

# MUPC Service Award Announcement



The National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) of Fox Valley Technical College is honored to award **Shannon Hodder** with the **2026 National Missing and Unidentified Persons Conference (MUPC) Service Award** for her outstanding contributions.

The MUPC Service Award recognizes the extraordinary efforts and outstanding achievements that have been made in contributing to the search, investigation, recovery, identification, and reunification of those that go missing. Ms. Hodder will be honored during the **National Missing and Unidentified Persons Conference, April 21-23, 2026, in Las Vegas, Nevada.**

Senior Assistant District Attorney Shannon Hodder is being recognized for demonstrating a sustained, unwavering commitment to bringing answers, dignity, and justice to families who have endured years of uncertainty. Shannon exemplifies the highest standards of public service, innovation, and compassion in the field of missing persons, unidentified decedent investigations, and cold case prosecution. Her body of work demonstrates not only exceptional professional ability, but a profound moral commitment to restoring identity, dignity, and justice to victims and families who have waited years—often decades—for answers.

Shannon has dedicated more than fifteen years serving her community as a prosecutor, with the later years of her career focused on missing persons, unidentified decedents, and their families. Since joining the DeKalb County District Attorney's Office, she has become one of the most influential prosecutorial leaders in the nation in the investigation, recovery, and identification of missing and unidentified persons.

Shannon's achievements extend far beyond individual cases. Shannon is one of the nation's leading prosecutorial experts in forensic investigative genetic genealogy (FIGG). She is FBI-trained and certified in IGG and has used that expertise to fundamentally transform the investigative capacity of DeKalb County. She helped design and launch the DeKalb County Cold Case Task Force, the first fully coordinated, multi-agency structure for reviewing the county's 600+ unsolved homicides. Under her leadership, the Task Force created a modern, systematic approach that unites the District Attorney's Office, the Medical Examiner's Office, the FBI, the GBI, law enforcement agencies, and multiple private labs in a shared mission to solve cold cases and identify decedents.

Shannon created DeKalb County's first Missing Persons Day and community DNA drive. For the past three years, she has organized and led this event, offering families investigative support, connections to national resources, and opportunities to provide kinship DNA to aid identification efforts. Her work has strengthened trust, expanded access to justice, and directly contributed to solving cases involving underserved populations.

For the past three years, Shannon has led DeKalb County's annual Missing Persons Day and community DNA drive, the first event of its kind in the county. These efforts provide direct services, resources, and kinship DNA collection opportunities to families searching for missing loved ones. Her leadership ensures minority and historically underserved communities have better access to investigative pathways that did not previously exist.

Shannon secured more than one million dollars in federal BJA funding to support this work. These grants enable DeKalb County to pursue FIGG for 27 unidentified decedents and to reinvestigate cold case homicides using advanced DNA methods. Because of her leadership, the county now benefits three FBI-certified FIGG analysts—a level of expertise rarely found in local jurisdictions. Her efforts have already resulted in the identification of 14 long-unidentified decedents and active genealogical analysis in 21 additional cases.

She also proposed legislation in Georgia that would make NAMUS entry mandatory for all missing persons cases. This is a significant public safety reform that would modernize statewide practices and help ensure that no individual is left out of national systems designed to aid identification.

Shannon's integrity is recognized on a national scale. She was appointed to the IJIS National FIGG Task Force, where her contributions help shape the ethical, legal, and operational standards for FIGG across the United States. Her participation in this group reflects both her expertise and her deeply rooted commitment to balancing justice, privacy, and public trust.

Her work on the no-body homicide of Shawndell McLeod is equally extraordinary. Very few prosecutors attempt—and even fewer succeed at—no-body prosecutions. Shannon led a complex, years-long multidisciplinary effort involving K-9 units, forensic specialists, digital analysis, witness development, and expert testimony presentation. Bringing a no-body case to trial requires meticulous attention to detail, strategic coordination, and unshakeable dedication. Shannon's prosecution resulted in the conviction of a defendant who would have otherwise escaped justice entirely.

Shannon's work has not only solved individual cases, but has fundamentally reshaped investigative systems, expanded forensic capacity, and elevated standards of practice throughout the field. Shannon's contribution is unique because it endures far beyond her individual caseload—she has built frameworks, policies, partnerships, and community initiatives that will continue to serve victims and families for decades.

*For more information about our 2026 National Missing and Unidentified Persons Conference visit [ncjtc.org/MUPC](https://ncjtc.org/MUPC)*