



FROM THE OFFICE OF
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WALSH ONLINE DATING SAFETY

February is known for a lot of things. It's the shortest month of the year. It's also Black History Month.

Many people associate February with love. Valentine's Day is the one day dedicated to telling the ones closest to us that we love them.

It's also a time when people who are looking for love might be willing to try new ways to meet people. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, three in 10 American adults have used an online dating website. That number jumps to nearly 50 percent for 18 to 29 year olds.

In the same study, a little over half of those surveyed say dating sites are either a very or somewhat safe way to meet people.

That means just under half (46%) believe online dating sites are either not too safe or not safe at all.

Recently, I conducted two separate interviews with local television stations who were looking into the dangers of online dating. I'm not saying you can't find love online. However, there are several precautions you need to take before swiping right or agreeing to see someone you've only "met" online.

My office has prosecuted a number of cases where a woman was sexually assaulted by a man she met online.

In one case, the woman texted back and forth for several weeks with the man before meeting him for a hike. The woman believes he drugged her before sexually assaulting her.

First, I want to make it perfectly clear that this is not the victim's fault. These criminals are very calculating predators. And the dating sites are not much help, with very few actually doing criminal background checks.

If you do decide to meet someone from an online dating service—remember these things:

- Pick a location that is familiar, where you might know the staff or have friends.
- Tell a friend where you are going. Maybe they can escort you.
- Don't be afraid to go on a group date with other people you know.
- Take time to research the person's social media accounts and online presence.
- Ask friends and family their opinion.



FREE WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE CLASS

Sponsored by

Sherri Bevan Walsh

Summit County Prosecutor

AND

Chad Cunningham
Certified Instructor

No registration required!



Learn simple techniques that could save your life!

- Verbal techniques
- Free yourself from a chokehold
- Learn the wrist breakaway
- Escape if pinned to the ground
- Practice kicks and slaps

Tuesday, February 25, 2020
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Tallmadge Indoor Soccer Field
(Tallmadge Rec Center)
46 N. Munroe Road
Tallmadge, OH 44278



For more information, contact:
Tania Bomer
330-643-7751 tbomer@prosecutor.summitoh.net

My office is also holding a FREE Women's Self-Defense class on February 25th at the Tallmadge Rec Center Indoor Soccer Fields. We'll provide lots of great safety information as well as potentially life-saving self-defense techniques to help keep you safe.

Just remember a little added safety could go a long way in helping keep you safe.

As always, stay safe!

Sherri B. Walsh



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@ProsecutorWalsh

IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is devoted to making our community a better and safer place for families and crime victims.

Prosecutor Walsh lives and breathes that mission as she met with seniors in Hudson.



Prosecutor Walsh spoke about the latest scams and how to avoid being a victim of crime.

We’ve also heard of more scams in our area.

Phone scams include the grandparents scam and the jury duty scam. Almost always, the caller pressures the victim, claiming either a loved one is in trouble, or threatens them with being arrested. Our best advice is that if you do not recognize the phone number, do not answer.

Prosecutor Walsh also spread the word about safety to the Nordonia Hills Seniors.



About 70 people attended the event at Macedonia City Hall.

Representatives from the Prosecutor’s Office joined Prosecutor Walsh at the NAACP’s annual Winter Gala to honor Martin Luther King Jr’s legacy.

The NAACP presented Prosecutor Walsh with a plaque, an honor for all the work she does in helping keep the community safe.



The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office is involved in informing the public about the dangers of human trafficking.

Tania Nemer, the office’s Community Outreach Prosecutor, joined **Assistant Prosecutor Heaven DiMartino**, our facility dog **Avery**, and Avery’s handler **Melanie Hart** at the recent Human Trafficking Symposium at the downtown Akron-Summit County Public Library.



The free event focused on prevention and warning signs of human trafficking.

Participants included a survivor, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers.

Travis Johnson, the office’s Community Outreach Advocate, joined Assistant Prosecutor Heaven DiMartino at **Providence Baptist Church with Pastor Vincent Peterson**.



They took part in the monthly Safe Sunday event at the church.

The focus was on the signs of human trafficking and how to teach children to avoid being caught up in the dangerous and illegal activity.

A big thank you to Kimberly Overton Spahos, an internationally recognized trainer and prosecutor from North Carolina.

Kim conducted training for local law enforcement and provided insight into implicit and complicit bias and how it could impact investigations.



Over 70 police officers attended the training.



AVERY'S CORNER

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

I love spreading joy and love wherever I go, especially this month. HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY EVERYONE!

I had a blast spreading love at Akron's Haven of Rest. I got to meet a bunch of new people.



They even played ball with me!

I got to help a human who came to my office because something bad happened to her. I sat with her and squeezed next to her on the chair.



She was very nice. I hope I was able to make her feel a little bit better when she met with prosecutors.

I also got to spend time in one of my favorite places. It's called Valor Court.

That's where people who served our country can get help from a judge after doing something wrong.



I even get to bring them a special gift when they graduate from the program.

It's a lot of fun. Lots of people say "good boy" to me and humans pat my head and scratch behind my ears. I think that's the best part!

Follow Avery II on Facebook at:

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[SummitCountyProsecutorAveryII](https://www.facebook.com/SummitCountyProsecutorAveryII)



GUILTY VERDICTS

January 2020

Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors for obtaining convictions at trial.

