



WEST VIRGINIA STATE POLICE
FORENSIC LABORATORY
THE LAB REPORT
VOLUME 7 NO. 1 — SPRING 2021



**SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST:**

- New Testing Services!
- Submission of NIBIN evidence
- Employee Spotlights

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

We at the WVSPFL hope everyone is safe, healthy and successfully adjusting to the changes COVID-19 and this last year has brought. The pandemic required some operational changes within the Laboratory including limited on-site staffing, increased demand for IT equipment and off-site capabilities, and the balance between maintaining the health and safety of our staff while meeting the needs of our customers. I am proud to say that our staff was incredibly effective in a telecommuting environment as we succeeded in maintaining consistent operations and had no evidence of work-place spread of the COVID-19 virus. Moreover, we successfully implemented the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) in our Firearm/Toolmark/Impressions Section and quantitation technologies in our Seized Drugs Section. Details on these technologies are contained within this newsletter and we are happy to help with any questions or concerns you may have. Stay safe in 2021.

With Respect,
Sheri Lemons
Laboratory Director



Links:

[WEST VIRGINIA STATE POLICE FORENSIC LABORATORY FIELD MANUAL](#)
[FORENSIC LABORATORY EVIDENCE SUBMISSION FORM](#)
[CURRENT JOB POSTINGS](#)
[FEEDBACK SURVEY](#)

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHTS!

Employee Spotlight: Angela Gill

Hometown: Milton, WV

Education: Bachelors and Masters degrees in Biological Science from Marshall University.

Work Experience: I have been with the WVSP Forensic Laboratory in the Biology/DNA Section since 2005.

Role at the WVSP Forensic Laboratory: As a Forensic Scientist in the Biology/DNA Section, I receive items of evidence that contain biological materials (blood, saliva, hair, etc.) and attempt to produce a DNA profile from those samples. I am also the Training Officer for the Biology/DNA Section, so I am responsible for training any new scientists or technicians who join the section. I also participate in training new law enforcement officers through the State Police Academy, regarding collection and submission of biological evidence.

Favorite part of your job: I have an amazing group of colleagues who really come together to get the job done. I also enjoy training and the connections and conversations that produces. Through training, I have been able to interact with veteran and new scientists, law enforcement officers of all levels of experience, lawyers, and school kids of all ages, and I always learn something new! It has really helped me learn effective ways to communicate a difficult subject to people of all ranges of experience.

and a little bit more...

Meagan Lesser—“Angela plays a large role in the success of our section. She makes sure she always has the time for hands-on training and questions any time of day. Even throughout the midst of a pandemic, she was able to train new scientists by being available, not only at the office, but at home too. I am grateful to have such a caring person to call, not just a co-worker, but also a friend.”

Melissa Runyan—“Angela and I began our career in the DNA section around the same time. She is not only a coworker, but also a good friend. Angela goes above and beyond in all aspects of her life. As the training officer, she ensures all new DNA scientists are prepared to work cases independently and that the community is educated on aspects of DNA testing. Angela has the kindest heart. She never forgets a birthday or special occasion; she checks on you if you are sick, keeps a basket of candy in her office for the occasional chocolate fix and makes sure the office is always kept tidy.”



CONT: Employee Spotlights!

Employee Spotlight: Robyn Lewis

Hometown: St. Albans, WV

Education: Bachelor of Science from the University of Charleston

Work Experience: I have been employed by the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory since October, 2000. Prior to coming to the WVSP Forensic Lab, I was employed as a microbiologist with the Office of Laboratory Services State Public Health Laboratory.

Role at the WVSP Forensic Laboratory: I am employed as a Forensic Scientist 6 in the Latent Print Section. I am trained to competency in all aspects of the latent print discipline. This competency includes knowledge of the biological morphology of friction ridge skin, knowledge and experience in the physical, chemical, and electronic processing of evidence for latent friction ridge skin impressions; and in the preservation of developed latent impressions. My competency also includes the use of the Analysis, Comparison, Evaluation and Verification methodology (ACE-V) of developed latent impressions and in the use of the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). Another aspect of my position as a latent print examiner is using the ACE-V methodology to conduct comparisons of non-latent impressions (i.e. inked or electronically taken fingerprints), and I am currently the primary examiner for fingerprint comparison requests submitted by the ATF. I also provide court testimony of my examinations when requested. I conduct administrative and technical reviews of cases for other examiners in the section. I have also been trained to do administrative reviews of cases in the Toxicology and Seized Drug Sections, and I enjoy helping when needed. As the Quality Officer of the Latent Print Section, and a member of the Quality Assurance Board, I am responsible for keeping up on quality matters not only within the section, but also with ANAB standards, and current and proposed standards in the latent print discipline. I have also been involved in providing training for law enforcement officers at the WVSP Academy and throughout the state through the Laboratory Road Shows, as well as being a guest speaker at WV State University for forensic classes taught by the Criminal Justice Department and at Marshall University for classes taught by the Forensic Science Department. I am currently on the Forensic Advisory Board for Fairmont State University where I have also provided guest lectures. One of my proudest accomplishments is achieving certification in the discipline of latent prints from the International Association for Identification (IAI) in which I am an active member of both the parent body as well as the regional chapter (Chesapeake Bay Division).



