



Sheriff David P. Decatur, Jr.
Stafford County Sheriff's Office
A State Accredited Law Enforcement Agency



July 25, 2025

Virginia Forensic Science Academy Alumni Association
Dr. Paul Ferrara Award Nomination
Nominee: Master Detective David Wood
Stafford County Sheriff's Office

To the VFSAAA Awards Committee,

It is with great pride and deep respect that I nominate Master Detective David Wood of the Stafford County Sheriff's Office for the Dr. Paul Ferrara Award.

Detective Wood, a 1991 graduate of the Virginia Forensic Science Academy, has consistently demonstrated outstanding professionalism, forensic expertise, and relentless commitment to justice. His leadership in the investigation of the 1986 murder of Jacqueline Lard—one of Virginia's most enduring and complex homicide cases—culminated in the successful identification, arrest, and conviction of the offender nearly four decades after the crime. His work exemplifies the critical role that forensic science, when paired with tireless investigative dedication, plays in bringing long-overdue closure to victims' families and communities.

On the night of November 14, 1986, 40-year-old Jacqueline Lard was working late at Mount Vernon Realty on Garrisonville Road in Stafford County. She was last seen around 9:00 p.m. The following morning, coworkers arrived to find clear evidence of a violent struggle, and both Lard and her vehicle were missing. Two days later, her body was discovered in a wooded area near Railroad Avenue in Prince William County. She had been brutally beaten, sexually assaulted, and strangled. Her vehicle was found abandoned in Fairfax County in December.

A regional task force was quickly formed, and investigators collected critical biological evidence from the scene. However, the Virginia DNA database did not exist at the time, and the FBI's CODIS system would not be implemented until 1998, limiting the ability to match unknown DNA to any offender. Although the case was never closed and remained active under the stewardship of multiple dedicated investigators, it would take decades of evolving forensic science and unwavering determination to finally uncover the truth.

When Detective Wood assumed responsibility for the case in January 2012, he brought renewed momentum and modern forensic strategy. Over the following years, he worked closely with a wide network of partners, including the Virginia State Police, Fairfax County Police Department, Prince William County Police Department, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal

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Bureau of Investigation, the FBI Laboratory, Parabon NanoLabs, and most notably, the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (DFS).

In 2021, a pivotal moment occurred when DFS successfully linked DNA evidence from the Lard case to the 1989 murder of 18-year-old Amy Baker in Fairfax County. The scientific confirmation that both homicides were committed by the same unknown offender breathed new urgency into both investigations and deepened the inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

In 2018, anticipating breakthroughs in DNA analysis, Detective Wood engaged Parabon NanoLabs to apply forensic investigative genetic genealogy (FIGG)—a cutting-edge method that combines traditional DNA profiling with genealogical research. With continued support from DFS, investigators identified a potential family name by December 2023. Over the course of the investigation, DNA reference samples were collected from more than 30 individuals. Eventually, a sample obtained from 65-year-old Elroy Harrison resulted in a direct match to the biological evidence preserved from the 1986 crime scene.

On March 5, 2024, Harrison was arrested following a grand jury indictment in Stafford County for first-degree murder, abduction with intent to defile, aggravated malicious wounding, and breaking and entering with intent to commit murder. On June 26, 2025, a jury found Harrison guilty on all counts. He is currently awaiting sentencing.

This case is a remarkable testament to the enduring power of forensic science, the value of preserving evidence, and the importance of interagency collaboration. The successful resolution reflects the collective efforts of crime scene investigators, forensic scientists, analysts, and detectives spanning nearly 40 years. But it was Detective David Wood's vision, persistence, and forensic acumen that served as the driving force behind the final outcome.

Thanks to his leadership, closure was finally delivered to the families of Jacqueline Lard and Amy Baker, and justice was served for two of Virginia's most tragic and long-unsolved homicides. Detective Wood's work has also set a gold standard for the integration of forensic tools into investigative practice.

For his extraordinary use of forensic science, steadfast dedication over more than a decade, and leadership in one of Virginia's most significant cold case investigations, I am honored to nominate Master Detective David Wood for the 2025 Dr. Paul Ferrara Award.

Sincerely,



Eric Quinn
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