

November, 2007 - Monthly Update

FYI, this update is sent each month to all IAI board members, officers, committee chairs, regional representatives, division secretaries, certification board chairs and secretaries, division editors and IAI staff. This update contains information that is of particular interest to these groups. It is sent by e-mail to all those for whom I have an e-mail address and by regular mail to the rest. **If you receive this by regular mail but have an e-mail account**, please let me know and I will add your e-mail address to the distribution list. It is much more efficient and cost effective to send it that way.

Hello again from the IAI office.

Student Crime Scene Knowledge Certification

The International Association for Identification (IAI) announces a new program whereby students in two or four-year colleges or universities are eligible to take the knowledge portion of the IAI's Certified Crime Scene Investigator (CCSI) examination. Upon successful passage of that examination, students will be issued a letter of achievement noting they passed that test and upon completion of one year's experience doing crime scene investigation duties as an employee of a government agency, they will be fully certified as a Certified Crime Scene Investigator (CCSI). This letter of achievement is good for a period of five years. If the student fails to obtain the necessary experience within five years after successful completion of the knowledge examination, the student competency certification is null and void.

For students to be eligible for such knowledge certification, their educational institution must have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the IAI that outlines certain policies and procedures that must be in place before the educational institution is able to offer the CCSI examination. Any educational institution interested in participating in this program, seeking more information or a copy of the MOU should contact Molly in the IAI office at (651) 681-8566.

In order to be eligible for testing, students must have taken at least two crime scene related courses and be in the last two years of their educational program; most often that is a junior or senior year of college or university but could also be a student in a two year community college.

For complete information about the knowledge requirements for IAI certification as a CCSI, please see the IAI's website page

http://www.theiai.org/certifications/crime_scene/requirements.php

Students, note that applications for this program are not being taken at this time. Before that can occur, your educational institution must have signed an MOU with the IAI. Because it will take a while for this program to become established with the various educational institutions, applications are not available at this time.

The IAI looks forward to offering this unique opportunity to students who seek a career in crime scene investigation.

More information about the program will be published on the IAI's website, www.theiai.org, as it becomes available.

National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Forensics Committee

As noted previously, the IAI submitted a position paper to the NAS Forensic Committee. This paper outlined a number of contemporary issues in forensics that are of particular concern to the IAI. The entire text of the paper can be found at the following link:

http://www.theiai.org/nas_letter_20070919.pdf

President Ken Martin has been invited to address the final meeting of the Committee to be held in Washington, DC on December 6th. The Committee is interested in the matters raised in the IAI's position paper and requested that a representative from the IAI attend the meeting and participate in a discussion with the committee relative to the matters raised in that paper. In addition to President Martin, Glenn Langenburg, a fingerprint examiner from the Minnesota State Crime Laboratory, has been invited to speak to the Committee. A summary of the meeting will be provided in future columns.

Complete information about the NAS Forensic Committee can be found at:

<http://www8.nationalacademies.org/cp/projectview.aspx?key=48741>

National Institute of Justice (NIJ) News

NIJ recently announced a significant award to the National Forensic Technology Center (NFSTC) to offer training in latent fingerprint identification, footwear/tiretrack analyses and some administrative courses for those supervising those functions. Those courses will be offered in conjunction with the IAI's training partner, Ron Smith & Associates (RS&A). A total of approximately 72 people will go through a ten week training program, broken into one and/or two week blocks, during the next 18 months. The objective of the training will be to prepare the students to work as a latent fingerprint examiner and meet the knowledge requirements for that certification program. All training, to include transportation and lodging, will be at no cost to the student or their agency. Details are still under development and will be disseminated as they become more finalized.

The NIJ General Forensics Technical Working Group (TWG) recently met in Scottsdale, Arizona. President Ken Martin and I are members of that group and participated in the meeting. The purpose of the TWG is to provide NIJ with recommendations for research projects in the area of general forensics. That's pretty much everything other than DNA, and some of the bench sciences. The meeting was very productive and resulted in a number of research recommendations.

