

June 24, 2009

H-E-A-R-T's Debbie Smith Speaks to Massachusetts iWIN Chapter

On June 18, the iWIN Massachusetts chapter hosted Debbie and Rob Smith from H-E-A-R-T (Hope Exists After Rape Trauma) at Life Technologies' Bedford, Massachusetts office. Approximately 70 employees participated in the program, which was the first for iWIN Massachusetts. iWIN is an organization sponsored by women, designed to support, mentor and inspire Life Technologies employees through personal and professional development opportunities.

Twenty years ago, Debbie Smith was kidnapped from her home and assaulted while her husband, a police officer, was sleeping. The traumatic effect of the assault remained with Debbie and her family for six and a half years, until her perpetrator was finally caught through a DNA database known as CODIS (Combined DNA Index System). Debbie's assailant had also abducted and robbed two other women and was identified through an ATM photo made when he forced them to take out their money. When his DNA was put into the system, there was a match to Debbie Smith's case. As a result, her attacker was convicted and sentenced to two life terms plus 25 years in prison.

Debbie Smith talked at length about how appreciative she is of our industry and our scientists and thanked Life Technologies employees for coming to work and doing what we do.

Through our Applied Biosystems brand, the company has been providing kits and instrument systems to automate and standardize the analysis of human DNA for forensic investigations since 1995, and our AmpF Φ STR[®] kits are a leader in this market. Lenny Klevan, Head of Applied Markets, which manages this product line, notes that the introduction in 2003 of the Quantifiler[®] kits—which tell forensic analysts how much forensically relevant DNA is present—advanced the workflow for crime labs.

“And with the release of our Quantifiler[®] Duo DNA Quantification Kit in 2008,” he says, “the analyst knows with one test not only the total amount of amplifiable DNA in a sample but also the ratio of male to female DNA, which is useful in sexual assault cases, and whether the material has been degraded by time or compromised by environmental



Debbie Smith of H-E-A-R-T and her husband Rob spoke to the iWIN Massachusetts Chapter about the work of Life Technologies in forensic DNA. *From left:* Rob Smith, Debbie Smith, Bedford Director of Manufacturing J. Steven Curran and Senior Support Services Supervisor Nancy Gangemi who is also the iWIN chapter lead.

inhibitors. This helps the analyst decide what to do next—proceed with DNA processing, process the sample with the AmpF λ STR[®] Yfiler[®] PCR Amplification Kit to identify the male component, or process with the AmpF λ STR[®] MiniFiler[™] PCR Amplification Kit if it appears the DNA is degraded. These kits are all tools to expand and speed up the workflow in the crime lab, which improves turnaround and processing time on casework samples.”

Databasing—that is, putting on record the DNA of felons, usually through the FBI’s CODIS in the United States—is an important part of the forensic process. Life Technologies validates its forensic DNA products and works with customers to make sure they are validated for forensic use in their laboratories so that the results can be uploaded. In addition, we promote the use of the CODIS software in other countries and facilitate interactions with those countries and the FBI to help establish these systems worldwide.

Debbie Smith reminded us of how much our work is shaping discovery, improving lives and making a difference.

If you have questions or comments about this story, please send them to [Employee Communications](#) with the subject line “Debbie Smith of H-E-A-R-T.”

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