



SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

Summit County Prosecutor

Newsletter

End of the Year Wrap up — 2009

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Message from the Prosecutor



Prosecutor
Sherri Bevan Walsh

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office this year handled more than 4,500 criminal cases in Common Pleas Court and over 7,000 juvenile cases in Juvenile Court.

We had 185 cases go to trial this year, and our felony conviction rate – being found guilty at trial or pleading guilty prior to trial – is 96%, where it has remained constant for several years.

The Civil Division successfully represented Summit County agencies and elected officials with more than 100 opinions, not including pending cases from previous years. In addition, the Civil Division supported enforcement of sex offender laws in almost 200 cases.

I want to commend the outstanding staff that works in my office. Due to county budget reductions across all offices, my office is down 25 positions since 2008. We continue to seek other funding revenues. Of the 101 employees who remain in our civil, criminal, juvenile and tax divisions, 16% of these employees are paid with grant funds rather than from Summit County taxpayers. These grants were sought and won by our office.

The true testament to my staff is that regardless of the cuts and demands placed upon us this past year, we continued to achieve justice for the citizens of Summit County.

In fact, the hard work of the clerical staff, victim advocates, investigators and assistant prosecutors in this office is demonstrated by the long hours and extra effort put in daily to fulfill our office's mandates.

Much of our success is also due to the hard work of our local police, which we recognize monthly in this newsletter. Although there isn't enough space to recognize everyone, I want to take this opportunity to once again thank all of the officers in Summit County who work with us to successfully prosecute our cases.

Thank you everyone for your hard work!

Top Cop and Top Firefighter



Lt. Kevin May, Hudson Police Dept.

Bob Carter, Chief, Hudson Fire Dept.

Nominated by: Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh

State of Ohio vs. Michael Knudson

Lt. Kevin May of the Hudson Police Department and Hudson **Fire Chief Bob Carter** didn't know what they were in for on April 5, 2009 when they were called to respond to what appeared to be an open and shut arson case. Little did they know that they would be leading an investigation of one of the most horrifying crimes the City of Hudson has ever witnessed.

It became almost immediately clear that the Knudson family — the occupants of 1280 Connecticut Woods Drive — were either missing or still in the burning house. Lt. May led a team of police officers that canvassed the property looking for leads. Through his leadership it was determined that one of the missing occupant's cell phones was still on and it led them to the Haven of Rest, where Michael Knudson was found with his mother's and brother's personal effects and their blood in the back of his SUV.

Lt. May was searching for the victims in the unusually cold April temperatures, while Fire Chief Bob Carter and numerous firefighters worked tirelessly to put out the house fire that was raging out of control. It took more than twenty firefighters from numerous communities and over eight hours to finally suppress the fire.

The open and shut case of arson quickly became a multiple homicide. Lt. May worked arduously to locate Knudson's mother and brother, searching through the fire's debris with a team made of forensic anthropologists from the **Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute**, cadaver dogs from **Ohio Search and Rescue**, investigators from the **State Fire Marshall** office, members of **Summit County's Medical Examiners** Office, and numerous police officers from Hudson.

Kudos to **Lt. Sean McAleese** for his keen eye at the crime scene and **Detective Kaija Jeantet** for her attention to details. When nominating these Top Cops **Walsh said, "As a resident of Hudson, I feel fortunate to live in a community with so many outstanding police officers and firefighters."**

The two victims were located in a shallow grave under a wood pile and the case was virtually airtight due to the thorough investigative work. Knudson pled guilty and was sentenced to Life without parole eligibility until after 22 years in prison.

Thank you Top Cop AND Top Firefighter!

TOUGH SENTENCES OF 2009

Murders**Hersie Wesson**

Agg. Murder (2), Agg. At-tempted Murder

Sentenced to Death

Jason Webster

Agg. Murder

Life without parole

Terry Lee Wilson

Agg. Murder

Life without parole

Dannis Lindsey

Agg. Murder, Agg. Robbery

Life, parole eligible 50 years

Marc Kirksey

Agg. Murder

Life, parole eligible 43 years

Kaqun Slocum

Murder, Aggravated Burglary

Life, parole eligible 38 years

Lance Brown

Murder, Aggravated Murder

Life, parole eligible 35 years

David Zander

Aggravated Murder

Life, parole eligible 25 years

Kenneth Cash

Murder

Life, parole eligible 23 years

Daniel Tice

Aggravated Murder

Life, parole eligible 23 years

Michael Knudson

Murder

Life, parole eligible 22 Years

Murder of Babies**Craig Wilson**

Murder (Baby Camryn)

Life, parole eligible 15 yrs.

