

# Authorities identify Jane Doe from 1995 case

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Posted: Oct 20, 2020 / 02:13 PM CDT / Updated: Oct 20, 2020 / 06:32 PM CDT

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, Ill. (WCIA) — The Champaign County Coroner's Office and the Champaign County Sheriff's Office gave new information regarding the identity of a woman whose remains were found in May of 1995 in Thomasboro.

On Tuesday, officials said the woman was identified as Keri Lyn Wyant, who was born on October 18, 1971 in Galesburg, IL. They were able to identify Wyant through genetic genealogy.



Photos provided by the Champaign Co. Sheriff's Office show Keri Lyn Wyant. She was identified as the woman whose remains were found in 1995. She was not identified until fall of 2020.

Authorities said in May 2019, the sheriff's department was informed the producers of a TV series of true crime mysteries and the "Unknown Doe Project" were interested in helping them attempt to identify Wyant through genetic genealogy. The production team also said they would cover the cost of additional DNA extraction from Wyant's remains.

This comes after Wyant's remains were found outside of Thomasboro in the area of 2600 North and 1200 East in 1995. The cause of death has been withheld, but it is determined to be a homicide.

On April 30, 2020, the sheriff's office was notified by the production team that their team of genealogists were constructing family trees and they found crossovers where multiple family trees intersected. Through that research, they were able to figure out the remains belonged to someone with the last name Wyant. The sheriff's office investigated further and figured out Wyant's full name and birthplace.

They were then able to learn that Wyant went to high school at Galva High School in Galva, Illinois between 1989 and 1990, but did not graduate.

With the help of the Stark County Sheriff, they were referred to one of Wyant's relatives. They then got DNA from Wyant's parents. That DNA was sent along with a previous sample collected from the remains. In early September 2020, the comparison confirmed Jane Doe was Keri Wyant.

After interviewing Wyant's parents, they were able to figure out she moved out of her parent's home in 1985 at the age of 14 to temporarily live with other relatives. Authorities said she "then possibly moved out of her relative's home and she reportedly stayed for a period of time in Peoria, Illinois at the 'Southside Mission.'"

Between late 1985 and 1988, officers said her location was mostly unknown. However, between 1989 to 1991, they said Wyant was believed to have worked at the following businesses:

- Gustavo's Tacos (Galva, IL) (1989-1990)
- Market Street Cafe (Galva, IL) (1990)
- Hardee's (Galesburg, IL) (1990)
- Taco House (Galva, IL) (1990-1991)

They also listed several other jobs from other the years that ranged from other areas of Illinois to Texas.

Through speaking with one of Wyant's previous friends, they found out she reappeared in Galesburg around February 1994. "Keri appeared to have no place to stay and was approximately seven months pregnant," said officers. The friend took her in. She gave birth in May of that year.

She stayed with the friend and lived in Kewanee until around June 1994. "When Keri's son was only a couple of months old, Keri decided to join the carnival that was operating at the Henry County Fair, located in Cambridge, Illinois." Wyant left her son with her friend so she could work with the

carnival. “Keri reportedly continued to work for the carnival and traveled to the next carnival venue and event that was described as approximately 30-45 minutes away from Cambridge, Illinois.”

Detectives were able to identify the 1994 Henry County Fair carnival operator as Swyear Amusements. They are based in New Athens, Illinois. The owner said his company went to the following areas after the Henry County Fair:

- Sangamon County Fair
- Granite City Celebration
- Fisher Fair (in Champaign County) (This festival was held in the first part of July)

The owner said after Labor Day, they went south for events. Those included areas around Little Rock, Arkansas:

- Faulkner County, Arkansas
- Jefferson County, Arkansas
- Pulaski County, Arkansas

The owner said he did not recall Wyant being a previous employee. Authorities also said he could not find employment records for 1994.

Authorities believe a few years before her death, Wyant likely spent time around Little Rock before coming back to her last known address in Kewanee.

The Champaign County Sheriff’s Office is looking for help with locating more information regarding Wyant. That includes a names of her friends, acquaintances, or anyone who had interactions with her. If you have any information that could help solve Wyant’s homicide, call Detective Dwayne Roelfs or Lt. Curt Apperson at the Champaign County Sheriff’s Office at (217) 384-1213.