

SHERIFF BUILDS FORENSIC DENTISTRY TEAM



**The Porter County
Sheriff's
Department is
sinking its teeth
into another tool to
help solve crimes.**

Sheriff David Reynolds recently swore in three local dentists as part of the department's forensic dentistry team, something he had in place during his earlier two terms as sheriff, from 1999 to 2007.

The dentists will do everything from matching bite marks with suspects or victims, to using dental records to identify victim's remains, Reynolds said.

“It’s vitally important for us, from an investigative standpoint, to have that caliber of expertise at our beck and call,” Reynolds said Thursday.

The dentists are team captain Jim Cahillane of Hobart; Gene Ranieri of Valparaiso; and Eric Pulver of Highland. Reynolds worked with Cahillane when he was with the Portage Police Department and during his earlier terms as sheriff.

When Reynolds was still in Portage, a murder victim bit one of the suspects in the back and forensic dentistry helped identify him.

Over the years, Reynolds has used forensic dentists a number of ways.

“We used them for rape cases, investigating bite marks,” he said, as well as for remains. “They would come in and identify the victim based on their dental records, and that was really important for us.”

Reynolds expects the dentists will train the department’s investigators on preserving evidence and related matters this summer, and may include investigators from other departments.

The dentists will be on call with the sheriff’s department; Reynolds said they could be called in two or three times a year, and will work with the county’s coroner, Chuck Harris, when necessary.

Cahillane, who has been a forensic dentist for the Lake County Sheriff’s Department for 37 years, said he and the other members of the team will be the “last line” to identify people from their remains.

“If we have an idea who the victim is, we can get complete dental records and compare them. It’s pretty cool,” he said, adding the team also will have backup support from the Indiana Society of Forensic Odontology and the American Society of Odontology, in case of a crime that involves a large number of victims.

One of the cases he’s worked on involved a suspect bitten by a victim. “It seemed to me he had put his hand over the victim’s mouth and she bit him between the thumb and forefinger,” Cahillane said, adding the suspect claimed a dog bit him, but Cahillane thought from the beginning the bite marks weren’t from an animal.

“There were other cases where people were bitten and we were able to take (dental) models and pictures and match them up to bite marks on the victims.”

The team also will assist if there are emergency dental needs at the Porter County Jail, Cahillane said.