

*The*  
**PROSECUTOR'S POST**

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025

SUMMIT COUNTY, OH



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**Elliot Kolkovich**

**Summit County Prosecutor**

## A NOTE FROM THE PROSECUTOR



As I've dived into my first full official term as the Summit County Prosecutor, I am committed to continuing to increase the efficiency of our office and keep Summit County safe.

Last April, I reorganized the Adult Felony Unit of the Criminal Division, creating teams of six prosecutors to cover two judges' dockets together. We've already seen more convictions of high-level offenses, quicker case dispositions, and more diversionary placements for deserving offenders.

One of my key priorities is to continue building on the success of this reorganization, to recruit and promote talented individuals, and to align their skills within an Office that puts them in a position to flourish. That's why I'm excited to announce several personnel moves so that we can continue to improve public safety in and around Summit County.

From working to prevent crime and reduce its impacts, to getting violent offenders off the streets, to advocating for victims and the most vulnerable people in our communities, I will always fight to better protect and serve Summit County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Kolkovich', written in a cursive style.

[HTTPS://PROSECUTOR.SUMMITOH.NET](https://prosecutor.summitoh.net)



## **RICK RALEY, Deputy Chief Counsel**



Rick Raley, formerly an Assistant Prosecutor in the Appeals and Adult Felony units, has been promoted to serve as Deputy Chief Counsel. In that role, he will oversee the Office's communications, community outreach, and budget/personnel departments while also advising Prosecutor Kolkovich on all aspects of public affairs and the implementation of his policies. In addition to his service in the Summit County Prosecutor's Office, Raley has served as Chief Counsel in the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office, as an Assistant Prosecutor in the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, and as a Judicial Attorney for the Ohio Court of Appeals. He is an honors graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where he was a member of the Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society, and Case Western Reserve University School of Law, where he was President of the Moot Court Board and Editor of the Law Review.

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## **ELAINE VILEM, Director of Communications**



Elaine Vilem, formerly the Deputy Press Secretary in the Office of United States Senator Sherrod Brown, has been named as Director of Communications. She will oversee all aspects of the Office's public relations, marketing, and media strategy. Before joining the prosecutor's office, Vilem rose up the ranks in Senator Brown's Office, starting as an intern before becoming a Staff Assistant, Constituent Advocate, Press Assistant, and finally Deputy Press Secretary. In those roles, she handled constituent service requests, assisted with the development of digital media strategy, and served as Senator Brown's spokesperson with state and national reporters. Vilem is an honors graduate of the University of South Carolina, where she was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

## **MICKEY VALDEZ, Community Outreach Coordinator**



Mickey Valdez, formerly a Sexual Violence Specialist and Community Outreach Specialist, has transitioned to the role of Community Outreach Coordinator. In that role, she will coordinate the Office's efforts in organizing or attending scores of community events and educational programs, including the Office's innovative programs like the women's self-defense classes and Start By Believing campaign. Before starting with the Prosecutor's Office in November 2019, Valdez served as Director of Services for the Victim Assistance Program of Summit County, where she ensured that victims of crime received appropriate support and crisis services, and as a Family Advocate for the Children's Center of Medina County, where she worked with victims of child abuse and their families. She is a graduate of Oklahoma City University and holds a Certificate in Advanced Crime Analysis, Criminology, and Criminal Justice from Portland State University.

## **SAMANTHA LISY, Specialty Dockets Prosecutor**



Samantha Lisy has returned to the Office as Specialty Dockets prosecutor. In this role, she will manage cases assigned to the Court's specialty dockets, including Turning Point, Valor Court, and Reentry Court, which are designed on giving deserving offenders an opportunity for rehabilitation. Lisy is a graduate of Ashland University and the University of Akron School of Law.

She has held various positions in different divisions of the Prosecutor's Office and has previously served as a public defender in Stark County. Lisy has been admitted to the practice of law since 2010.

