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For Immediate Release

District Attorney Investigator Named ‘Peace Officer of the Year’ by SDPOA

Award Recognizes Outstanding Work on a Cold Case Homicide

In 1979, Craig Woolley was brutally stabbed to death in bed. The case went cold when no suspect was identified, although evidence collected included the knife, fingerprints, and swabs of blood. In 2006, the San Diego Police Department identified Jeffrey Cauble, a Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton in 1979, from one fingerprint on a drinking glass. Cauble, who was now living in Colorado, was interviewed in 2009, but denied knowing the victim or being at the residence. A DNA sample from Cauble subsequently matched several items of evidence at the scene; however, more evidence was needed. It was until nearly 10 years later, when District Attorney Investigator Sandra Oplinger was assigned to the case that Cauble was brought to justice. On Friday, April 26, 2019, the San Diego Police Officers Association recognized Oplinger with the Peace Officer of the Year Award for her work in the resolution of this nearly 40-year-old cold case.

“Sandra Oplinger exemplifies the work of the elite investigative team at the District Attorney’s Office which takes on the tough mission of pursuing justice on cold case homicides,” said San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan. “Using her excellent investigative skills, attention to detail, and expertise, Sandra refused to give up and was instrumental in bringing a measure of justice to the victim’s family, holding the defendant accountable for this murder.”

In 2017, when Oplinger was assigned to the case, she employed various investigative techniques to obtain additional evidence against Cauble. She coordinated with the San Diego Sheriff Department’s Detentions Intelligence Group (DIG) to advance the investigation in Colorado. Eventually, Cauble made admissions regarding the murder of Craig Woolley. In February 2019, he was convicted of second-degree murder and is pending a sentence of 16-years-to-life in prison.

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“Sandy is driven to seek justice for family members who have lost loved ones to violent crimes,” said Chief Investigator Jorge Duran. “Her persistence and attention to detail has brought closure to many families left without answers regarding their loved one’s demise. She is a consummate professional and an asset to the District Attorney’s Office.”

District Attorney Investigator Sandra Oplinger has served 34 years in law enforcement and was hired by the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office in 2011. The San Diego Police Officers Association presented the award to Oplinger during their 28th Annual Peace Officer of the Year Award Ceremony recognizing excellence in San Diego County’s law enforcement.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office
The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

About the DA’s Bureau of Investigation
The Bureau of Investigation is the law enforcement arm of the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office. It is made up of six divisions, which include 130 District Attorney Investigators who are sworn peace officers, 13 Process Servers and 10 Investigative Technicians. The divisions include Special Operations, the DA’s branch offices, Superior Court/Juvenile/Trial Support Services, Gangs/Cold Case Homicide, Family Protection/Sex Crimes/Human Trafficking/Child Abduction/Elder Abuse and Economic Crimes/Insurance Fraud.