

Identity of Jane Doe discovered after 23 years, revealed as Gail Marlene Johnson

BY WCCO STAFF

SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 / 1:52 PM / CBS MINNESOTA

NEW BRIGHTON, Minn. — The New Brighton Department of Public Safety announced Friday that they've learned the identity of a woman in a 23-year-old cold case.

The identity of the woman has been revealed to be 40-year-old **Gail Marlene Johnson**. At the time of her death, investigators believed she was last known to reside in Minneapolis.



FBI RECONSTRUCTION, DNA DOE PROJECT

On Sept. 15, 2000, two teenagers walking in Long Lake Regional Park found the body of an unidentified woman in a wooded area. At the time of the discovery, investigators believed the body had been there for up to two months.

Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension collected DNA material from the remains back in 2000, but it did not match any missing persons in their database at the time.

Officers worked tirelessly to find the identity of the woman, but the case remained cold until recently.

This past summer, investigators began working with Astrea Forensics and built a DNA profile in order to establish a genetic genealogy. Using this profile and the DNA Doe Project, investigators were ultimately able to establish a genetic connection to Johnson's family.

Investigators obtained a DNA sample from a family member and confirmed the genetic familial connection.

RELATED: New DNA Science Could Help Solve New Brighton Cold Case

"It's been 23 years and we never gave up on finding out who this woman was and what happened to her," New Brighton Public Safety Director Tony Paetznick said. "Identifying her provides an important new clue as we continue our work to determine the circumstances of her death."

Unfortunately, the investigators still have their work cut out for them.

Due to the condition of Johnson's remains, the Ramsey County Medical Examiner's Office was unable to determine her cause of death. However, investigators believe she died under "suspicious circumstances."

Johnson was 5 feet, 7 inches tall, weighed 135 pounds and had light brown hair. She drove a black or gray 1989 Ford Mustang, had been a sex worker, and was known to spend time along Lake Street in Minneapolis. Her last known interaction with law enforcement was on July 11, 2000.

Investigators urge anyone who knew Johnson, or had been in contact with her prior to her death, to contact the police department.

- Phone: 651-288-4141
- Website form: <https://newbrightonmn.gov/gail> (the QR code below will also link to this form)
- Email: gail@newbrightonmn.gov