



SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

Summit County Prosecutor

Newsletter

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Message from the Prosecutor



Prosecutor
Sherri Bevan Walsh

Gangs... in Akron?

Unfortunately, it's not just large cities like Los Angeles or Chicago who have gangs. Criminal gangs have an increasing presence in Akron. The last decade has seen a 50% increase in criminal gang activity within Akron city neighborhoods, and experts at the Akron Police Department (APD) gang unit cite approximately 72 documented gangs in the city.

Working with the gang unit my office has convicted 132 criminals — adults and juveniles — for participation in criminal gang activity since the Criminal Gang Law was passed in 1999. One of the most notable victories was the recent sentencing of Kaika Klan Outlaw gang member Ray Gaiter, who was sentenced to 24 years in prison by Judge Judith Hunter for his participation in criminal gang activity.

Gangs thrive by gaining things like money, power and protection from other gangs, through felonies usually involving violent crimes. Typically gang members who are more violent and have committed more violent acts tend to wield more power and respect within the gang structure. Home invasions, robberies, drug trafficking and car-jackings are usually gang-related. Another commonality between gangs is they all will typically have a certain color or name to identify themselves.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the APD gang unit who work in the dangerous and very important position of keeping our communities safe from gang activities.

DID YOU KNOW



- Gang members are often identified through gang clothing, tattoos, colors, who they associate with and where they hang out geographically.
- Gangs are typically loosely structured.
- True to rumor, it is very difficult to leave a gang. One way to leave is being "jumped out" - beat up by other gang members. Relocating to entirely different areas is another way.

- Gang graffiti is a way for gangs to mark territorial boundaries. The Akron Gang Unit documents and maps each new case of graffiti found in the greater Akron area.
- The first use of the gang law took place in Akron in February. Police within the Gang Unit, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office and the Ohio Attorney General's Office decided to use the "Participating in a Criminal Gang" statute after two gang members robbed two victims, shooting one as he fled.

Why do kids join gangs?

Most gang members become involved in gangs from a young age—some as young as nine. Kids join gangs for a myriad of reasons. Some of the reasons are:

- Identity or status. Gangs may wield a lot of power in the particular area a child lives in.
- Feeling of belonging. Fitting in.
- Protection from other rival gang members or bullies.
- Recognition or group identity kids may not get at home or elsewhere.
- Excitement. Gang activity may seem attractive to kids who are bored, lack interests or direction, or lack self esteem.
- Intimidation. Threats of force or beatings may force youths to join.
- Glamorization. Gangs are often glamorized in movies, music, video games and television.
- Financial benefit. Kids see being in a gang as an easy way to access money and new material possessions.
- Peer pressure. Kids may feel pressured to join a gang if others around them are gang members.
- Kids may not realize the real dangers to joining a gang.

You play an important role in protecting your child from falling prey to gang involvement. Help your child refuse the lure of becoming involved in gangs by talking to them about the real dangers gangs pose. Foster your child's self esteem and always know the three W's:

Where your child is
Who he is with
What he is doing

Questions? E-mail Laurie Cramer:
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Top Cops

Sergeant Brandon Watson,
Barberton Police
Department



Nominated by: Sherri Bevan Walsh

Sergeant Brandon Watson was seriously injured in February, 2009 when he tried to stop Earl McMorrow from a drug-induced joy ride in a stolen truck in Barberton. During a routine traffic stop, Sgt. Watson approached McMorrow's truck, but the defendant tried to flee by putting the truck in drive. Sgt. Watson was trapped on the truck's running boards when McMorrow drove the truck over a snow bank, between a tree and an apartment building, leaving Sgt. Watson trapped between the truck and gas meters, suspended in mid air.

Sgt. Watson was able to taser the defendant, even though he could not feel his legs, and McMorrow was taken into custody. Sgt. Watson was removed by the fire department and transported to the hospital. He suffered a broken pelvis and was out of work for several months.

Sgt. Watson's heroism prevented others from being injured that day. As McMorrow was sentenced to 14 years prison on June 2, Sgt. Watson stood by, humble and forgiving in the courtroom.

Thank you, Top Cop!



GUILTY!!

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutors **Angela Poth-Wypasek (2), Angela Walls-Alexander, Richard Hoenigman, Tom Kroll, Michael Rickett, Dustin Roth, Jennie Shuki, Colleen Sims, Mike Todd, Mike Cody, Beth Aronson, Jon Baumel, Greg Peacock, Teri Burnside, Jessica Didion, Charlene Hardy, and Kevin Mayer** who obtained **19 guilty verdicts in May!**

MEET ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR

MARGARET TOMARO



POSITION: Assistant Prosecutor

HIRE DATE: May 2007

LAW DEGREE: Cleveland State University

HOMETOWN: Chagrin Falls, OH

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: Maggie served four years on active duty in the Army and was an Army prosecutor *and* defense attorney before becoming a prosecutor for Summit County. Of her army experience, she says, "that's probably why I'm so assertive!" When asked why she chose to enter the army, she says "it was the fastest way to get myself into a courtroom." She recalls of her Army legal experience: "everything was punished more harshly in the army, and everything is a felony. If you don't follow orders, you can be prosecuted with a felony." Maggie's late uncle was also a civil attorney, who influenced her drive to practice law.

MOST MEMORABLE CASE: I prosecuted a soldier when I was in the army who bought drugs in Juarez, Mexico and shipped them to his grandmother's house in New Orleans for Thanksgiving. His defense was, "I would never jeopardize my music/rap career over five pounds of pot!" He provided me with a copy of his CD and I played a line from the lyrics for the jury: "Got the drugs and the power, back and forth from Texas to New Orleans, makin money..." The jury gave him five years in prison—one year for every pound of marijuana!

HOBBIES: Maggie says the Army reserve is her main hobby. She also likes to run, watch Cavs and Indians games, and read.

That's Outrageous!



Thomas Lollis was sentenced by Judge Judith Hunter on May 28, 2009 to life in prison for the execution-style shooting death of Andre Wood on his 29th birthday. Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock and Beth Aronson handled this case.

Lollis, Wood, and two friends were driving around intoxicated in Akron on July 5, 2007 after a party on the Fourth of July. After a verbal argument, Wood and Lollis stopped the car and got out to fight. Lollis grabbed a gun from the glovebox of the car and shot Wood in the stomach. As Wood tried in vain to escape, Lollis shot him three more times in the back. He died later at the hospital.

Featured on *America's Most Wanted*, Lollis was apprehended in Houston a year later as a fugitive. He attempted to flee police by running through several apartments in the complex he was living in, knocking over a toddler and jumping out of a two story apartment, breaking his foot on the chase. During the trial, he continued to maintain his innocence, despite overwhelming witness testimony. This was not the first time Lollis had shot someone: he had a previous 1992 conviction for felonious assault as well as participating in a criminal gang and trafficking crack cocaine. Great job!

Now that is outrageous!