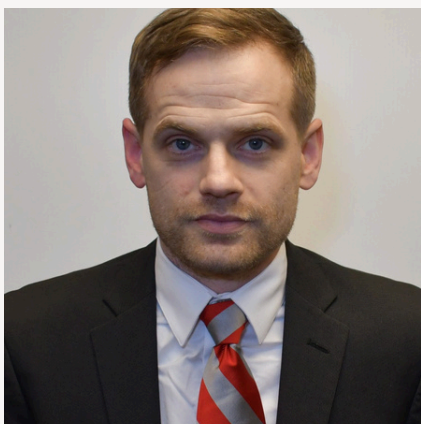
## **MAJOR TRIAL PROMOTIONS**

Ben Carro, Emily Hall, and Zach Neumann were promoted to Major Trial Prosecutors in the Adult Felony Unit of the Criminal Division. All three were previously Senior Prosecutors. In their new roles, they will handle prosecutions for homicides, sexual offenses, and other complex matters.



Carro has been admitted to the practice of law since 2013. He first served as a public defender in both Summit County and Wayne County before becoming an Assistant Prosecutor for the City of Akron. In 2019, Carro became an Assistant Summit County Prosecutor. He is a graduate of John Carroll University and the University of Akron School of Law.

Hall has also been admitted to the practice of law since 2013. In addition to her service in Summit County, she has served as an Assistant Prosecutor in Richland County, where she tried more than 25 felony jury trials. Hall is a graduate of Bowling Green State University and University of Toledo Law School.



Neumann has been admitted to the practice of law since 2015 and has spent his entire career as a licensed attorney with the Summit County Prosecutor's Office. He started in the Child Protection Unit handling abuse, neglect, and dependency cases in Juvenile Court to protect vulnerable children before transferring to the Adult Felony Unit in 2018. Neumann is an honors graduate of Loyola University of Chicago and the Ohio State University College of Law.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT IMPERSONATION SCAMS

We have heard from residents that have received intimidating calls where scammers are posing as deputies from the Summit County Sheriff's Office.

Please remember:

- The Sheriff's Office does **NOT** call residents to notify them of outstanding warrants or unpaid fines.
- The Sheriff's Office does **NOT** issue warrants for missing a jury summons.
- The Sheriff's Office does **NOT** ask for or accept payment for anything over the phone, through PayPal or similar apps, or through pre-paid credit cards.

New technology allows scammers to mask their phone numbers and make them appear as trusted numbers. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up and call the Sheriff's Office Dispatchers directly at (330) 643-2181.

## INMATE REPRESENTATION SCAMS

We have also received reports that scammers are using the inmate search feature on local Sheriff's Office websites to contact the family members of inmates. These scammers falsely claim to be able to help secure the release of the inmate for a fee. Never send any money, money orders, gift cards, or other forms of payment to anyone that you don't know who is claiming to represent an inmate. Never share any personal information like logins, passwords, bank account information, or personal identity information with anyone you don't know.





## CONCEALED CARRY WEAPONS WORKSHOP

In January, we hosted another successful CCW Workshop in partnership with the Summit County Sheriff's Office in Mogadore. These workshops provide community members with the opportunity to learn about Ohio's concealed carry laws, ask questions about the laws, and receive safety tips and advice on how to legally carry concealed handguns in our state.



## SENIOR SAFETY SPEECHES

Prosecutor Kolkovich delivered senior safety speeches at churches throughout Summit County in January and February to help seniors learn how to protect themselves from theft and the ever-changing technology that scammers use.



## MLK DAY BREAKFAST

Prosecutor Kolkovich and staff attended the Akron Urban League's Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast. Congratulations to the Akron Urban League on their Centennial Celebration!

## FREE WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES

Join us for free self-defense classes for women with certified instructor Chad Cunningham. Come learn simple techniques to help you stay safe.

**March 18, 2025 at 6 P.M.**

Twinsburg High School

**April 15, 2025 at 6 P.M.**

Norton High School

**Questions? Call (330) 643-2787**



## CSEA AFTER HOURS



Do you have child support concerns, but it's too hard to make it to our office during regular hours? Come see CSEA out in the community for assistance with general questions, DNA testing, job assistance, license reinstatements, and more.

**March 4, 2025 from 5 p.m. - 7 P.M.**

Akron Urban League

**March 19, 2025 from 2:30 - 6 P.M.**

David Hill Community Learning Center

**Questions?**

Travis Johnson (330) 643-8468

James Brewer (330) 643-8703



## CSEA RECOGNIZED FOR EXEMPLARY WORK



Our Child Support Enforcement Agency received the below awards from the Ohio Office of Child Support for Federal Fiscal Year 2024 performance in the Metro Category. Congratulations to all of our dedicated CSEA staff!

