



FORENSIC SCIENCE
CENTER

Marshall University: a
forensic science resource for
West Virginia and the nation.

Forensic Science Resource

Summer Edition 2015

Director's Corner



Hello all,

We have developed this newsletter to keep you informed about the academic program and our forensic laboratories.

Over the last 20 years the Forensic Science Center

has grown in many ways including development of a forensic science campus consisting of three buildings that house both the Master's degree program and forensic laboratories. During the development process our faculty has expanded from one to three full time faculty and over 20 adjunct faculty. The Master's degree program has been fully accredited by FEPAC for the third 5 year cycle. In addition, the digital forensics area of emphasis was FEPAC accredited in 2011 making it the first digital forensics offering to be accredited. The May 2015 graduation saw the 293rd graduate receive her degree as part of the 19th graduating class. Our graduates are working in forensic laboratories throughout the country, many in leadership roles. We also look forward to expanding our class size and building out the third floor of the West Wing Annex to accommodate the chemistry and microscopy labs. To our graduates, we hope that you will stay in touch and update us on your careers and great things going on in your lives.

Terry Fenger, PhD

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Marshall University Forensic Science Center: A National Resource

Marshall University Forensic Science Center (MUFSC) is a resource for state and local forensic crime laboratories throughout the nation as well as those from other countries. The Center was first established in 1994 and has grown into a state-of-the-art complex featuring a FEPAC-accredited Master's degree program in Forensic Science and forensic DNA laboratories accredited by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board. The DNA labs meet the ISO/IEC 17025:2005 and FBI Quality Assurance Standards.

MUFSC performs high quality forensic DNA testing on sexual assault kits, crime scene evidence, known-source samples from convicted offenders and provides relationship testing and human identification services. Our DNA analysts have testified in cases nationally.

The center supports the nation's criminal justice system by providing a highly skilled workforce of graduates who are in high demand at crime laboratories and private companies across the country.

In conjunction with the West Virginia State Police, a digital device investigative unit conducts examinations on evidence from criminal casework submitted by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Digital Forensic Unit serves 26

counties in the southern part of the state and local federal agencies. A certified West Virginia State Police trooper serves as investigator and works in conjunction with MUFSC staff to solve crimes involving murder, embezzlement, prescription drug fraud, illegal drug operations, computer harassment and child exploitation. He also provides technical assistance to law enforcement on digital forensic investigations.

MUFSC also offers training to practicing forensic examiners in multiple areas of DNA analysis and various aspects of digital evidence examination.

Our DNA and digital forensic casework laboratories help law enforcement solve crimes and obtain convictions, making our communities safer.

DNA Technical Leader Presents Success of Novel Project to Review Sexual Assault Cases at National DNA Technical Conference

DNA Technical Leader Jason Chute delivered a presentation about a successful pilot project to review and expedite sexual assault kit cases for the Michigan State Police on March 31 at

the 12th Annual DNA Technical Workshop Bode West in Coronado, Calif.

Chute was asked to present at the conference because this novel approach to review cases has never been done before.

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MUFSC Forensic Analyst Delivers Training Nationally and Internationally on DNA's Role in Sexual Assault Investigations

MUFSC Forensic DNA Analyst/Lab Coordinator Misty Marra is passionate about providing training and education to professionals who are involved with responding to sex assault crimes.

A graduate of Marshall's Forensic Science Graduate Program, Marra has been involved with MUFSC's sexual assault initiative since it began in 2001. The center began hosting adult and pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) trainings more than 10 years ago for nurses in West Virginia and later expanded the offering to nurses around the United States. She presents a segment about DNA at these trainings.

MUFSC is also the host facility for monthly meetings for the Cabell County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), of which Marra is a member. She also is a member of the West Virginia SANE Advisory Board.

A SART is a group of professionals who coordinate high-quality, victim-centered response to sexual violence in the local community. Teams may include SANEs, physicians and medical personnel, victim advocates, members of law enforcement, prosecutors and crime lab specialists.

Marra expanded her outreach efforts outside of her position at MUFSC in 2013 by using her expertise as a forensic DNA analyst to serve in the role of faculty in the SANE-SART On-line + Clinical Program, delivering training nationwide and internationally.

As part of this program, she has taken the message to Puerto Rico, Japan, El Paso and San Antonio, Texas, Seattle, Wash. and Louisville, Ky.

"I want members of SART to understand and be informed about what a crime lab can do for them and the role DNA can play in a sexual assault investigation," she said.

The SANE-SART On-line + Clinical Program, sponsored by SANE-SART Resource Service in Minneapolis, Minn., is an interactive online and on-site learning resource for professionals who respond to sexual assault, with SANEs being the primary focus.

Marra said she joined the program because of her long-term



MUFSC Forensic DNA Analyst Misty Marra, MSFS, delivers her "DNA in the Crime Lab" presentation in Japan.

interaction with Linda Ledray, RN, PhD, SANE-A, FAAN, who is the director SANE-SART Resource Service. Ledray is a nationally renowned expert who conducted several SANE trainings at MUFSC.

Marra is part of a team of subject-matter experts who provide training to SANE nurses and members of SART participating in the SANE-SART On-line + Clinical Program.

The program provides an online webinar and on-site training. Marra delivers a segment, "DNA in the Crime Lab," for both components. During the webinar, Marra prepares participants for the on-site training with an in-depth lecture.

At a later date, the subject matter experts conduct a two-day SART Live on-site interactive scenario and mock trial in regional locations to accommodate attendees.

The first day of on-site training involves interaction amongst the participants who are tasked with roles for working a mock sexual assault case, start to finish. Marra plays the role of victim. The second day, Marra provides information about DNA and the crime lab's role in a sexual assault case.

At MUFSC, Marra has analyzed approximately 500 forensic DNA cases, which have included homicides, sexual assaults and property crimes, as well as approximately 9,000 convicted offender samples.

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MUFSC Forensic DNA Lab

The presentation provided an overview of the strategies, challenges and successes that were encountered during development and implementation of the novel project.

A few years ago, the Michigan State Police (MSP) was faced with addressing a backlog of over 8,000 sexual assault kits from Detroit that needed to be tested.

In support of addressing the backlog, MUFSC's Forensic DNA Laboratory provided MSP assistance with the processing and DNA analysis of over 800 untested sexual assault kits for a project funded by the National Institute of Justice.

More recently, the MSP outsourced DNA testing of thousands of kits to private labs, and analytical reports from the cases needed to be reviewed.

To help expedite the review process of cases, the MSP approached MUFSC about participation in a pilot project to help complete reviews of the outsourced analytical data.

Over a one-year period, MUFSC completed reviews of about 2,400 cases tested by the private labs for MSP.

The project helped to expedite these cases for entry into CODIS (Combined DNA Index System). A CODIS hit links either a DNA profile from a forensic case to another case or to an offender profile. These hits provide investigative leads to law enforcement officers to follow.

Chute called the project a win-win situation. "We provided Michigan State Police with a highly qualified and highly trained temporary workforce to help reduce their sudden backlog, and we generated economic development for us and helped to address their needs," he said.

For more information about MUFSC's DNA testing and review services, please contact Chute at 304.691.8946 or e-mail jchute@marshall.edu.