



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

**A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WALSH
START BY BELIEVING**

I believe you. I am sorry. I can help. Three simple words—but they can mean the world to a sexual assault survivor. Since being sworn in as Summit County Prosecutor 18 years ago, I have focused on the needs of victims. That is why I am launching a new victim awareness campaign.

START BY BELIEVING

Start By Believing is a public awareness campaign started by End Violence Against Women International. It was created to end the cycle of silence and change the way society responds to sexual assault.

I have found that in my nearly 20 years as Summit County Prosecutor, many survivors of sexual assault are reluctant to come forward. Several confide in family and friends. This program reaches those people to help them express belief and support, rather than doubt, shame, or blame. If sexual assault survivors do not come forward, then the offender remains free to potentially assault additional victims.

As Summit County Prosecutor, my mission is to keep the community safe and fight for victims. Start By Believing does that.

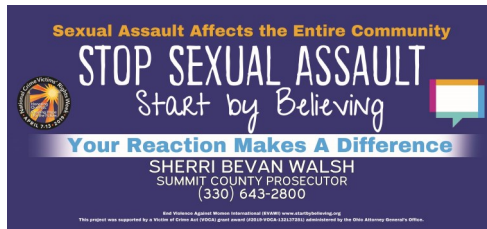
The criminal justice system can be intimidating and overwhelming. As Summit County Prosecutor, I am focused on helping

victims as they make their way through the criminal justice system. That is one of the reasons I became the first Prosecutor's Office in Ohio to have a facility dog. There was concern and even opposition when we got Avery over five years ago.

After seeing all the good work Avery has done, I know it was the right thing to do. And Start By Believing is the right thing to do.

Don't mistake the Start By Believing program as a desire just to believe everything someone says and put innocent people in jail. Local law enforcement will still begin each case with an open mind and conduct a complete investigation. They will follow the evidence wherever it takes them. That's why the word "START"

is there. Start By Believing simply shows survivors and the accused that they will benefit from a thorough, evidence based investigation.



The first Wednesday of April was Start By Believing day. It preceded National Crime

Victims' Rights Week, which was April 7th through April 13th, and sponsored by the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime. April is also Sexual Assault Awareness Month. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a campaign to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it.

As part of the Start By Believing campaign, you will see signs on buses and billboards, as well as newspaper, and web based ads with specific messages to help support survivors of sexual assault.

Know that we believe—and I urge you to stay safe.

Sherri B. Walsh



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IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office fights to make sure our community is safe. That is why we launched the Arrive Alive program to help keep drunk drivers off the road. Arrive Alive offers free cab rides home within Summit County for people during certain times of the year.



Arrive Alive was operating during the St. Patrick’s Day holiday weekend with 85 people taking advantage of the free service.

Thank you to **Summit County Sheriff Steve Barry** who was on hand as we announced the program, as well as everyone who helped make Arrive Alive a success—and stay tuned for future announcements about Arrive Alive.

Prosecutor’s Office employees were also out in the community providing information to help keep people safe. About 60 people took part in our latest FREE Women’s Self-Defense class at Copley High School.



Close to 60 people learned simple safety and self-defense techniques to minimize their chances of becoming a victim.



Those who attended learned how to escape a choke hold, how to use a trachea notch push off, and the best techniques for groin slaps and kicks.

Pictured on the left is **Jennifer Watson** showing the trachea notch push-off on instructor **Chad Cunningham**. And on the right is **Assistant Prosecutor John Galonski** on the receiving end of a knee to the groin area.

Our next FREE Women’s Self-Defense class is Thursday April 25 from 6p-8p at Springfield Junior High School.

In our cover article, Prosecutor Walsh discussed the reasons for launching the Start By Believing campaign in Summit County. Part of the campaign includes training local law enforcement on the best ways to respond to a survivor of sexual assault.



Anthony Greiter, a community outreach specialist with the University of Iowa Police Department, led the presentation to about 110 people including local law enforcement officers, Prosecutor’s Office employees, victim advocates, and nurses.



The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office was also involved in several events throughout the county.

Angela Walls-Alexander, our Director of Community Outreach, attended the annual Inclusion Day held by Summit County Developmental Disabilities.



The event supports people of all abilities and is part of Developmental Disabilities month.

We are proud to support the Victim Assistance Program of Summit County. A great time was had by everyone at the annual Mardi Gras celebration.

The event is a celebration of the great work Victim Assistance does. It also raises money to help provide needed services.



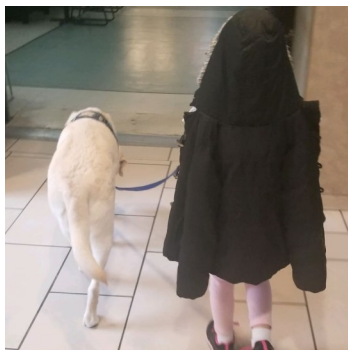


AVERY'S CORNER

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Ah April. One of my favorite months of the year. The days are longer and the weather is getting nicer. More time to go outside & play!

But I also love helping humans, especially the little ones. This was a new friend I was able to help. She came to my office because something bad happened to her. But she's doing ok and is very brave and strong.



I was really busy in April. Another young human came to my office because something bad happened to her.

