

Year in Review

A message from DA Andrew Murray



It has been a rewarding and productive year at the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office. We implemented new and innovative initiatives to work more effectively and pursued an aggressive trial schedule to prosecute violent offenders in our community.

In 2013, my approximately 140 staff worked hard every day to protect the community in which we live. Every week, we prepared multiple cases for trial to make the most of the courtroom time available to us. Some of those trials took only hours. Some took days or weeks, and one lasted more than a month. Our hard work has paid off. We've brought drunk drivers, burglars, drug traffickers, armed robbers and murderers to justice, leaving no doubt that our neighborhoods are safer as a result.

My prosecutors and I have also been out in the community this year, speaking with students and civic groups about the work we do in the criminal justice system. This report, which is part of my ongoing commitment to openly communicating with the public, contains information about the goals and accomplishments of each of my office's prosecution teams in 2013. I hope it provides a glimpse into the diligence that goes on every day in Mecklenburg County's courtrooms.

As the end of my third year serving as Mecklenburg County's District Attorney approaches, I know now more than ever that it is an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Mecklenburg County. I look forward to working with the amazing team I've assembled to continue seeking justice in 2014.

R. Andrew Murray

Introduction

The District Attorney's Office represents the state of North Carolina and prosecutes crimes and traffic offenses that occur in North Carolina's 26th Prosecutorial District, which covers Mecklenburg County and includes Charlotte, Mint Hill, Matthews, Pineville, Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson.

The office prosecutes more than 9,000 felonies and more than 200,000 misdemeanor and traffic offenses each year. In every case, the goal of the DA's Office is to seek justice.

Each Assistant District Attorney is assigned to the Misdemeanor, Crimes Against Property, Juvenile, Drug, Domestic Violence, Crimes Against Persons, Habitual Felon or Homicide Teams. The types of crimes each team prosecutes are discussed in this report.

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DA Murray continues leadership in 2013

In his third year serving as Mecklenburg County's District Attorney, Andrew Murray continued his leadership of more than 80 Assistant District Attorneys and 60 support staff who work to vigorously and fairly prosecute crimes. Murray oversaw the implementation of new initiatives in 2013 to improve prosecutors' efficiency and effectiveness while also working at the state, national and even international levels to seek out measures to better protect our communities.

Giving back to the community was a priority for Murray in 2013. Throughout the year, he taught students about the criminal justice system, served lunch at the local domestic violence shelter and participated in the county's first organized Child Abuse Awareness Month campaign in April.

In 2013, Murray also worked to address emerging issues for prosecutors. He has been elected by his peers to serve as the vice president of the N.C. Conference of District Attorneys' Executive Committee in fiscal year 2014-2015. The statewide organization, which is made up of the state's elected district attorneys, provides training to prosecutors across North Carolina and communicates with legislators to lobby for laws that make our neighborhoods safer.

Murray was honored by being selected to participate in a U.S. Department of Justice delegation that traveled to Turkey in April to teach justice officials there about criminal case resolution. Murray joined four other American justice officials and legal experts on the delegation and made presentations to Turkish justice officials about the roles of prosecutors and defense attorneys in the resolution of criminal cases. Murray's presentations provided insight for potential new procedures in Turkey, where an overwhelming backlog of cases results in the dismissals of thousands of cases in a country that is an important ally in the United States' fight against terrorism.

In July, Murray was officially promoted to the rank of Captain (O-6) in the U.S. Coast Guard. Murray, who has served in the Coast Guard for more than 30 years, was honored in a ceremony at Coast Guard Sector Charleston, South Carolina.

Murray traveled to Washington, D.C. in October for a roundtable discussion with fellow prosecutors from the 35 largest jurisdictions across the country. The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys roundtable's goal was to better understand crime prevention practices and challenges faced by prosecutors. The roundtable was a great opportunity to share ideas, Murray said, adding that it was encouraging to hear that many of the best practices discussed, such as community outreach and pretrial services, are already happening in Mecklenburg County.

About DA Murray

Andrew Murray was elected District Attorney of Mecklenburg County in November 2010 and took office in January 2011. With 20 years of legal experience as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney, Murray brought new insight to the District Attorney's Office.

Following high school, Murray enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, serving as an aviation electronic technician and helicopter flight crewman. After six years of active duty, he joined the Reserve program.

