

Year in Review



2015

District Attorney's Office
*26th Prosecutorial District
of North Carolina*
Mecklenburg County

A message from DA Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray took office in 2011 after he was elected as District Attorney of Mecklenburg County. In 2014, he ran unopposed for reelection and began his second four-year term in January 2015. In his role as Mecklenburg County's chief prosecutor, DA Murray works to secure justice for the community.



“

I lead a team of public servants who tirelessly and effectively work to make Mecklenburg County a safer place to live, work and raise a family. I'm grateful for the trust of the community, and I'm proud of the work that goes on every day in this office and in our courts.

”

R. ANDREW MURRAY,
District Attorney

I began 2015 by swearing an oath to protect Mecklenburg County and seek justice for all. Transitioning into my second term as District Attorney, I vowed to continue confronting dangerous offenders who threaten the safety of this community.

In 2015, we did just that. As a result of a targeted effort to aggressively prosecute sex offenders, my office convicted numerous rapists and child molesters. My Habitual Felon Team utilized enhanced punishment laws for those who repeatedly commit crimes, and my Drug Team actively participated in the planning of police campaigns focused on areas troubled by criminal activities associated with illegal drugs.

My prosecutors also began the year by taking a collective oath to follow

my lead in upholding the U.S. Constitution and serving the State of North Carolina by working to ensure that the criminal justice laws are fairly and impartially administered. And in 2015, my office placed a special emphasis on impartiality. We sought out nationally-recognized experts who came to our office to teach prosecutors about implicit biases, the subconscious and unintentional biases that can affect our attitudes about the people around us. They trained my staff to use strategies that help ensure that the work of this office remains unaffected by factors such as race or socioeconomics, which are factors that have no place in the criminal justice system.

In this report, you'll learn more about the inner workings of my office, new initiatives and coordination with

community partners that build on our constant efforts to keep Mecklenburg County safe. We also celebrate the year's successes, and we recognize those without whom our work would not be possible. The partnerships we share with local law enforcement and the incredible strength of crime victims and witnesses in this community are crucial elements in the accomplishments that we achieve every day in our courtrooms. I am honored to serve the people of Mecklenburg County again in 2016.

Sincerely,

R. Andrew Murray
District Attorney

DA Murray represents Mecklenburg County at state, national levels to seek out innovative strategies

Since taking office in 2011, District Attorney Andrew Murray has established himself as a leader in the state and national prosecutorial communities. In 2015, he participated in innovative organizations and worked with prosecutors across North Carolina and the United States to seek out strategies to better protect all communities.

DA Murray was elected by his peers in June to become president of the N.C. Conference of District Attorneys' executive committee. Soon, he invited the state's 44 elected district attorneys to meet in order to identify priority issues that would serve as the foundation of a strategic plan. The conference plans to develop recommendations related to issues affecting prosecutors, such as the need for additional crime lab resources, and present those recommendations to legislators. Over the course of the year, DA Murray traveled to Raleigh to speak with state legislators about the needs of

the criminal justice system.

DA Murray was tapped to join the N.C. Commission on the Administration of Law and Justice, which was created in 2015 by N.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin. This multidisciplinary commission will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the state's judicial system and make recommendations to strengthen the courts. DA Murray serves on the Commission's Criminal Investigation and Adjudication Committee.

In 2015, DA Murray also had the opportunity to share crime prevention programs and best practices with prosecutors working across the country. In October, he accompanied Chief Justice Martin, Judge Marion Warren, director of the N.C. Administrative Office of the Courts, and Libby Magee Coles, the chair of the N.C. Human Trafficking Commission, to New York for the National Summit on Human Trafficking and the State Courts.

They explored ways in which judicial officials can work with community partners to address human trafficking. In August, DA Murray and Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. met with U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis to discuss cellphone encryption technology and its devastating impact on criminal investigations.

