



# *Pueblo County Sheriff's Office*

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## News Release

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Gayle Perez 719 924 5471  
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### **Sheriff's Detectives Solve 23-year-old "Baby Hope" Cold Case**

**Pueblo, CO:** Dedicated and persistent work by Pueblo County Sheriff's detectives with assistance from the Colorado Bureau of Investigations has led to solving and closing the cold case homicide involving an infant girl whose body was found in the Arkansas River, west of the Nature Center in 1996.

The case of "Baby Hope", which had been under investigation for more than two decades, recently resurfaced as Pueblo County Sheriff's Detective David Butterfield, who took over the case in 2017, continued pursuing leads into the identification of the infant's parents and any other involved individuals in her death.

Based on leads developed with assistance from CBI, detectives contacted and attempted to question all persons of interest in the case. One of the individuals contacted by detectives in early October 2019, was LeeAnne Hed, 52, of Pueblo West. Hed refused to speak to detectives. Days later, Pueblo Police investigated a burned car with a body inside found in the lot of the Southern Colorado Gaming & Events Center, 3215 Lake Ave. Pueblo County Coroner Brian Cotter recently identified the body in the vehicle as LeeAnne Hed. Pueblo Police concluded their investigation and in conjunction with the coroner's office ruled her death a suicide.

Detective Butterfield continued to gather biological evidence from the victim in the burned car. The evidence collected was compared to DNA from "Baby Hope" to positively identify Hed as the mother of the infant.

The "Baby Hope" case began August 24, 1996, after two fishermen found the body of the infant in the river below the reservoir. An autopsy revealed the baby had been born alive before she was left in the river. The cause of death was ruled a drowning and deemed a homicide. The child was buried under the name of "Baby Hope" at Mountain View Cemetery.

Pueblo County Sheriff's investigators aggressively pursued numerous leads early on to identify the mother. The baby became known as "Baby Hope" as leads into her identification, the identification of the mother and information on how the infant ended up in the river were exhausted. Detectives also worked closely with law enforcement in Larimer County to determine if a similar case there was related. In the Larimer County case, a day-old infant girl's body was found also on August 24, 1996, in the Horsetooth Reservoir. The cases were determined to not

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be related. Both cases ended up going cold. An arrest in that incident known as the “Baby Faith” case was made in November 2019.

As all leads in the “Baby Hope” death were exhausted, the case was acknowledged as a cold case. However, throughout the past two decades, investigators periodically dusted off the file and attempts were made to identify the mother. In early 2019, Pueblo County Sheriff’s detectives were contacted by CBI, who agreed to conduct an updated analysis of “Baby Hope’s” DNA and as a result, produced a list of persons of interest as possible parents of the child. That’s when detectives began contacting the individuals, including Hed.

Further investigation by sheriff’s detectives following Hed’s death determined she was solely responsible for the death of Baby Hope based on facts and evidence collected throughout the entire case. The case has now been closed.

“If not for the support and assistance provided by the CBI, this case would still be unsolved,” said Pueblo County Sheriff Kirk M. Taylor. “I want to thank CBI for their work on helping us bring a resolution to this case and I commend our detectives for their perseverance, dedication and diligent work on it. Bringing closure to this case demonstrates our determination to solve crimes, no matter how old or how cold the case may be.”

The Pueblo County Sheriff’s Office reminds the public that if they have information on any active or cold cases, contact the Pueblo County Sheriff’s Office at (719) 583-6250 or to remain anonymous call Crime Stoppers at (719) 542-STOP (7867).

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