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News Release

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Police make arrest in cold case murder investigation

LĪHU'E - The Kaua'i Police Department has arrested Darren Galas, 40 of Kalāheo, for the 2006 murder of his estranged wife, Sandra Galas.

On January 25, 2006, Sandra Mendonca Galas, 27, was found dead in her car parked inside the garage of her 'Ele'ele home. An autopsy revealed Sandra, the mother of two young boys 3 and 5, was brutally strangled.

Since 2006, the Kaua'i Police Department followed up on leads, submitted items for forensic testing, and conducted dozens of witness interviews to gather the evidence needed to bring charges against Sandra's killer. During that time, Sandra's murder led her father, Larry Mendonca, to begin working to help young women better protect themselves. In 2007, Mendonca partnered with the YWCA Kauai and Dennis (Mendonca's cousin) and Susan Cabral, to begin hosting the annual Never Forget Sandy G Golf Tournament. Money raised from the events was used to help abused women and children.

In 2011, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney and Kaua'i Police Department began an intensive and collaborative effort to utilize the latest investigative techniques and technology to solve Sandra's murder.

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This partnership led to the establishment of *Ke Ahi Pio'ole*, translated as "the fire that never burns out," Hawai'i's first Prosecutor-Directed Cold Case Murder Unit - which was made possible by nearly \$100,000 in grant funding from the Attorney General's Office.

The Unit, headed by Prosecuting Attorney Shaylene Iseri-Carvalho and comprised of experienced prosecutors and senior investigators from KPD's Investigative Services Bureau, brought an unprecedented level of focus and expertise to Sandra's murder, which resulted in the case finally moving forward.

"While we still have a long way to go in the adjudication process, I would like to thank the investigators for their perseverance, the Prosecutor's Office for their detail assistance, and Sandy's family and friends for their patience and trust in KPD." said Police Chief Darryl Perry regarding Galas's arrest.

"We're happy to see this case move forward, and we'll continue to support Sandy's family throughout this process." said Renae Hamilton, Executive Director of the YWCA Kauai. "We'd like to thank KPD and the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, as this case shows the power that comes from unity and the importance of never forgetting the victims of domestic violence."

"True strength is a product of collaboration and dedication." said Prosecuting Attorney Shaylene Iseri-Carvalho. "Our drive and desire to seek justice for Sandra has always burned within our hearts and souls, and we look forward to honoring her memory by ensuring that her killer is held accountable"

Galas is currently in custody with bail set at \$1,000,000.00.

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