



# SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

## Summit County Prosecutor

### Newsletter

#### January 2008

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## Message from the Prosecutor



**Prosecutor**  
**Sherri Bevan Walsh**

This edition of the newsletter reviews 2007 and highlights what we believe were some of the more interesting people, cases, and community events of the year. As I was reviewing this newsletter, I was reminded of why I love my job so much.

First, I continue to work with an outstanding staff of professionals. While my Office prosecutes more than double the number of cases than when I took office seven years ago, our conviction rate remains strong at 95 percent. In fact, in 2007, we prosecuted 4,668 defendants, up 41 percent from 2001!

While everyone in my Office plays a role in our achievements, there are others who also deserve mentioning: police officers. Each month, I recognize *Top Cops*, officers who did something exceptional, whose efforts helped bring about a successful conviction. For the first time, I am honoring a **Top Cop of the Year** and his Department. It was a very difficult task to choose just one, but once you read why we chose Twinsburg, you will see the challenges they overcame to help us gain two major convictions.

Another highlight this year for me was trying the Jimmy Lee Tayse case. I enjoy being in the courtroom and wish that I had the time to personally try more cases. It reminded me of why I am a Prosecutor, why I started the Victim Services Unit in 2001, and why I continue to support bringing the voice of the victim into the courtroom. Tayse will likely be in prison for the rest of his life (73 years). The Victim is putting her life back together, in part, because she knows he is not getting out of prison to do this again.

Finally, the people I interact with in our community inspire me every day. The senior citizens I speak to about protecting themselves show me just how independent and proud they are when they stand up with me and practice self-defense moves; the ministers I work with who guide individuals to "do the right thing," such as during this summer's Fugitive Safe Surrender program, remind me of what can be done with strong leadership; and the people I meet when we are trying to solve community problems, such as at our Juvenile Violence Forum in May, reminds me of what we can achieve when we pull together as a community.

Some of the best people in the country are right here in Summit County and I am proud to be your Prosecutor.

## 2007 TOP COP OF THE YEAR

### Detective Jim Scarl and the Twinsburg Police Department

Det. Scarl was the lead detective on two of our biggest and most tragic cases in 2007, the murders of Sejal Patel and Makaila Clay. Prosecutor Walsh chose Det. Scarl and the detectives and officers of the Twinsburg Police Department because this department truly stood out this year as **Top Cops**.

Det. Scarl was out of the state on his day off when he was summoned to return to Ohio to immediately start the homicide investigation of Sejal Patel. Although he had been a police officer for a number of years and had a couple of years of experience as a detective, this was his first murder case and it was the first homicide in the City of Twinsburg in more than 10 years.

Sejal Patel was found outside the Chrysler Stamping Plant. Her husband, Chetan, had strong evidence to support an alibi. Det. Scarl began a meticulous investigation gathering voluminous phone records and bank records, and conducted countless interviews. This eventually led to the discovery of Rupal Patel, a life-long friend and girlfriend with whom Chetan was having an affair. That information resulted in an extensive investigation that involved the use of confidential informants to gather information from the Indian community, stake-outs, the execution of search warrants, hours of surveillance, and a manhunt for a co-conspirator who was an illegal alien and known only as "V.J." The investigation took Det. Scarl and other officers to several states including New York, New Jersey and eventually Pennsylvania, where he found Vijay Patel in a small town working at a gas station.

Ultimately, due to the Twinsburg Police Department's dedication and investigative savvy, they were able to peel away the many layers of lies and cover-ups to find out what happened to the 28-year-old mother of two. She was murdered by her husband, his mother and his mother's boyfriend. They, and Chetan's girlfriend, are all serving long sentences.

Det. Scarl and other officers also conducted an extremely thorough and detailed investigation into the death of eight-month-old Makaila Clay at the hands of her father, Michael Clay. Det. Scarl worked with the Prosecutor's Office before the defendant was even charged to present the strongest case possible. He coordinated the investigation, interviewed numerous potential witnesses, and preserved blood and physical evidence for trial. His attention to detail and follow-through on every lead, made the case much more compelling for the State.

