



SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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Prosecutor's Office Takes Unique Step in Assisting Crime Victims *Victim Advocate Added to Grand Jury Process*

AKRON, Ohio (Friday, December 07, 2018) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that the Summit County Prosecutor's Office is reinforcing its objective to help crime victims by adding a victim advocate to assist victims prior to their case being presented to a grand jury, thanks to a federal grant.

"My main mission as Summit County Prosecutor is to help victims of crime, especially when they have to navigate the sometimes confusing and overwhelming justice system. Expanding my victim services division to include the grand jury process emphasizes that goal," said Prosecutor Walsh. "Now a victim advocate will provide services to victims before the case is presented to a grand jury. This fills a gap we saw between when a crime occurs and when it's reviewed by a grand jury."

Prosecutor Walsh added, "This new position allows a victim advocate to be involved in the screening of cases, providing them the opportunity for immediate contact with a crime victim. Prior to this, a victim advocate from my office was assigned a case after it was indicted by a grand jury. My hope is that this new position will help streamline the process for victims and help keep them informed from the very beginning."

This position will also ensure that victims' rights under Marsy's Law are being upheld as it relates to reasonable and timely notice of proceedings. This will also ensure a victim's right to be treated with fairness and respect, even if a case is not billed or remanded.

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The Summit County Prosecutor's Office received \$503,470.00 in Victims of Crime Act funding administered by the Ohio Attorney General's Crime Victim Services section for the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year. This is the most the Summit County Prosecutor's Office has ever received from a Victims of Crime Act grant.

In 2017, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office Victim Services Division assisted two-thousand and nine victims of crime. Victim Advocates provide information and support to crime victims as their case proceeds through the judicial process. Our Victim Services Division is the primary provider of court advocacy for victims of felony crimes within Summit County. Our Victim Services Division is a full-time unit with a director and multiple victim advocates who assist victims in the common pleas and juvenile courts. In addition to this, the funding allows us to conduct victims' rights awareness campaigns and monthly self-care sessions for our victim advocates. We will also be able to provide professional training as well as comfort and support to victims through our Facility Dog, Avery.

"I am very proud of my victim advocates. They are vital in making sure victims and their families know what is happening with their case. Without them, victims could get lost in the system," said Prosecutor Walsh. "This grant money is key to continuing the great work they do by informing victims of their rights and minimizing the trauma associated with being a victim of crime."

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Crime Victims Fund was established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) and serves as a major funding source for victim services throughout the country. Each year, millions of dollars are deposited into this fund from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalty fees, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorney's Offices, U.S. Courts, and the Bureau of Prisons. These dollars come from offenders convicted of Federal crimes, not from taxpayers.