



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOINT PRESS RELEASE OF THE DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF AND DODGE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

“Baby Theresa” Cold Case Resolved

13 years ago authorities in Dodge County found a deceased baby near the Village of Theresa. Until today, the community has been left wondering if her family would ever be identified. Today we can provide closure: This case has been resolved!

On Wednesday, April 29, 2009, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office and the Dodge County Medical Examiner's Office responded to Lone Road in the Town of Theresa and confirmed the death of a newborn baby found abandoned in a garbage bag. The full-term, 8# baby girl, appeared healthy. At that time, tests were conducted which were used to determine the cause of death for the baby. Investigators named her “Baby Theresa” to provide her with an identity, naming her after the community closest to where she was found, the Village of Theresa.

Authorities worked tirelessly at the time to identify family members of Baby Theresa (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles) to provide her with a respectful and dignified burial. Unfortunately, no family members could be identified and “Baby Theresa” was laid to rest without family present on Monday, May 11, 2009, at the Lowell Cemetery in southwest Dodge County. While the family may not have been present, her community in Dodge County was there to pay their respects.

Dodge County Medical Examiner PJ Schoebel conducted his investigation of the incident and ordered an autopsy which was performed on April 30, 2009. The medical examination did not reveal evidence that supported the contention or charge that the child was murdered. The pathologist concluded that the incident was a “fetal demise” indicating that the child may have died prior to, or during birth.

For almost 13 years, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office and the Dodge County Medical Examiner's Office continued to investigate and advances in forensic science allowed us to identify a suspect in this incident. In 2014, the sheriff's office worked with the district attorney to file a charge against the then-unknown mother's DNA profile to prevent the six-year statute of limitations for the charges to run, thus allowing for any prosecution now, 13 years later. In 2021, the mother was identified as Karin Luttinen from Milwaukee.

Our offices worked closely with the Dodge County District Attorney's Office to identify the correct charge in this incident. After evaluating all the evidence, it was determined that the appropriate charge, in this case, is Concealing the Death of a Child under Wisconsin State Statute 948.23(1)(a) relating to the issue of a woman. Concealing the Death of a Child or the issue of a woman is a Class I Felony punishable under statute by not more than \$10,000, or imprisonment by no more than 3 years and 6 months or both.

Today the mother made her initial appearance in the Dodge County Circuit Court and we will now wait for the legal process to take its course. Today we will not be able to release anything additional related to the investigation itself. For details, you may certainly request a copy of the criminal complaint from the courts as it is paramount that we maintain the integrity of this case throughout the criminal proceedings.

This incident shocked our Dodge County community when it occurred, but as shocking as it may be, the professionals of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office, the Dodge County District Attorney's Office and the Dodge County Medical Examiner's Office, along with our community, came together from the initial discovery of Baby Theresa's body until today.

I would like to thank all of those who worked diligently in this incident over the past 13 years. First, I would like to thank our primary investigators in this incident, Detective Vickie Brugger and Medical Examiner PJ Schoebel. They never gave up and pursued absolutely every lead imaginable since Baby Theresa was discovered in 2009. Detective Brugger was provided with every resource she needed to find closure in this case. I would also like to thank the rest of the criminal investigative division of the sheriff's office for their support and assistance of Detective Brugger along the way. PJ Schoebel worked on this case in conjunction with Detective Brugger providing additional resources and perspectives. Both of these individuals went above and beyond to solve this case.

I would also like to thank several other individuals:

- Sheriff's Office Chaplain Timothy Bauer - conducted the funeral service.
- Todd Michael and the staff at Cornerstone Funeral Home – donation of services.
- Matt Lober - vocalist at the gravesite during the funeral.
- Retired Sheriff Todd Nehls - providing resources in the initial investigation.
- Retired Correctional Officer Hanna Mueller - conducted a forensic drawing of Baby Theresa.
- Dodge County District Attorney Kurt Klomberg - provided legal guidance and prosecution of this case.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office and the Dodge County Medical Examiner still mourn the death of Baby Theresa, but we are thankful that resolution has taken place. While this certainly has been a shocking discovery for us all, especially to the family of Baby Theresa, closure can now begin for all those touched.

Questions may be directed to Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt or Medical Examiner PJ Schoebel.

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