



Elliot Kolkovich

Summit County Prosecutor

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PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH, FORMER PROSECUTOR WALSH CELEBRATE LIFE OF BELOVED FACILITY DOG “AVERY”





Avery Served as the Summit County Prosecutor's Office Facility Dog from 2013 to 2023

AKRON, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich, former Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh, and the entire Summit County Prosecutor's Office celebrate the life of Avery, the beloved labrador-golden retriever who served as the office's facility dog from August 2013 to October 2023. Avery passed away peacefully on February 10, 2025 at the age of 13.

“Avery helped hundreds of people throughout his life, and worked to prevent victims and witnesses from being retraumatized by criminal court proceedings,” said Prosecutor Kolkovich. **“He was a dedicated public servant, a loyal companion, and an innovator in our state.”**

“I am extremely sad about the loss of the best dog ever. I am particularly heartbroken for Melanie Hart, Avery's dog handler, who did an exceptional job loving and taking care of Avery for over 11 years. I will always be grateful to Melanie and Avery for the help they gave to hundreds of abused children. I am proud to have developed the first facility dog program in a Prosecutor's Office in the State of Ohio and am pleased that other offices are implementing similar programs to benefit children,” said Prosecutor Walsh.

“Avery was not only my partner, but my family. He helped so many people during his life—including me. I am honored to have worked with him, and thankful for the 11 ½ years I got to spend with him by my side. He will forever be a part of my heart,” said Melanie Hart, Avery's professional handler and caretaker.

Avery was the first facility dog at a prosecutor's office in the state of Ohio. Born August 1, 2011, he came to the Summit County Prosecutor's Office at two years old, after being raised and trained by Sallie and Charley Carey through the national nonprofit organization Canine Companions. Melanie Hart, who served as Prosecutor Walsh's administrative specialist for 30 years, became Avery's primary handler in 2013 after undergoing a thorough review process and a week-long training program. Melanie partnered with Avery every day to provide emotional support to adults with developmental disabilities and children who were victims and witnesses of crime. Avery was placed with the Summit County Prosecutor's Office for his sweet and calm personality, providing a soothing presence for victims and witnesses during meetings with

prosecutors, court appearances, hearings, testimonies, and sentencings. Melanie continued to love and care for Avery in his golden years.

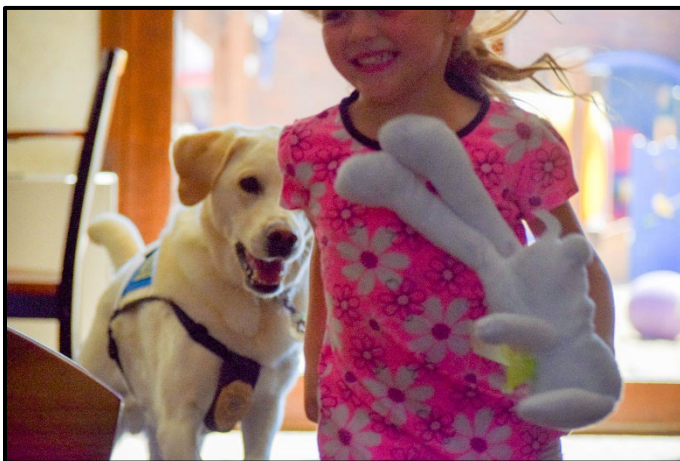
Throughout his decade-long career, Avery helped nearly 300 victims and witnesses across 236 cases, including 229 victims under the age of 18, one witness under the age of 18, and 62 adult victims. He was present with 50 victims during their testimony in court and was used in 15 competency hearings, 20 sentencings, four Grand Jury Hearings, two Domestic Relations Evidentiary Civil Protection Order hearings, and 31 juvenile cases. If Avery could not be present during testimony, he often walked victims and witnesses to court and waited outside for them until they were finished. Avery served not only Summit County, but several other counties who requested to utilize him – including Cuyahoga, Stark, and Trumbull Counties.

Avery also attended two specialty courts in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas: the drug court, known as the Turning Point Program, and Valor Court, for cases involving veterans. Avery helped to relieve the stress of participants and their family and friends, and celebrated the graduation of participants.

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office would like to thank Canine Companions for donating Avery, and his successor Adam, to our office; Dr. Paroff and the Stow Kent Animal Hospital for providing Avery with free veterinary services; Pet Supplies ‘Plus’ for providing Avery with free food, grooming, and pet supplies throughout his career; and Trusted Journey Pet Memorial Services for graciously covering aftercare costs.

Avery was an easy-going dog who loved to come to work and help both victims and staff during difficult days. He was fun and playful, and loved to chase his tennis ball, chew his squeaky porcupine, and play with Melanie’s rescue dog, Bogey. But when he put his vest on, Avery knew that he had an important job to do—and he did it incredibly well. Avery will be truly missed by all who had the pleasure of meeting him.

Information on a Celebration of Life for Avery will be forthcoming.





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