

Erie's Criminal Investigation Division receives grant for cold cases

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Credit:

Jose Rosario Sr. may finally get closure on the death of his son, Jose Rosario Jr., after Erie's Criminal Investigation Division received a grant to investigate cold cases and unsolved homicides.

18-year-old Jose Rosario Jr. was fatally shot in his apartment on Erie's Reed Street on Oct. 15, 2018. That night, his mother, two sisters, his girlfriend, and another family member who was visiting were at the apartment. When the shooting occurred at 3 a.m., everyone was thought to be sleeping, except for the guest, who was awake playing a video game. Around this time, Rosario got out of bed and headed to the back door for an unknown reason. When he reached the door, there was an interaction between Rosario and the assailant, concluding in Rosario being shot. Family members soon woke up and began caring for him before he was transported to UPMC Hamot. He was pronounced dead at 3:30 a.m., with Erie County Coroner Lyell Cook reporting that Rosario had died of a single gunshot wound to the chest.

In late 2021, Erie police announced that they had identified and charged five suspects in two homicides from 2018. Unfortunately, these resolved cases did not include Rosario's.

Rosario's father continues to draw attention to his son's unsolved murder by putting up signs, distributing shirts, holding memorial services and motorcycle rides, and posting information on social media to identify his son's killer.

The case is still open and will most likely benefit from the \$249,966 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, which called on the city to appoint a seasoned detective as a cold case investigator. Rick Lorah, the Erie Police Deputy Chief that oversees the bureau's Criminal Investigation Division, says that the police plan to have the cold-case detective working by early October.

Among the Erie homicides that remain unsolved are:

- The fatal shooting of 42-year-old Nelson Irizarry, on April 14, 2012. Irizarry had left a card game before he was found dead inside his Dodge Caravan in the 300 block of West 19th Street.
- The fatal shooting of 20-year-old Travon D. Green, on July 11, 2014. Green was an Erie native living in Baltimore at the time. He was found lying in bushes between two houses in the 700 block of East 10th Street, killed by a gunshot wound to the back.

- The shooting of Antonio "Jay" Yarger, 31, on Sept. 16, 2016. Yarger was shot as he was entering the front door of the place he was staying in the 1200 block of East 21st Street. Yarger's 7-year-old son Antonio was shot and killed in April of 2022.
- The fatal stabbing of James Allen, 34, on April 27, 2019. Allen was stabbed during an altercation inside a former nightclub, The Culture at 1023 State St.
- The fatal shooting of Deltwan Keyes, 29, and Donta Carson, 34, on Aug. 3, 2020. The two were standing in a small group of people in the 700 block of East Seventh Street when someone opened fire.
- The fatal shooting of Calvin Davis, 18, on July 1, 2021. Investigators said someone fired multiple gunshots into a duplex in the 500 block of West 29th Street, shooting Davis, who was sleeping in a bedroom in one of the units.

The detective will also focus on cases other than homicides, including the 2002 disappearance of Sabrina Kahler, who never came home after going to swim with a friend in Western Erie County.

Authorities say that they plan to keep seeking assistance from the community.

Jose Rosario Sr. continues to share stories about his son, including how his son became a highly skilled pool player, and how he was fixing up a 1998 Pontiac Bonneville with his dad's help. At the end of the day, Rosario says that what he remembers most fondly about his son is the way others remember him.