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News from the Criminal Division

Message from Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh

We are once again participating in National Night Out. This year the event takes place the evening of Tuesday, August 7.

Assistant prosecutors from my office will be at all of the locations throughout Akron to discuss how my office can help reduce crime in Akron neighborhoods and answer your individual questions.

Check my website for information on locations and times.

Hope to see you there!

There have been a lot of warnings lately about various scams targeting Summit County residents. The most recent widely-publicized scam is one in which residents are told President Obama will pay up to \$1,000 of their utility or credit card bills.

Like most things that sound too good to be true, this is false.

Even the most cynical of us are susceptible to falling victim to scam artists. Those criminals are very good at preying on people's hopes and fears, and in these tough economic times, it's hard to blame someone for wanting to believe they could finally get some assistance paying their bills.

Many agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, Office of Consumer Affairs and Attorney General's Office have resources to help you determine whether an offer is legitimate or a scam.

And they've all been warning lately to be extra vigilant, as they predict scam artists will be working hard over the coming months.

In addition to the scam I previously mentioned, these agencies warn of scams involving home storm repairs, debt consolidation and job and business opportunities that require you provide large sums of cash up front or personal identification information.

Need more information? Visit my website or contact one of these agencies:

Better Business Bureau
(330) 253-4590
akron.bbb.org

Office of Consumer Affairs
(330) 643-2879
cosummitoh.us/conaffairs.htm

Ohio Attorney General
800-282-0515
OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov



Stay safe,

Sherri B. Walsh

Agency Spotlight: DOVE Program

Since 1997, St. Thomas Hospital in Akron has had a program dedicated to serving victims of sexual assault. The DOVE (Developing Options for Violent Emergencies) Program provides health care to victims of sexual assault and, since 2000, victims of domestic violence and elder abuse.

Victims of these terrifying and very personal crimes require compassionate and confidential

treatment from professionals trained in dealing with their unique needs.

Victims seen in the DOVE Program are often embarrassed about what happened to them and hesitant to report the abuse. The DOVE Program clinicians are skilled at putting victims at ease and helping them through difficult health care procedures.

Furthermore, DOVE Program clinicians are often called to provide

expert testimony in court. They have proven crucial in explaining to juries why sexual assault victims might have acted in a way that seems strange to someone who's never been a victim or why a strangulation victim might not have any marks on her neck.

We thank the clinicians in St. Thomas Hospital's DOVE Program for their compassion and expertise in working with victims.

Serving Up A Second Chance

While there is a heavy focus on imprisoning offenders, little thought is given to their release. For most ex-offenders, reentry into society is by no means easy. Ex-offenders are far less likely to be hired and often lack connections to get back on their feet. They are also likely to commit another crime under these circumstances.

Many organizations are working to change the status quo. South Street Ministries is one such remarkable organization.

On July 11, interns from the Summit County Prosecutor's Office made a special visit to the Front Porch on Grant Street in Akron. The organization, coordinated by Pastor Duane Crabbs and Lisa Crabbs through South Street Ministries, caters to ex-offenders looking for a chance to start over in life. The Front Porch stresses the

importance of a positive attitude and lays out steps to employment, even providing work at its own café.

A large number of Front Porch volunteers and employees have turned their lives around and put

the past behind them. They serve as exemplary role models to those who have been recently released from prison.

The Front Porch's efforts make for a safer community by decreasing

the likelihood of re-offenses, and hiring ex-offenders can also spark economic growth, taking many off the streets and reducing poverty.

The group's success was made all the more evident by two ex-offenders who shared their inspiring stories during the interns' visit. Both speakers described their

negative lifestyles leading up to their imprisonment and the steps they took to turn their lives around. As one of the ex-convicts simply stated, "What I saw was what I became."

Despite their criminal past, both are embracing a new beginning and have thrived throughout the program.

In addition to employment at the cafe, the Front Porch provides ex-offenders with many other useful resources through its partnership with local organizations and agencies. For example, the Summit County Reentry Network support group meets at the Front Porch every Friday at 6:30 p.m.

I highly recommend trying the Front Porch Café the next time you're in Akron. By eating there, you are supporting a valuable job training venture that greatly benefits our local community.

The Front Porch Café, located at 798 Grant Street, is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can view the menu at www.SouthStreetMinistries.org by clicking on the Front Porch Café tab.



July Top Cop

Top Cop: Akron Police Detective **Crystal Bowen Carter**



Nominated By: Criminal Division Chief Brad Gessner and Assistant Prosecutor Joe Fantozzi

In mid-July last year, a teenage girl was walking home down Copley Road after a late-night visit to a friend's house. As she walked, a man driving an SUV offered her a ride. She declined, but the man continued to follow her and offer a ride. Eventually he forced her into the vehicle, took her to the driveway of an abandoned house and raped the girl.