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CONT: Employee Spotlight (Robyn Lewis)

Favorite part of your job: I would have to say that the favorite part of my job is the relationships I have made over the past twenty years. Not only with colleagues within the section and laboratory, but within the entire criminal justice system throughout the state and across the country. Working with people who are dedicated to doing honest, ethical work makes it easy to come to work every day, and the friendships I have made during my time here at the WVSP Forensic Lab have come to be more like family.

and a little bit more...

Korri Powers— “I am fortunate enough to call Robyn Lewis both a friend and colleague. Robyn’s skill as a latent print examiner is only outweighed by her kindness and compassion for others. She is well respected in both her field and her community and is a true asset to the laboratory.”

Stephen King— “I have worked with Robyn Lewis for twenty plus years now. She arrived without training in the discipline and worked exceptionally hard to learn what she needed to in order to perform the work at the highest level. Every day she has brought with her to the office and laboratory the work ethic she learned from her parents and every day she strives to maintain it. She has made herself into one of the most respected people in the laboratory and a skilled professional that is part of a small group of professionals in the world who are certified in her particular skill. She is as much the author of our unit’s success as anyone.

I have benefitted from every one of those days that have added up to her twenty plus years. She is a valued and respected colleague and a dear friend.”

CONT: Employee Spotlight!

Employee Spotlight: Blake Reta

Hometown: Murrieta, CA — but I call WV home now!

Education: Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of Charleston

Work Experience: I have been employed by the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory (WVSPFL) since December, 2010. Prior to working full time at the WVSPFL, I was an intern in the Firearm & Toolmark Identification Section and a part-time analyst in the Drug Identification Section.

Role at the WVSP Forensic Laboratory: I serve as a Forensic Scientist 5 in the Firearm & Toolmark Identification Section, where I perform casework. As an examiner in the Firearm & Toolmark Section, I conduct testing of evidence in the following areas: firearm comparisons, toolmark comparisons, NIBIN entry & correlation, physical/fracture match comparisons, serial number restorations, distance determination, footwear comparisons, and tire track comparisons. I am a member of the Association of Firearm & Toolmark Examiners (AFTE), through which I have obtained certification in the area of Firearms Identification; I also am a member of the International Association for Identification (IAI). In addition to casework, I serve as the section's technical leader and NIBIN program administrator. I am an editor of the laboratory newsletter and a member of the laboratory's internal audit team.



Favorite part of your job: I find joy and meaning in many different aspects of my job, however it is easy to say that my favorite part of the job is the people I work with. I really enjoy the relationships that I have developed over my first 10 years within the WVSPFL, as well as with other examiners from laboratory's throughout the country and world.. Every relationship has the opportunity for each person to share and gain knowledge and perspective. I look forward to coming to work every day with the chance to learn something from someone else or share my knowledge and experience with others.

and a little bit more...

Calissa Carper—“Blake is one to always offer assistance in any area that he can. He is also one of the most technology-savvy individuals that I know and this trait is becoming more beneficial to our section as our firearms discipline is starting to enter the 3D microscopy field.”

Kent Cochran—“Blake is very self-motivated and likes the challenges that come with being involved in different aspects of not only our section, but the laboratory as a whole. At the same time he manages to be a dedicated husband and father to his two girls.”

QUANTITATION OF METHAMPHETAMINE IS AVAILABLE

Carrie Summers
Seized Drugs Section Supervisor

The Seized Drug Section of the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory recently validated a method for the quantitation of methamphetamine. The methamphetamine quantitation process has been accredited by ANAB. This service will be performed, once the sample has been confirmed to contain Methamphetamine, utilizing Gas Chromatography with a Flame Ionization Detector. The officer will need to specify if purity/quantitation is needed at the time of submission, on the Case Submission Form, the **WVSP Form 53**. The Case Submission Form requesting meth quantitation must be accompanied with a letter from

the United States Attorney or Assistant United States Attorney handling the case, as purity is critical in the federal sentencing process. The letter should be on official letterhead, indicating the laboratory case number and/or case number of the submitting agency, the suspect's name, and the items (up to five) for which quantitative analysis is requested. Once the case arrives at the laboratory it will be given two requests and the officer will receive two reports, one with the confirmation of methamphetamine, and the other with the purity information. The scientists in the Seized Drugs Section have worked very hard on this validation, as well as during the implementation process, and are looking forward to providing this service.