He later studied political science at UNC-Charlotte and then graduated from UNC School of Law.

He began his legal career at the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office, working as an Assistant District Attorney on a variety of special prosecution teams. He then worked in private practice prior to being elected District Attorney. Murray has also been elected by his peers to serve as vice president of the N.C. Conference of District Attorneys' Executive Committee.

Murray has continued his service to our country, serving as a Coast Guard officer since 1989, and earning the rank of Captain (O-6). As an officer, he has acted as Coast Guard Sector Charleston's Senior Reserve Officer and has worked as a Senior Analyst with the Coast Guard Department of Counter Terrorism and Defense Strategies.

Murray and his wife, Pam, have three children and live in Huntersville. He and his family are active members of Lake Norman Baptist Church.



Moving forward with new initiatives in 2013

District Attorney Andrew Murray and his staff are always looking for new initiatives to work more effectively and efficiently within the criminal justice system.

This year was the first full year in the operation of Citizens Court. Launched in late 2012 through a collaboration between the DA's Office and Mecklenburg County District Court judges, Citizens Court is dedicated to handling privately-initiated cases. These types of cases, which result from a citizen going to a magistrate to file misdemeanor charges, often involve family members or neighbors who have underlying disputes. In Citizens Court, a judge and prosecutors determine whether a privately-initiated case is appropriate for mediation. Then, victims and defendants meet with a mediator in an attempt to find a resolution. The DA's Misdemeanor Team, which works in Citizens Court, prosecutes more than 200 such cases every month. Citizens Court's goal is to address underlying disputes and save future court time by resolving the issues. Doing so also means that prosecutors have more time to focus on DWIs, serious assaults and domestic violence crimes, which are not heard in Citizens Court.

In April, the DA's Office joined forces with a team of agencies charged with helping children to create Mecklenburg County's first public awareness campaign during Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month. The campaign's goal is to make the public aware

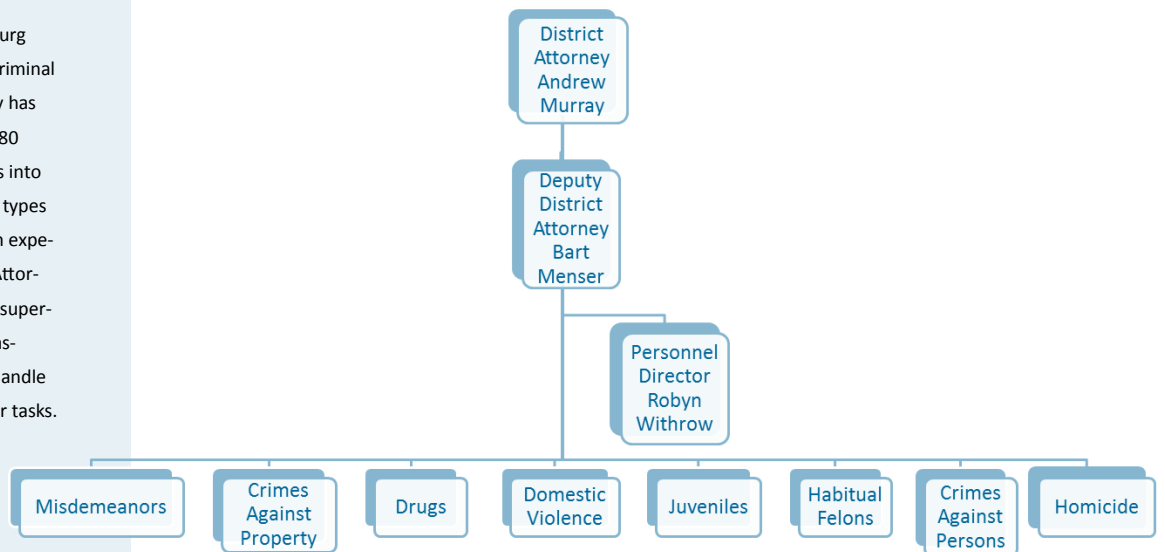
that, under North Carolina law, everyone has a duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

In October, the DA's Office implemented its Officer Scheduling Streamlining Initiative. This pilot project involves scheduling officer court appearances in courtroom 4150 once each month rather than twice every month. The initiative aims to be more efficient with officers' time, allowing them to spend more time protecting our streets. The program will run for several months to give prosecutors a chance to evaluate the program and determine whether it should be expanded to more courtrooms.