Det. Scarl was present at counsel table during the entire trial, and maintained an active role, testifying clearly and directly. He was tremendously dedicated to making sure Michael Clay was convicted. Clay is now serving 15 years to Life for murdering his infant daughter.

## TOUGH SENTENCES OF 2007

**James Tayse**

Rape, Kidnapping, Aggravated Robbery, Felonious Assault; **73 Years to Life**  
Prosecuting Attorney Sherri Bevan Walsh & Assistant Prosecutor Mary Ann Kovach

**Richard Murphy**

Child Rape; **Life plus 4 years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Greg Peacock

**Michael Clay**

Murder; **15 Years to Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock & Jennie Shuki

**Garry Figueroa**

Child Rape; **Life**  
Assistant Prosecutor Margaret Kanellis

**Jermaine Baker**

Aggravated Robbery, Kidnapping, Felonious Assault; **32 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Charlene Hardy

**John Westry**

Attempted Murder, Kidnapping, Aggravated Robbery; **31 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Brian LoPrinzi

**Leo Clauss III**

Child Rape; **Life plus 5 years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Greg Peacock

**Safaa Al-zerwaji**

Attempted Murder, Kidnapping; **17 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Susan Manofsky

**Jess Brown**

DUI; **16.5 years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Tom Bown

**Richard Harter**

Rape; **13 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock & Teri Burnside

**Gerald Varner**

Aggravated Murder, Attempted Aggravated Murder; **28 Years to Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Brian LoPrinzi & Becky Doherty

**Archie Wooden**

Murder, Felonious Assault; **25 Years to Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock & Jennie Shuki

**Roosevelt Engram**

Rape; **15 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutors Beth Aronson & Margaret Kanellis

**Joseph Gorospe**

Murder, Kidnapping; **23 Years to Life**  
Prosecuting Attorney Sherri Bevan Walsh and Assistant Prosecutor John Mascolo

**Ronald Sklare**

Child Rape; **Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Brian LoPrinzi & Colleen Sims

**Darnail Carlisle**

Aggravated Murder, Aggravated Robbery;  
**36 Years to Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Brian LoPrinzi & Becky Doherty

**Chetan and Minaxi Patel**

Aggravated Murder; **30 Years to Life (Chetan), 25 Years to Life (Minaxi)**  
Assistant Prosecutors Brian LoPrinzi and Mike Carroll

**Edrick Mayfield**

Kidnapping, Aggravated Robbery, Felonious Assault;  
**23 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Charlene Hardy

**Joshua Lortz**

Child Rape; **Life**  
Assistant Prosecutor Greg Peacock

**Brandon Whiteside**

Attempted Murder, Participating in a Criminal Gang; **15 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutors Beth Aronson & Margaret Kanellis

**Thomas Crangle**

Child Rape; **Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Margaret Kanellis & April Keller-Drumm

**Robert Gibson**

Aggravated Robbery, Felonious Assault on a Police Officer; **20 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Becky Doherty

**Lamont Brown**

Child Rape; **Life**  
Assistant Prosecutor Greg Peacock

**Brian Ciraco**

Conspiracy to Commit Aggravated Murder, Attempted Aggravated Murder; **16 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Susan Manofsky

**Jonathan Tschudy**

Child Rape; **Life plus 2 years**  
Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock & Jennie Shuki

**Leonard Dent**

Aggravated Robbery, Felonious Assault;  
**16 years**  
Assistant Prosecutor Susan Manofsky

**Aaron Diamond**

Aggravated Murder; **20 Years to Life**  
Assistant Prosecutors Angela Walls-Alexander & Margaret Tomaro

**Karl Varner Jr.**

Attempted Murder, Domestic Violence;  
**13 Years**  
Assistant Prosecutors John Mascolo & Emily Laube-Haughton

## MOST NOTABLE CASES OF 2007

### James Tayse gets 73 years for Kidnapping, Rape, and Robbery of Pittsburgh Woman

Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh and Chief Counsel Mary Ann Kovach prosecuted Jimmy Lee Tayse, 31, who abducted a Pittsburgh woman and her baby as the woman left Giant Eagle. Over the course of the next five hours, Tayse robbed the woman and raped her three times before releasing the two in Cleveland. The jury found him guilty of 14 felony offenses. Tayse was sentenced to 73 years to Life in prison.

