

# NEWS RELEASE

**R. Andrew Murray**  
District Attorney

**December 14, 2016**

## **DA Murray presents awards to honor outstanding service to the community**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A nurse whose testimony helped ensure the conviction of a domestic violence offender, a detective who took action when he discovered a family in need and a prosecutor who volunteers her time with special needs children were among those honored today by Mecklenburg County District Attorney Andrew Murray.

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office hosted its second 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.

"My prosecutors worked hard this year, achieving justice and success both in and out of the courtroom," says District Attorney Murray. "But our successes would not be possible without community members who stand alongside us in court. We continue to be inspired by the strength victims and witnesses show as they are called to the stand to testify, and we are grateful for the dedicated work of local law enforcement."



**DA Murray with the 2016 DA's Office award recipients.**

The 2016 Above and Beyond Citizen Award was presented to Christi Milledge and Norma Messer. 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. Detective Carl Albanese and Detective Tim Jolly of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department received the 2016 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 Heather Taylor and her son, Dallas, as well as Assistant District Attorney Gabrielle Kelly. 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 after a brave battle with cancer.

### **Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Christi Milledge**

In June 2015, Ms. Milledge was working as a nurse at Carolinas Medical Center when a woman arrived at the emergency room after being beaten by her boyfriend and strangled to the point that the cartilage in her throat was fractured. Medical staff were concerned that she could suffocate if her condition worsened. Ms. Milledge took the time to meet with a prosecutor to discuss 400 pages of medical records and explain how those records showed signs of domestic violence. This year, Ms. Milledge took the stand at trial, testifying before a jury for several hours about the medical records that had been introduced as evidence.

Assistant District Attorney Robert Cuffney says her insight into those records and her knowledge of the subject matter was a crucial piece of the State's case against the defendant. The jury found the defendant guilty of assault by strangulation, and he was sent to prison.



**ADA Robert Cuffney, Christi Milledge and DA Murray**

### **Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Norma Messer**

In December 2014, Ms. Messer was attacked and robbed in her home by three defendants. These defendants – two adults and a juvenile – were young people Ms. Messer had known for years. She was bound and assaulted during the hour that the defendants were in her home. When the defendants finally left, they thought they had killed her. Ms. Messer, still bound, managed to reach a neighbor's house, and she was taken to the hospital, where she was treated for a serious head wound. This was the beginning of more than two years of juvenile detention hearings, Superior Court hearings and meetings with police and the District



**DA Murray and Norma Messer**

Attorney's Office. She quickly became a fixture in District and Superior Court, serving as a reminder to judges, defense attorneys and court personnel that all victims have faces and names. When Ms. Messer felt that the juveniles involved should be held accountable, she responded by attending every juvenile detention hearing, coming to court on average once a week for a year. When she felt betrayed by the defendants who abused her trust, she spoke up in Superior Court and helped prosecutors obtain substantial prison sentences for the adult defendants.

### **Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Detective Carl Albanese**

In June, Detective Albanese visited the DA's Office to provide information about a case. In the process, prosecutors learned that he had gone the extra mile to help a crime victim. The victim was a 73-year-old woman who was in her car at a local library when someone reached in through her open window and snatched her purse. Eventually, police recovered the victim's purse, and Detective Albanese went to the victim's home to return it to her. When he arrived, he learned that this 73-year-old woman has two children, an 8-year-old boy and an 8-year-old girl who had come from a bad situation. The woman took them in and adopted them as her own. They all lived together in a two-bedroom house, and she gave them each a bedroom. When Detective Albanese asked her where she slept, she pointed to a cot on the sun porch in the home, which did not have air conditioning. Detective Albanese, his brother and his father got an air conditioning unit and installed it for her.



**Detective Albanese and DA Murray**

**Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: Detective Tim Jolly**

Detective Jolly has served with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department for more than 20 years. He has worked in several roles, including as a canine officer and most recently as a homicide detective. Assistant District Attorney Anna Greene, who nominated Detective Jolly, says that his work to seek justice on behalf of families who have lost loved ones to violence is truly extraordinary. She described him as a “dog on a bone” because once he is involved in a case, he does not rest until the case is solved. He has been known to work extremely long hours for days and weeks at a time, sacrificing sleep and time with his own family in order to bring closure to another family that is grieving. He has never met a case that he has not given 100 percent of his effort to bringing the perpetrator to justice. Detective Jolly is a tireless and incredibly skilled detective who never hesitates when asked to do anything for the betterment of cases or others.



**Detective Jolly and DA Murray**

**The Bryan Crocker Award: Heather Taylor and her son, Dallas**

Ms. Taylor is a victim/witness legal assistant who works with the District Attorney’s Juvenile Team. This year, Ms. Taylor saw a need in her own neighborhood in west Charlotte to encourage people, particularly children, to read. With the help of Dallas and her family, Ms. Taylor built a miniature library that she placed in the front yard of her home, joining the national “Little Free Library” program, which promotes literacy and the love of reading. On the little library’s shelves, Ms. Taylor provides books for kids and adults free of cost. People in the neighborhood stop by to borrow a book or leave a book for others to read. Not only has Ms. Taylor passed on the importance of community service to her own children but she is also giving the gift of knowledge to others. Ms. Taylor saw the need, took action and is making a difference in the future of the community’s children.



**Heather Taylor, Dallas and DA Murray**

**The Bryan Crocker Award: Gabrielle Kelly**

Assistant District Attorney Gabrielle Kelly has worked as a Mecklenburg County prosecutor for 12 years, and she now serves as supervisor of the District Attorney’s Habitual Felon Team. For the last four years, ADA Kelly has spent every other Sunday working with children in the special needs class at Central Church of God. The program aims to create a safe environment where these young people are shown how much God and their church family care about them while their parents attend church services knowing that their children are in loving hands. ADA Kelly works with children who range in age from 3 to 16 and have an array of disabilities, including multiple sclerosis, autism and Down syndrome. Most of the children are non-verbal, and many are confined to wheelchairs. ADA Kelly engages these children by doing puzzles, watching “Blue’s Clues” or even just sitting in a rocking chair together if they’re having a difficult day. These children look forward to their



**DA Murray and ADA Kelly**

special time with ADA Kelly and her fellow volunteers, and she has touched the lives of numerous special needs children and their families.

*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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