In 2013, all of the office's felony prosecution teams moved to the use of electronic discovery. Discovery is all records and evidence related to an investigation, and the DA's Office is responsible for providing that information to defense attorneys. Previously, discovery was delivered in paper form, sometimes in large stacks of paper. Now, discovery is delivered in the form of a disc, which is cost-saving, more efficient and more environmentally friendly. This year, the DA's support staff who are dedicated to working with the Discovery Automated System trained the county's public defenders, as well as a number of private attorneys. In 2014, the office aims to provide training to more private attorneys so that the use of electronic discovery becomes more widespread.

Office organization

To best manage Mecklenburg County's high number of criminal cases, the District Attorney has divided his approximately 80 Assistant District Attorneys into teams that handle specific types of crime. Each team has an experienced Assistant District Attorney acting as a leader and supervisor. Each team also has assigned support staff who handle file management and other tasks.



Outside of court, DA's staff volunteers in community

The District Attorney's prosecutors and staff chose to work in positions in which they serve the county and the state every day. So it's no surprise that the DA's staff regularly continue their service to the community through volunteer work. In 2013, the DA's staff volunteered for a variety of organizations. Here is a sampling of their volunteer efforts:

Samantha Pendergrass, who prosecutes sexual assaults, participated in the Sexual Assault Awareness Walk.

Two teams from the DA's Office competed in the Pink Lady Fire Truck Pull, a fundraiser hosted by Cops 4 the Cure and the Charlotte Fire Department's "Fight to Extinguish" cancer campaign.

Several Assistant District Attorneys spent an evening giving dogs exercise at the Humane Society of Charlotte.

Assistant District Attorney Bryan Crocker graduated from the Arts & Science Council's Cultural Leadership Training and was selected to serve on the board of Theatre Charlotte.

Two teams of DA's Office staff battled it out in the Jump and Run 5K, a race and obstacle course fundraiser for Charlotte's Finest Legacy Foundation.

District Attorney Andrew Murray and his prosecutors served lunch to residents at Safe Alliance's shelter for victims of domestic violence.

A group volunteered in September to spend a day building a home with Habitat for Humanity of Charlotte.

Groups of volunteers sorted and wrapped toy donations for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Explorer Post Christmas Project.

Reaching out to our community partners

For the third year, the District Attorney's Community Liaison Initiative connected prosecutors with residents across Mecklenburg County.

District Attorney Andrew Murray created the initiative in 2011 to send prosecutors to neighborhood organizations and civic groups to speak with people about the mission and work of the DA's Office. Murray believes that, because his office works on behalf of the people of Mecklenburg County, he and his staff should make themselves available to answer questions about their work and explain policies and procedures.

In 2013, the office once again participated in National Night Out, the annual celebration that aims to promote involvement in crime prevention programs. Murray and 50 of his prosecu-

tors attended 26 events across the county.

This year, prosecutors went to more than 65 community meetings. Since 2011, prosecutors have attended more than 150 meetings across Mecklenburg County.

For more information about the Community Liaison Initiative or to request a presentation from a representative of the DA's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com or email meghan.a.cooke@nccourts.org.



District Attorney Andrew Murray meets residents of the Hidden Valley neighborhood during National Night Out 2013.

Since 2011, prosecutors from the District Attorney's Office have attended more than 150 meetings of community groups across Mecklenburg County.

Working with Mecklenburg County students

The DA's Office recognizes the importance of working with our youth to not only educate them about the consequences of their actions but also to teach them about possible careers in the criminal justice field. From taking student groups on tours of the DA's Office to leading a trial of the Big Bad Wolf for fourth-graders, prosecutors enjoyed giving students a glimpse into the work of the DA's Office this year.

The Boy Scouts' Mecklenburg County Council continues to partner with the DA's Office through the Exploring program, which allows high school students to learn about careers in various fields. Students who choose to "explore" the DA's Office are interested in criminal law. With about 50 students participating in the 2012-2013 session and about 60 students in the 2013-2014 session, the Exploring program at the DA's Office is among the largest of the local programs. This year, the Boy Scouts announced that out of 282 scout councils across the country, the Mecklenburg County Council was No. 1 in Exploring growth.

