SOLVING COLD CASE HOMICIDES

Thanks to a $500,000 federal grant, new DNA testing will be used to help solve some of the hundreds of cold case homicides in Palm Beach County.

State Attorney Dave Aronberg was joined by U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel and leaders from the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office to announce that the Department of Justice funds will help investigators use newly-developed DNA and other expensive DNA testing technologies, including forensic genetic genealogy.

With this grant we will be able to better hold accountable those who commit the most heinous crimes. It will help prosecutors and law enforcement stand up for victims of crime and obtain justice.

The Sheriff’s office says 360 homicides since 1964 remain unsolved, as well as 50 cases of unidentified remains. At least 60 homicide cases have DNA evidence and detectives are seeking to link the DNA to murder suspects.

Over the past decade, advances in DNA have led to several convictions and life sentences in local murder and rape cases that had gone cold for decades.

Now, with the new grant, DNA can be tested by private laboratories at a cost of $5,000 to $10,000 per case. Prosecutors and detectives will prioritize cases where there is a high probability of an arrest and prosecution.

The goal is to find murderers by linking the evidence to DNA that was submitted to genealogy companies by people making family trees.

For an example of how it can work on cold cases, officials have pointed to the notorious “Golden State Killer,” who in 2020 pleaded guilty to 13 counts of first-degree murder – crimes committed across California in the 1970s and 1980s.

It’s likely only a matter of time until there is a similar breakthrough here.