

*Melody Reilly's brother, Shawn, was murdered in the summer of 2005. His body was dumped in a field in rural Bastrop County, Texas, and was extremely decomposed when found. A year later, the Center for Human Identification (CHI) at the University of North Texas Health Science Center identified Shawn's body from his DNA. Here is the letter that Melody wrote to George Adams, program/project coordinator for CHI, after the men who killed her brother were convicted.*

Dear Mr. Adams,

I just want to tell you how much your office's work means to me, my sisters, our husbands, children, and extended family. Also on behalf of our parents, who are no longer here; but I am sure they appreciate your efforts, as well.

My sister Michelle and I were in court during the trial last week, and it was so comforting to see the people who worked so hard to identify my brother's remains.

My brother, Shawn, was an amazing and special person who ended up in the company of the wrong, and the worst, people. What our family has gone through is almost the worst you can imagine—wondering where Shawn was, hoping the remains were not his. The only thing worse is the terrible thought of not knowing where my brother is now. I wish he was here next to me, laughing and smiling, but unfortunately that is no longer possible. What your office did to identify my brother and allow us to bring his remains home is something I can never repay or express enough gratitude for. It really scares me to think we could be in a completely different place right now.

We feel badly because we put so much pressure—sometimes daily—on Investigator Yarbrough to give us some answers from August through March, and he tried his best to keep us calm. I didn't realize how much work and time it takes to identify someone, and I am now happy that your office took every day and every minute they needed to get it done properly.

Please pass my thoughts on to those involved and let them know their work is important and invaluable. I am attaching a photo of Shawn so maybe you and they can have a nicer image of him.

Melody Reilly