The Northwest School of the Arts received the 2013 College Board Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Arts as the result of a partnership with the DA's Office. District Attorney Andrew Murray visited the school to speak with students about the significance of the Bill of Rights. Then, students created artistic interpretations of the U.S. Constitution's first 10 amendments, and their work was hung in the Historic Courthouse during its rededication in February.

In April, Assistant District Attorney Clayton Jones set up mock crime scenes—complete with shell casings and fake bloody footprints—for students in forensics classes at Olympic High School. ADA Jones guided students as they marked evidence with placards, photographed the scenes and placed items into evidence bags. The exercise showed students that crime scene investigations are more complex than what they see on television.



Assistant District Attorney Clayton Jones leads forensics students through a mock crime scene at Olympic High School.



The Historic Courthouse, which was built in the 1920s, is home to the DA's Office.

DA's Office returns to Historic Courthouse

This year marked the return of the District Attorney's Office to the Historic Courthouse on Trade Street in uptown Charlotte. From 2009 to 2012, the DA's staff worked in temporary offices while the Historic Courthouse, which was built in the 1920s, underwent extensive renovations.

It was fitting that, as staff were settling back into a building designated as a historic landmark, Mecklenburg County was set to celebrate the county's 250th anniversary.

On February 26—the 250th anniversary of the first court held in Mecklenburg County—the county hosted a Sestercentennial Celebration and rededication of the Historic Courthouse. Visitors heard remarks from county officials and The Honorable Sarah Parker, Chief Justice of the N.C. Supreme Court, as well as historian and UNC-Charlotte Professor Dr. Dan Morrill. The ceremony also featured musical performances by students from Northwest School of the Arts and the firing of muskets and cannons by costumed historical reenactors. Assistant District Attorneys then guided visitors on tours of the building. It was a scene similar to the building's original grand opening 85 years ago.

The approach of the 2009-2012 renovation, completed by Mecklenburg County Facility Management, Neighboring Concepts and Messer Construction, was to highlight the Historic Courthouse's original character. Previous renovations were torn away and windows were uncovered. In two large rooms on the second floor, which had once served as Superior Courtrooms, drop ceilings were removed to reveal ornate plasterwork. Workers made castings of the ceiling and rebuilt pieces of the plasterwork, which had suffered water damage. The result looks similar to the plasterwork that was originally placed there. Those rooms now act as office space for prosecutors and support staff.

District Attorney Andrew Murray and his staff are thankful for the county's commitment to providing the resources and space needed to work to effectively protect this community.

The history of the Historic Courthouse

In 1925, county commissioners voted to build a new courthouse to replace the existing one on South Tryon Street. Louis H. Asbury, a Charlotte architect, was tapped for the project. The neoclassical-styled courthouse opened in 1928, becoming the county's fifth courthouse. In April of that year, a grand opening saw thousands of people pour into the courthouse to see the \$1.25 million structure that had been hailed as the "million-dollar temple of justice" by The Charlotte Observer.

At the time of the grand opening, The Observer reported that "every caller was anxious to visit" the jail on the fourth and fifth floors of the building. The jail was in use until the 1960s.

Over the years, the county's growing population led to the construction of other courthouses with more space. While this building's courtrooms were still active, the DA's Office was confined to the third floor. By the late 1980s, court was no longer held at the Historic Courthouse.

As the courtrooms moved elsewhere and the DA's Office grew, prosecutors' offices gradually moved throughout the building, which was periodically renovated to serve as office space.

Not included in the most recent renovation was the jail on the upper floors. More than 20 jail cells remain on those floors, as well as the dispensary. Messages and drawings scribbled by inmates in the 1960s are still visible on the cell walls.

[Click here](#) to read the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission's report on the Historic Courthouse.

Misdemeanor Team

The District Attorney's Misdemeanor Team prosecutes traffic citations and misdemeanor offenses, such as driving while impaired and simple assault, in Mecklenburg County District Court. On average, the team prosecutes more than 200,000 misdemeanor and traffic offenses each year.

To protect Mecklenburg County streets in 2013, the team continued to aggressively prosecute impaired drivers, particularly repeat offenders who qualify for prosecution as habitual impaired drivers. One repeat offender sent to prison this year was Jarrett Grier, who pled guilty to habitual impaired driving and assault on a government official. He'll spend 25-39 months in prison.