**Best Collections on Current Support**

**Most Improved Collections on Current Support**

**Best Paternity Performance**

**Most Improved Arrears Performance**

**Best Overall Performance**

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## CSEA AND THE SUPER BOWL

Parris Campbell, Akron native and son of CSEA's own Shelly Woodruff, competed in Super Bowl LIX as a wide receiver with the Philadelphia Eagles.

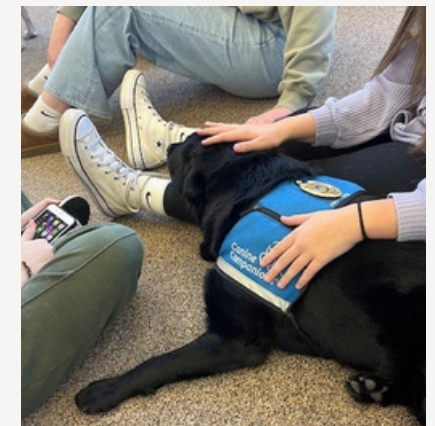
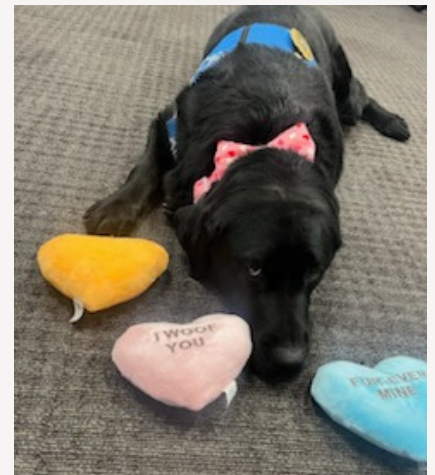
Campbell is a graduate of St. Vincent - St. Mary and The Ohio State University. Congratulations to Parris, Shelly, and the rest of their family on an incredible season!



## NEWS FROM OUR FACILITY DOG

In January and February I had lots of fun playing out in the snow, meeting new people and dogs, and snuggling up with anyone who needed it. I got to have lunch with our current group of interns, and went to Garfield Community Learning Center's Annual Valentine's Day Dance for special education students. I got to dress up in a fancy bowtie and dance and have fun with so many cool people!

I also sat in trial for the first time to help a young witness give her testimony to a jury. I am so proud of her!



# Remembering Avery II

FEB/MAR 2025

## 2013 - 2023 SCPO FACILITY DOG

This month, we celebrate the life of Avery II, the beloved labrador-golden retriever who served as the office's facility dog from August 2013 to October 2023. Avery passed away peacefully on February 10, 2025 at the age of 13.

Avery was the first facility dog at a prosecutor's office in the state of Ohio. Born August 1, 2011, he came to the Summit County Prosecutor's Office at two years old due to the dedication of former Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh. Along with his handler Melanie Hart, who served the Prosecutor's Office as an administrative specialist for 30 years, Avery worked every day to provide emotional support to adults with developmental disabilities and children who were victims and witnesses of crime. Avery was placed with the Summit County Prosecutor's Office for his sweet and calm personality, providing a soothing presence for victims and witnesses during meetings with prosecutors, court appearances, hearings, testimonies, and sentencing. Melanie continued to love and care for Avery in his golden years.



Throughout his decade-long career, Avery helped nearly 300 victims and witnesses across 236 cases, including 229 victims under the age of 18, one witness under the age of 18, and 62 adult victims. He was present with 50 victims during their testimony in court and was used in 15 competency hearings, 20 sentencing, four Grand Jury Hearings, two Domestic Relations Evidentiary Civil Protection Order hearings, and 31 juvenile cases. If Avery could not be present during testimony, he often walked victims and witnesses to court and waited outside for them until they were finished. Avery served not only Summit County, but several other counties who requested to utilize him – including Cuyahoga, Stark, and Trumbull Counties.

