

# NEWS RELEASE

**Spencer B. Merriweather III**  
District Attorney

**December 13, 2018**

## **DA Merriweather presents honors for service to the community**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A detective who went above the call of duty to make a homicide witness feel safe, a woman who survived a murder attempt and testified against her assailant, and two legal assistants who volunteer with young people were among those honored today by Mecklenburg County District Attorney Spencer B. Merriweather III.

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office hosted its fourth 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 2018 Above and Beyond Citizen Awards were presented to Frank Timothy Carter III and Kimberly Cherry. 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.



**District Attorney Spencer B. Merriweather III**

Detective Joe Dollar, Sgt. Thomas Shields and CMPD's Crime Scene Investigation unit received the 2018 Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Awards, which honor 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 Janice Oates and Elise Bautista. 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.

## **The Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Frank Timothy Carter III**

Last year, Mr. Carter was playing basketball and accidentally knocked a classmate with his elbow. When Mr. Carter, 13, apologized for bumping into him, the boy tried to strike him. A week later, Mr. Carter left art class to go to the bathroom to wash his hands when the same classmate approached from behind and began punching him, leaving him with a chipped tooth and two swollen eyes. Mr. Carter was called to testify in juvenile court in October 2018. And

despite threats at school, he took the stand to do the right thing. He showed maturity and fortitude well beyond his years while in court. He answered the prosecutor's questions and respectfully answered questions from the defense attorney. As a result, the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent on the charge of assault inflicting serious injury. Mr. Carter, who stood up to the pressure of his peers, was so impressive that two members of the DA's Office nominated him for this award.

### **The Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Kimberly Cherry**

Ms. Cherry had been in an on- and off-again relationship with Timothy Crumitie for years until she met and fell in love with Michael Gretsinger. In August 2016, Crumitie snuck into Ms. Cherry's Charlotte apartment while she and Mr. Gretsinger were outside. When Ms. Cherry and her boyfriend entered the apartment, they found Crumitie waiting for them, armed with a gun. While Mr. Gretsinger was crouched with his hands up, Crumitie shot him in the head. Crumitie then tied Ms. Cherry's hands behind her back and kidnapped her at gunpoint, taking her car and driving her to his home in Rowan County, where he held her captive for hours. Eventually, Crumitie drove her back to Mecklenburg County to a construction site near her apartment. He took Ms. Cherry out of the car and told her to turn around. She thought he was going to let her go, but instead, he shot her in the back of the head. She fell to the ground, and he fired again, shooting her in the temple. She had the presence of mind to play dead as Crumitie placed her in the trunk of the car and drove to the parking lot of her apartment complex. She waited in the trunk until she was confident he had gone. Then, she pulled her trunk's emergency release and ran to a neighbor's door for help. With two bullets in her head, Ms. Cherry told police what had happened, asked officers to help Mr. Gretsinger and identified Crumitie as her assailant. Sadly, Mr. Gretsinger died in the hospital nine days after the shooting. Paramedics called Ms. Cherry a miracle. The bullets fired by Crumitie did not penetrate her skull. In February 2018, the case went to trial. Ms. Cherry took the stand to testify against Crumitie. [The jury found Crumitie guilty](#) of first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder, second-degree burglary, first-degree kidnapping and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The judge sentenced him to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The DA's Office is grateful for the strength Ms. Cherry found to secure justice for Mr. Gretsinger and protect the entire community.



### **The Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Detective Joe Dollar**

In November 2016, Christian Alfredo Soto Mojica had tried to calm an altercation. As he and a woman were walking away, Montdrekus Moore pulled up alongside them in his car, stepped out and fired one shot, striking Mr. Mojica in the neck. He was pronounced deceased at the scene. Detective Dollar of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department became the lead detective. He interviewed the woman, who was the sole witness of the murder. Detective Dollar also discovered that this witness was the daughter of Moore's girlfriend. That led Detective Dollar to investigate further to be sure that the witness' mother was safe and that the witness would be safe to return to her mother's home. The case proceeded to trial in June 2018. During trial preparations, Detective Dollar spoke with the witness numerous times and accompanied prosecutors to her apartment to reassure the witness that she was doing the right thing. But the



morning of her testimony, the witness' mother took her out of the county to prevent her from testifying. Detective Dollar and his colleagues worked to locate her and get her to court. He then arranged for the witness to stay in a hotel, drove to pick up the witness' child and belongings and even bought her dinner. Detective Dollar did not hesitate to do everything needed and more to ensure the witness not only testified but felt safe in doing so. His hard work resulted in justice. [The jury found Moore guilty](#) of first-degree murder and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Moore was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, as well as an additional 19-32 months in prison. From the investigation to the trial, Detective Dollar went above and beyond to ensure that the victim's family received justice, the key witness felt safe and the entire community was protected.