Christopher Hoffman

Murder (Baby Nathan)

Life, parole eligible 20 years

John Ross

Murder (Baby John)

Life, parole eligible 31 years

Rape**Jason Knapp**

Rape of Child Under 3

Life without Parole

Dale Purdue

Rape of a Child Under 3

Life, parole eligible 40 years

Matthew Cunningham

Rape of a Child Under 10

Life without Parole

Eugene Mishler

Rape, 11-year-old

Life, parole eligible 25 years

Andre Reid

Rape (11 year old)

Life, parole eligible 25 years

Virginia Johnson

Rape, Permitting Child Abuse

17 years in Prison

David Kelley

Rape, Aggravated Burglary

16 years in Prison

Attacks on Police**David Jackson**

Att. Agg. Murder, Police Officer

30 Years in Prison

Damond Herrington

Att. Murder, Police Officer

30 years in Prison

Donte Sales

Att. Murder, Police Officer

22 years in Prison

Earl Jeffery McMorrow

Felonious Assault, Police Officer

14 years in Prison

Attempted Murder**Breshaun Nichols**

Attempted Murder, Aggravated

Burglary, Felonious Assault

29 years in Prison

Taylor Black

Attempted Murder

16 years in Prison

James Coplin

Attempted Murder, Intimidation

12 Years in Prison

White Collar**David Willan**

Securities and Mortgage Fraud

16 years in Prison

Assaults**Coty Frazier**

Felonious Assault

10 Years in Prison

Ricardo Allison

Agg. Burglary, Intimidation, Assault

18 years in Prison

DUI**Ted Cartmel**

DUI (eight prior DUI's)

7 Years in Prison

MOST NOTABLE CASES OF 2009

Hersie Wesson

Wesson's crime is indeed a heinous and senseless one. He brutally murdered his 81-year-old neighbor and left his wife for dead. The victim's wife only survived because she played dead to escape further injury, but may never fully recover from her physical injuries, much less the emotional ones. A three judge panel sentenced Wesson to the death penalty.

Hersie Wesson was the only person sentenced to death in Ohio this year.

Virginia Johnson

Johnson was sentenced to seventeen-years in prison — one year for every year of her daughter's life — because she allowed and assisted her boyfriend in raping her daughter from the time she was 13. The boyfriend killed himself during the investigation.

Johnson pled guilty and is serving her 17-year prison sentence in Marysville. She was ordered to not have any contact with her daughters.

Jason Knapp, Dale Perdue

Unfortunately, this office is accustomed to child rapists (at least as accustomed as one can become to this horrible crime). We don't, however, often have cases of babies being raped.

In two unrelated cases, Perdue and Knapp both raped two-year old baby girls. Knapp was sentenced to Life without parole and Perdue was sentenced to Life without parole until after serving 40 years. At his age, we expect he will never see the outside of prison walls again.

Michael Knudson

Michael Knudson killed his mother and brother and set the family house on fire. We don't often see the murder of two family members at one time.

Knudson was sentenced to 22 years to Life, in prison. His siblings did not want him to spend the rest of his life in prison and asked the judge for a shorter sentence than the State requested.

Daniel Tice

Tice epitomizes the reason for our Domestic Violence Unit. He killed his wife because she was threatening to leave him, leaving three children without parents to raise them.

Tice somehow survived a bullet that ricocheted off his head during his standoff with police and is now serving 23 years to Life in prison.

John Ross, Craig Wilson, Christopher Hoffman

These three men are in prison for killing their newborn babies. We always hope for a year when we don't have this tragic situation in our notable cases.

Herrington, Jackson, McMorro, Sales

These men all tried to kill a police officer. It was a rough year for our police, with more serious harm to them than noted before. Fortunately, we did not lose any officers this year and for that we are grateful.

NOTABLE EVENTS OF 2009

Take Me Home Program

Our database for individuals with disabilities and senior citizens who would have trouble communicating in an emergency now contains over 1000 citizen's contact information and photos to assist law enforcement.