Membership of the TWG was recently adjusted, adding President Martin and Alice Maceo from the IAI.

NIJ will hold a forensics summit on December 17 and 18 in Washington, DC. I am honored to have been invited to that summit. The summit will bring together various forensic science stakeholders to discuss future directions and funding priorities. I'm told that forensic science advocates, critics, Innocence Project leadership, the defense bar and other disparate but affected stakeholders are invited. This should be a most interesting meeting. More information will be provided in future columns.

At the end of the Scottsdale TWG Meeting, a follow-on meeting was held with Ken Martin, Peter Komarinski, and myself from the IAI as well as Melissa Taylor from NIJ and Keith Morris from West Virginia University (WVU). Melissa explained that she is working with NIJ administration to create a task force to study the issues involved in AFIS Interoperability. As you know this issue has been around for a long time and is one of the line items that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Committee has been asked to explore. At the present time IAI leadership is working with Melissa to identify the appropriate individuals to be involved in this task force, should it be officially constituted by NIJ. A while ago I sent an e-mail to all of you asking for volunteers who would like to serve on this task force. A number of excellent responses were received in response to that e-mail and in the next few days President Martin will decide who will fill these positions. Again, more information to follow as it becomes available.

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Forensics Award

During the recent IACP Conference in New Orleans, several Volmer Awards for excellence in forensic science were awarded. Below is an article from the Chicago Daily Herald regarding one of the award recipients. It's pretty interesting.

Chicago Daily Herald: State Police Lauded for Saving Evidence

Three members of Chicago Forensic Science Center have been named as the first recipients of the August Vollmer Excellence in Forensic Science Award in the category of Significant Investigative Value in a Major Crime. The trio received the prize this week at the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference in New Orleans.

Chicago Daily Herald, October 17, 2007

State Police Lauded for Saving Evidence By Stacy St. Clair

The nation's top cops have bestowed a prestigious award upon the Illinois State Police employees who helped solve the Brown's Chicken murders.

Three members of Chicago Forensic Science Center have been named as the first recipients of the August Vollmer Excellence in Forensic Science Award in the category of Significant Investigative Value in a Major Crime. The trio received the prize this week at the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference in New Orleans.

Illinois State Police forensic scientists Cecilia Doyle, Debora Depczynski and the late Barbara Wilson discovered DNA traces on a discarded chicken bone found at the Brown's crime scene.

The evidence led to the May conviction of Juan Luna, one of two men charged in the grisliest murders in suburban history.

"The recognition of our personnel for their outstanding efforts and hard work in one of the most horrific murder cases in Illinois history is honorable and appreciated," state police Director Larry G. Trent said in a prepared statement. "The experience, knowledge and dedication these individuals bring to forensics and law enforcement is invaluable."

Luna and his high school pal Jim Degorski were arrested in May 2002 after DNA linked Luna to a discarded chicken dinner found in a trash bin inside the Palatine restaurant. At the time the food was found in 1993, scientists had no way of testing such a small sample.

The bones sat in a freezer for five years, until the Chicago Forensic Center was able to extract the DNA source from a breast bone. Police initially used the findings to exonerate a local man who had confessed to the crime.

In 2002, Luna provided a sample to police, and his saliva was matched to the genetic material found on the chicken. The profile linked to Luna could match only 1 in 2.8 trillion people, experts said.

After Luna's murder trial, jurors said the DNA evidence played a key role in their decision to convict. They also relied upon a detailed videotaped confession and a partial palm print found at the scene.

Luna has been sentenced to life in prison for his role in the fatal shootings of the restaurant's two owners and five employees on Jan. 8, 1993. His attorneys are appealing.

Degorski has pleaded not guilty to the crimes and is scheduled to stand trial early next year. If convicted, he could face the death penalty.

Joe Polski