



FROM THE OFFICE OF
 SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WALSH
START BY BELIEVING

Why? It's a question many of us ask as we look for answers.

But asking why could have a negative impact for victims of crime, especially survivors of sexual assault.

Why did you leave your keys in the car—it was an invitation for someone to steal it.

Why would you go out alone—it's just an invitation to get attacked.

Why would you wear that—you're just making it easy.

These are just a sample of why questions and how they could negatively impact crime victims.

"Why" questions can blame the survivor and cast doubt on what happened.

What would you do if someone comes to you and says they are a crime victim or a survivor of sexual assault? Would you ask why they did something or would you be supportive and ask how you can help?

Your reaction can make a big difference in whether the victim reports the crime.

WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THEY WERE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

What will your reaction be?

Start by Believing



Rape Crisis Center Hotline:
(330) 434 - 7273



PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH
CO.SUMMITOH.NET/PROSECUTOR

Research shows that many sexual assault survivors tell friends or family members first. That is why it is so important to understand how to respond. Start By Believing builds a foundation of belief and support, rather than doubt, shame, or blame. This is vital in order to conduct a complete, evidence based investigation and prosecution.

If you are a survivor of sexual assault and need assistance, reach out to Summit County Hope & Healing at 330.434.7273 or Summit County Victim Assistance at 330.376.0040.

So if someone comes to you and says they were sexually assaulted—try this approach—I believe you. I am sorry this happened to you. I'm here for you. It's not your fault. What can I do to help. Simple words—but they can mean the world to a survivor of sexual assault.

As always, stay safe.

Sherrri B. Walsh

That's why I began the Start By Believing campaign in Summit County in 2019. 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. You may have seen billboards and bus ads throughout Summit County, asking what will your reaction be if someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted. Or maybe you've seen our social media posts discussing ways to support victims.

I want people to come from a position of support and offering help instead of questioning why someone did something. It is never the victim's fault and always the fault of the person who committed the crime.



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IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office was very busy during March, spreading safety information throughout the community.

Prosecutor Walsh spoke to over 100 people at Hudson’s Laurel Lake Retirement Community during a recent senior safety speech. Prosecutor Walsh discussed the latest crime trends and scams, as well as how to minimize a person’s chance of becoming a crime victim.



Prosecutor Walsh reminded everyone to avoid distractions when out and about and don’t answer calls from unknown numbers.

Thank you to the nearly 170 people who attended our FREE Women’s Self-Defense class at the Tallmadge Rec Center.

It was a tremendous turnout as people learned the latest techniques to minimize their chance of becoming a crime victim.



Special thanks to **Megan Raber, Tallmadge Law Director**, and **Summit County Council Member Christine Higham** for all their help in holding the event.

John Galonski, head of the Civil Division at the Prosecutor’s office, along with Sexual Violence Specialist Mickey Valdez, spoke with members of the Springfield Township Fellowship Church, and provided safety information.

John spoke about the latest scams impacting the community and Mickey discussed the office’s Start By Believing campaign, which was created to end the cycle of silence and change the way society responds to sexual assault.



GUILTY VERDICTS

March 2023

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

- Jon Baumoe1
- Amanda Hathaway
- Brian LoPrinzi
- Jamila Mitchell
- Jamie Morris
- Devorah Pasternak
- 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:

Keith Soto, 37

- Murder
- **LIFE IN PRISON**

Tyler Omenai, 24

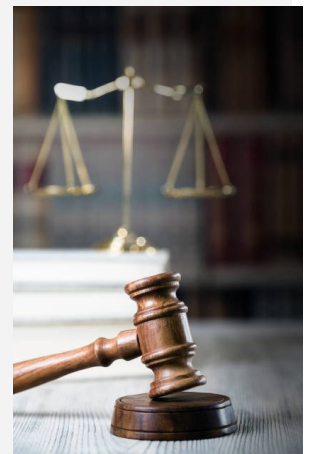
- Murder
- **LIFE IN PRISON**

Princess Fitzgerald, 35

- Voluntary Manslaughter
- **17-22.5 YEARS IN PRISON**

Brandon Jones, 38

- Involuntary Manslaughter
- **10-13.5 YEARS IN PRISON**





AVERY'S CORNER

EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hey, I'm famous! That's me with Prosecutor Walsh and a reporter and photographer from a TV station in Youngstown, Ohio!

They came all the way to the office to do a story about me and how I help crime victims.



The TV reporter and photographer were very nice. They wanted to know more about my recent trip to the Trumbull County Court where I sat with a crime victim.

I got to spend time with a new friend. She was very nice and let me rest my head on her leg so I could sleep.

I'm glad I was there and able to help her.



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The Summit County Prosecutor's Office "Ambassadors for Equity & Social Justice" was formed to work toward bringing people of different backgrounds and cultures together. Each month the Ambassadors share thoughts in making our community a better place to live. Here is an article from one of the group's members.