The team also handles cases in which a defendant was convicted in District Court and then appealed his or her conviction to Superior Court for a jury trial, as allowed under North Carolina law. One such case involved the deaths of two children. A jury found Dirk Jerome Brown guilty of two counts of misdemeanor death by vehicle for the deaths of Jeremy Brewton, Jr., 1, and Kadrien Pendergrass, 5, who were killed when they were struck by a delivery truck driven by Brown.

The team also works in Citizens Court, which exclusively handles privately-initiated cases. Read more about Citizens Court on page 3.

This year, the Misdemeanor Team welcomed 11 new Assistant District Attorneys. New ADAs to the office are generally trained on this team before progressing to felony teams.



On average, the Misdemeanor Team prosecutes more than 200,000 traffic and misdemeanor offenses each year.

Crimes Against Property Team

The Crimes Against Property Team prosecutes a wide range of property crimes, including breaking or entering, larceny, burglary and even dogfighting.

Many property crimes, particularly break-ins and burglaries, disrupt families' sense of security in their homes. That's why District Attorney Andrew Murray has instructed prosecutors on this team to demand jail time for people convicted of residential breaking or entering.

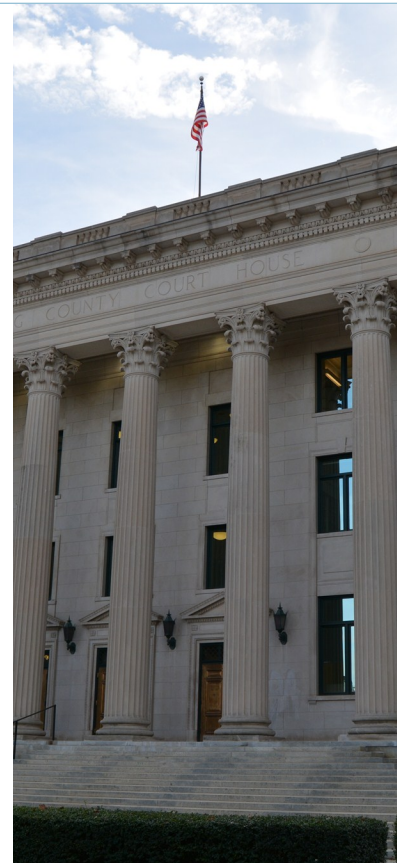
These prosecutors also utilized the habitual breaking or entering offender status to target defendants who continue to commit property crimes. Habitual breaking or entering status offenders are eligible for active prison sentences rather than probation, which is often the punishment available by state law for those convicted of breaking or entering.

In August, the team convicted Thomas Powell of burglary and other related charges, as well as being a habitual breaking or entering status offender. He was sentenced to 88-130 months in prison. Powell broke into two homes within days and tried to break into a third.

In October, the team convicted Jason Haney of attempted organized retail theft, attempted larceny and being a habitual felon. He was sentenced to 40-60 months in prison.

In 2013, the team designated three of its prosecutors to handle fraud cases. Crimes such as forgery and uttering a forged instrument fall under the purview of the Crimes Against Property Team. In April, the team convicted Kristine Yurchison at trial for charges of corporate malfeasance, forgery and larceny after her former employer discovered she'd used the company's credit card to purchase personal items and forged signatures on company checks to pay off her credit card.

Throughout the year, the Crimes Against Property Team consulted with local authorities about the enforcement of the new video sweepstakes law, as well as the resulting arrests and seizures. A N.C. Supreme Court ruling in late 2012 upheld a law banning video sweepstakes machines. The DA's Office sent a number of letters to businesses across the county, directing them to cease and desist operations of any illegal machines.



Juvenile Team

For criminal proceedings in North Carolina, defendants are considered adults at age 16. Individuals ages 15 and younger who are accused of committing a crime in North Carolina fall under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court. At the District Attorney's Office, those cases are handled by the Juvenile Team.

The Juvenile Team's goal is to facilitate treatment and services for juveniles while holding them accountable for their actions and protecting the public. The team handles cases involving all sorts of crimes committed by juveniles, including larceny, robbery and sex offenses. By early December, the team had prosecuted 458 juveniles facing a combined total of 2,075 charges in 2013.

