



FROM THE OFFICE OF
SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR
SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR WALSH

“DISCORD” DANGERS

As parents and caregivers, we do our best to protect children. We make sure to warn them about certain dangers and make sure they take precautions when out of our sight.

But with social media, that can be a daunting task. Most of us have heard about the dangers of the more mainstream apps, like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and others. There have been documented reports of online bullying and threats made to children on those apps.

Now a newer social media app is coming under significant scrutiny. Discord was launched in 2015 and lets people chat online through video, text, or calls. Users can join various different communities depending on their interests through the app. It started out as a venue for people interested in gaming but has expanded to include other topics.



However, as with many other social media apps, there is a dark side to Discord. We recently found out about a sexual abuse incident where the survivor met the other person on the app. There have also been reports of men using Discord to groom victims and have them send nude or sexually explicit pictures.

Even though many of the people using Discord discuss topics like music and video games, there are private, invitation only rooms where minors can interact with people much older than them. This can lead to unwanted conversations and the potential for children to be manipulated and victimized.

And it's not just about sexual exploitation. These chat rooms can impact a person's mental health, especially when members of a chat room get into darker discussions. Parents have reported discussions on the best ways to cut yourself with tips on how to hide it from parents as well as how to run away from home.

While Discord can be a valuable place for people to connect and share ideas, parents and caregivers need to know about the dangers of Discord and other social media apps—and what you can do to protect your family.



Parents can set up certain controls on Discord, but you must have your own Discord account to access your child's account. You can also view your child's activity on the app. And lastly, you can always disable and shut down the Discord account.

As with any social media account, you should follow these tips to be safe.

- Adjust your privacy settings on the app—and even lock your account to keep it private.
- Turn off geolocation—that way people can't "see" where you are.
- Report harassment or inappropriate content.
- Look before you click on a suspicious looking message.

Hopefully this information will help you and your family stay safe.

Sherri B. Walsh



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IN THE COMMUNITY

The Summit County Prosecutor’s Office ended 2023 on a positive note— with helping the community stay safe.



FREE WOMEN’S SELF-DEFENSE CLASS

Sponsored by Summit County Prosecutor

Sherri Bevan Walsh

Our FREE Women’s Self-

Defense class at Akron’s Central Hower High School at the University of Akron wrapped up the year with attendees learning simple moves and information to help minimize their chances of becoming a crime victim.



Community Outreach Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich kicked things off as instructor Chad Cunningham led the program.

Check our website— www.prosecutor.summitoh.net— and go to the self-defense tab to find future locations and dates.

Prosecutor Walsh joined Summit County Sheriff Kandy Fatheree at the WAKR Senior Lunch to talk about safety and our combined Take Me Home program.



Take Me Home is a secure database for people living with conditions which might make it difficult for them to communicate such as Autism, Alzheimer’s, dementia, and Down Syndrome. Accessible by law enforcement, Take Me Home provides officers access to pictures and contact information in case a person wanders away from their home. The hope is to quickly find that person and safely return them to their caretaker.

To register someone in our Take Me Home Program head to <https://prosecutor.summitoh.net/programs/Take-Me-Home.html>.

2023 BY THE NUMBERS:

- 4,860 TOTAL DEFENDANTS
- 4,612 FOUND GUILTY OR PLED GUILTY
- 95% CONVICTION RATE
- 61 TRIALS
- 78 OPEN HOMICIDE CASES

CONVICTION CONFIRMED!

Phyllis Cottle left a lasting impression on the residents of Summit County. She was an inspiration, fighting for crime victims, after becoming a crime victim herself.

Cottle was raped by Samuel Herring in 1984. Herring blinded Cottle by stabbing her eyes out. He then left her to die after setting her car on fire. But Cottle survived. And she helped convict Herring, who’s now serving a 330 year prison sentence for the crime.



Herring has claimed he was innocent, even asking the Ohio Innocence Project to assist in having evidence tested for his DNA.

Those tests were recently completed and showed Herring’s DNA on clothing Cottle wore when she was attacked. The DNA tested was found to be a one in 1,000,000,000,000 (one-trillion) match to Herring. Herring is 100-percent guilty!

The pain and suffering Herring has put the Cottle family through is unimaginable. We hope this news brings them some solace knowing the person who committed this brutal crime will spend the rest of his life in prison.



ADAM'S CORNER

EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hi everyone. I've been very busy getting used to meeting new people and helping them when they come to the courthouse. I mostly work where the Grand Jury reviews new cases.

I get to meet hoomans who come in and talk to the grand jury. They call it testify.



I also got to meet a new friend in a different court. That's me walking in Juvenile Court. Lots of times younger hoomans go there if something bad happened. I'm happy to help them.

It's also a new year! Did you make any new year's resolutions?



I resolve to help as many hoomans as I can. I really love what I do and I am so happy to be at the Summit County Prosecutor's Office!

Hoping you have a great 2024!

Follow Adam on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/AdamVIISPO



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.



We stand on the threshold of a new year. Many look at the new year as a fresh beginning, an opportunity to start over, to overcome a habit or do a better job. Some are pessimistic about the whole issue of making resolutions. Many of our good intentions in the new year are followed by a history of failures.

New year's resolutions are usually based on something which needs improvement. Be it parenting, a better spouse, losing weight, or starting a business of your own. It may be developing different priorities, using our time better or a whole host of things you would like to change. A new year is filled with new possibilities and opportunities. Twelve new months, 52 new weeks, 365 new days, 8760 new hours, 525,000 new minutes and 31,536,000 new seconds...every one which is a gift to us.

