

Remains of woman found in Upstate in 2011 have been identified



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SPARTANBURG COUNTY, S.C. —

The remains of a woman found in 2011 by a group of teenagers in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, have been identified.

On Oct. 26, 2011, the teenagers [were searching for scap metal and found skeletal](#) remains in a wooded area in Startex, South Carolina.

At the time authorities said the remains belonged to a 40- to 55-year-old Caucasian woman who had been murdered before her body was hidden under debris.

In 2020, the Spartanburg County Coroner's Office brought the case to the DNA Doe Project, which investigates genetic genealogists and work pro bono to identify Jane and John Does.

Through the project, a DNA profile was generated from the woman's remains and uploaded to GEDmatch and FamilyTreeDNA.



They learned that the woman only had distant DNA matches but it was obvious that she had roots in Puerto Rico, where endogamy can complicate genetic genealogy research.

“The genealogy in this case was very complex,” said team leader Rebecca Somerhalder. “Our team built out family trees for hundreds of Puerto Rican DNA matches, but figuring out how they were connected to Ms. Startex was tricky because they were all very distant relatives.”

In April 2025, a new DNA match appeared on FamilyTreeDNA.

The team had identified the biological parents of the woman as a couple from Orange County, New York.

The father was originally from Puerto Rico, while the mother had deep roots in the area.

The team said they found out that none of their known children were missing and it became clear that the woman had been adopted.

Investigators spoke with the family and discovered that, after the death of their mother, two of the children had been adopted by a family who later moved to South Carolina.

They later learned **Jolene Lynn White** had been missing for two decades.

Follow-up DNA testing confirmed that White was, in fact, the woman whose remains were found.

“This identification was only possible because of a dedicated and collaborative team,” said researcher Janel Daniels. “It also goes to show that one DNA match can make a huge difference - anyone who uploads their DNA to GEDmatch.com, DNAJustice.org or [FamilyTreeDNA.com](https://www.familytreeDNA.com) might help solve a cold case without even realizing.”

The DNA Doe Project said it is grateful to the groups and individuals which helped solve this case including the Spartanburg County Coroner’s Office, who entrusted the case to the DNA Doe Project; Astrea Forensics for DNA extraction; HudsonAlpha Discovery for sequencing; Kevin Lord for bioinformatics; GEDmatch Pro and FamilyTreeDNA for providing their databases; donors who joined our mission and contributed to this case; and the DNA Doe Project’s dedicated teams of volunteer investigative genetic genealogists who work tirelessly to bring all our Jane and John Does home.