Prosecutors on this team regularly seek out training to learn more about working with juvenile offenders and victims. One prosecutor attended training on technology-facilitated child abuse. Many of the team's prosecutors went to a training session to learn about interviewing juveniles for criminal cases, and one attended a conference to discuss local gangs. In October, the Juvenile Team attended training with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Juvenile Priority Offender Strategy Team, which works with juveniles who are identified as priority offenders. Their goals include preventing crime in the community and reducing the juvenile recidivism rate.

The team also actively participates in Race Matters for Juvenile Justice, a local collaboration that works to reduce disproportionality and disparities in the juvenile justice system.



The Drug Team targets drug dealers and traffickers while offering treatment court services to some low-level offenders to end the cycle of addiction.

Drug Team

The District Attorney's Drug Team prosecutes all felony drug crimes. The team places an emphasis on getting treatment for drug addicts while targeting drug dealers and drug traffickers who bring illegal substances into the community.

Many low-level offenders are offered an opportunity to participate in treatment court or other diversion programs.

Throughout the year, prosecutors on this team received training about drug issues and steps to improve trial skills. The entire team of prosecutors attended a training on jury selection, and prosecutors also attended conferences about prescription drug fraud and abuse. They also learned more about bath salts and synthetic cannabinoids, which are commonly known as "K2" or "Spice."

In 2013, the Drug Team continued to see high numbers of cases involving heroin. Heroin operations, some of which originate in Mexico, are often sophisticated operations with varying levels of organization.

The team also saw a number of cases involving the abuse of prescription drugs, which are

now widely considered as the new gateway drug.

One troubling trend on the rise in 2013 was the influx of high-grade marijuana into the Mecklenburg County area. This type of marijuana has led to violent crimes, including armed robberies and homicides.

A jury found Jose Gustavo Galaviz-Torres guilty of trafficking in cocaine and other offenses in May. He was sentenced to 350-444 months in prison, and ordered to pay a fine of \$250,000. Galaviz-Torres had been charged after he met a confidential informant at a fast food restaurant in Charlotte to sell 2 kilograms of cocaine.

In August, a jury found Jimmy Briones guilty of trafficking in methamphetamine and other offenses. He was sentenced to 180-240 months in prison. Another jury in September found Salvador Quinonez guilty of methamphetamine trafficking. He was sentenced to 225-279 months in prison.





Assistant District Attorney Jamie Adams (center) participates in the Third Annual "Steps for Change" Domestic Violence Awareness Walk/Run on Oct. 12, 2013.

Domestic Violence Team

District Attorney Andrew Murray created the Domestic Violence Team in 2012 to address the epidemic of domestic violence in Mecklenburg County. Since then, this team of Assistant District Attorneys has worked to prosecute men and women charged with both misdemeanor and felony domestic violence crimes. The team prosecutes charges that result from intimate relationships, such as assault on a female, stalking or violations of a domestic violence protective order. The team also prosecutes cases of misdemeanor child abuse.

Each month, the Domestic Violence Team handles about 1,000 cases in court. In 2013, the team took hundreds of cases to trial in District Court in addition to its 22 jury trials in Superior Court.

Tyrell Kirkland was convicted of two counts of discharging a firearm into occupied property and sent to prison for 41-62 months after he fired gunshots into a home in February 2013, when the victim told him to leave. Leonard Lewis, 34, was sentenced to 57-90 months in prison when he pled guilty to assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Yolanda Hamilton pled guilty to assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury and was sentenced to 23-40 months in prison.

The prosecutors on the Domestic Violence Team are trained to handle the challenges of domestic violence cases effectively and with sensitivity. Prosecutors encourage the public to speak out against domestic violence. In many cases, witnesses who could assist in the prosecution of these crimes don't because they don't want to get involved in a couple's "personal business." Domestic violence is a crime, and the community needs more people to speak up about incidents they witness, talk to police about those incidents and then be prepared to come to court to testify.

Assistant District Attorney Jamie Adams, who leads the team, is very involved in the local community of professionals and organizations that work to prevent domestic violence and assist victims. She serves on the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, the legal committee of the Mecklenburg County Domestic Violence Advocacy Council and a domestic violence task force of district attorneys from across the state. This year, Adams also helped develop a domestic violence policy for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Steps for Change

The District Attorney's Office understands that stopping the cycle of domestic violence requires more than criminal convictions. That's why the DA's staff spent time outside of court this year to volunteer with organizations working to stop domestic violence.

