

# Ashley Okland suspect worked for townhome developer

Kyle Werner and Tyler Jett

Des Moines Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

An “unrelenting pursuit of justice” led to the arrest of Kristin Ramsey, 53, in the 15-year-old cold case of Iowa Realtor Ashley Okland, West Des Moines police said Wednesday, March 18.

When Okland was killed, Ramsey, of Woodward, worked as an administrative assistant and sales manager for Rottlund Homes, the developer of the townhome where Okland was shot, according to Ramsey’s LinkedIn and confirmed by a source familiar with her work history. Most recently, Ramsey was an employee at Midland Title & Escrow, an organization that’s part of Iowa Realty Co., where Okland worked at the time of her death, an Iowa Realty spokesperson said.

“Everyone within Iowa Realty and related companies was relieved for the family of our friend and colleague Ashley Okland that an arrest was made for her murder,” said the spokesperson, adding the company was “stunned” to hear of Ramsey’s arrest. “Her tragic passing was something that not only deeply impacted our company and community, but the national real estate world as a whole.”

Ramsey was charged Tuesday with first-degree murder after an indictment by a Dallas County grand jury, police said.

Okland, 27, was showing a model townhouse in West Des Moines on April 8, 2011, when she was shot twice. An employee with Rottlund Homes heard a commotion inside the house at 558 Stone Creek Court and went to investigate, according to Crime Stoppers of Central Iowa. Inside, the employee discovered Okland on the floor and called 911, reports said.

Okland later died at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines.

Ramsey was not the person who called 911, according to a Des Moines Register story from June 2011.

## Police followed thousands of leads in Ashley Okland death

Assistant Police Chief Jody Hayes, who has worked the case from the beginning, said at a news conference police followed thousands of leads and reviewed “countless” items of evidence



West Des Moines Assistant Chief Jody Hayes speaks March 18 about the arrest of Kristin Ramsey in the 2011 shooting death of Realtor Ashley Okland. ZACH BOYDEN-HOLMES/THE REGISTER

and materials since Okland’s death.

The mystery was national news and was among the most high-profile cold cases in central Iowa. It even changed the way real estate agents show houses, which now include a safety pledge that they will not show a home to a stranger until they have met the prospective buyer in a public place and asked them to submit identification.

“Ashley’s story has kept many of us awake at night, revisiting the details over and over in our minds, searching for that missing piece that would tie everything together and lead us down the right path to identifying a person who was responsible for this act,” Hayes said.

Police on Wednesday declined to give any additional details on the case, citing the integrity of the case as it moves through the court system. Because Ramsey was charged by indictment, court documents do not include a criminal complaint with an affidavit laying out probable cause. Ramsey’s attorney Alfredo Parrish declined to comment.

“As significant as this arrest is, our work is not done yet,” Hayes said.

Hayes said police in the cities of Clive, Urbandale and Windsor Heights, as well as the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, the FBI and its behavioral analysis unit, the Iowa Attorney General’s cold case unit, the Dallas County Attorney’s Office, Polk County Crime Stoppers and the community helped in the investigation that led to Ramsey’s arrest.

He said police arrested Ramsey without incident on Tuesday. She’s being held in the Dallas County Jail on a \$2 million cash bond. Hayes said police do not anticipate any other arrests in the case. Dallas County Attorney Matt

Schultz said he will personally prosecute the case alongside Assistant County Attorney Andrea Lovig and Assistant Attorney General Scott Brown, who leads Iowa’s cold case unit. Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird formed the unit in 2024 to investigate the state’s more than 400 cold cases. Okland’s brother, Josh Okland, was there when she announced the unit, saying he was optimistic it could generate new leads in his sister’s case.

“Every person here today believes one thing for sure, no one should ever get away with murder,” Bird said on Wednesday. “Families deserve answers and there needs to be justice for every victim.”

## Police work ‘a true gift from God,’ sister says

At the news conference Wednesday, Josh Okland said the day Ramsey was arrested was “a day my family has thought about very often in the last 15 years.”

He and sister Brittany Bruce, both Okland’s younger siblings, thanked authorities, family and friends for their support over the years.

“That Friday afternoon when Ashley was taken from us seems so long ago,” Bruce said. “We had lost our hope in finding answers and having any justice for Ashley. It was really difficult to accept that the case went cold.”