### **The Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Sgt. Thomas Shields**

Sgt. Shields works for the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, and for years, the DA's Office – and all people of Mecklenburg County – have benefitted from his effective and dependable work. Sgt. Shields monitors calls coming from the county jail. These calls can become critical evidence in domestic violence cases, as well as other cases that heavily rely on eyewitness testimony. These calls may contain admissions, threats to victims or witnesses, or information that leads to the identification of another suspect. Having someone with the level of Sgt. Shields' skill and dedication is a significant component in this office's ability to successfully prosecute some defendants. In fact, Sgt. Shields' work has made the difference between a guilty and not guilty verdict in many cases. He is known for being good natured and enthusiastic, and he consistently makes himself available to testify. When he is called to the stand, he is an expert at explaining the process by which jail calls are recorded, laying the foundation that allows prosecutors to introduce these calls into evidence. And perhaps most importantly, he aggressively investigates complaints from victims who have received unwanted calls from an inmate, and he works to stop those calls. This reduces the pressure on victims, helping prosecutors to encourage their continued cooperation with the prosecution. He recently notified prosecutors of a possible violation of a "no contact" order that he discovered of his own initiative without being asked to monitor that particular defendant.



### **The Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: CMPD Crime Scene Investigation**

In 2015, Rasool Harrell was murdered in Matthews, and his friend was shot multiple times and left for dead. Two days later, Jonathan Cosme Alvarado, Jusmar Isiah Gonzaga-Garcia and Mirjana Puhar were murdered in Charlotte. Emmanuel Rangel and Edward Sanchez were soon charged with the murders. They pled not guilty and both went to trial – one in 2017 and one in 2018. Ultimately, [juries found them guilty](#) in connection with the murders and each received multiple consecutive sentences of [life in prison without the possibility of parole](#). Four families, as well as a surviving victim, received justice. And the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Crime Scene Investigation unit played a huge role in securing that justice. At the Charlotte crime scene, where three people were killed, CSI investigators spent more than 48 hours documenting, photographing and collecting all of the evidence. As prosecutors were preparing for trial, this unit went above and beyond by reviewing photographs and documentation from both homicide scenes. They constructed a detailed color-coded crime scene diagram consisting of numerous items of evidence, including



spent casings, spent projectiles and live bullets for both scenes. They even took it upon themselves to create an enlarged version for prosecutors to use at trial. Their efforts took hours upon hours. These detailed diagrams allowed the juries to visualize and cross-reference the various items of evidence collected in the cases and make necessary connections that would not have been possible without their efforts. In such a complex case involving two separate scenes and many pieces of evidence at each one, the diagrams linked the scenes together and helped explain to the jury the tragic sequence of events at each scene. The DA's Office believes it made a difference in the outcome of these cases.

### **The Bryan Crocker Award: Janice Oates**

Janice Oates, a member of the DA's Office support staff, has spent years giving back to the people of Mecklenburg County. She is a Success Coach with Communities in Schools. As a coach, she is assigned to a fifth grader at Westerly Hills Academy. She meets with this student regularly, and together, they get to know each other and work on the girl's academic and behavior goals. For about 23 years, Ms. Oates has been teaching Sunday school at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in the Cherry community. This award recognizes Ms. Oates for a program she created to inspire young girls. In 2011, she established the U R First program. Working with an after-school program, Ms. Oates takes U R First to fifth and sixth grade girls at Ashley Park PreK-8 School. During this 12-week program, she helps these students build character, self-esteem and leadership skills. They have group discussions, and at the end of the program, the girls have an opportunity to participate in a community outreach project that teaches them the value of service to others. During their most recent session, the girls worked together to make a local elderly neighbor feel special. The girls visited the 95-year-old woman, who is mostly homebound, and they sang, danced, read poetry and painted for her. Ms. Oates is the epitome of service over self. She shares her love of community service with young people to inspire them to help others. As a result, she also inspires her coworkers at the DA's Office.



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

Elise Bautista is a support staff manager, supervising the legal assistants who work on the DA's Drug, Crimes Against Property and Habitual Felon Teams. Ms. Bautista received this award for the work she has done with at-risk young people. Over the course of about three years, Ms. Bautista has made a difference in the lives of homeless children. As a volunteer with A Child's Place, she served as a lunch buddy and a reading buddy, committing to visiting with her assigned mentee every week during the school year. She provided stability, understanding and friendship to a child experiencing the transitory nature of homelessness. Ms. Bautista dined every week with her mentee, as well as the child's classmates. One of her most meaningful experiences as a volunteer occurred during lunch at an elementary school. She was speaking with her lunch buddy at the end of the school year, tying up all of the advice and lessons she had instilled over the year. She told the girl that she was a great student with a bright future, and the girl responded positively with enthusiasm, asserting that she was a good kid. But a group of young boys at the table began speaking up, each saying, "I'm not a good kid." Ms. Bautista was heartbroken that, at such a young age, they already had the mindset that they were bad kids. She looked them in the eye and said, "I have spent time with you each week for the last year and never once did I look at you and think you're bad kids. You're



smart. You're good kids." From her work in the courts, Ms. Bautista knows what happens to young people over time if they believe they are simply bad kids. That moment at the lunch table sticks with Ms. Bautista and fuels her passion for working with children. She even organized an event at one of the schools, inviting her coworkers to join her to learn more about the program and encourage them to also get involved.

*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.*

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