

# Virtual DOJ-BJA Forensic Genetic Genealogy Training

---

Speaker Bios



## James Anstead

Dr. James Anstead is the Laboratory Director for DNA Solutions, which he joined in 2013. He has over 15 years' experience in molecular biology, population genetics, and entomology. His prior experience includes working as a Research Associate at Pennsylvania State University and Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Anstead has published numerous articles and abstracts in various fields—including population genetics, plant biology, and entomology. He is an active member of the International Society for Animal Genetics, the Royal Entomological Society, the Entomological Society of America, the American Society of Plant Biologists, and other scientific organizations. Dr. Anstead received his BS in Biology from the University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom; he received his MS in Entomology from Oklahoma State University and his PhD from University College London.



## Ryan Backmann

Ryan Backmann was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida, where he worked in the architectural field until tragedy struck and changed his life. On October 10, 2009, his father, Cliff Backmann, was shot and killed during a robbery in what remains one of Jacksonville's estimated 1,500 unsolved murders. After losing his dad, he found a passion for helping others as a victim advocate. That passion evolved as his dad's case went cold. In 2015, Mr. Backmann started Project: Cold Case to advocate for—and publicize—cold cases while linking families, information, and law enforcement.

Mr. Backmann has served as Chair for the Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council in Jacksonville and is currently a regional coordinator for the Florida Crisis Response Team. He also serves on the Florida Sheriffs Association Cold Case Advisory Commission as the only survivor advocate. He has been recognized by numerous agencies, organizations, and publications for his work involving cold case advocacy.



## Amy Durall

Amy Durall is currently a Project Manager for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and her portfolio includes work on SAKI, Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims, Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services, Documenting and Advancing Promising Practices in Law Enforcement Victim Support, and Research and Evaluation of Victims of Crime. Prior to joining the IACP, Ms. Durall served as Victim Services Director for two separate law enforcement agencies—with both agencies receiving national recognition for victim services during her tenure. She has served on local and national committees that focused on a multidisciplinary and collaborative response to victims and consulted on projects aimed at criminal justice system intersections and enhanced victim response. Ms. Durall has enjoyed over 30 years of social service experience with a variety of populations—including youth and adults with developmental, emotional, and cognitive disorders; adults with mental health disorders; incarcerated adults; children and adults who need protective services; and individuals who have experienced physical violence, sexual violence, criminal victimization, and crisis circumstances. Ms. Durall has an MA in Psychology and was accepted into the Psi Chi Honor Society. She has received specialized certification in the instruction of victimology, grantsmanship essentials, and crisis intervention training; she routinely provides training to law enforcement personnel, community service agencies, and allied partners.



## Misty Gillis

Misty Gillis has been involved in the Genetic Genealogy field for over a decade. Over the years, she has been sought out by adoptees and children with misattributed parentage to successfully identify their biological families.

Ms. Gillis was part of the first wave of Forensic Genetic Genealogists, giving her the opportunity to apply her skills and knowledge to cold case crimes and unidentified persons. While working with Identifinders International, she has resolved over a dozen cases nationwide. Additionally, she is a subject matter expert for the SAKI Training and Technical Assistance Team. She also assists law enforcement with evidence assessments and case intake to evaluate whether a case is suitable for Forensic Genetic Genealogy.



## Trampas Gooding

Lt. Trampas Gooding has been in law enforcement since 1993, when he began serving as a Police Officer in Central Texas. In 1998, he joined the Texas Department of Public Safety as a State Trooper and was later promoted to Texas Ranger in 2004. During his career as a Texas Ranger, he has investigated and assisted numerous active and cold case homicide and sexual assault investigations and has assisted in numerous skeletal remains excavations. He has provided assistance to Texas Rangers and other agencies with case and crime scene reviews, evidential review and prioritization, and DNA and analyses reviews; additionally, he has consulted on further investigative strategies. In 2020, he was promoted to Staff Lieutenant and assigned to Texas Ranger Headquarters to assist and coordinate a federal grant for SAKI. The Department of Justice/Bureau of Assistance awarded the grant to the Texas Rangers in 2019 to assist with furthering cold case investigations involving unsolved sexual assaults and sexually related homicides by utilizing advanced DNA testing and genetic genealogy methods. Lt. Gooding serves as the SAKI Site Coordinator and Investigation Coordinator to review qualifying cases and coordinate with laboratory officials, district attorneys, investigative agencies, and Texas Rangers statewide to further these cases in hopes of bringing justice to the victims and their families. He is a current member of the Texas Sheriff's Cold Case Team, a member of the International Homicide Investigators Association, and a Law Enforcement Consultant to the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University.