Although the girl was able to give a good description of her rapist and recognized him from the neighborhood, she didn't know his name or where the police could find him. Detectives did not identify a suspect until the DNA collected during the girl's hospital examination was matched to James Winchester, an offender in the

FBI's database of DNA profiles from convicted criminals.

Akron Police Detective Crystal Bowen Carter conducted a thorough investigation, which included not only routine tactics like interviewing witnesses and creating a photo array, but she also listened to close to 200 hours of Winchester's jail calls.

Detective Carter's perseverance proved invaluable for trial strategy. She first alerted the prosecutors, Brad Gessner and Joe Fantozzi, that Winchester was trying to build an alibi by calling his friends and asking them to claim he was with them when the rape happened. And when Winchester decided to try another defense by creating a phony explanation for potential witnesses

to explain away the DNA, Detective Carter once again alerted the prosecution.

Without the dedication and tenacity of Detective Carter, the evidence of Winchester's concerted cover-up would not have been discovered. Persistence and hard work paid off with justice for another victim. The jury found Winchester guilty of Rape and Kidnapping, and we can expect him to spend many years behind bars when Judge Teodosio sentences him on August 3.

That's why Detective Crystal Bowen Carter from the Akron Police Department is July's Top Cop.

Way to go, Detective Crystal Bowen Carter!

Why We're Quiet Until the Case is Closed

Have you ever noticed that my office typically only talks about a case after there is a verdict or the judge issues a sentence?

That's because ethical rules prohibit what is called "pre-trial publicity." My office is limited in the information we can release to the public before a case is concluded so that the defendant's right to a fair trial is not jeopardized.

Before a case is finished, my office is allowed to publicly disclose:

- The name, age and hometown of the defendant,
- The charges on which the defendant was indicted,
- When and where the defendant was arrested,
- The State's allegation of the facts surrounding the crime, and
- Schedule of hearings and other court appearances.

All of that changes, however, when there is a gag order in place. In that case, my office is usually prevented from publicly disclosing any information pertaining to the case until the order is lifted.

While it can be frustrating for the media and the public to be kept somewhat in the dark about cases, this helps to ensure that every defendant has a fair trial. If jurors are already knowledgeable about a case before reviewing evidence presented by the prosecution and defense, then they will likely already have a determination of guilt before the trial even starts.

Of course, if you're really curious about a trial's developments, you can come to the Summit County Courthouse and watch the proceedings for yourself. It can be quite educational.



Meet Assistant Prosecutor Shari Barton-Harrell

Hire Date: March 2007

Title: Assistant Prosecutor

Hometown: I do not have a hometown. My father was a chemical engineer, first for Merck Pharmaceuticals, then PPG and General Motors. He was responsible for starting contracts at automobile plants and paper mills, so we would move to his next assignment as soon as the contract was up and running. I attended five elementary schools by the time I was nine years old. I ended up in Ohio because this is where I was born and where my father's family is from.

Education: I earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Louisiana State University, a Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Dayton.

Background: I have been an assistant prosecuting attorney for fifteen years. I started in Fayette County, then joined the Highland County Prosecutor's Office before coming here.

Fun Fact About Me: From 1990 to 1992 I lived in New York City, where I was an intern at Bellevue Hospital's prison ward. One of my chief responsibilities was conducting psychological testing of the inmates. I worked closely with the psychologists and psychiatrists in conducting competency to stand trial and not guilty by reason of insanity evaluations.

Job Duties: I am assigned to the Grand Jury division, so I present cases to the grand jury for indictment.

Most Memorable Case: After 15 years, there have been many memorable cases, but one will always stand out. As a courtroom prosecutor in 2008, I was ready to start trial in the case of State v. Archibald, a Burglary and Kidnapping case, when I learned that the victim had gone to Columbus to appear on the game show "Cash Explosion" instead of testifying. We could not proceed without the victim, and the judge refused to grant the State any delay to wait for the victim. Interestingly, we learned that the victim owed back child support, so his game show winnings were seized.

Why I Wanted to Become a Prosecutor: I originally was interested in forensic psychology and how the criminal mind worked. However, a dear friend of mine was murdered while I was in graduate school, which changed my focus to prosecuting criminals.

Guilty at Trial

Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors for obtaining guilty verdicts at trial in June:

Jon Baumel (2)

Brian LoPrinzi

Omar Siddiq

Nik Buckmeier

Kevin Mayer

Colleen Sims (2)

Joe Dangelo

Angela Poth-Wypasek (2)

Tom Kroll

Dan Sallerson

Help us go green!

If you currently receive this newsletter on paper and would like to receive an electronic version instead, email Melanie Hart at hart@prosecutor.summitoh.net.

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