



# Summit County Prosecutor's Office News from the Criminal Division

November 2011

A newsletter for residents of Summit County from the Summit County Prosecutor's Office

## A MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTING ATTORNEY SHERRI BEVAN WALSH



The holiday season is officially upon us. In this season of reflection and giving thanks, I'd like to draw attention to a side of the Prosecutor's

Office that is often hidden from public view: the charitable side.

Throughout the year, the Community Relations Committee, which is comprised of staff from every division of my office, plans fundraising and community service opportunities for the entire office.

The most popular fundraising effort is Casual Friday, in which staff members pay \$3 to wear jeans to work. That is followed closely by our annual Wii tournament. The money raised from these two events will primarily go toward purchasing gifts for the families we support at Christmas.

December is certainly our most active month for charitable efforts. We'll be bell-

ringing for the Salvation Army at the Chapel Hill Mall, shopping for families who need a little help putting gifts under their trees and making one last fundraising push.

But the Community Relations Committee works all year to help those in our community who are going through tough times.

You can find staff members from my office serving hot lunches at Open M in Akron, taking part in community meetings like National Night Out, working closely with organizations like the Battered Women's Shelter and providing information about our many programs at events such as Summit for Kids and Boo at the Zoo.

Although financial experts have been assuring us the economy is on an upswing, there are still many people in our area struggling to get by. As you prepare to celebrate this festive season, I hope you will also remember those in our community whose holidays won't be as bright.

### Inside This Issue

A Message from Sherri Bevan Walsh	1
Prosecutors Educate Akron Bar, An Intern's View, Child Support Collections	2
Top Cop, Holiday Safety Tips, Guilty Verdicts	3
Meet an Assistant Prosecutor, Self Defense Classes	4

#### HELP US GO GREEN!

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## **PROSECUTORS EDUCATE AKRON BAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS**

With the passage of H.B. 86 this summer, new sentencing guidelines took effect October 1. While this means prosecutors had to learn the new rules, defense attorneys also had to brush up on what sort of sentence could be imposed on their clients.

To make the transition a little easier for everyone, representatives from the Summit County Prosecutor's Office recently gave a presentation to the Akron Bar Association on sentencing reform.

Local defense attorneys learned about why mandatory sentencing was changed, how the new rules affect drug charges and sex offenders currently in prison, sentence length changes and how all of this pertains to juvenile law.

### **AN INTERN'S VIEW**

*By Stephanie Canon*

Growing up as a Latina, my plan was to help domestic violence victims in this community. The best way for me to do so is through a legal education.

After graduating from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a B.A. in Justice Studies, I decided to move from New York to Ohio to pursue my J.D. I am currently a 3<sup>rd</sup> year part-time student at the University Of Akron School Of Law.

When I began my internship at the Summit County Prosecutor's Office, I wasn't sure what to expect. As time went on, I found myself constantly learning about different areas of law and gaining knowledge that I would never have received in school. In law school we constantly read about trials, but rarely do we get to witness them up close. By observing

these courtroom interactions, I am able to study the various strategies different prosecutors use and which work best.

My experience has also translated to the classroom, where what I have learned has allowed me to better grasp different concepts in my classes.

This internship has been a rewarding, eye-opening experience, and I am glad I have been given the opportunity to be a part of it.

*To apply for an internship with the Prosecutor's Office, contact Lisa Holdt at [holdt@prosecutor.summitoh.net](mailto:holdt@prosecutor.summitoh.net) or 330-643-2796.*

## **CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS**



This month our Criminal Non-Support division of the Child Support Enforcement Agency reached a significant milestone. In the 10 years since the division was created, it has collected more than \$25 million from prosecuting parents who owe at least \$5,000 in past due child support and have not made a payment in more than six months.

We do not take prosecution lightly, and we exhaust all other options first. But we have found that many parents start making their payments when faced with prison.

The staff at our Child Support Enforcement Agency work extremely hard on behalf of the children of Summit County, and I am very proud of them. We know that the involvement of both parents is crucial to a child's well-being.

## TOP COP

**Top Cop:** Sgt. John Thorne, Ohio State Highway Patrol

**Nominated By:**  
Assistant Prosecutors Greg Peacock and Brian Stano



On the evening of March 31, Michael Plemons struck Springfield Township Patrolman Mark Dodez with his truck as the officer was searching along Arlington Road for drugs that had been tossed out of a car window during a police chase earlier that evening. Officer Dodez was left paralyzed by Plemons, whose blood alcohol content was recorded at .28 after the crash.

Ohio State Highway Patrol Sgt. John Thorne spent hours painstakingly creating an accident reconstruction for use at trial. His testimony during the trial was intelligent, factual and professional. Sgt. Thorne's testimony helped the jury convict Plemons of Aggravated Vehicular Assault, Driving Under the Influence and Hit-Skip. After the trial, several jurors remarked about Sgt. Thorne's extensive expertise in accident reconstruction and were impressed with his testimony. Judge Alison McCarty imposed the maximum penalty Plemons could receive – six years in prison and a 10-year license suspension.

That's why Sgt. John Thorne of the Ohio State Highway Patrol is November's Top Cop.

Way to go, Sgt. Thorne!

## HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS



Although we all survived Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the holiday shopping season has just begun. While you're making your list and checking it twice, be mindful that shoppers laden with bags and distracted by sales are prime targets for thieves.

Remembering just a few safety tips can keep you safe while shopping:

- Keep your purse tucked firmly under your arm or your wallet in a front pocket or inside jacket pocket.
- Limit the number of credit cards and amount of cash in your purse or wallet.
- Put your money or credit card back in your wallet before walking away from the cash register.
- Review credit card and bank statements often for errors and unauthorized activity.
- Inspect gift cards for signs of tampering and purchase only from trusted sources.
- Be alert. Keep your head up and scan your surroundings as you walk. Check your vehicle before entering.

A little common sense and a lot of vigilance will keep you (and your bank accounts) safe this season.

## GUILTY AT TRIAL

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

Joe Fantozzi  
Greg Peacock  
Jennie Shuki

Greta Johnson  
Dustin Roth  
Brian Stano

## MEET AN ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR



**Name:** Bridget Hinegardner

**Hire Date:** November 2011

**Title:** Assistant Prosecutor

**Hometown:** Dayton, Ohio

**Education:** I received bachelor degrees in Criminology and Psychology at The Ohio State University. I also received my law degree from The Ohio State University.

**Something People Don't Know About Me:** Every year my siblings and I go on a white water rafting trip. I have also been thrown out of every raft I have ever been in (by the river rapids, not my siblings).

**Job Duties:** I work on the delinquency side of the Juvenile Division. I prosecute juvenile cases involving misdemeanors, felonies, traffic violations or status offenses such as truancy or unruly conduct. I am also assigned to the Thursday night Crossroads docket, which is a diversion program for certain types of juvenile offenders.

**Why I Chose This Field:** I chose this field because it is interesting, fast-paced and has the potential to directly impact society in a positive manner.

## SELF DEFENSE CLASSES



Do you know what to do if someone tries to snatch your purse? What if someone grabs your arm in an attempt to abduct you?

I've partnered with Lt. Chad Cunningham of the University of Akron Police Department to offer self defense classes to community groups. These fun, informative sessions teach the basics of self defense and are appropriate for any age group.

To schedule a self defense class, contact Merle Payne at [payne@prosecutor.summitoh.net](mailto:payne@prosecutor.summitoh.net) or (330) 643-2800.