## Ellen Greytak

Dr. Ellen Greytak is the Director of Bioinformatics at Parabon NanoLabs, where she leads the development of novel genomic analysis technologies for forensic and medical applications. She has spent more than 10 years researching the relationship between genotypes and phenotypes in humans. She is the Lead Scientist for the Snapshot<sup>®</sup> DNA Phenotyping technology, the world's first software application that is able to predict the ancestry and physical traits—including face shape—of an unknown person based on a forensic DNA sample. She also leads the Snapshot operational division, which performs phenotyping, genetic genealogy, and kinship analyses of forensic casework samples. Her continued research on Snapshot uses innovative software tools for phenotype capture, data mining, and predictive modeling to further advance this application. Additional ongoing projects include the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)-funded development of algorithms to determine the kinship between severely degraded DNA samples, with a goal of identifying fallen soldiers from past conflicts; the DoD-funded



creation of next-generation sequencing tools for the Fx Forensic Analysis Platform; the DoD-funded prediction of antimicrobial resistance phenotypes from pathogen genomes; and the National Institutes of Health-funded creation of an accurate direct-to-consumer test to predict individualized lifetime risk of late-onset Alzheimer's Disease. Dr. Greytak holds a PhD in Evolutionary Biology from Harvard University.

## **Jon Habben**

Special Agent (SA) Jon Habben has 17 years of law enforcement experience as an FBI Special Agent assigned to the Los Angeles Field Office. Since 2004, SA Habben has been assigned to the Orange County Resident Agency, working various white collar violations that include cyber matters and healthcare fraud. SA Habben has traveled overseas to work international corruption in Afghanistan and served as an Operator on the FBI Los Angeles SWAT team for 10 years. In 2019, SA Habben began working with the FBI's Investigative Genealogy Team in Los Angeles. His efforts have helped to solve dozens of cold case violent crimes nationwide. SA Habben continues to work with federal, state, and local agencies utilizing genealogy to solve some of the nation's most violent crimes.

## **Charles (Chuck) Heurich**

Charles (Chuck) Heurich's career began as a Crime Scene Technician in Baltimore City, where he processed over 2,000 crime scenes. He then spent 12 years with the Montgomery County Crime Lab; during this time, he worked as a Forensic Scientist in the Forensic Biology Unit performing DNA analysis and as a Forensic Specialist 2 in Forensic Services processing crime scenes, chemically enhancing latent fingerprints, and enhancing digital images. Mr. Heurich is currently a Senior Physical Scientist with the National Institute of Justice, where he has managed the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System since 2009; he now manages the National Center on Forensics, along with other special projects.



## **Mark James**

Special Agent (SA) Mark James has 17 years of law enforcement experience as an FBI Special Agent assigned to the Baltimore Field Office investigating gangs, narcotics, and violent crimes. Since March 2020, SA James has been the Team Leader of the FBI Baltimore Investigative Genealogy (IG) Team, which is responsible for conducting IG on violent crime and unidentified

human remains cases on the U.S. East Coast. The Baltimore IG Team has been responsible for the successful resolution of numerous violent crimes—including rapes and murders—and for the identification of unknown homicide victims.

## **Lisa Kalisek**

Lisa Kalisek is the Microarray Account Manager for law enforcement at Gene By Gene, where she has worked since 2015. Before being promoted to her current position, Ms. Kalisek managed the Array Team and helped implement procedures to facilitate high throughput microarray processing. In early 2019, she was promoted to assist in consulting and accepting law enforcement cases for single nucleotide polymorphism testing. Ms. Kalisek continues to be passionate about using biotechnology and genetic services to help law enforcement. She holds a BS in Microbiology and is certified by the American Society for Clinical Pathology in Molecular Biology. Additionally, she is pursuing an MBA with a Data Analytics concentration from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.



