

Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Friday, May 6, 2011

Office of Justice Programs (OJP) (202) 307-0703 www.ojp.gov

More Than 15,000 Cases in New Database That Matches Missing Persons and Unidentified Dead Users Number 10,000

Washington—The number of cases in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System's (NamUs) two databases has reached a combined total of more than 15,000 and the number of registered users has grown to 10,000 since NamUs was launched in January 2009. To date, NamUs is credited with resolving 62 of the missing and unidentified person cases in its databases.

"Reaching 15,000 cases illustrates the exponential growth of NamUs," said John Laub, Director of the National Institute of Justice. "In 2009, we doubled the number of missing person cases in the system, and last year we nearly tripled it. This continued growth is critical because with more cases in the system, more cases can be solved and more families can get the resolutions they have been seeking for so long."

NamUs (www.namus.gov) is a national repository for information about missing and unidentified persons. The public may register to search and report information in the missing person database and may search, but not add, information about unidentified persons. Law enforcement officers, coroners and medical examiners and other professionals may register to search and report information to the missing person database and the unidentified persons database. More than two-thirds of the 10,000 registered NamUs users are members of the general public; the balance are death investigation professionals such as coroners, medical examiners and law enforcement officers. The missing persons database contains 7,148 entries and the unidentified persons database has 7,855 records.

The two cases below illustrate how NamUs works.

David Brennesholtz - On March 8, 2008, an unidentified deceased male was found in Clearwater, Fla. The case was entered into NamUs in July 2008. In November 2009, Sue D'Agostino from Islip, New York, learned of NamUs after seeing a public service announcement. D'Agostino and her family had not heard from her brother, David Brennesholtz, for several years and began searching the unidentified side of NamUs.

She came across Unidentified Person Case #2297 and thought the face in the photo could be her brother and contacted the Pinellas County Medical Examiner's office with her inquiry. Family DNA reference samples were taken and the unidentified man in Clearwater was positively identified as D'Agostino's missing brother.

Ronald Norman - On December 8, 1991, Ronald Norman, 42, went missing from the foster care home where he lived in Detroit, Mich. He went for a walk and was never seen again. The following April, two fishermen came across a body floating in Lake Erie. The medical examiner determined the victim's cause of death was drowning. The unidentified man was buried as "John Doe." Then in 2008, Mr. Norman's case was entered into NamUs, and he became Missing Person (MP) case #829. In 2011, the Michigan State Police began entering their unidentified cases into NamUs, and the unidentified man found in Lake Erie became Unidentified Person (UP) case #8484. As soon as the UP case was entered, the NamUs automated cross-matching feature flagged UP #8484 and MP #829 as a potential match. The two cases had similar features – specifically missing teeth, a skull injury and the type of clothing Mr. Norman wore when he was last seen. The medical examiner ultimately made a positive identification of Ronald Newman. This was the first resolved case as a result of the NamUs automated cross-matching feature.

On Saturday, May 7, 2011, local law enforcement agencies in Detroit, Mich., will highlight NamUs at the Michigan's Missing Persons Day. More information about this event is available by contacting Detective/Trooper Sarah Krebs, Michigan State Police, tel. 313-215-0675, email: krebss@michigan.gov.

###

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Laurie O. Robinson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has seven bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; the Community Capacity Development Office, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at http://www.ojp.gov.

NIJ11098