



Sherri Bevan Walsh

Summit County

Prosecuting Attorney

Issue II

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Congratulations, Sherri!

Elected Official of the Year

Public Images of Ohio

"As a mother of a child with Autism, Prosecutor Walsh understood how easily a child with autism could become separated from a caregiver and acting on that, she teamed with local law enforcement to implement the Take Me Home program to make sure police can help people that are non-verbal and lost."

Ohio Public Images president, Jane Imbody, when presenting the award.

Message from the Prosecutor



This month, I was honored to receive the Award of Excellence by Public Images Network in the category of **"Community leaders who consistently champion causes for people with developmental disabilities."**

[Public Images Network](#) is made up of the 88 county boards of developmental disabilities (DD) with the mission of creating positive public awareness for individuals with DD. Summit County's Board of DD nominated me for the Take Me Home program and for my volunteer work as Chairman of the Board for our local chapter of the [Autism Society](#).

Of the awards I have been given since becoming [Summit County Prosecutor](#), this is one of the awards closest to my heart. When we launched Take Me Home in 2007, my son, who has an Autism Spectrum diagnosis, had just been dropped off at the wrong bus stop by a substitute bus driver and had to be walked home by a very observant neighbor girl. The son of a friend of mine was lost in the park and when he was found by the police, he could not communicate his name or address because he, too, had autism. Both of these situations worked out, but are terrifying examples of how precarious a situation can be for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

[Take Me Home](#) is a FREE database for individuals with disabilities or senior citizens with dementia who may have trouble communicating their name and address in an emergency situation. The database is housed at the Sheriff's Office and our part-time coordinator, Leslie Knoblauch, collects photos and contact information to enter into the database. With identifying characteristics, such as eye and hair color, a search of the database can be conducted by police if they find someone wandering or if they are reported missing. Take Me Home currently has almost 1,300 individuals registered and is only accessible to Summit County law enforcement. When we started this program, Summit County was the first county in Ohio to offer it. We continue to get phone calls from other counties in Ohio and from around the country about how we implement the program.

The Take Me Home database has also opened doors to training law enforcement in Summit County on recognizing individuals with developmental disabilities and how best to interact with them in a law enforcement situation. Our trainings have reached hundreds of police officers and first responders.

New format? Yes! Tell us what you think!

Contact
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April is Autism Awareness Month

Learn more about autism!

Tips for First Responders

Serving Victims of Crime with Autism

Autism Risk and Safety Management

Being Chairman of the Board for the Autism Society Greater Akron allows me to focus on the families in our community. It is the time when I can be just like any other mom going through many of the same challenges other families experience raising a child with a developmental disability. I enjoy supporting our chapter and helping to raise awareness about developmental disabilities in our community.

Did you know? April is Autism Awareness Month

Law enforcement officials might wonder how they can identify someone with autism. Unfortunately, individuals with autism do not display any specific “signs” that can help in identification. Individuals with autism frequently exhibit characteristics that can be confused with behaviors sometimes exhibited by suspects, such as aggression, lack of cooperation, silence, and/or yelling. It is vital to remain calm and, when possible, use visual cues along with verbal commands (such as holding your hand up while saying, “stop.”).

Individuals with autism:

- May appear high/drunk/having psychotic episode
- May be non-verbal/have limited verbal skills
- May be unresponsive/react inappropriately
- May repeat your words/body language/ask “why” repeatedly
- May have difficulty expressing needs
- May throw tantrums/scream for no apparent reason
- May not make eye contact
- May not fear danger and not react to pain
- May be *extremely* sensitive to stimuli
- May self-stimulate (rocking, spinning, hand flapping)
- May not understand warnings/rights
- May become anxious in new situations
- May not understand consequences of their actions

In Criminal Justice Situations:

- May not understand rights or warnings
- May become anxious in new situations
- May not understand consequences of their actions
- If verbal, may produce false confession or misleading statement

What can you do?