## **Heather McKiernan**

Dr. Heather McKiernan is currently a Research Forensic Scientist at RTI International, where she serves as the Forensic Services Program Manager for the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). She received her MS in Forensic Science from Arcadia University and her PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of Denver. Prior to joining RTI, Dr. McKiernan's professional experience spanned academia, research, casework, and executive leadership. She has directed graduate forensic science programs at Arcadia and Thomas Jefferson universities, worked as a Director of a nonprofit forensic laboratory, and served as a Forensic Genetics Consultant. Her areas of interest include emerging approaches to serological identification; improvements to methods for the collection, detection, and interpretation of low-template DNA samples; application assessment of next-generation sequencing technologies; and analysis and interpretation for DNA contact traces. Dr. McKiernan is a former member of the Biological Data Interpretation and Reporting Subcommittee of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science and current Co-chair of the 2022 Congress of the International Society of Forensic Genetics.



## Stephanie Mellinger

Staff Operations Specialist (SOS) Stephanie Mellinger works with the FBI in the Baltimore Field Office. SOS Mellinger began her career with the FBI in 2006 as a Biologist at the FBI Laboratory in Quantico, Virginia. She worked in both the Mitochondrial and Nuclear DNA Units. In 2016, SOS Mellinger transferred to the FBI Baltimore Field Office, where she has worked on the Violent Crimes Task Force. Since March 2020, she has been a certified member of the Baltimore Investigative Genealogy Team, which has solved numerous violent crimes and unidentified human remains cases.

## Rachel Oefelein

Rachel Oefelein is currently the Director of Research and Innovation as well as a Senior DNA Analyst at DNA Labs International. Additionally, she is a PhD candidate with Griffith University located in Brisbane, Australia. Ms. Oefelein received her MSc in Forensic Science from the University of Strathclyde and her BS in Criminal Justice, with a Forensic Science Minor, from Loyola University of New Orleans. Ms. Oefelein worked at the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory for nearly 5 years and interned at the Instytut Ekspertyz Sądowych, the forensic laboratory in Krakow, Poland. Since joining DNA Labs International in 2014, she has testified around the world—including 13 Florida counties, 6 states and U.S. territories, and 5 countries—as an expert witness for both the prosecution and the defense in misdemeanor and felony trials, as well as Williams, Daubert, and Arthur hearings.



## Carol Owens

Detective Carol Owens is a 26-year veteran of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD). She has 21 years' experience investigating sexual assaults, with the last 6 years focused on investigating cold case sexual assaults. In her role as Lead Detective in CMPD's Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit, she manages four part-time Detectives. This team investigates cases that have evidence tested by CMPD's Crime Lab; the evidence is also tested with funding through various grants—including the District Attorney of New York and multiple SAKI grants (i.e., FY2016, FY2017, FY2019, and FY2020). Detective Owens understands the importance of a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach and works closely with CMPD's SAKI Site-Based Advocate when supporting those affected by sexual violence. She is also a member of Mecklenburg County's Sexual Assault Response



Team. Detective Owens understands the importance of keeping informed about and utilizing the latest technological advances in cold case sexual assault investigations.

## **Patricia (Patti) Powers**

Patricia (Patti) Powers joined AEquitas as an Attorney Advisor after serving as a Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in Washington State for 27 years. During her tenure as a prosecutor, she supervised the Sexual Assault—Domestic Violence Unit. She successfully prosecuted and tried a high volume of violent crimes—specializing in adult sexual assault; child sexual assault and abuse; sexual exploitation of minors; domestic violence; and related homicides—which included complex litigation of high-profile, as well as cold and current cases. Ms. Powers served as a member of domestic violence and child fatality review committees and was also a member of the Washington State Technical Assistance Committee for Child Death Review Guidelines. For 5 years during her prosecution career, she was appointed as a Highly Qualified Expert for the United States Army, Criminal Investigation Division; in this role, she provided training for army criminal investigation agents and prosecutors at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and in Germany. She is the lead AEquitas Attorney Advisor on the SAKI project.



