

Body found in Pacifica in 2006

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SAN MATEO — For more than a decade, the remains of a woman found along a Highway 1 service trail in Pacifica went unidentified, but thanks to a DNA specimen contributed by a family member and advances in DNA analysis, authorities finally know her name.

Authorities this week identified the remains of a woman found along a Highway 1 service trail in Pacifica in 2006. Christine Martell Kuhn was reported missing from Washington, D.C., the previous year. (Courtesy of the San Mateo County Coroner's Office)

Christine Martell Kuhn

The San Mateo County Coroner's Office on Tuesday identified her as 41-year-old Christine Martell Kuhn, who had been reported missing from Washington, D.C. in 2005.

The remains, along with multiple religious items and extensive literature, were found June 6, 2006. They were badly decomposed and the woman's cause of death was not determined.

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The coroner's office submitted her DNA to the California Department of Justice and a so-called short tandem repeat profile to the Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS.

On Nov. 30, 2006, the woman's fingerprints were matched to an arrest record from Jan. 27, 2006, handled by the California Highway Patrol San Francisco area field office. The name on the arrest record, "Sam Smith," was an alias and suspected to be fictitious.

Another break in the case didn't come until 2014, when one of Kuhn's relatives submitted a DNA specimen, and a mitochondrial DNA profile was completed and filed with CODIS. On Tuesday, the DOJ notified the coroner's office that it had matched Kuhn to the remains.

Kuhn might have gone unidentified if not for advances in DNA analysis in recent years, the coroner's office said.

The coroner's office lists persons it hasn't identified on its website and Kuhn's was the most frequently viewed. Reasons included a mugshot photo from her 2006 arrest and the unusual circumstances in which she was found, according to the coroner's office.