

FUGITIVES CAPTURED **1297**
 MISSING PERSONS FOUND **129**

From the Director2
 Faith Corner2
 To Protect and Serve3
 Empty Place at the Table4
 Grief Counseling5
 Hats Off!8

The Slow Wheels of Justice

page 14

Unsolved Murders9
 Missing Persons9
 Wanted10-11
 Duval County Courthouse12
 Slow Wheels of Justice14
 Busted15

**“Together We Can”
 Breakfast
 March 30**

JUSTICE COALITION'S
VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

MARCH, 2006

WWW.JUSTICECOALITION.ORG

Volume 12 • Number 13 • FREE

JCCI launches study on violence



From the Sheriff's Desk

Sheriff
 John
 Rutherford

The readers of this publication and supporters of the Justice Coalition's mission represent a very special constituency for the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Many of you have been the victim of a crime and understand how investigations, arrests, the prosecution and sentencing of criminals – all the different aspects of the criminal justice system – function in our society. You've learned this first hand, whether you wanted to or not.

I'm pleased that in 2005 we were able to report to the community and the federal government that crime, overall, is down slightly in Jacksonville. The 2005 murder rate was less than in 2004 – but rather than celebrating this fact, I am redoubling our efforts around those initiatives we know to be working and contributing to these declines: Operation Showdown; the Violent Crimes Task Force; the Aggravated Battery Unit; and all our important Crime Prevention programs. But we need to focus on stopping criminal behavior before it starts.

Recognizing that crime and violence are the end result of breakdowns or failures of other systems in our community, in late 2005 I suggested an in-depth analysis of this issue. Last month the City Council endorsed my

From the Sheriff's Desk.. Continued on page 6

**Jennifer Medernach:
 a young life cut short**
 14-year old stabbed and thrown in river

By Shirley Shaw

When the two teens decided to go fishing on the warm, breezy afternoon of November 8, 2001, they did not anticipate the traumatic experience they faced. It would leave them badly shaken and at least one of them having nightmares for a long time to come.

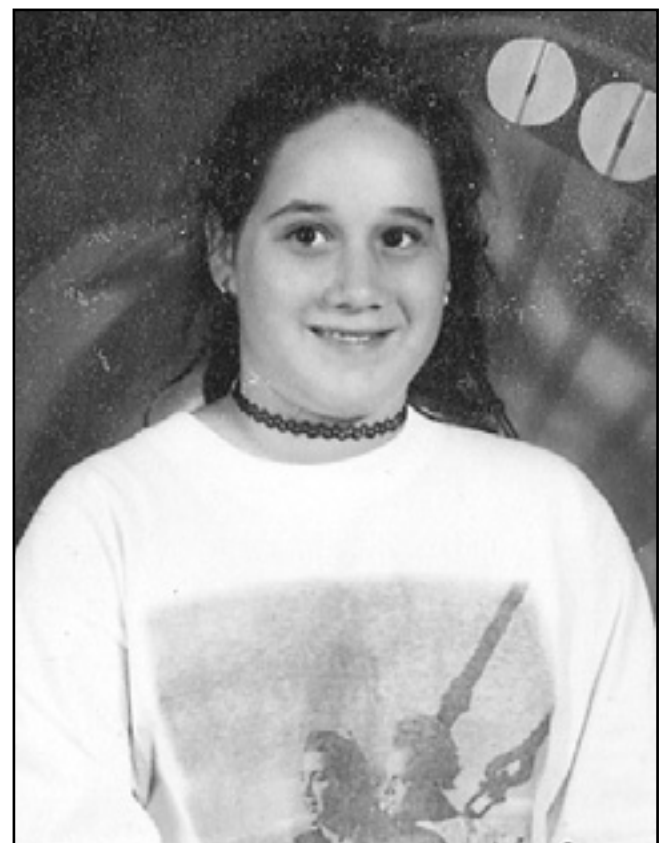
Hollie Smith, 16, and Donald Hoilman, 17, had driven to a bridge on County Road 217 that crossed over a stream near the Smith home, parked their vehicle, and Donald had dropped his fishing line into the water. Hollie sat on the bank, idly watching the insects buzz around and just enjoying the beautiful day. Suddenly, her attention became riveted on an object floating nearby.

At first she thought it might be a body-shaped prop from a recent Halloween party, but, drawing closer, she realized with horror she was looking at the nude body of a human floating in an unnatural position, facedown in the stream. She screamed for Donald, then together they drove to her home and brought her father to the scene.

Clay County law enforcement officers responded to their 911 call and quickly cordoned off the site. Detectives and personnel from the Medical Examiner's office processed the crime scene and removed the body of the young female from the water.

An autopsy performed by Dr. Margarita Arruza attributed death to stab wounds, but the victim's identity was unknown. Local media aired her picture the next day, and that was how her parents learned what had happened to their daughter.

Sometime after the first of November, Jennifer Leigh Medernach, 14, had walked away from her home in



Jennifer Medernach

Woodland Estates Trailer Park after an altercation with her mother about cleaning her room. Angie Medernach says, "She left that morning, came back and cleaned her room and we had a talk. Then a day or two later she said she wanted to go to the store on 103rd Street, kissed me on the cheek and said, 'Mom, I'll be back in a little bit.'"

Jennifer Medernach... Continued on page 13

Medical Examiners: Indispensable in solving crimes
 Dr. Margarita Arruza, Chief ME, heads busy staff

By Shirley Shaw

During an intense murder trial last year the defendant claimed self-defense as the reason he shot three young men. Defense lawyers argued that he was fighting off his attackers, one of whom was hanging on to his legs. He allegedly struggled for the gun which discharged, killing two and seriously wounding the other.

Prosecutors were not too concerned about the impact this improbable scenario would have on the jury because Dr. Margarita Arruza, Duval County's Chief Medical Examiner, was ready to relate the facts about what *really* happened. Those who have seen her testify are quick to say that she is a very credible, unflappable witness for the prosecution in many of

Jacksonville's homicide cases.

Jeffrey Hicks, Isaac Brown, Jr., and Latoya Criner were hanging out at the home of Gavin Berry – all friends from high school. After watching TV for a while and drinking a couple of beers, they decided to play video games. According to Gavin, who survived the attack, Criner (sitting behind the other three) suddenly stood up and started shooting.

Dr. Arruza determined in the victims' autopsies that Isaac was shot in the back of his head as he sat in a chair. From the angle of the bullet, it would have been impossible for him to be clinging to Criner's legs. Jeffrey was shot in his back and arm and Gavin, attempting to intervene, was shot three times in the

Medical Examiner... Continued on page 7



Dr. Margarita Arruza, Chief Medical Examiner