
PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

The “CSI Effect”: Maximizing the Potential of Forensic DNA

June 25, 2009 • Doubletree • Washington, DC

Christopher H. Asplen

Christopher Asplen, Esq., is an internationally known expert in the areas of forensic technology, particularly DNA. He has consulted directly with the Ministers of Justice in several countries and has been asked to assess the legislative strategies of DNA databasing in European countries by the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes.

Prior to his work with foreign governments on technology policy, Mr. Asplen was an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Washington, DC. While a prosecuting attorney in Washington, he was appointed executive director of the U.S. Attorney General’s National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence. The Commission consisted of 22 nationally recognized experts in the fields of criminal prosecution and defense, science, ethics, law enforcement, victim advocacy, and government. Its mission was to maximize the value of DNA in the criminal justice system. Mr. Asplen worked closely with both Attorneys General Reno and Ashcroft to develop DNA policy for the Department of Justice, and also testified before Congress to help appropriate over \$160 million for forensic DNA testing.

Joseph Blozis

Detective Sergeant Joseph Blozis has been employed by the New York Police Department (NYPD) since 1979. For 13 years as a senior sergeant in the Crime Scene Unit and as Supervisor of Detective Squad, he supervised the search, collection, preservation, and documentation of all types of physical and trace evidence. Det. Sgt. Blozis has managed in excess of 2,500 crime scenes, including more than 1,000 homicide investigations. In 1993 and 2001, he oversaw both crime-scene investigations involving the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. On September 11, 2001, he was on scene as both towers collapsed and was immediately assigned to “Ground Zero” until May 2002. Prior positions include supervising the criminalistics, narcotics, questioned documents, serology, and polygraph units for NYPD’s Police Crime Laboratory, as well as working as a patrol sergeant, in a detective squad, as plainclothes anti-crime, and as a uniformed patrol officer. Det. Sgt. Blozis currently coordinates the NYPD’s Biotracks DNA Program, which expands the collection of DNA evidence to property crimes, in addition to homicides and sexual assaults, and has identified more than 500 offenders to date.

Sarah Chaikin

Sarah Chaikin is the Cold Case Program Coordinator with the Denver Police Department Victim Assistance Unit. She holds a bachelor’s degree in human services and a masters in professional studies in applied communications. Since 1992, she has worked in various victim services, from on-scene crisis intervention for crime victims to investigating abuse and neglect of the elderly. In her current role, she is responsible for maintaining the Denver Police Department’s compliance with the Victim Rights Act (C.R.S. 24-4.1-301).

She also works in conjunction with the Cold Case Investigations Unit, providing outreach to victims of cold case sexual assault, felony kidnapping, and family members and co-victims of homicide.

Norman Gahn

Norman Gahn is an assistant district attorney with the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office. Previously, he served as a Military Police Officer and Criminal Investigation Division Officer in the United States Army.

Mr. Gahn has lectured extensively around the country on the use of DNA evidence in the courtroom. He is a member of the DNA Legal Assistance Advisory Group of the American Prosecutors Research Institute. Mr. Gahn was appointed in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Justice to the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has formally recognized him as a pioneer in DNA technology in the courtroom, and the National Institute of Justice has formally recognized him as an innovator in the field of DNA evidence.

He graduated from Marquette University Law School in Milwaukee, earned a master of forensic sciences degree from George Washington University, and has a bachelor's degree in psychology from St. Louis University.

Lisa Hurst

Lisa Hurst, a consultant at Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs, has worked in government affairs for sixteen years, and has been directly involved in much of the forensic DNA research and policy formulation conducted at the firm. She is responsible for publishing a monthly report on national and international news and legislation affecting forensic DNA policies. The monthly report, which is distributed to over 8,000 recipients, is well-regarded by criminal justice professionals as a reliable and unique source of information about forensic DNA. Before joining the firm, Ms. Hurst worked in Washington, DC, for a Member of Congress and most recently as an associate with a large DC lobbying firm.

Debbie Smith

Debbie Smith was at home in 1989 when a masked intruder entered her home, abducted, robbed, and repeatedly raped her in the woods behind her home in Williamsburg, Virginia. The crime went unsolved for more than six years until DNA made a cold hit on a repeat offender who was serving time for other crimes. Since the end of a lengthy and drawn out trial, Ms. Smith has been intent on helping other victims and trying to prevent others from becoming victims. She has appeared on several TV shows including *60 Minutes* and *Oprah* and has been interviewed in numerous national magazines and newspapers. A federal law with Ms. Smith's name attached (The Justice for All Act of 2004) passed and was signed by President George W. Bush, and will provide funding to: eliminate the backlog of untested rape kits; train first responders such as police, EMTs, and nurses; and standardize rape kits nationwide. Ms. Smith speaks at conferences all over the United States and Canada and is the founder of H-E-A-R-T, Inc., a nonprofit foundation established to aid victims of sexual assault.

Rob Smith

Rob Smith retired from the Williamsburg, Virginia, Police Department as a Lt. Detective with more than 25 years of service to help run H-E-A-R-T, Inc., where he serves as president and treasurer for the foundation. Together with his wife, Debbie Smith, he speaks at conferences, bringing his police experience together with his experience as a secondary victim and the husband of a rape survivor. His primary focus is in training first responders how to better understand the mindset of a victim of sexual assault. He currently serves on the board of directors for the local Williamsburg area battered women's shelter, AVALON, for the local SANE program, and on the Colonial Area Taskforce on Domestic and Sexual Assault. He graduated summa cum laude from St. Leo's University with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Barbara R. Wimmer

Detective Barbara Wimmer has been a police officer in the state of Colorado for 30 years, the last 13 years with the Denver Police Department. With an extensive investigative background in sex crimes investigations, she was chosen to help start the Denver Police Department's Cold Case Unit at its inception in 2005, and investigated both cold case sex assaults and homicide cases. Through a collaborative partnership with the Denver District Attorney's office, Detective Wimmer has been extremely successful in numerous cold case criminal prosecutions that have resulted in hundreds of years of sentencing time for offenders and a sense of justice for the victims and their families. Detective Wimmer teaches Sex Crime Investigations classes throughout the state and has also been called upon to teach various aspects of Cold Case Investigations.