



FROM THE OFFICE OF
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WALSH
SUMMER STORM SCAMS

It's June! We finally made it to warmer weather. With those backyard barbecues and lazy summer weekends also comes the danger of summer storms. Strong thunderstorms could knock down trees and cause significant damage to your home and surrounding

property. But beware before you contact a company to clean up the mess.

My office has prosecuted several cases where a person has scammed a homeowner out of money by either not doing work or causing more damage.

One recent case involved a Sagamore Hills homeowner. 82-year-old George Homa needed some help in clearing debris from a November storm. He hired Alternative Property Maintenance to clean up the area around his home. During the process of removing the debris, workers were cutting down a tree when it fell on the home and trapped Mr. Homa. Mr. Homa suffered significant injuries and underwent three surgeries to repair a broken pelvis and shattered tibia. He was just recently discharged from a



rehabilitation facility where he spent months recovering.

A follow-up investigation found the owner of Alternative Property Management, Cory Howard, broke several laws. He was charged and eventually pled guilty. He is now awaiting sentencing.

Though there are many reliable tree service companies, there is also the potential for scammers who want to capitalize on homeowners who have been impacted by storms.

So what should you do if you need help removing debris?

- Don't pay cash in advance of the work being completed. Legitimate tree service companies will provide written estimates and be registered with the state.
- Call your insurance company immediately.
- Document the damage and take pictures or videos if possible.

- Obtain three to four estimates and compare based on the same specifications and make sure the tree service has all of the proper equipment to perform the job quoted.
- Get everything in writing. Make sure the agreement includes the business's information, project details, estimated start and completion date and the price. The contract should also be clear as to how clean-up will be handled. Only pay the business in full once the job is completely done.
- Confirm the tree service is properly insured and check registration with the Ohio Attorney General's Office at 800.282.0515.



Remember, don't be pressured by someone knocking on your door demanding the work needs to be done immediately. Take your time and make the right decision!

As always, stay safe!

Sherri B. Walsh

IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office was busy in May working hard to spread safety in the community.

We began the month by providing training for the best practices for investigating and prosecuting sexual assault cases for local law enforcement.



About 100 people representing local police departments, the Sheriff’s office and various prosecutors’ offices attended. Thank you to everyone involved in helping keep our area safe from sexual predators.

Employees with the Prosecutor’s Office spent time paying tribute to those who have dedicated their lives to keeping us safe.

Wednesday May 10 was the annual **Akron Police Department Memorial**.



Each year, the Akron Police Department’s Fraternal Order of Police takes time to pay tribute to those who protect and serve and to the officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our community.

Our next stop was the headquarters of **JOANN Fabrics** in Hudson where **Prosecutor Walsh** presented our FREE self-defense presentation for employees.

They learned the best ways to avoid becoming a victim as well as techniques to get away from an attacker.



Thank you to everyone who attended—we had a wonderful time and hope you did as well!

Residents of the northern part of Summit County also learned potentially life-saving information when they attended our FREE Women’s self-defense class at **Woodridge High School** in Peninsula.



The large and enthusiastic group took part in the demonstrations which included learning the wrist breakaway technique, the trachea notch push-off, and groin slaps and kicks.

The **Twinsburg Rotary Club** was the next stop for Prosecutor Walsh as she spoke about how to avoid becoming a victim.

Thank you to **Mayor Ted Yates** and the group as they live by the rotary motto, service above self.



The safety of our seniors is always a priority and the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office took part in two separate events for seniors.



The first event was the **WAKR Senior Luncheon** at Todaro’s Party Center on May 23rd where close to 250 seniors learned about ways to stay healthy and safe.

The other event was the **Senior Summit EXPO**—coordinated by the Summit County Probate Court.



Several hundred attended the brand new event at Akron’s Firestone Community Learning Center.



AVERY'S CORNER

KEEPING THE COMMUNITY SAFE

I always enjoy meeting new people. And I got to do a lot of that in May!

First, I spent time with cadets at the University of Akron Police Academy.

They were very nice—but I was hoping they would give me some treats!



Good luck and stay safe.

May also brought one of my all-time favorite events—Bark In The Park!

This time we were at Lock 3—which is really close to where I work.



I got to meet Pseudo, the K-9 for Northfield Village Police. He was nice, but I'm not sure I could do what he does. I like what I do.

And speaking of what I do—I had a chance to sit with a young human who came to the office because his mom was a victim.



We sat and played and talked. He even got to take home a small stuffed animal which looks like me!

I'm glad we were able to spend time together.

Follow Avery II on Facebook at:

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

SummitCountyProsecutorAveryII



GUILTY VERDICTS

May 2018



The Summit County Prosecutor's Office had a **100% CONVICTION RATE** for May! Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors for obtaining convictions at trial.

Teri Burnside

Jeff Puthoff

Brian Stano

GREAT JOB PROSECUTORS!