## **Sean Regan**

Special Agent (SA) Sean Regan has over 25 years of law enforcement experience. He has been with the FBI as a Special Agent for over 14 years and is currently assigned to the Baltimore Field Office. He is also the Primary Behavioral Analysis Unit Coordinator for FBI Baltimore and a certified FBI Interview and Interrogation Instructor. Prior to joining the FBI, he spent 12 years as a Trooper with the Pennsylvania State Police. Since March 2020, SA Regan has been a certified member of the Baltimore Investigative Genealogy Team, which has solved numerous violent crime and unidentified human remains cases.



## Ashley Rodriguez

Ashley Rodriguez is a Research Public Health Analyst with RTI International, where she has primarily served as a Forensic Scientific Advisor on the SAKI Training and Technical Assistance program since 2021. Prior to joining RTI, Ms. Rodriguez spent over 12 years working at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). The majority of her NCMEC career was spent serving as a Senior Forensic Case Manager, providing training and technical assistance to law enforcement and medical examiners/coroners working cases involving unidentified children. She has extensive experience collaborating with law enforcement to resolve highly sensitive cases using a variety of technical and forensic resources. Ms. Rodriguez worked on a high-profile quadruple homicide case in New Hampshire. Her work helped local law enforcement agencies connect the case across jurisdictions to another case in California, ultimately identifying the suspect. This case led to a New Hampshire Congressional Law Enforcement Award for Ms. Rodriguez. Ms. Rodriguez obtained a BA in Psychology and Cognitive Science in 2007 from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She received an MA in Forensic Psychology in 2008 from Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.



## Sarah Savicki

Sarah Savicki has served as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's (CMPD's) SAKI Site Coordinator since 2016. She coordinated the SAKI FY2016 grant and now coordinates the SAKI FY2017, FY2019, and FY2020 grants for CMPD. Ms. Savicki sees her role not only as CMPD's point of contact for the grants but also as an advocate for their guiding principle—comprehensive, victim-/survivor-centered jurisdictional reform of approaches to sexual assault cases. To this end, she serves on the Mecklenburg County Sexual Assault Response Team, a multidisciplinary working group collaborating to bring a coordinated, victim-/survivor-centered response to those affected by sexual assault.



Prior to her work as the SAKI Site Coordinator, Ms. Savicki volunteered for 5 years with the CMPD Cold Case (Homicide and Sexual Assault) Unit; this experience gave her a critical foundation of knowledge for her responsibilities to come. Prior to this volunteer work, she served in community mental health where she implemented a Dialectical Behavior Therapy program and provided direct therapeutic programming and psychological consultation. Ms. Savicki has both an undergraduate and a master's degree in Clinical Psychology.

## Andrew Singer

Andrew Singer, Chief Commercial Officer at Othram, is responsible for leading efforts to expand Othram's operations by growing and developing the use of Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) while focusing on the company's mission of enabling justice for all victims and their families. Mr. Singer collaborates with internal and external stakeholders to responsibly and ethically adopt FGG technology. He also oversees the customer experience and works to streamline investigations and communications.



Mr. Singer joined Othram after 14 years at Bode Technology, most recently as the Vice President of Global Marketing and Operations Sales. His responsibilities included developing and implementing go-to-market strategies for new projects and programs and managing strategic partnerships, including the FGG program. He also managed the domestic sales, marketing and technical services teams. Mr. Singer earned an MBA and an MS in Biotechnology from Johns Hopkins University and a BS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Maryland.

## Jessica Smith

Jessica Smith serves as a Supervisory Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Alexandria and has been employed as a prosecutor in that office since 2009. She currently supervises the Violent Crimes Unit, serves as the Crash Team Liaison, and handles probation and parole matters—as well as the prosecution of designated major crimes. Her previous responsibilities involved a variety of dockets—including the prosecution of homicides, felony assaults, sex offenses against adults and children, assaults on police, asset forfeiture, domestic violence offenses, and traffic cases.



Ms. Smith regularly participates in moot court exercises at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy to train the recruit officers how to testify in criminal cases. Additionally, she has participated in several moot court qualification hearings with the Forensic Science Law Unit at the FBI Laboratory in Quantico, Virginia, acting as a prosecutor or defense attorney in hearings involving complex scientific testimony. Ms. Smith has also trained members of the FBI's Evidence Response Team as part of their Advanced Moot Court course.