FIREARMS: NIBIN TESTING IS AVAILABLE

Blake Reta
NIBIN Program Administrator

What is NIBIN? How does it work?

The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, commonly referred to as NIBIN, is a database comprised of digital images of cartridge cases submitted by local, state, and federal agencies. NIBIN's aim is to provide investigative leads for law enforcement related to gun crime.

Captured images from cartridge cases and firearms recovered at crime scenes, or from confiscated firearms, can be

entered into NIBIN. Once entered, those images will be sorted and searched against the database to return other similarly marked cartridge cases. A NIBIN user will then examine the images to determine if any potential leads (potential matches) are present. Potential leads will then be communicated to the relevant agencies involved.

Continued on the next page.

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CONT: NIBIN TESTING

How does NIBIN benefit me? Why Should I participate and enter my evidence into NIBIN?

NIBIN is a network that allows the comparison of a piece of evidence that has been entered with thousands of other exhibits in a very short period of time. This tool can help to solve and prevent violent crime that involves the use of firearms. As NIBIN users at the WVSPFL, our goal is to provide you with leads in a timely manner and aid you in the investigative process.

NIBIN can provide links between crimes that are suspected of being connected, as well as provide links between crimes that had no previous appearance of being connected.

However, this only works if you participate! Just like searching a fingerprint through AFIS or looking for a match to someone's DNA in CODIS, if the database being used is not populated with information, it is of little use. **The population of the NIBIN database with local items of evidence is dependent upon the participation of all of West Virginia's law enforcement agencies.** If you do not participate, the chances of you getting a lead for an investigation you are working on is 0%!

What is a potential lead, how will I be notified, and what is a hit?

A potential lead is the association of two or more cases through the digital comparison of the items of evidence entered into NIBIN. Agencies will be notified of a potential lead through a lead notification form. This form will be emailed to the agencies that are involved in the potential lead. The NIBIN program will make every effort to inform agencies of potential leads within 24 hours of them being developed. This means it is critical the contact information (email & phone) you provide on the paperwork for NIBIN is correct.

Note: A potential lead is not a report, and the items of evidence involved have not been examined by a firearms examiner under a comparison microscope. A lead notification form is not meant to be used in court as testimony that a firearm fired a particular fired cartridge case, or that multiple fired cartridge cases were fired in the same unknown firearm.

A hit is when the items of evidence involved in a potential lead have been microscopically examined by a Firearms Examiner and been confirmed as having been fired in the same firearm. A hit is the subject of a forensic laboratory report and can be testified to in court by a firearms examiner.

Continued on the next page.

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CONT: NIBIN TESTING

Is my evidence eligible?

The following firearms are eligible for entry into NIBIN:

- All semi-automatic pistols.
- Semi-automatic rifles chambered for 7.62x39 and 5.56x45 (223 Remington).
- Semi-automatic or slide action shotguns chambered for 12 gauge.
- Long guns chambered for pistol cartridges (this includes 22 Long Rifle)
- Fired cartridge cases / shotshells are also eligible as long as they are a caliber included in the above firearms.

Revolvers are not eligible for entry into NIBIN. Any firearm or fired cartridge case/shotshell not meeting the above requirements will require justification to be entered into NIBIN.

What evidence is needed for submission?

Submit all eligible firearms (or test fires) that are seized or from crime scenes. It is preferred, if you have the capability, that you test fire the firearm and submit only the test fires with the appropriate firearm information requested on the WVSP Form 53B.

Note: If you are submitting a firearm, make sure the magazine is submitted as well!

Submit all eligible fired cartridge cases and shotshells from crime scenes.

To ensure timely entry, it is required that you package any evidence with a NIBIN request separate from all other evidence when you are submitting to the laboratory.



NIBIN: SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

Blake Reta

NIBIN Program Administrator

How do I get my evidence into NIBIN?

Entry of your evidence into NIBIN can occur 1 of 2 ways.

If NIBIN is the only examination needed, then we request you use the NIBIN by Appointment program, if your agency can travel to the WVSPFL. If you have additional forensic examinations that are needed of the evidence involved for NIBIN entry, then you will need to submit your evidence to the laboratory with the **WVSP Form 53** and **WVSP Form 53B**.

