



**FROM THE OFFICE OF SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH**

THE SENIOR NEWS

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION

November is Elder Abuse Awareness Month. Because the victim of elder abuse is usually silent about the abuse, we are often unable to detect when such abuse is taking place and many cases of elder abuse are never reported. With this in mind, it is horrifying to know that statistics show that in 2002, the Ohio Adult Protective Services (APS) system handled more than 13,000 reports of elder abuse. National estimates show that as many as 150,000 older Ohioans experience some form of elder abuse.

Elder abuse can affect people of all ethnic backgrounds and social status and can affect both men and women. Signs and symptoms of elder abuse can include the following: "Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions, and burns may be an indication of physical abuse, neglect, or mistreatment. Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness, and unusual depression may be indicators of emotional abuse. Sudden changes in financial situations may be the result of exploitation. Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, and

unusual weight loss are indicators of possible neglect. Behavior such as belittling, threats, and other uses of power and control by spouses are indicators of verbal or emotional abuse. Strained or tense relationships, frequent arguments between the caregiver and elderly person are also signs of potential abuse situations."

Because the suffering is often in silence, it is important to remain alert to the situation. If you notice changes in personality or behavior, you should start to question what is going on. If you suspect that Elder Abuse is occurring, you should call your local APS Agency at (330) 643-7217. You may also wish to contact the police in the area where the abuse is potentially occurring.

Efforts are being made nationwide to step up the resources to protect seniors and also to educate everyone so that we can prevent elder abuse. The National Center for Elder Abuse suggests the following tips to reduce the risk of abuse to yourself and others:

1. Take care of your health, and be involved by volunteering to help with

older adults in your community.

2. Keep an eye out for loved ones, friends, or neighbors who may be vulnerable, and speak up if you have concerns, even if you are not sure.

3. If you are older, stay active in the community and connected with friends and family. This will decrease social isolation, which has been connected to abuse.

4. Seek professional help for drug, alcohol, and depression concerns, urge family members to get help for these problems, and attend support groups for spouses to learn about domestic violence services.

5. Plan for your own future. With a power of attorney or a living will, health care decisions can be addressed to avoid confusion and family problems, should you become incapacitated. Seek independent advice from someone you trust before signing any documents.

CRIME STATISTICS

Prosecutors in the criminal division disposed of 3,987 cases in 2003 and obtained convictions in 96% of these cases. Our conviction rate is substantially higher than the national conviction rate on felony offenses prosecuted in similar size counties throughout the country.

During the month of June, 2004, assistant prosecutors went to trial on 18 separate felony cases with a conviction rate of 100%!

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

**WWW.CO.SUMMIT.OH.US/
PROSECUTOR**



Over 1,000 seniors visited our booth at the John S. Knight Senior Expo in August

CHANGES TO OUR D.U.I. LAW

In the past few years, Summit County has had a rash of repeat drunk drivers who have been driving drunk on Summit County roadways. Because of legal loopholes in the current law, offenders with 10, 15 or more previous convictions for driving drunk were only being convicted of misdemeanors with little or no mandatory incarceration. Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh worked with State Representatives and State Senators, and House Bill 163 was introduced in the legislature. This bill provides for up to five years of mandatory incarceration for repeat DUI offenders with five or more prior convictions. Prosecutor Walsh believes that the only way to prevent these chronic drunk drivers from killing somebody on the highway is to lock them up.

Prosecutor Walsh conducted a petition campaign within Summit County and obtained over 13,000 signatures in support of this law. After testifying before the State legislative committees in support of this legislation, House bill 163 passed both the State House and Senate on May 26, 2004. This bill was signed by the Governor on June 24, 2004 and took effect on September 23, 2004.

TOUGH PROSECUTION!

Michele Lee Cramer, 42, of Doak Road in Ravenna, will be spending **15 years in prison**, like her daughter before her, after pleading guilty recently to plotting the murder of 79-year-old Gysberta Boer of Cuyahoga Falls, whom Cramer was caring for.

Cramer received eight years in prison for conspiracy to commit aggravated murder of Boer and seven years in prison for complicity to commit felonious assault in con-

nection with the daughter carrying out a plan to kill Boer. The two prison terms are to run consecutively. In August, 2003, Cramer's daughter, Jamie Lee Wagner, 18, also of Ravenna, was also sentenced to 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to the same two charges in connection with the death of Boer, who was smothered with a pillow in a plot Michele Cramer hatched for financial gain and had her daughter carry out.

Cramer, who was to face trial in the case on Oct. 13, agreed to give up any rights to being an heir to Boer's will. She was third in line to receive benefits from the estate, worth \$600,000, after Boer's daughter and grandson. She had mistakenly be-

lieved while plotting Boer's death that she would receive benefits under the will when Boer died. Cramer also gave up any rights to hold a nurse's aide license.

Cramer made incriminating statements indicating her role in the plot on a police wire transmitter a relative wore in the spring of 2003 when meeting with her. Wagner's plea agreement, like Cramer's, was worked out in cooperation with Cuyahoga Falls police and an attorney who is the trustee for Boer's estate.

**Visit our Senior Safety website:
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor/srcitsafe.htm**