samples that are collected, submitted, analyzed and entered into the National Database, the chances for making a match are improved dramatically.

Nationwide the number of unidentified remains projected by the International Association for Homicide Investigators is somewhere over 40,000. This number is only a conservative approximation and does not consider the number of unidentified that have been cremated or buried in pauper's graves. The number of families with long-term missing loved ones over the past twenty years can only be estimated in hundreds of thousands. According to a recently released study performed by the Washington State Attorney General's Office, the number of non-custodial (stranger) abductions has dramatically increased. The abducted child is normally murdered within the first three hours after the abduction. Therefore, it is critical that each state implement effective protocols for the identification of their missing.

The CHI is funded by grants awarded through the National Institute of Justice. Services are offered at no charge to the following:

1. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies
2. The medic legal community, (i.e. medical examiners, coroner and others assigned with the responsibility for the examination of human remains
3. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
4. Other regional or specialized agencies dealing with the missing
5. Criminal justice entities

Representatives from our facility will be happy to meet with appropriate state entities to design and implement protocols for the collection and submission of all reference and remains samples. This is offered on a state-wide basis through the utilization of each state's available monetary and physical resources using Washington State as the model program.

We applaud your efforts to enact legislation in all 50 States and please do not hesitate to contact the center for any information that we may provide to help with this initiative.

Respectfully,

Arthur J. Eisenberg, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
DNA Identity Laboratory