One group volunteered with Safe Alliance, a nonprofit that works with victims of domestic violence in Mecklenburg County. In August, District Attorney Andrew Murray and prosecutors who work on the Domestic Violence Team prepared and served lunch to women and children staying in the shelter for victims.

In October, the District Attorney's Office partnered with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department to host the Third Annual "Steps for Change" Domestic Violence Awareness Walk/Run.

With about 150 participants, the event raised \$1,825 for Safe Alliance's domestic violence programs.

Since 2011, prosecutors and police have joined forces to host "Steps for Change" each October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"Our community can't afford to turn a blind eye to violence at home," District Attorney Murray said as he announced plans for the third annual walk/run. "We need everyone's help to remove the stigma associated with domestic violence and stop the cycle of abuse."

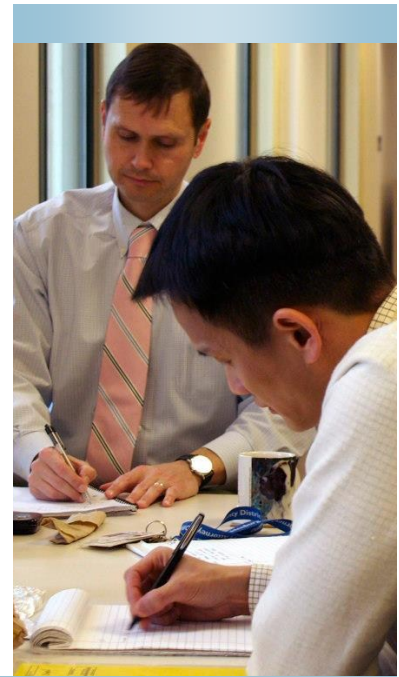
The event, which was held at Alexander Graham Middle School, was spearheaded by Assistant District Attorney Jamie Adams and CMPD Sgt. Angela Haywood.

Crimes Against Persons Team

The Crimes Against Persons Team prosecutes felony cases in which a person is victimized in incidents such as serious assaults, robberies and sexual assaults. The team is also responsible for prosecuting cases of convicted felons in illegal possession of firearms. Prosecutors regularly meet with their federal counterparts in the U.S. Attorney's Office to review gun cases and to coordinate prosecution of those crimes.

This year, the team convicted a number of armed robbers who threatened the community's safety. Quadarran Morrison was sent to prison for 229-303 months after a jury found him guilty of robbing and shooting a man. Lejarris Williams, who robbed a hospital employee at gunpoint in a hospital parking deck, pled guilty in March and was sentenced to 51-74 months in prison.

The team has two prosecutors devoted to prosecuting sexual assaults and an additional two prosecutors who exclusively prosecute cases involving children who've been sexually abused. The team worked closely this year with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit. In February, a jury found Roger Dale Honeycutt guilty of raping two women in 1981. Honeycutt, who was linked to the crimes decades later by DNA evidence, was sentenced to at least 60 years in prison. In November, Jerry Lee Brooks was convicted of raping three Charlotte women in 1979. Brooks, who was known as the "ski mask rapist," was sentenced to life in prison. The team was proud to finally secure justice and closure for the victims.



The Habitual Felon Team examines a defendant's criminal history and his threat to the community when prosecuting each case.

Habitual Felon Team

Under North Carolina law, a person who has previously committed three felony offenses may be eligible to be indicted as a habitual felon. A conviction as a habitual felon increases the defendant's possible sentence.

The District Attorney's Habitual Felon Team exclusively prosecutes repeat offenders whose prior felony convictions qualify them as habitual felons. Formed in 2009, the team was created to achieve a consistent approach to dealing with habitual felons. District Attorney Andrew Murray has increased the number of prosecutors on this team and instructed them to target violent felons and felons who illegally possess firearms.

The prosecutors on this team handle cases that involve an array of felony charges, including robbery, breaking or entering and drug crimes. They most often draw cases from the Drug and Crimes Against Property Teams.

The team regularly meets as a group for "roundtable" discussions in which they examine each case individually. When deciding how to prosecute a case, prosecutors weigh several factors, such as a defendant's criminal history and the threat to the community. They also look for patterns in defendants' behav-

iors. For example, if a defendant has been repeatedly convicted of selling drugs or breaking into homes, the Habitual Felon Team will seek a sentence that takes the defendant off the streets for a long period.

In 2013, the team took 25 cases to trial.