Changes do not come easy for most of us. We get comfortable holding on to the past. New Years' Day provides us with a crossover moment, an opportunity to step out of our comfort zones and into a new beginning. Crossover times can be caused by all sorts of challenges. For some, it may be the death of a loved one, a divorce, a sickness. When we have "not passed that way before."

As we stand at the brink of this new year, our hearts should be filled with anticipation. As we enter the new year, we should do so by being flexible, being faithful, being futuristic and most importantly, being fearless.

As Ambassadors, it is our hope: we will be kind to others, we will help someone along the way. Lastly, if if you want to see change, "be the change you want to see."

Joy and Peace from the Ambassadors in this year of 2024.

MONTHLY CELEBRATIONS

Each month there are plenty of ways to celebrate and bring awareness to certain causes and issues.

January has plenty of those opportunities. Here are a couple of designations:

- WORLD HEALTH ESTEEM MONTH**
 An opportunity to appreciate ourselves for who we are now and the small choices we can make to enhance our lives.
- NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH**
 It's a great time to pick up a new hobby which can take your mind off the pressure of work or other daily stresses. Maybe you'll find something you love!



Help Us Go Green!

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



TOP COPS

AKRON POLICE OFFICERS JOSEPH WOODIN, JOHN GROGAN, PAUL BARNES, DANIEL HENRY NOMINATED BY ASST. PROS. AARON CAMPBELL

Our office works hard to protect the community. That also means holding parents accountable for putting children in danger—which is one of the roles the Prosecutor’s Office Juvenile Division fulfills.



Recently, we worked with Akron Police Officers Joseph Woodin, John Grogan, Paul Barnes, and Daniel Henry following an unusual and difficult situation. That’s why they are this month’s TOP COPS.

Officers had pulled over a female driver and determined she was driving while under the influence. During the traffic stop, the drunk driver became combative and kept referring to her children, even though she was alone in the car.

Though the suspect became increasingly belligerent, the officers remained calm and professional throughout the night. Officers were able to learn from the driver that she

had left her young children alone while she was out drinking. At least one child required regular attention due to medical disabilities and all were under the age of seven. The officers were able to get the location of the children from the suspect, where police promptly found all of the children and took them to a safe location.

The officers also worked closely with Summit County Children Services and relatives to ensure the children would be safe that night.

Thanks to Officers Woodin, Grogan, Barnes, and Henry the children are safe and staying with relatives while in custody of Summit County Children Services.

Great job and congratulations!!!

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Communications Specialist Ben Sliwa as the 2023 Summit County Prosecutor’s Office Employee of the Year.

Ben fulfills many roles at the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office. Ben is the office’s technical expert and works very closely with assistant prosecutors as they prepare their cases. That includes working on video presentations, redacting and editing police video including from body worn cameras, and utilizing graphics to help jurors better understand the circumstances surrounding a crime.

Ben also coordinates the Office’s Safety Kids Calendar contest, going through over 1,000 posters from Summit County Schools.

Congratulations Ben!!



RINGING IN A NEW YEAR!

Summit County Prosecutor’s Office employees were also out in the community throughout December, helping ring in the holiday season. Several were “bell ringers” for the Salvation Army’s annual fundraising event.

We had workers at ACME locations in the Akron area. Pictured are **Assistant Prosecutor Rimma Avanesyan** and **Terri Valine** from our **Child Support Enforcement Agency**.

This is an annual tradition for the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office. A big thank you to all the volunteers. Everyone had a great time helping out Summit County’s less fortunate.



WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

AARON CAMPBELL

"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 begin a new year, their dedication to the community, and to finding truth, hasn't changed.

Assistant Prosecutor Aaron Campbell who works in our Juvenile Division talks about why being a prosecutor is so important to him.



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

The most rewarding part of being a prosecutor is that we get to witness first hand how we can make a positive impact in the lives of children whom we work with. We see some incredibly heartbreaking situations and we work with those families to improve the situations or find a safe home for those children.

• WHY DID YOU BECOME A PROSECUTOR?

I went to the University of Akron for undergrad and law school. I served in the Army for a few years and then I came here for school. After I graduated from law school it was right in the middle of the COVID pandemic. It was a great opportunity for me and a natural extension to give back to the community and make this my home. It's really been a good experience for me as a prosecutor as I enjoy what I do here and it allows me to use my legal skills in a way that benefits the community.

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

The most difficult part is the child abuse cases. We see some of the most heinous things done to children. It's emotionally taxing but it underscores the importance of our role in being able to protect those children.

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

ARRIVE ALIVE—KEEPING THE COMMUNITY SAFE

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office works hard to help keep our community safe. That's why we team up with the Summit County Sheriff's Office several times a year to provide FREE or reduced fare rides home for the Arrive Alive program.

The numbers are in—and close to 600 people used our codes to get a \$20 credit on LYFT to get home safely and prevent people from drinking and driving during Christmas and New Year's Eve!

Thank you to everyone who celebrated responsibly and either used Arrive Alive or had a designated driver.

Keep an eye out for information about our Arrive Alive program for the upcoming St. Patrick's Day holiday. The life you save might be your own!



Celebrate the holidays responsibly!
Have a designated sober driver or use **Arrive Alive**.

A FREE Ride Home in Summit County

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