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'YOUR OWN BACKYARD'



Chris Lambert is shown producing his "Your Own Backyard" podcast about the 1996 disappearance of Cal Poly student Kristin Smart.

Local podcaster sheds new light on 23-year-old disappearance of Kristin Smart

Occult resident's episodes have captivated the public... For more than two decades, the disappearance of Kristin Smart has haunted Central Coast residents... Chris Lambert, a 2006 Bighetti High School graduate, produces the "Your Own Backyard: The Disappearance of Kristin Smart" podcast...

Virus worries experts

BEIJING — World health officials expressed "great concern" Wednesday that a dangerous new virus is starting to spread between people outside of China... The new virus has now infected more people in China than were sickened there during the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak...

Sheriff's Dept. lists evidence collected in Smart disappearance

The announcement came in response to a "large volume" of public inquiries about the nearly 24-year-old case... Sheriff's deputies maintained Wednesday, coinciding with the sheriff's update... Smart, a Cal Poly student, went missing on May 25, 1996, after a campus party...

Ukraine trade decision defended

The Republicans are still hoping to wind up the impeachment trial with a rapid acquittal... Simply, no, declared Democrats an opposing hand... The House will vote on whether to impeach Trump on Tuesday...

Lee Enterprises makes deal to buy Berkshire Hathaway newspapers

DAVENPORT, Iowa — Lee Enterprises will buy Berkshire Hathaway's news publications for \$240 million, the companies said Wednesday... The deal covers 31 daily newspapers in 10 states as well as 49 paid weekly publications...



Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., answers reporters questions outside his office Wednesday prior to the start of the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump at the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

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Smart

From A1

of a musical polymath, having become proficient in various instruments including the guitar, bass, drums and piano.

He has released 11 albums, ranging in genres from alternative rock and punk to folk and ambient folk.

Lambert started experimenting with the podcasting format in 2010, leading to the "Are We OK?" podcast, in which he interviewed various artists at his home.

That podcast ran for three years until he stopped to focus entirely on the Smart story, even quitting a full-time job at a recording studio last May.

Lambert has largely avoided receiving advertising for his podcasts, although a friend started a GoFundMe page to help cover expenses and show support for the podcaster.

Roadblocks and rewards

Lambert has encountered some roadblocks due to the fact that Smart's case is still open and that troves of information still are withheld by the Sheriff's Office.

At first, sheriff's officials were hesitant to talk to Lambert when they learned of his podcast, but they opened up after listening to the first six episodes.

For his seventh episode,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO, TREVOR BOELTER

Chris Lambert is shown recording his "Your Own Backyard" podcast about the 1996 disappearance of Cal Poly student Kristin Smart.

Lambert sat down with sheriff's Detective Clint Cole and Cmdr. Nate Paul, who both expressed gratitude for Lambert's work that has propelled the case back into the public spotlight.

Lambert added he understands that officials have to be "tight with what goes on behind the scenes."

"They have to be tight-lipped, and I understand that," he explained.

One rewarding outcome of the podcast, according to Lambert, is the personal relationship he has developed with the Smart family, who he now considers friends.

In keeping with the Smart family's wishes,

Lambert has declined to comment on news of any possible development in the case.

Additionally, the podcast has earned Lambert praise from local journalists, who have encouraged him to apply for awards.

Lambert's ultimate goal, however, is that his work will lead to a conclusion in the case or the recovery of Smart's body.

Looking ahead, Lambert is weighing his next possible project. Over the course of his work on "Your Own Backyard," he said, fans suggested new story ideas, and he's already interviewed 30 to 40 people on various topics.

Update

From A1

Cipolla said a team of sheriff's investigators and forensic specialists has actively worked on it since 2011 when Sheriff Ian Parkinson was elected to office.

Since that time, work has included the service of 18 search warrants, physical evidence searches at nine separate locations, recovery of 140 new items of evidence and the writing of 364 supplemental reports.

Cipolla confirmed that the Sheriff's Office currently holds two trucks that previously belonged to the Flores family in 1996 as evidence

in the case.

Additionally, investigators have re-examined every item of physical evidence seized in the case, Cipolla said.

He added that 37 pieces of evidence seized early in the case have been submitted for modern DNA testing.

Altogether since 2011, the Sheriff's Department has spent approximately \$62,000 in investigative expenses that includes forensic DNA testing but not employee hours, Cipolla said.

The department has expended more than 7,500 employee hours since 2011, he added.

According to a Jan. 18 article published by The Stockton Record, a retired

FBI agent recently told the Smart family to "be ready" for a new development, although the timing of such an announcement remains unknown.

The most recent development in the case came in 2016 after sheriff's investigators excavated what they described as items of interest from under the Cal Poly "P" on the hillside overlooking the campus.

Although remains were found during the excavation effort, there was no official announcement after they were sent for testing by forensic anthropologists to determine whether the remains were animal or human.