Twice in 2015, DA Murray attended meetings of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' Major County Prosecutors Council, which discussed challenges and successes relating to mental health issues, firearm science and more.

DA Murray is also a founding member of Prosecutors Against Gun Violence, a non-partisan coalition formed in 2014 to identify and promote prosecutorial and policy solutions to gun violence. He joined participating prosecutors in March and again in October to share strategies and discuss the link between domestic violence and gun violence.



District Attorney Andrew Murray speaks with a community member during a Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum meeting in June.

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Mission & introduction

District Attorney Murray provides this annual report to the public as part of his ongoing commitment to openly communicate about the work that he and his prosecutors do on behalf of the community. This report offers a glimpse into the day-to-day operations of the District Attorney's Office, as well as current trends and initiatives that aim to improve the effectiveness of the local criminal justice system.

The District Attorney's Office represents the State of North Carolina and prosecutes crimes and traffic offenses that occur in the State's 26th Prosecutorial District, which covers Mecklen-

burg 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.

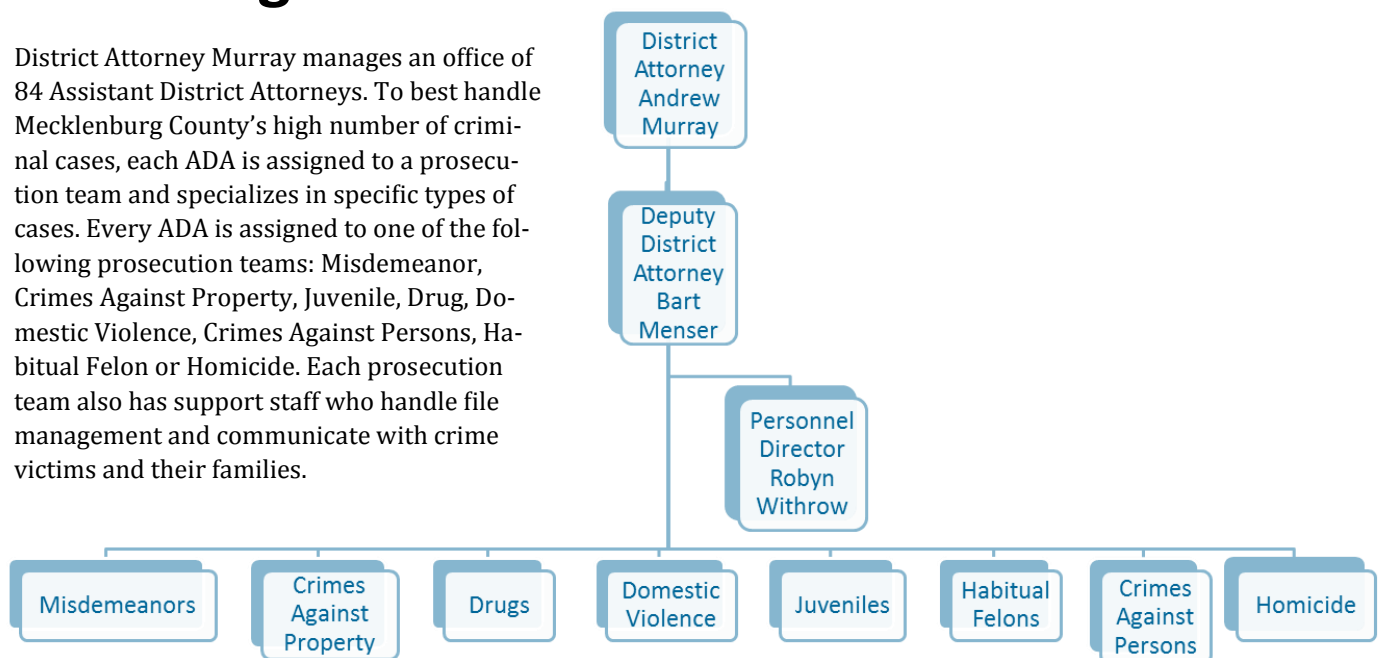
In every case, the goal of the District Attorney's Office is to seek justice. Prosecutors must consider all evidence in each case and weigh a number of factors — such as public safety, strengths and weaknesses of the case, opportunities for rehabilitation and sentencing laws — in an effort to reach a just result for victims, defendants and the community as a whole.



