

Illinois State Police and SIUE partnership helps solve cold cases

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Tue, July 22nd 2025 at 10:54 AM

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. (WICS) — A collaboration between the Illinois State Police (ISP) and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) is offering invaluable real-world experience to criminal justice students while aiding in the resolution of cold homicide cases.

Since 2022, SIUE students have been working alongside ISP Division of Criminal Investigation Zone 6 special agents, applying a solvability matrix to prioritize cases based on their potential for further investigation.

The students have reviewed numerous cases, creating a "Murder Book" with searchable information on cold homicides in the Metro East area. This initiative has allowed them to delve into the methods used for forensic identifications and track ISP's ongoing efforts to identify victims.

In a notable achievement, the partnership has contributed to the identification of three women believed to be victims of serial killer Maury Travis. The bodies were discovered in 2002 along Illinois roadways. Through collaboration with various agencies, including the Columbia Police Department, the FBI, and the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification, all three women have been identified.

On January 30, 2002, a body was found along I-64 near Mascoutah, Illinois. The victim, later identified as **Kelly Johnson**, had been deceased for several months. On March 11, 2002, another body was discovered along I-70 near Highland, Illinois, and was identified earlier this year as **Crystal Lay**. Finally, on March 28, 2002, skeletal remains were found in Columbia, Illinois, and identified as Carol Jean Hemphill.

In another case, SIUE students and ISP special agents reviewed the 2011 shooting death of Truman Smith in East St. Louis. Smith, who was shot while making a delivery, provided a description of the suspect before succumbing to his injuries. After an extensive investigation, Alan Davis, 34, of East St. Louis, was charged with

First Degree Murder on May 22, 2025. Davis is currently held at the Graham Correctional Center on an unrelated conviction.

This partnership not only equips students with practical criminal investigation skills but also provides a fresh perspective on cold cases, helping to bring justice to victims and their families.