

# NEWS RELEASE

**Spencer B. Merriweather III**  
District Attorney

**December 13, 2017**

## **DA Merriweather presents awards to honor community service**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A Good Samaritan who chased a suspect, a pediatrician who treats abused children, an officer who dedicates his time to helping troubled youth and a District Attorney's Office employee who volunteers to provide Hospice care were among those honored today by Mecklenburg County District Attorney Spencer B. Merriweather III.

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office hosted its third annual awards ceremony today to recognize individuals who have provided outstanding service to promote the mission of the District Attorney's Office, to better the criminal justice system and to improve the community as a whole.

The 2017 Above and Beyond Citizen Award was presented to Jamil Swedat and James Brindle. This award commends victims or witnesses of a crime who exhibit extraordinary courage and responsibility by assisting in the apprehension of a defendant or participating in the prosecution of a case. The Community Leadership Citizen Award, which recognizes someone who has demonstrated outstanding leadership within the community for standing up for what is right, was presented to Dr. Patricia Morgan.



**DA Merriweather recognizes the winners of the 2017 DA's Office awards.**

Officers Matthew Teague and Darron Cooper received the 2017 Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award, which honors local law enforcement members who have exhibited exemplary work in the field and have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the community is safer and that victims feel more secure.

The Bryan Crocker Award was presented to Maribel Bautista and Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Wilson. This award recognizes employees of the District Attorney's Office who have worked outside of the courtroom to make Mecklenburg County a better place. The award is named for Assistant District Attorney Bryan Crocker, who dedicated his career to public service. He passed away in 2015 following a battle with cancer.

### **Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Jamil Swedat**

In 2014, Mr. Swedat was running the register at his uncle's convenience store when a man became unruly after Mr. Swedat informed him that he didn't have enough money to make a

purchase of tobacco products. The man smashed a display on the counter, and Mr. Swedat chased him out of the store. Less than two hours later, the man returned, opened the front door and fired several gunshots at Mr. Swedat, striking him once in the abdomen. Over the course of months, Mr. Swedat underwent multiple surgeries to remove bullet fragments that caused him extreme pain. Despite his injuries, Mr. Swedat became an active participant in the prosecution of a man who posed a threat to the community. He made a point of attending many of the defendant's court dates, and he took the stand to testify when the case went to trial in February of this year. Mr. Swedat displayed extraordinary strength by testifying against the defendant at trial, and his testimony resulted in the defendant's conviction for the charge of assault with a deadly weapon with the intent to kill inflicting serious injury. Mr. Swedat is to be commended for standing up for the entire community – while suffering from the aftermath of his injuries – to ensure that others were protected from a dangerous offender.



**DA Merriweather, Jamil Swedat and ADA Brett Few**

### **Above and Beyond Citizen Award: James Brindle**

In 2015, Mr. Brindle and his wife heard a woman screaming near their apartment complex and discovered the woman bleeding profusely at a nearby bus stop. They saw a man running away from her, carrying the woman's bag. Mr. Brindle immediately ran after the man. When the man reached his vehicle, Mr. Brindle confronted him and tried to force him to stay at the scene. But the man fled in the car, almost striking Mr. Brindle in the process. Mr. Brindle ran to his own car and began to follow the man. As a result of Mr. Brindle's actions, CMPD located the man and arrested him after a chase. At the time, Mr. Brindle did not know that the man – who would be identified as [Davonn Belk](#) – was carrying a pistol that he had used to beat the woman at the bus stop. He also did not know that only two hours earlier, Belk had sexually assaulted and robbed another woman at gunpoint. Belk was tried for his crimes in May 2017. The victim in the bus stop assault was too terrified of Belk to identify him in court. Mr. Brindle's testimony provided the only identification of Belk as the perpetrator of that crime. A jury found Belk guilty of first-degree sex offense, two counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon, first-degree kidnapping, possession of cocaine and misdemeanor flee to elude arrest with a motor vehicle. He was sentenced to at least 31 years in prison, and upon his release from prison, he must register as a sex offender for 30 years.



**DA Merriweather, ADA Jane Honeycutt, James Brindle and ADA Kristen Northrup**

### **Community Leadership Citizen Award: Dr. Patricia Morgan**

Dr. Morgan is the medical director of the child maltreatment unit at Levine Children's Hospital, as well as the medical director of the Pediatric Resource Center at Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center. Dr. Morgan treats children who have been physically and sexually abused, but her work does not end in the exam room. She also works closely with the District Attorney's Office and community partners as part of efforts to hold abusers accountable. She participates in weekly meetings at Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center, where she explains the medical findings in each case to a multidisciplinary team of police, prosecutors, forensic interviewers and social workers who work together on



**DA Merriweather, Dr. Patricia Morgan and her colleagues**

these cases. Dr. Morgan works with prosecutors to help them understand medical evidence, allowing prosecutors to more thoroughly analyze the evidence and, ultimately, better explain that information to a jury. She has testified numerous times and acted as a consultant in cases involving both sexual assault and physical abuse of children. She has hosted local lunch and learn sessions for others in the field, and she has provided child abuse-related trainings across the country. Dr. Morgan has been a valued partner of the District Attorney's Office for years, and her work is critical to the office's success in prosecuting those who harm the most innocent of victims.