Being an Ambassador of Equity and Social Justice means fighting for every person and supporting their difference.

A way of bridging the gap between us is to learn about other people's cultures and way of life. The month of April brings awareness to many things such as stress and autism. 2023 is the first year a president, Joe Biden, proclaimed the month of April as Arab American Heritage Month. This adds to the other cultural months like Black History Month in February, Irish American Heritage in March, Asian Pacific American Heritage month in May, and National Hispanic Month, which is from mid-September to mid-October. Arab American Heritage month has become permanent in three states - Illinois, Oregon and Virginia. Many hope all states will follow suit in including this month celebrating Arab Americans all over.

Arab Americans began arriving in America in the late 1800's. There are nearly 3.7 million Americans who have Arabic roots. The majority of Arab American ancestry comes from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. Arab heritage is very complex with a variety of religious traditions, ethnicities and racial identities. Arab Americans have many different skin tones, facial features and hair textures.

To celebrate Arab American Heritage month, you can donate to an organization like Arab America or Center for Arab American Philanthropy. You can cook some Arabic foods like hummus, manakeesh, couscous, falafel and many more.



DISTRACTED DRIVING

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness month. In 2011, distracted driving killed 3,522 people. This month is dedicated to reminding people to pay attention when behind the wheel.

Ohio recently enacted a new distracted driving law. As of April 4, 2023, it is illegal to use or hold an electronic device in your hand, lap, or other parts of your body while driving.

Drivers can still use hands-free devices like Bluetooth. But, if an officer sees a violation, they can pull you over.

For more information on restrictions and exemptions, go to transportation.ohio.gov



Help Us Go Green!

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



TOP COP

AKRON OFFICER MICHAEL NOVAK

NOMINATED BY ASST. PROS. ASHLEE JAMES

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office sees a wide variety of cases, from murders, to drug possession, and even mental health issues.



Officer Novak was very responsive to emails and follow-up questions as well as thoroughly reviewed the bodycam footage of the incident.

Cases where mental health plays a role can be some of the more difficult situations. Because of the actions of Akron Police Officer Michael Novak, one man is getting treatment and his son is in a safer place.

His testimony was exemplary as he was able to remember key details about the incident which led to the boy’s rescue and the father taken for treatment.

A recent Juvenile Court case involved a man with ongoing mental health issues. Akron Police had been to his home several times. Officer Novak arrived after the man called and asked for assistance. However, the man refused to come outside, and said he intended to harm himself and possibly his 9-year-old son.

Even though Officer Novak is relatively new to the Akron Police Department, he presented as if he was a veteran of the force.

Police were able to safely get the boy out of the house and took the father into custody.

The actions of Officer Novak and his fellow Akron Police Officers helped the man get the mental health help he needs and place the man’s son into a safer environment.

During the dependency hearing in Juvenile Court, Officer Novak did an excellent job testifying.

Great job and congratulations Officer Novak!

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE

April is Autism Acceptance month. The nationwide effort was launched over 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.

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

ARRIVE ALIVE—RESULTS!

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office works hard to protect the community and make Summit County a better and safer place to live.

As part of that mission, the Office re-launched Arrive Alive providing 600 codes for a FREE or



A FREE Ride Home in Summit County

discounted ride home via LYFT during the St. Patrick’s Day holiday. The goal was to keep drunk or impaired drivers off the road by providing an alternative to get home.

We provided 307 FREE or reduced fare rides home for people who used the code.

Thanks to **Summit County Sheriff Kandy Fatheree** for co-sponsoring the event.

WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

BAILEY COLE

"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.

As we continue into 2023, their dedication to the community, and to finding justice, hasn't changed.

Assistant Prosecutor Bailey Cole, who works in our Juvenile Division, talks about why being a prosecutor is so important to her.



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

The best part of being a prosecutor is that I can see a direct impact on the community. When I have a case and a victim is in court, I can immediately see the impact and how I'm able to help them. It's really rewarding to interact with people and it's not just a name or a number on a piece of paper.

• WHY DID YOU BECOME A PROSECUTOR?

I became a prosecutor because I wanted to be involved with the community.

I grew up in Summit County and my family was very focused on being involved and serving the community. When I went to law school I really enjoyed the trial work and the advocacy so I wanted to do something which allowed me to do both. Being a prosecutor provides me the opportunity to do that and it just made the most sense.

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

The difficult thing about being a prosecutor is that it is a tough job. It takes a toll physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are long hours, plus every day we deal with people who have gone through the worst day of their life.

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

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office works hard to ensure local law enforcement have the latest information on any changes to Ohio law.

Last month, the Prosecutor's Office provided training to more than 100 officers and administrators on updates and changes to Ohio's gun laws and the state's conceal and carry law.

That included information on the legality of ghost guns and 3D printed guns, how to preserve and test evidence for trials, and guns and juveniles.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the training and for your commitment to keeping Summit County safe.



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