Amanda Koren

Joe McAleese

Zach Neumann

Devorah Pasternak

Kelsey Riffle



TOUGH PROSECUTIONS

These defendants will be locked up for a lengthy period of time thanks to our dedicated Assistant Prosecutors:

Steven Kmetz, 62

- Rape
- **LIFE IN PRISON**

Sirvonte Rice, 27

- Vehicular Homicide
- **12 YEARS IN PRISON**



Help Us Go Green!

Contact Melanie Hart at hart@prosecutor.summitoh.net to receive this newsletter by e-mail



TOP COP

OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL TROOPER LEWIS FINSEN NOMINATED BY ASSISTANT PROSECUTORS BRIAN STANO & JENNIE SHUKI

Crime can be devastating, especially if someone is seriously injured or even killed as a result. Such was the case when 27-year-old Sirvonte Rice ran a stop sign and slammed into a car occupied by Nicholas Bobo and Arielle Davis. Bobo and Davis were killed as a result of the crash.



Without the work of Ohio State Highway Patrol Trooper Lewis Finsen, Rice may not have been held accountable for what he did. Rice is currently serving a 12 year prison sentence.

Trooper Finsen did a fantastic job on this case from start to finish. This was a challenging case because Sirvonte Rice ran away immediately following the crash. Rather than simply assume the passenger Rice left behind was the driver, Trooper Finsen conducted a thorough investigation to determine exactly what happened. Working with crash experts, witness statements, and video and forensic evidence, Trooper Finsen was able to put together a complete picture not just of the crash, but the moments before and after.

Trooper Finsen assisted prosecutors with preparing the case for trial by coordinating additional expert witnesses, and allowing us to get an in-depth look at all the evidence in the case. He even assisted in gathering additional evidence almost right up until the day of the trial.

Moreover, Trooper Finsen served as an additional victim advocate during the case, taking the extra time to stay in constant contact with the families of the victims to answer any questions they had.

Thanks to his tireless effort, the Defendant ended up pleading guilty the morning of trial and was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

As this month's TOP COP, Trooper Finsen receives a gift card from Belgrade Gardens. Thank you Belgrade Gardens for your support of law enforcement.

**Great job and congratulations
Trooper Finsen!**

PROSECUTOR HIGH 5!

A Summit County Prosecutor's Office High 5 goes out to **Sergeant Kim Williams** with the Akron Police Department.

Sgt. Williams has been instrumental in helping us spread the word about our Take Me Home program.

Sgt. Williams took the initiative to train other officers during roll call about this important program. Thank you Sgt. Williams!



Take Me Home is a secure database, accessible only by law enforcement. It's used to help reconnect caregivers with people who have a difficult time communicating and may wander from home. This includes people who have Autism, or may suffer from Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Please contact Leslie Knoblauch for more information at knoblauch@prosecutor.summitoh.net, or 330-643-2800.

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

February is American Heart Month. First started in 1964, American Heart Month teaches us the ways we can help reduce our risk of heart disease.

Here are a few signs you may be at risk for heart disease.

- **High blood pressure.** Millions of people in the United States have high blood pressure, even those in their 40s and 50s. If you are one of them, make sure to have it under control.
- **High cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity** are all conditions that can increase your risk for heart disease. If you have any of these risks, work on eating healthy and getting some physical activity a few times a week.
- **Vaping.** Over 35 million adults in America are smokers and thousands of young people are picking up the habit daily. If you vape or smoke, do your best to quit or cut down. It's what's best for your health.



WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

RIMMA AVANESYAN

Over the past two years, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office has provided insight into how we approach our jobs by producing videos highlighting our assistant prosecutors. "Why I'm A Prosecutor" gives our prosecutors the chance to tell their own story and why being a prosecutor is so important to them.

Assistant Prosecutor Rimma Avanesyan, who works in our Criminal Division, talks about why being a prosecutor is so important.



• WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF BEING A PROSECUTOR?

The best part of being a prosecutor is the reason why I became a prosecutor in the first place—to help people. I love helping people and working with the community. I've met so many interesting people as a prosecutor.

• WHAT'S THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF BEING A PROSECUTOR?

The most difficult part of being a prosecutor is you meet a lot of people who are in the worst circumstances they can be put in. Trying to comfort someone and helping them through the criminal justice process is very difficult. I love doing it but I understand that this is their life and they are dealing with a very tough situation. It's not just another case to them and I try to treat them with respect.

You can watch Rimma's complete video on our website, Facebook and YouTube page.

• WHY DID YOU BECOME A PROSECUTOR?

I decided I wanted to be a prosecutor because I want to help people. This is the perfect job where I can be an attorney and assist victims and others in the community and get justice.

I actually started out as pre-med but realized that wasn't for me. In college I interned at a public defenders office and then here at the Summit County Prosecutor's Office and found it was something that I loved.

PREVENTING TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. According to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, approximately 1.5 million high school students across the country experience physical abuse from a dating partner.

Even more surprising, about 75 percent of parents have never talked with their children about domestic violence. Now is the time. You can raise awareness about dating violence and break the cycle of domestic violence.

If you are a victim of domestic or dating violence, you

have options. Call the Battered Women's Shelter of Summit and Medina Counties at 330.374.0740 to develop a safety plan.

You can also call the Summit County Domestic Violence hotline at 888.395.4357. The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence has more info as well www.nrcdv.org.



February is...
Teen Dating Violence
Awareness Month

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