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San Diego County District Attorney's Office Receives Two National Achievement Awards for Innovative Programs

NACo Honors CARE Center's Same Day Solutions Fair and Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort (CHARGE)

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that her office has received two prestigious [National Association of Counties \(NACo\) Achievement Awards](#) recognizing innovative programs that improve public safety, deliver justice and enhance the quality of life for San Diego County residents. The awards recognize the District Attorney's Same Day Solutions Fair, organized by the DA's Community Action Resource Engagement Center (CARE) Center team, and the Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort (CHARGE), which uses advanced forensic genetic genealogy to solve decades-old homicide cases and bring long-overdue justice to victims and their families.

"These awards reflect our commitment to innovation in public service and our mission to pursue justice in ways that strengthen communities and improve lives," DA Stephan said. "Whether helping individuals experiencing homelessness resolve legal barriers and access critical resources or using cutting-edge forensic science to solve cold case murders, these programs demonstrate how collaboration and innovation can produce meaningful results for the people we serve."

Same Day Solutions Fair

The Same Day Solutions Fair was recognized for its collaborative approach to helping individuals experiencing homelessness resolve minor legal matters while connecting them with essential support services. Organized by the DA's CARE Center team, the resource fair brings together prosecutors, public defenders, judges, law enforcement agencies, county departments, nonprofit organizations and service providers in a one-stop setting. Participants can resolve eligible misdemeanor offenses and outstanding warrants while gaining immediate access to housing assistance, behavioral health treatment, substance use services, identification documents such as birth certificates, employment resources, veteran services and other support programs

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like WIC, Medi-Cal and Cal fresh carts produced on site and hot meals. The event often provides dental services, mobile showers and haircuts.

Since the program's launch in 2021, the resource fairs have served 6,530 individuals across San Diego County. With more than 20 agencies typically participating in each monthly event, community members can connect with multiple services during a single visit. This coordinated approach reduces duplication of effort among providers while providing a clearer picture of the program's collective impact.

One of the most immediate and measurable outcomes is the resolution of legal barriers. Through on-site Homeless Court services, individuals can address eligible warrants, resolve fines and review driver's license holds in real time. Since the program began, justice partners have handled 1,944 cases through this process. Removing obstacles often represents a critical first step toward stability. Participants frequently report that clearing a warrant enables them to pursue employment opportunities, reinstate a driver's license or move forward with housing applications.

CHARGE Program

The District Attorney's Office also received a NACo Achievement Award for its Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort (CHARGE), an innovative initiative that solves and prosecutes unsolved homicides through the use of Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG).

CHARGE brings together the expertise of the DA's Cold Case Homicide Unit, a forensic genealogist and an experienced homicide investigator to identify unknown homicide suspects using DNA evidence recovered from crime scenes or victims. The groundbreaking technique allows investigators to develop leads in cases that have remained unsolved for decades.

The CHARGE project has delivered significant results since it began in 2020, helping solve 10 cases, including the identification of the killer of 22-year-old 7-Eleven clerk Christy Bryant, who was murdered in 1974, and the killer of 32-year-old U.S. Navy serviceman Larry Joe Breen, who was murdered in 1990. Following those identifications, the District Attorney's Office successfully prosecuted and convicted the offenders, bringing long-awaited answers to victims' loved ones, justice for the community and accountability for those responsible.

"Every victim deserves justice, no matter how much time has passed," DA Stephan said. "The CHARGE program harnesses advances in forensic science to solve cases that once seemed unsolvable. It provides answers to families who have waited decades for justice and ensures offenders are held accountable for their crimes."

Beyond solving individual cases, CHARGE has established specialized forensic genetic genealogy capabilities within the District Attorney's Office that benefit law enforcement partners throughout San Diego County and serve as a model for agencies nationwide.

The [NACo Achievement Awards](#) recognize innovative county government programs that enhance services for residents, improve government effectiveness and strengthen communities.

This year's honors highlight the San Diego County District Attorney's Office's continued commitment to forward-thinking solutions that promote public safety, support vulnerable populations and deliver justice for victims.

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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.