West Des Moines police were “given the chance to work on Ashley’s case, dedicating their focus and time to it, so that was definitely a gift to us,” Bruce said. “Their dedication, commitment to Ashley, their drive and work ethic is a true gift from God that we feel fortunate to be touched by.”

## Who is Kristin Ramsey?

Before West Des Moines police arrested Ramsey on Tuesday, the Woodward resident did not have a criminal record, according to Iowa Court files. Her only legal blemish? A speeding ticket in Dallas County in 2001.

The former Kristin Pommer got married in 1995 to Toby Ramsey. He is the owner of a local concrete and snow removal business, according to his LinkedIn page. Toby Ramsey also sits on the Board of Adjustments and Appeals in

Woodward, a city about 30 miles northwest of Des Moines with a population of about 1,000. He could not immediately be reached for comment.

Kristin Ramsey had worked in Des Moines real estate for almost 30 years, according to her LinkedIn profile. In 1997, she joined the Iowa division of The Rottlund Co., then a major builder of townhomes and condos. Okland was killed inside a Rottlund townhome that was on the market.

At the time of Okland’s death, Ramsey was a Rottlund sales manager after working at the company for about 14 years. After the broader housing market downturn, Rottlund shuttered and sold off assets when creditors demanded \$29 million in 2011. Grayhawk Homes, another developer, bought Rottlund’s Iowa division, according to Builder Magazine.

Ramsey became a title officer at Midland Title & Escrow, a division of HomeServices of Iowa, a major parent company of several local real estate businesses. In a sign of just how wide-reaching HomeServices is, the company’s holdings include Iowa Realty, the state’s largest real estate company — where Okland had been affiliated as an agent.

As a title officer, Ramsey would have researched real estate deals before they closed to make sure the transactions were legal. Midland Title & Escrow removed Ramsey from its website on Wednesday.

“While we take comfort that Ashley’s family and our community as a whole finally has closure, it is with tremendous shock and sadness that we learned of the arrest of Kristin Ramsey, an employee of Midland Title & Escrow, an organization which is a part of Iowa Realty,” the statement from Iowa Realty said. “Kristin became associated with the company several months after the events of 2011. Along with everyone in our community, we are understandably stunned.”

Register courts reporter William Morris contributed to this story.

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## Cook

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### Embracing innovation

Cook said the change in Iowa State has been “transformational” in recent years.

He’s impressed with the variety of new buildings and facilities that have been built since his time as a student.

In particular, he said the Student Innovation Center is “quite incredible.”

“It aligns so well with our innovation and entrepreneurial brand where we have students starting businesses, a store there where the products that are created get sold,” Cook said. “Watching an entrepreneurial pitch where our college students are pitching ideas for new products and new companies, in that facility. That’s been really fun for me, very special to see that.”

### Advice to Iowa State students

With the large number of opportunities at Iowa State, Cook encouraged students step outside their comfort zone.

“There are so many things to do on a



David and Katie Cook get congratulations from the Iowa State community after introducing him as the next president of Iowa State University in November.

NIRMALENDU MAJUMDAR/AMES TRIBUNE

campus like this,” Cook said. “Try something different, join a club. If it doesn’t work, that’s okay.”

He said if students are struggling, they can always ask for help.

“We have amazing staff here who care deeply,” Cook said. “If you need a little bit of help, ask, because there are people here who want you to be successful.”

Celia Brocker is a government, crime, political and education reporter for the Ames Tribune. She can be reached at [CBrocker@gannett.com](mailto:CBrocker@gannett.com)

## PUBLIC NOTICE OF STORM WATER DISCHARGE:

TK Concrete, Inc. plans to submit a Notice of Intent to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to be covered under NPDES General Permit No. 2, “Storm Water Discharge Associated with Industrial Activity for Construction Activities”. The storm water discharge will be from construction improvements to storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water main, and concrete paving, which will be located on Second Street between Warford Street & Willis Avenue, on Warford Street between 3rd Street & 1st Avenue, and the alleyway running North & South between Warford Street & Lucinda Street and between 1st Avenue & 2nd Street. Storm water will be discharged and captured at multiple storm intakes, and discharged via storm sewer to Frog Creek – North Raccoon River. Comments may be submitted to the Storm Water Discharge Coordinator, IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, Environmental Protection Division, Henry A. Wallace Building, 502 E. 9th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0034. The public may review the Notice of Intent from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the above address after it has been received by the department.

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