

Metropolitan Nashville Police Department and Othram Team to Identify a 2010 John Doe

A man whose remains were found in 2010 has been identified as 23-year-old Marcus Rutledge, who was reported missing from Nashville in 1998.

In December 2010, the remains of an unidentified individual were found in Nashville, Tennessee. The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department launched an investigation after a hunter discovered the remains off Pecan Valley Road. It was determined that the remains were that of an adult male. The man could not be identified and he became known as Pecan Valley John Doe.

Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP16916. With few leads to go on, investigators teamed with Othram to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify the man.

In 2023, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department submitted forensic evidence to Othram where scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the evidence. Othram scientists then used Forensic Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile, enabling Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team to perform a genealogical search and develop new leads about the man's identity. Using these leads, investigators launched a follow-up investigation, which led to possible relatives of the man.

While investigators conducted the follow-up investigation, they received a separate lead that led to the identification of Pecan Valley John Doe, who is now known to be 23-year-old Marcus Rutledge. Rutledge was reported missing from Nashville in June of 1998. Details of Rutledge's missing person were entered into NamUs as MP26 in December of 2008. If Rutledge were alive today, he would be 50 years old.

Funding for Othram's advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by NamUs, a national program that assists the criminal justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. NamUs is funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is managed through a contract with Research Triangle Institute International. We are grateful for the support of RTI, NamUs, and the NIJ.

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