In February, a jury found Dwight Dobie, a habitual felon, guilty of stealing a vehicle as the victim helped his father inside a hospital. Dobie was sent to prison for 129-164 months.

A jury convicted Isiah Davis of robbing two Hispanic victims at a light rail station in Charlotte. The habitual felon, who has a history of targeting Hispanic members of the community in robberies, was sentenced to 70-96 months in prison. Stilloan Robinson, who used a stolen vehicle to escape a federal parole facility, was sent to prison for 84-113 months.

Jeremy Southern, another habitual felon, was sent to prison for 67-93 months for breaking into two Charlotte businesses.

In November, a jury convicted habitual felon Randy Meeks, Jr. of robbing a Charlotte bank. Meeks, who was also convicted of robbing a bank in the 1980s, was sent to prison for 102-135 months.





Family and friends of murder victims participate in the National Day of Remembrance of Murder Victims vigil Sept. 25, 2013, at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

Homicide Team

In 2013, the District Attorney's Homicide Team continued working toward its goal of aggressively seeking justice for victims of homicide and closure for their families. This year, the team resolved 99 cases.

The diligent prosecution of violent crimes, particularly homicides, was an early priority for District Attorney Andrew Murray. Since Murray took office in 2011, he has increased the number of prosecutors on the Homicide Team, which prosecutes cases of murder, manslaughter and felony death by vehicle. The team also adopted the "roundtabling" process, which brings team members and police together to discuss each case individually. During a roundtable discussion, a prosecutor presents information about a particular case and then police and prosecutors discuss specific challenges about that case and decide, as a group, how the case should be prosecuted. The process also has a built-in case management system for pending cases. If a case is not presented to the group within a certain period of time, police and the DA's Office can work to identify any issues causing the delay.

Murray also instructed the team's prosecutors to go to the scenes of homicides that occur across Mecklenburg County. Having a prosecutor at the scene allows them to assist police when needed and helps prosecutors develop an understanding of a case in the early stages of the investigation.

Two years later, the team saw the results of Murray's changes. Since Murray took office in 2011, the Homicide Team has increased the number of cases prosecutors take to trial. In 2013, the team tried 14 cases. The average number of homicide trials during the five-year span before Murray took office was 8.6 per year. Now, the team is developing a plan to try a record number of homicide cases in 2014.

The team tried one capital case this year that lasted more than a month. In March, a jury found Andre Hampton guilty of beating his 23-month-old son, Elijah Burger, to death over a two-day period. After the jury returned the guilty verdict, the trial entered a sentencing phase in which jurors had to decide whether Hampton should be sentenced to death or life in prison without the possibility of parole. Jurors chose the life sentence.

In 2013, the Homicide Team sent 14 defendants to prison to serve life sentences without the possibility of parole.

Seeking justice in 2013

Among the murderers convicted and sent to prison this year were:

Mark Anthony Cox pled guilty to the murders of 25-year-old restaurant manager Danielle Watson and her unborn child. He received two consecutive sentences of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Gang leader Marco Davis and Warren Avery were tried separately, and both juries convicted them of the murder of Palo Childress, 23. Both were sentenced to life in prison.

A jury found Anthony Long guilty of sexually assaulting and fatally strangling his estranged wife, 32-year-old Sonia Long. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole, as well as an additional 251-320 months in prison.

Michael Crowder will spend the rest of his life in prison after a jury found him guilty of murdering Aaron Wood.

Robert Lee McPhail was sentenced to life in prison without parole after a jury found him guilty of robbing and fatally shooting Larry Dean Wallace, Jr. during a drug deal.

A jury found Jeremiah Luke guilty of murdering Mikal Legrande. He was sent to prison for the rest of his life.

Following a jury's guilty verdict, Ellis Royster was sentenced to life in prison without parole for fatally shooting 2-year-old Amias Robinson, who was killed when Royster opened fire on a man who had robbed his friend of \$10.

Chauncey Sterling was convicted at trial and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Robert Barber, who was slain while walking home from a coffee shop.

Eric Blackmon will spend the rest of his life in prison after a jury found him guilty of Miguel Angel Audón Corado's murder.

Franklin Grullon, Jr. was convicted at trial and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Kelvin Clark.

Christopher Huffman pled guilty to the January 2013 murder of Charles Michael Middleton. Huffman was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

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