### Mother Convicted with Son for Murdering His Wife

Assistant Prosecutors Brian LoPrinzi and Mike Carroll prosecuted Chetan Patel and his mother, Minaxi, the last two defendants in a complex Twinsburg murder case. The Victim, Sejal Patel, Chetan's wife and the mother of two young boys, was strangled and her body was hidden in the back of her Mercedes SUV. The two were convicted by a jury of Aggravated Murder, Tampering with Evidence, and Gross Abuse of a Corpse and were sentenced to 25 Years to Life and 30 Years to Life.

### Man Kills Infant Daughter

Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock and

Jennie Shuki prosecuted Michael Clay, 23, for the beating and suffocation of his 8-month-old daughter Makaila. He was convicted of Murder and sentenced to 15 years to Life.

### Diner Shooter gets 17 years

Assistant Prosecutor Susan Manofsky prosecuted Safaa Al-Zerwaji for his role in a standoff with Akron Police Officers at Plaza Diner. Al-Zerwaji held his wife at gunpoint and repeatedly shot at officers who responded to the scene. Arlington Plaza was shut down and, after hours of telephone negotiations, the Defendant surrendered. He pled guilty to multiple counts, including two counts of Attempted Murder and Kidnapping, as well as charges stemming from an incident when he held his wife at knife-point and was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

### Archie Wooden Blames Handicapped Brother for Murder

Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock and Jennie Shuki prosecuted Wooden for beating his girlfriend's son, 18-month-old Cameron Allen, to death. Wooden confessed to an Akron detective but later tried to pin the murder on his mentally disabled younger brother. The jury didn't buy it and

convicted Wooden of Murder and several charges relating to the boy's death. He was sentenced to 25 years to Life.

### Worst DUI Offender in Ohio

Jess Brown, of Barberton, has the most DUI's in Ohio (20). Assistant Prosecutor Tom Bown obtained the longest sentence for DUI charges in the history of my Office in the case of Jess Brown. Brown was arrested on felony DUI charges for his 19th DUI and while out on bond, was arrested again for his 20th DUI. He ran a stop sign in Barberton and crashed into another car. Fortunately no one was hurt, and Brown has 16 1/2 years in prison to re-think his position on drinking and driving.

### Husband Hires Hitman

Assistant Prosecutor Susan Manofsky prosecuted Brian Ciraco, who hired a hitman to kill his wife – a postal worker – so that he could collect her life insurance. Ciraco met with the potential hitman, who was actually an undercover officer, in a bar, where he explained his plan, drew a map of his wife's mail route on a napkin, and made a \$60 down payment to secure his services. He was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to 16 years.

## NOTABLE EVENTS OF 2007

### Take Me Home program launched

Take Me Home, a database for individuals with disabilities and certain senior citizens who may have difficulty communicating in a law enforcement situation, has become a valuable law enforcement tool.

### Kids in Court

In May, my Office held a juvenile forum to address the problems posed by escalating youth violence and gangs. It was an overwhelming success and helped lay the groundwork for our Juvenile Task Force.

### Strengthening DUI Laws

In June, I testified to the State Legislature that I believe the law should be changed to require that individuals with two or more DUI's not be allowed to refuse a breathalyzer test.

### Fugitive Safe Surrender

My Office joined the U.S. Marshals, local law enforcement, and an area church in July to offer individuals on the run the opportunity to safely surrender. An impressive 1,125 individuals turned themselves in.

### G.R.E.A.T.

My Office received a \$150,000 federal grant to implement the Gang Resistance Education and Awareness Training program in local schools.

### Christmas Fun

With fundraising efforts by employees, we adopted 10 families for Christmas. Numerous employees of my Office – secretaries, prosecutors, and administrators – also volunteered as Salvation Army Bell Ringers!

