

NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather III
District Attorney

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Misdemeanor Appeals Team convicts drivers of DWI

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Misdemeanor Appeals Team recently tried two defendants in Superior Court. The proceedings were held September 3-6, 2019, in courtrooms 5170 and 5110 before The Honorable Louis A. Trosch, Jr. and The Honorable Michael A. Stone, Superior Court Judges.

The Misdemeanor Appeals Team prosecutes cases in which the defendant was convicted in District Court, and then appeals his or her conviction to Superior Court for a jury trial as allowed under North Carolina law.

Demetrios Kotrotsios, 43, was tried for driving while impaired. After the State presented evidence in the case, Kotrotsios decided to plead guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Stone sentenced Kotrotsios to 120 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of supervised probation.

Austin Deem, 25, was tried for assault by pointing a gun. A jury returned a verdict of *not guilty*.

Eric Pendergrass, 30, pled guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Trosch sentenced Pendergrass to 60 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

Two additional defendants remanded their cases to District Court for sentencing.

Note: Misdemeanors and infractions are originally prosecuted in district court in North Carolina. In criminal district court, a judge determines guilt, not a jury; this is commonly referred to as a "bench trial." However, defendants have a right to appeal a conviction from the district court to the superior court for a trial de novo. The new trial in superior court must be a jury trial, not a bench trial. In a de novo trial, the jury cannot be informed that a district court judge previously found the defendant guilty; further, a record of any evidence, including testimony, from district court may not be introduced. While the DA's Office prosecutes nearly 225,000 misdemeanors and infractions each year in district court in Mecklenburg County, each defendant is entitled to exercise his/her right to appeal to the superior court. When a misdemeanor or infraction occupies the limited time available in our superior courtrooms, it the intent of the DA's Office to keep the public informed of the results through news releases like this one. Due to the volume of misdemeanors and infractions prosecuted in district court each day, reports like this are not possible for all of those cases.

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