If NIBIN is the only request for the firearm and fired cartridge cases (or shotshells), but other items require forensic testing for the case, then NIBIN by Appointment can still be used. In this case it may be to your benefit that you bring evidence for NIBIN by appointment and then submit the additional evidence to the laboratory before or after your appointment.

NIBIN by Appointment:

NOTICE: After evidence has gone through the NIBIN by Appointment program, it is not eligible to have Latent Print and/or DNA requests performed. These requests must be done before the evidence is entered into NIBIN.

The WVSPFL established the appointment program in order to more efficiently enter evidence into NIBIN. This program will allow law enforcement to have test fires from seized firearms and/or evidence cartridge cases / shotshells from crime scenes entered into NIBIN quickly. Entry of your evidence will be made into NIBIN on the same day as your appointment. Using this program could dramatically reduce the time between the crime and when an investigator can use information from a lead to benefit their case. There are many more benefits if you choose to participate.

Agencies that choose to participate will NOT have to do the following:

- Fill out submission paperwork for the traditional laboratory process (WVSP Form 53, 53A, 53B).
- Go through the submission process in our Central Evidence Receiving Section.
- Wait for evidence to be processed in our traditional laboratory process to get a lead.
- Wait to have your evidence returned to you. Continued on the next page.

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CONT: NIBIN Submission of Evidence

- Enter into an additional chain of custody for your evidence. Your evidence and/or test fires will be entered in your presence, while you wait. Your evidence never leaves your custody.

You can participate in the NIBIN by Appointment program by simply:

- Completing a WVSPFL NIBIN Information Request Form (NIRF).
- Contacting our NIBIN program and request to schedule an appointment.
- Travel to the WVSPFL on the day of your appointment.

A document with a more detailed explanation of the NIBIN by Appointment process is provided on the WVSP website. A link directly to the NIBIN page is at the bottom of this page.

Traditional Laboratory Submissions:

NIBIN evidence can be entered into NIBIN by submitting it to the laboratory in the traditional process, meaning the evidence is appropriately packaged and sealed, laboratory submission forms are completed, and the evidence is either mailed to or dropped off at our Central Evidence Receiving Section.

This submission process should be used if the firearm(s) or fired cartridge case(s) / shotshell(s) being submitted are also being submitted for additional forensic testing, such as firearm examinations, latent prints, or DNA. The other circumstance that would make this method of submission appropriate is if you cannot travel to the WVSPFL to participate in the NIBIN by Appointment program.

For a traditional laboratory submission, it is required that you complete a WVSP Form 53. In addition, if you are requesting the evidence be entered into NIBIN, you will also need to complete a WVSP Form 53B.

Note: Remember, if DNA is requested on any of the items a WVSP Form 53A is required as well.

All efforts will be made to enter evidence received via traditional laboratory submissions in a timely manner. However, when evidence must go through other sections, we cannot control how quickly it gets to the NIBIN program for entry. Entry of evidence via traditional laboratory submission will be in the order in which the cases are received.

NIBIN Website: <https://www.wvsp.gov/about/Pages/NIBIN.aspx>

LABORATORY INFO:

West Virginia State Police
Forensic Laboratory
725 Jefferson Road
South Charleston, WV 25309
Phone: 304-746-2100

Section Contacts:

Biology DNA / Databasing: biology@wvsp.gov

Biology Processing: biology@wvsp.gov

Central Evidence Receiving: cer@wvsp.gov

Seized Drugs: drugs@wvsp.gov

Firearms/Toolmarks: firearms@wvsp.gov

NIBIN: nibin@wvsp.gov

Latent Prints: latent.prints@wvsp.gov

Toxicology: toxicology@wvsp.gov

Trace Evidence: trace@wvsp.gov

Request for sex crime kits and CODIS kits: (below)
laboratory.kits@wvsp.gov

FEEDBACK

We always welcome feedback for the upcoming newsletter!

Have comments or suggestion?

Want to know how we do something?

Need to know how we recommend to collect a specific type of evidence?

Feel free to contact the editors and suggest topics and provide us with any comments or feedback.

Your Editors,

Blake N. Reta — blake.n.reta@wvsp.gov

Stephen C. King — stephen.c.king@wvsp.gov

Laboratory Mission and Goal

Mission:

It is the mission of the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory to provide accurate and impartial scientific support services to all criminal justice agencies operating in the State of West Virginia.

Goal:

The goal of the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory is to generate accurate, impartial, and timely scientific examinations and opinions for the criminal justice system of the State in the interest of public safety. Establish and maintain a database of convicted felons, sex offenders, case work profiles, and missing persons.