Ms. Smith graduated with a BPhil in Interdisciplinary Studies from Miami University in 2006. She began working for the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney as a Law Clerk in 2008 and obtained her JD from George Mason University in 2009. In 2019,

she received the S. Randolph Sengel Award for Prosecutorial Excellence for her prosecution of the Jesse Bjerke rape case, which was the first conviction in Virginia based upon investigative genetic genealogy. Her husband is an Special Victims Unit Detective in Alexandria, and she spends her time outside the office chauffeuring their two children to various sporting events and hiking with a moderately feral bloodhound.

## Cesar Tirado

Cesar Tirado has been with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO) since 2007. For the first 10 years, he worked as a Victim Advocate for the Victim Services Division and was assigned to the Major Crimes I & II Bureaus. For the past 3 years, he has worked as the Site Coordinator for MCAO's SAKI project. Mr. Tirado received his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice Administration from San Diego State University and his master's degree in Public Administration from Arizona State University.



## Teresa Vreeland

Teresa Vreeland is the Director of Forensic Genealogy Services at Bode Technology. She has been at Bode since 2006 and has a BS in Genetic Engineering from Cedar Crest College. As a Senior DNA Analyst, she has conducted DNA testing on thousands of cases. In late 2018, Ms. Vreeland played an integral part in forming Bode's Forensic Genealogy Services Team; as part of this team, she helped bring this full-service offering to the company's clients. She is passionate about finding new ways to bring DNA testing to the forefront of cold and challenging cases, with the goal of delivering closure for victims and their families—and justice for the guilty.



## Mary Weston

Mary Weston is the Supervisor of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office's Cold Case/Genetic Operations Linking DNA Unit. She has been an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney since 2006 and joined the Cuyahoga County Sexual Assault Kit Taskforce when it was formed in 2013. Currently, she is the Project Manager for the Taskforce; she oversees all aspects of cold case sexual assault and homicide investigations, makes charging decisions, presents cases to the grand jury, and litigates cases in court and on appeal.



## Amy Whitman

Special Agent (SA) Amy Whitman is an FBI Special Agent assigned to the Violent Crime/Major Offenders Squad in the Los Angeles Field Office. She has 10 years' experience working various criminal threats—including healthcare fraud, crimes against children, bank robberies, and threats to life. SA Whitman supports tactical operations as an Emergency Medical Technician on the Operational/Tactical Medicine Team. In 2019, she joined the Investigative Genealogy Team in Los Angeles and has assisted in solving complex cases throughout the United States. Further, SA Whitman has helped develop a more robust Investigative Genealogy program throughout the FBI and taught best practices to other investigators at the federal, state, and local levels.

## Angela Williamson

Dr. Angela Williamson is the Supervisor, Forensics Unit/Federal Bureau of Investigation Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) Liaison at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Dr. Williamson also serves as the Forensic Subject Matter Expert for BJA and FBI ViCAP/Behavioral Analysis Unit and assists law enforcement agencies across the United States. She developed and oversees SAKI, along with other forensic-based programs at BJA. She received her doctorate in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry from the University of Queensland in Australia. She has over 16 years of experience as a Forensic Specialist working on complex criminal cases and missing/unidentified persons' investigations. As a Forensic Scientist, Dr. Williamson worked in state and private forensic labs and performed serological screening and DNA analysis on thousands of major crime cases. Prior to joining DOJ, she held the positions of Director of Forensic Casework at Bode Technology (America's largest private forensic DNA laboratory) and Biometrics, and Unknown Victim Identification Project Manager at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). At Bode, she worked thousands of sexual assault cases; homicides; human remains (e.g., missing, unidentified, mass disasters); and many high-profile cases (including the Zodiac serial killer and



JonBenét Ramsey homicide). At NCMEC, she oversaw forensic/biometric services, assisted in the identification of child homicide victims, and helped solve cold case homicides. She has extensive knowledge of current forensic practices and emerging technologies and routinely trains law enforcement in all aspects of forensics, including advanced DNA techniques for crime scene evidence. In 2018 and 2020, Dr. Williamson received the DOJ Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contributions to the mission and goals of the Office of Justice Programs. In 2019, she also received the International Homicide Investigators Association Award for Excellence for her role in the Samuel Little serial killer investigation.