Questions? E-mail Laurie Cramer:  
cramer@prosecutor.summitoh.net

We're on the Web!  
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor

## January Top Cop



**Officer Jason Moore**  
Springfield Township Police Department

**Nominated by: Assistant Prosecutor Tom Bown**

On July 9, 2007, **Officer Jason Moore** was called to investigate a possible arson at the residence of Thomas Sarnesky. He spoke with neighbors who had witnessed Sarnesky that afternoon stating he was going to burn down his trailer because he was mad at his brother. While interviewing Thomas Sarnesky after the fire, Officer Moore asked about the suspect's brother possibly getting his trailer. Thomas Sarnesky slammed his fist on the table and stated, "He wasn't going to get it now, would he?"

Officer Moore knew there was a possible motive due to the tension between the Sarnesky brothers because he had previously investigated an arson by Thomas Sarnesky in May 2006. After the Defendant's arrest, he gave a full written statement explaining that he burned down the RV and that he would do it again.

Assistant Prosecutor Tom Bown nominated **Officer Moore** as this month's **Top Cop** because of his investigative efforts. With his help, my Office built a strong case against Sarnesky and he was found guilty on December 13, 2007 of Aggravated Arson for burning his brother's trailer down.

On December 14, Judge Patricia Cosgrove sentenced him to seven years in prison.

**Way to go, Top Cop!**

## GUILTY in December!

**12 JURY TRIALS WITH 12 GUILTY VERDICTS!**  
**GREAT WORK, ASSISTANT PROSECUTORS!**

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutors **Tom Bown, Jessica Didion, Becky Doherty, Charlene Hardy, Shauna Hill (2), Greta Johnson, Margaret Kanellis, April Keller-Drumm (2), Brian LoPrinzi, Susan Manofsky, Jennie Shuki, Brian Stano, and Angela Walls-Alexander, who had juries return GUILTY VERDICTS at trials in December.**

## 2007 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR BRIAN LOPRINZI

**Hire date:** April 4, 2005  
**Degree:** University of Akron, 1996  
**Years as prosecutor:** 9



Prosecutor Walsh has chosen **Assistant Prosecutor Brian LoPrinzi** as **Employee of the Year** because he embodies the goals and standards of the Prosecutor's Office.

Brian, a member of the Violent Crime Unit, often handles some of the toughest cases. Even so, Brian had eight trials in 2007 and gained convictions in every one of them.

His cases include an Aggravated Vehicular Homicide where a drunk driver killed a 57-year-old man. He worked tirelessly with the Twinsburg Police Department to build enough evidence to convict Chetan Patel, his mother, and two accomplices for the murder of Chetan's wife, Sejal. And, right on the heels of the Patel case, he successfully prosecuted Phillip Jones, who brutally raped and murdered a woman and left her body at an Akron cemetery.

In addition, Brian is a Supervisor who spends time training and helping the assistant prosecutors assigned to his two courts as well as others who seek his counsel. He always makes the time to mentor them and work with them. He observes their trials and provides constructive feedback, giving them guidance for improvement as well as pointing out their strengths.

**For these and many other reasons, Brian is our 2007 Employee of the Year.**

## Outrageous Crime of the Year



**It's impossible to choose just one!**

We had a woman steal an Easter ham from an elderly woman, a murder because a man wouldn't move his car for a snow plow, a man sentenced to 16 years for chronic (20!) DUIs, a man who hired an undercover officer who he thought was a "hit man" to kill his wife, a special education teacher who was having sex with a student, a man who killed his girlfriend's baby out of jealousy, a child rapist who claimed that Satan made him do it, a man who beat and raped his 10-year-old nephew because he got bad grades, a football coach who had sex with his student, a nurse who abused an Alzheimer's patient, a school bus driver who was involved with two of her students and got caught because of her MySpace profile, a man who went to prison for seven years because he had tons of child pornography on his computer ... and the list goes on.

**When the competition is this stiff...  
Let's hope for a better year next year!**