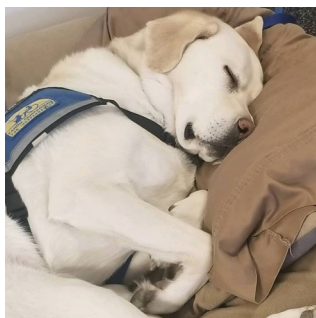
I sat with her in my favorite chair—can you see her behind the pillow?



She went through some bad things and I was very happy to help her. Sometimes I just sit there next to them. Other times they pet me which is really nice.

But don't worry, I got plenty of rest. That's me celebrating National Napping Day.

I think that's one of my favorite days of the year!



Maybe I can nap through all the bad weather!

Follow Avery II on Facebook at:

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

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



GUILTY VERDICTS

March 2019

Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors for obtaining a conviction at trial.

Jon Baumel (2) Seema Misra

Nik Buckmeier Zach Neumann

Felicia Easter

Sam Hardin

Joe McAlesse (3)



TOUGH PROSECUTIONS

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

Sage Smerk, 19

- Attempted Rape
- Felonious Assault
- **12 YEARS IN PRISON**

Nathan Furlow, 51

- Aggravated Burglary
- **6 YEARS IN PRISON**



April IS BOTH

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

and

Sexual Assault Awareness Month



Help Us Go Green!

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



TOP COP

AKRON POLICE DET. RUSSELL BASSETT

NOMINATED BY ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR ZACHARY NEUMANN

Solving crimes is sometimes extremely difficult. Gathering evidence (if there is any), speaking with witnesses (if there are any), and then finding the person who committed the crime is not easy.

One of the most difficult cases to solve is the burglary of an unoccupied home by an unknown suspect. The crime not only causes financial loss to the victim, but also shatters their sense of security. Through hard work, the support of fellow citizens, and a sleuth in training landlord, Akron Police Detective Russell Bassett was able to solve the difficult case of an unknown burglar. That is why Det. Bassett is this month's TOP COP.

Det. Bassett used several modern developments to solve the crime. First, the burglarized home had surveillance cameras located at the front and back doors. One camera captured the defendant's face, hat, and t-shirt. The second camera showed the same person carrying two flat screen televisions from the home. The sleuth in training landlord requested permission from Detective Bassett to post the surveillance footage to Facebook to ask the community for help in identifying the unknown burglar.



After posting the video, the landlord received several tips leading investigators to the Facebook page of the burglar. In a stroke of luck or what some would call "karma", the burglar's profile picture and landscape photo showed him wearing the same distinctive hat and t-shirt from the surveillance video. Additionally, one shirtless Facebook photo displayed several distinctive tattoos.

Detective Bassett searched for the final piece of evidence linking the video footage to the defendant. He reviewed jail booking photos to see if he could match the distinctive tattoo from Facebook. Detective Bassett eventually found a prior booking photo of John Coleman, who's now serving an eight year prison term

As this month's TOP COP, Detective Bassett receives a gift card to Diamond Deli. Thank you Diamond Deli for your support of local law enforcement.

**Great job and congratulations
Det. Bassett!!**

DISTRACTED DRIVING

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office strives to find the latest information to help keep our communities safe. That includes making sure drivers keep an eye on the road and not their cell phones.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness month. Did you know that every day one person dies and 100 more are injured in distracted driver crashes.



Safe driving should not be a one month thing. When behind the wheel, know what is going on around you.

That decision could save a life—maybe even your own.

AUTISM AWARENESS

We are also very fortunate to work with wonderful local organizations. One of those is the Autism Society of Greater Akron.

The Autism Society of Greater Akron is a tremendous resource for families who have a person in their lives who has autism.

April is also Autism Awareness month. The nationwide effort was launched 25 years ago to promote awareness, inclusion, and ensure that each person on the Autism Spectrum is given the opportunity to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

For more information head to <https://autismakron.org/>.



WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

ELISABETH JACKSON

Over the past year, 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 Elisabeth Jackson, who works in our criminal division, tells us why being a prosecutor is so important to her.



• WHY DID YOU BECOME A PROSECUTOR?

When I started law school I had no idea what kind of attorney I wanted to be. Then, the summer after my first year of law school, I got an internship at the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. Within a week I knew that's what I wanted to do. I spent all summer working on cases, watching trials, and learning from fantastic attorneys. I remember sitting there and thinking I'm going to do that. Being a prosecutor allows me to do something challenging, fast-paced, and exciting but it's also meaningful, so that was important to me.

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

We often meet people who have just experienced the worst day of their lives. They put a lot of trust in us to work hard and get a result which can help them get some closure and make those horrible experiences a little more bearable. The good days are when you work hard on a case and get a result which brings some closure and gives them a sense that they can move on.

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

A lot of times there are things that happen in a case which are out of our control, such as people not cooperating or showing up in court. So no matter how prepared you are, unexpected things can happen, which can be very frustrating.

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

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

In the main article of this newsletter, we discussed our Start By Believing campaign. The campaign coincides with Sexual Assault Awareness month.

2019 marks the 18th annual monthly event. This year, the theme is "I Ask" to highlight the importance of consent.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, the "I Ask" theme follows the #MeToo movement and builds understanding in order to prevent sexual harassment, assault, and abuse. Asking for consent is a healthy and necessary part of everyday activities.

For more information on resources to help prevent sexual violence, check out the National Sexual Violence Resource Center's website at www.rsvrc.org.



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