TOUGH PROSECUTIONS

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

Duane Lucas, 30

- Murder
- **LIFE IN PRISON**

Mark Wisniewski, 41

- Involuntary Manslaughter
- **8 YEARS IN PRISON**



Help Us Go Green!

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



TOP COP

AKRON POLICE DETECTIVE ROBERT VANEK

NOMINATED BY ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR GREG PEACOCK

Tracking down criminals is not easy. It can be even more difficult if the criminal is a friend and respected member of the community. That's what members of the Akron Fire Department had to endure and why I nominate Akron Police Detective Robert Vanek as this month's TOP COP



The case involves defendant Joseph Ruhlin, who recently admitted to stealing close to \$400,000 from the Akron Fire Department's Union bank account. Ruhlin is scheduled to be sentenced on June 18, 2018.

Questions were raised by the union president in March of 2017 after he found out bills weren't being paid. That led to a nearly year long investigation conducted by Detective Vanek. Det. Vanek worked closely with then Union President Russ Brode, going over the union's finances in great detail.

It was determined Ruhlin stole \$385,000—money he used for a variety of personal expenses.

Detective Vanek took on the long and tedious process of deciphering Ruhlin's web of deceit. He uncovered various methods Ruhlin used to bilk the tens of thousands of dollars from his colleagues. Ruhlin withdrew cash, opened credit cards and even took out a high interest loan—all at the expense of the firefighter's union.

Deciphering financial crimes is often as labor-intensive as solving a violent crime especially when the suspect moves money around and uses different schemes to cover-up his crimes. With

patience and hard work, Vanek was able to uncover the extent of the theft.

As this month's TOP COP, Detective Vanek receives a gift certificate to Bricco. Thank you Bricco for you continued support of local law enforcement.

Congratulations Det. Vanek!

ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. It's also a good time to remind you about our Take Me Home program.



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

The database contains a photo, contact information, and identifying characteristics that can be searched if a person is reported missing or is found wandering.

If you know of someone who could benefit from this program and is not registered, please have them contact Leslie at knoblauch@prosecutor.summitoh.net, or 330-643-2800.

TWINSBURG SENIOR FAIR

Seniors—get ready to be safe! Come to our next Senior Safety Fair at the Twinsburg Senior Center on Ravenna Road.

Learn about the latest scams targeting seniors as well as ways to stay safe while in the community.

You'll get a free lunch plus learn information about local businesses

and organizations which cater to seniors and their needs.

Our Senior Safety Fair is Thursday June 28 from 11am to 1pm. Registration is required but the event is free. Just call 330.963.8722 to RSVP.

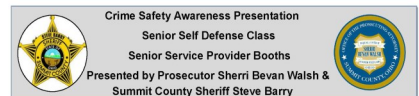
We hope to see you in Twinsburg on the 28th!

SENIOR SAFETY FAIR

June 28, 2018 @ 11:00 a.m.

Twinsburg Senior Center
10260 Ravenna Road, Twinsburg, OH 44087

Free lunch • Giveaways • Door prizes
RSVP to Twinsburg Senior Center
(330) 963-8722



WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

JON BAUMOEL

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office has a new campaign to help inform the public about what it's like to be a prosecutor. Each month, an assistant prosecutor in our criminal division will explain why they chose to be a prosecutor.

This month, Assistant Prosecutor Jon Baumoel discusses the reasons why he is a prosecutor.

• WHY DID YOU BECOME A PROSECUTOR?

My senior year of high school I took a criminology class. As part of the class, we took a trip to the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Courthouse where we observed a trial where the defendant was charged with rape. The day of our trip was the most dramatic day of the trial as the victim testified. I remember being there and remembering the magnitude and intensity of the moment. I left wanting to be a part of that and a desire to make a difference and help people deal with such a significant part of their lives.



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

I deal mostly with very violent cases including murders and rapes. I spend months working with victims and their families and see the pain they are going through. So the best part of being a prosecutor is seeing the relief on their faces after getting a conviction and a just sentence. Although that sense of happiness might be short-lived, it is gratifying knowing I had a role in bringing them some sort of closure.

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

The most difficult part of being a prosecutor is knowing that every investigation and case is not perfect. You may not be able to get the outcome you want, especially when you have a case filled with emotion.

Jon's full "Why I'm a Prosecutor" video is on our website and Facebook page.

HIGH POINT AWARDS

We are very proud of all of our employees. Recently, we honored four employees with our annual High Point Award; Elliot Kolkovich, Lisa Moss, Jasmine Brown, and Chandra Long.

Elliot, who's an assistant prosecutor in our criminal division, received the award for his problem-solving skills, plus his compassion and empathy towards victims.

Lisa is an administration specialist and was honored for her ability to go above and beyond while juggling all of her work assignments—all with a smile!

Jasmine works in our Child Support Enforcement Agency. She is willing to help everyone and has a profound sense of professionalism.

Chandra is a Child Support Specialist. Chandra is extremely dependable, and works diligently to help our clients. Congratulations!!!



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