- Call the *Take Me Home* program to see if they are registered
- Above all else, remain calm
- Give the individual extra personal space
- Reduce stimuli such as lights/sirens/reflections of light
- Avoid touching/making threatening gestures
- Permit the individual to complete behavior pattern, when possible
- Speak in direct, short phrases
- With children, squat down so they can see you
- Speak slowly and in short sentences
- Give them a moment to respond (don’t keep repeating question)

Seek the assistance of family or professionals who are familiar with the person or autism.

GUILTY AT TRIAL

Congratulations Assistant Prosecutors **Teri Burnside, Greta Johnson, Tom Kroll, Brian LoPrinzi, Greg Peacock** and **Mike Rickett**, who obtained **GUILTY** verdicts at trial in February!

Update!

The man who killed Akron Police Officer Stephan Ondas and seriously injured Officer Phil Brady in 1972 was denied parole.

Charles Hunt was sentenced to Life and will not be eligible for parole again until 2018. At the time, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled the death penalty unconstitutional and a Life sentence in Ohio meant an inmate was eligible for parole after 15 years.

Hunt has been denied parole seven times before by the parole board.

Meet Assistant Prosecutor Katherine Milane

Hire Date: August 2010

Hometown: Copley, Ohio

Law Degree: The University of Akron



Background: I started as an intern with the Canton City Prosecutor's office the summer after my second year of law school. That led to a position as an Assistant City Prosecutor. I spent six months as the Domestic Violence prosecutor and the rest of my time in Canton as a courtroom prosecutor. I handled everything from OVIs to Chickens Running at Large.

Little Known Fact: I wrote a column for the Akron Beacon Journal's teen page during junior high and early high school. I once received a threatening letter from a reader that was efficiently investigated by the Fairlawn Police Department.

Most Memorable Case: My most memorable case was the case of a Massillon City Councilman arrested for an OVI in Canton. It was the first time the local media showed up for one of my trials. I was especially nervous because the defendant had refused breath and blood tests. Fortunately, the dash cam captured about 45 minutes of the Defendant's drunken rambling and attempts to impress the Trooper with his status as a Massillon City Councilman. The video, the field sobriety tests, and, as one juror later told me, the fact that "nothing good happens at Market Ave. and 12th after midnight" were enough to secure a conviction.

Top Cop

Top Cop: Sgt. Mark Farrar, Akron Police Department

Nominated by: Sherri Bevan Walsh and Leslie Knoblauch



Nominated for championing the cause of individuals with developmental disabilities

Sgt. Farrar approached the prosecutor's office about partnering to train fellow Akron police officers about situations they may encounter if interacting with a child or adult with autism. Sgt. Farrar researched and developed a presentation for officers on autism awareness and asked our Take Me Home Coordinator, Leslie Knoblauch, to also present about the Take Me Home program at his training.

Sgt. Farrar is currently conducting trainings with his fellow Akron officers and has offered to take the course "on the road" to other police and dispatch departments.

Thank you, Sgt. Farrar for being a champion for individuals with autism!

Way to go, Top Cop!

Contact Us

For information about the
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Want to receive con-alerts and
other information from the
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Email Melanie Hart at

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That's Outrageous!



In the wake of the tragic earthquake and tsunami in Japan, there are scammers out there ready to take advantage of people wanting to help. Beware of these scams (courtesy of [Credit.com](#)):

- Already some 50 new domain names have been created using names like "Japanese Tsunami" or "Japanese earthquake." These domain names may be used for spam or phishing. The FBI stays alert to these pop up sites but sometimes can't keep up. If you receive an email from an unknown domain, do not click on it. It may be trying to wrongfully solicit a donation or get information from you.
- Watch out for scammers using the name of the American Red Cross to solicit donations from you. These cons are using e-mail, phone and mail to collect money that will never get to Japan. Be sure to verify your donations with our local chapter of the [American Red Cross](#).
- Facebook is also being used to create a scam. The Better Business Bureau is reporting that a Facebook page has been created saying it has video footage of the tsunami and when the link is clicked, it goes to a page asking for personal information.

Always report any suspected scams to local police or this office.