(Continued on next page)

## 2013 - 2023 SCPO FACILITY DOG

Avery also attended two specialty courts in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas: the drug court, known as the Turning Point Program, and Valor Court, for cases involving veterans. Avery helped to relieve the stress of participants and their family and friends, and celebrated the graduation of participants.

The Summit County Prosecutor's Office would like to thank Canine Companions for donating Avery, and his successor Adam, to our office; Dr. Paroff and the Stow Kent Animal Hospital for providing Avery with free veterinary services; Pet Supplies 'Plus' for providing Avery with free food, grooming, and pet supplies throughout his career; and Trusted Journey Pet Memorial Services for graciously covering aftercare costs.

Avery was an easy-going dog who loved to come to work and help both victims and staff during difficult days. He was fun and playful, and loved to chase his tennis ball, chew his squeaky porcupine, and play with Melanie's rescue dog, Bogey. But when he put his vest on, Avery knew that he had an important job to do—and he did it incredibly well. Avery will be truly missed by all who had the pleasure of meeting him.



## TOP COP: DETECTIVE TONY SUTTON

Akron Police Department



Assistant Prosecutor Jamila Mitchell nominated Detective Sutton for Top Cop for his remarkable work investigating two murder cases involving the same defendant. Detective Sutton interviewed the offender and collected crucial evidence for the foundation of a strong case, resulting in guilty pleas in both cases. Thanks to Detective Sutton's efforts, a violent offender was convicted of two murder charges and given two life sentences. Detective Sutton also played a crucial role investigating an aggravated robbery and felonious assault case where a victim had to have his leg amputated as a result of the gunshot wounds he sustained. Detective Sutton took the time to work closely with the victim, who had recently immigrated to the U.S. Detective Sutton's work in that case also helped secure a conviction and a prison sentence for the offender. Congratulations to Detective Sutton!

## TOP COP: DETECTIVE WILLIAM LAGASSE

Akron Police Department



Akron Police Detective William Lagasse was nominated by Assistant Prosecutor Rimma Avanesyan for his impeccable work on the case of J.C. Sanders, who was sentenced to at least 17 years in prison for shooting at a victim and leading police officers on a lengthy pursuit. Sanders fled to Pennsylvania during his trial in June and was arrested and extradited back to Ohio this past fall. Detective Lagasse was a patrol officer at the time of the crime and responded to this volatile situation, chasing the defendant through Akron. Detective Lagasse worked with the victims to identify the defendant, and collaborated with the violent fugitive task force who was later able to apprehend the defendant. Thanks to his work, another dangerous criminal has been taken off the streets. Congratulations to Detective Lagasse!

## **SUCCESSFUL TRIAL PROSECUTIONS**

Congratulations to the following assistant prosecutors who obtained convictions at trial during January and February:

**BEN CARRO**

**AMANDA KOREN**

**RYAN CASH**

**GREG PEACOCK**

**MACKENZIE GODWIN**

**CHARLES ROMAN**

**EMILY HALL**

**BRIAN STANO**

**KRISTI HAUDE**

**JEREMY VEILLETTE**

**EMILY WILLIAMS (3)**



## **AMBASSADORS FOR EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

In today's world, the need to feel like we truly belong is more important than ever. Belonging goes beyond simply being part of a group—it's about feeling accepted, valued, and understood for who we are. When we belong, we're not just accepted despite our differences, but because of them. This sense of connection fuels well-being and helps individuals and communities thrive.

A true sense of belonging creates a space where everyone, regardless of their background or identity, feels seen and heard. It's not just about similarity but embracing what makes each of us unique. When people feel safe and valued for who they are, they're more likely to contribute their ideas, talents, and perspectives. This makes communities stronger, more creative, and more resilient.

Belonging also empowers us to face life's challenges. Knowing we have the support of others who understand our experiences makes it easier to navigate tough times. The connections we build through belonging help us stay hopeful and persevere, even when things get difficult.

Ultimately, the power of belonging lies in creating spaces where fairness, respect, and inclusivity are at the forefront. When everyone feels they have an equal opportunity to succeed and be heard, communities flourish. By embracing diversity and ensuring everyone has a place, we can build a future where every individual can truly thrive.



**The Summit County Prosecutor's Office's Ambassadors for Equity and Social Justice bring together coworkers from different backgrounds and cultures, and foster education and engagement to make the community a better place.**