



NEWS RELEASE

MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

1983 COLD CASE HOMICIDE OF SHERI JO ELLIOT SOLVED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Michigan State Police investigators assigned to the Third District Cold Case Unit have resolved the 1983 kidnapping and homicide of 16-year-old Sheri Jo Elliot bringing closure to a case that had remained unsolved for more than 40 years.

Elliot, described by friends and family as kind-hearted and full of promise, was reported missing after she failed to return home from school in Flint as expected on November 16, 1983. Concerns quickly escalated as search efforts began, involving local authorities and volunteers who combed nearby areas in hopes of finding her safe.

Hope became heartache four days later when her body was discovered along a rural roadway in Blumfield Township, Saginaw County. She had suffered multiple gunshot wounds and investigators determined she had been sexually assaulted. Despite extensive efforts, the case went cold due to limited forensic technology available at the time.

In 2023, detectives reopened the investigation and reexamined evidence using modern forensic science. Working in partnership with the MSP Forensic Science Division and Othram Labs, investigators utilized Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing to develop a profile of an unidentified suspect. This work led detectives to focus on Roni Collins, 75 of Grand Blanc.

Before investigators could obtain a voluntary DNA sample, Collins died by suicide in January 2026. DNA collected during his autopsy was later analyzed and conclusively matched evidence recovered from Elliot in 1983, identifying him as the individual responsible for the crime.

Western Michigan University Cold Case Program students were integral to solving this case. The students assisted in reorganizing and digitizing decades of investigative material, providing critical support to the renewed investigation.

Although Collins will not face prosecution, detectives believe the identification provides long-awaited answers to Elliot's family and the community. This case underscores the significant impact of advancing forensic technologies – particularly forensic genetic genealogy – in resolving decades-old unsolved crimes.

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