Thanks to Summit County Developmental Disabilities for contacting 5,000 people registered with their agency to offer the program. And thank you to our schools, the Alzheimer's Association, the Autism Society and our police departments, who help us register those who need this vital service.

Fugitive Safe Surrender Returns to Akron

In August, more than 1,070 fugitives in Summit County successfully surrendered to a team of federal, state and local law enforcement officials.

We were proud to have been part of this second successful surrender opportunity, where those with outstanding warrants turned themselves in peacefully and resolved their cases. A special thanks again to our key partner, The House of the Lord, that worked with us to make this event a success.

Senior Safety and Self Defense Classes

Prosecutor Walsh spoke to approximately 500 senior citizens this year about learning how to protect themselves from becoming victims of a crime. With the help of Sgt. Cunningham from the University of Akron Police Dept., these seniors learned about self-defense techniques and common scams to help prepare them should they face a criminal situation.



Questions? E-mail Laurie Cramer
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We're on the Web!
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor

Criminal Non-Support Continues to Grow Child Support Enforcement Agency Update

The Summit County Prosecutor's CSEA Criminal Non-Support Unit reached the \$19 million mark in 2009, which is money collected from individuals charged with a felony for not paying their child support. This represents child support collected by the unit since 2001, when the unit was created by Prosecutor Walsh.

CSEA continues to be creative in its outreach efforts and has been given almost 20 awards that recognized their efforts over the years. Most recently, they were recognized at the state and national levels by the **Ohio Child Support Director's Association (OCD)** and the **National Association of Counties (NACO)**.

OCD recognized CSEA at its Fall conference with a **Best Practice Award** for its development of child support workshops at churches throughout the community. NACO awarded CSEA an **Achievement Award** for its **Child Support Days** held last year.

GUILTY in November!

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutor's **Tom Kroll, Kevin Mayer, Greg Peacock, Angela Poth-Wypasek (2), Justin Richard (2), Mike Rickett, Dustin Roth, Norm Schroth, Brian Stano, Mike Todd, Maggie Tomaro (2)** and **Nicole Walker** who had juries return **GUILTY VERDICTS** at trials in November.

GREAT JOB, ASSISTANT PROSECUTORS!



Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh's
Criminal and Civil Prosecutors, Investigators, Victim Advocates, Secretaries and Administration.



2009 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR OFFICE INVESTIGATOR JOE SANDS

Rodney "Joe" Sands is our 2009 Employee of the year. Joe has been with the office since 2004 as the investigator for our Domestic Violence Unit. Prior to that he was Chief of Police at Lakemore Village. His law enforcement experience has made him an asset to the unit and office.

Joe is an organized, pleasant and dependable team player. He is more than willing to help out any time with any task. He has fulfilled a multitude of requests including retrieving 911 calls, conducting jail interviews of defendants, serving subpoenas, transporting witnesses, assisting with police reports/records, and testifying in court proceedings. Joe's work is always timely, accurate and helpful in our pursuit of justice. Joe never complains, even when he should. His prior experience in law enforcement provides a depth of knowledge that help us successfully prosecute cases. Joe is a great asset to our office and upon winning this award said, "he couldn't do his job without the support of his fellow investigators." For this and ALL you do Joe, **Congratulations as our 2009 Employee of the Year!**

That's Outrageous



Once again, the competition for **THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS** crime is too tight to pick just one.

We have the "**Most Unusual Weapon**" category with the stripper who used the heel of her stiletto to whack another stripper; the "**Parents of the Year**" case where they manufactured meth in the camper where they were living with their kids; to the "**Just Plain Mean**" assault of the grandfather who was brutally beaten when he stopped for breakfast on his way to pick up Girl Scout cookies; to the "**Heartless**" category for the man who conned \$84,000 from a disabled woman; to the "**Decaf Anyone?**" guy who road raged on a woman for no apparent reason by punching her in the face when she rolled her window down to see if there was a problem; to our "**Total Sicko**" who called women and told them to perform sex acts on themselves or he would hurt their families, to the final "**Miracle Grow Award**" for the guy who had 12-foot pot plants growing in his Akron backyard... to, well...out of space. For 2010 —

Let there be Peace on Earth!