#### **Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Officer Matthew Teague**

Officer Teague is assigned to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Juvenile Priority Offenders Strategy Team (JPOST), which works with the community's most troubled youth who have repeated contact with the juvenile justice system. Officer Teague is dedicated to serving as a positive influence and redirecting the harmful paths of youthful offenders toward brighter and more promising futures. He often goes above and beyond. For example, Officer Teague wanted to encourage and reward a juvenile for opening up to the idea of having a mentor, so he took the young man to the Cheesecake Factory. This juvenile had never been served at a restaurant with waiters, and this was his dream restaurant. Officer Teague paid for the young man's meal out of his own pocket. Simply sharing a meal together allowed the juvenile to break out of his shell, and they were able to work together toward a positive change in this juvenile's life. Officer Teague is an irreplaceable asset to the District Attorney's goal of creating a community where young people can flourish.



**DA Merriweather, Officer Matthew Teague and members of the DA's Juvenile Team**

#### **Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Officer Darron Cooper**

In September 2016, CMPD Officer Cooper was the first officer to respond to a report of a sexual assault of a woman by her ex-boyfriend. When he arrived, he found the victim visibly upset and fearful. He remained calm and demonstrated a level of care and regard for the victim that went above and beyond. Officer Cooper personally drove the victim to the hospital and then gave his personal cellphone number to the nurse conducting the sexual assault exam so that she could contact him when the exam was complete. Officer Cooper returned to the hospital to drive the victim home. The victim was concerned about returning to her apartment without knowing where her ex-boyfriend may be, so Officer Cooper requested an additional unit to respond to her home. The officers searched the victim's apartment before she entered and waited with her until she packed a bag and left to go to a family member's home. In October 2017, a jury found the defendant, [Carlos Sinclair](#), guilty of second-degree sex offense and second-degree kidnapping. He was sentenced to 148-250 months in prison and must register as a sex offender for 30 years upon his release from prison. Officer Cooper's testimony was essential in securing the conviction. His professionalism, sincerity and candor while testifying led courtroom personnel to describe his testimony as the best they had ever witnessed from any member of law enforcement.



**ADA Jane Honeycutt, DA Merriweather, Officer Darron Cooper and ADA Kristen Northrup**

### **The Bryan Crocker Award: Maribel Bautista**

Ms. Bautista has worked for the District Attorney's Office for about seven years as a legal assistant and interpreter for Spanish-speaking victims and witnesses. For the past 13 years, Ms. Bautista has also dedicated her time as a volunteer at the Gordon Hospice House in Iredell County to help patients and their families spend their final moments together. She offers companionship, takes patients outside for fresh air and even feeds patients. Ms. Bautista has been a frequent volunteer, at times volunteering multiple times a week, particularly when there is a special need. She sat with a Hispanic patient evening after evening because the woman felt lonely and longed for someone to speak Spanish with her. She cared for a dying child, holding her and rocking her to sleep. Her volunteerism is even more remarkable because Ms. Bautista has done this through difficult times in her own life. She has twice survived breast cancer. Her colleagues commend her for her selflessness and for the work she does to help others in need when they need it most.



**DA Merriweather and Maribel Bautista**

### **The Bryan Crocker Award: Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Wilson**

ADA Wilson has served as a Mecklenburg County prosecutor for 10 years and currently works on the Violent Crimes Team. Throughout those 10 years, ADA Wilson has dedicated his time outside of the work day to help young people learn about the criminal justice system through the District Attorney's Exploring program. The Exploring program, which is organized by the Boy Scouts of America, allows male and female students to explore their career interests through various Exploring posts. Students who are interested in pursuing a legal career or a career in the criminal justice system join the District Attorney's Office post. ADA Wilson has been a steadfast volunteer, and the program's longevity is due in large part to his efforts. He has planned monthly meetings, organized tours of the courthouse and jail and led mock trials. ADA Wilson is a prosecutor who spends his days working to hold violent offenders accountable for their actions but spends his evenings once a month introducing youth to the courts in a positive way, ensuring that these young people enter the justice system not as defendants but as future colleagues. He has earned the respect of his colleagues and community for his commitment to the program.



**ADA Mary Elledge, ADA Jonathan Wilson and DA Merriweather**

*Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com). For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/charmeckda](http://www.facebook.com/charmeckda) and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.*

// End //