“ *The vision of the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office: To provide fair and equal justice to the people of Mecklenburg County by doing the right thing — every time.* ”

Office organization

District Attorney Murray manages an office of 84 Assistant District Attorneys. To best handle Mecklenburg County's high number of criminal cases, each ADA is assigned to a prosecution team and specializes in specific types of cases. Every ADA is assigned to one of the following prosecution teams: Misdemeanor, Crimes Against Property, Juvenile, Drug, Domestic Violence, Crimes Against Persons, Habitual Felon or Homicide. Each prosecution team also has support staff who handle file management and communicate with crime victims and their families.



The Misdemeanor Team

The District Attorney's Misdemeanor Team is responsible for the prosecution of Mecklenburg County's high volume of misdemeanor cases and traffic offenses. Prosecutors on this team work primarily in District Court, but the team has a group of Assistant District Attorneys who prosecute cases in Superior Court when a defendant appeals a District Court judge's conviction, exercising his right to a trial before a jury.

District Attorney Murray continues to instruct his Misdemeanor Team prosecutors to place an emphasis on impaired drivers, particularly those who repeatedly threaten the safety of local roadways. In July, Stanley Bates was sentenced to 17-30 months in prison after the team convicted him of habitual driving while impaired. In November, Assistant District Attorney Sheena Gatehouse, who supervises the Misdemeanor Team, joined Mothers Against Drunk Driving of North Carolina for a Day of Remembrance vigil in Charlotte to honor those who have been killed or injured by impaired drivers. ADA Gatehouse

spoke about impaired driving's devastating impact on victims, their families and the courts.

Misdemeanor Team prosecutors are also responsible for operating innovative court programs, including Citizens Court and Environmental Court. Citizens Court was launched in 2012 to provide an opportunity for mediation between those involved in privately-initiated, non-violent cases. Privately-initiated cases are ones in which a citizen goes to a magistrate and files misdemeanor charges against another person, often a relative or neighbor. Mediation allows for an effective way to handle disputes without using additional court resources.

In Environmental Court, the team prosecutes cases related to housing, community health, animal cruelty and other violations. In August, prosecutors working in this courtroom convicted Charles Davidson at trial of two counts of animal cruelty for beating a dog with a belt and dragging it by the neck with a chain.

Kimberly Sokolich and Caitlin Bernstein are sworn in as prosecutors in October before joining the Misdemeanor Team.



Nationally, 75 percent of drug treatment court graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years. In Mecklenburg County, 80 percent of graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years.

The Drug Team

In 2015, the Drug Team worked alongside police to plan targeted campaigns in specific areas plagued by illegal substances and criminal activity associated with drugs. Prosecutors on this team also placed an increased focus on drug cases involving convicted felons who are in illegal possession of firearms.

The team continues to aggressively prosecute drug traffickers and sellers who bring drugs into the community and then distribute them. Heroin, a dangerous drug responsible for many deadly overdoses in Mecklenburg County, remains a concern for prosecutors.

Eduardo Paredes sold heroin to undercover detectives, and police later located 102.1 grams of heroin and \$16,527 on his person and in his apartment. In November, he pled guilty to trafficking in heroin and selling heroin. He was sentenced to 90-120 months in prison.

In December, a jury found Jeremy Black

guilty of trafficking in methamphetamine and other drug-related offenses. He was arrested after a citizen found individually-wrapped baggies of methamphetamine that Black had brought into a local restaurant. Police then located more methamphetamine, as well as \$1,555, in his vehicle. Black was sentenced to 70-93 months in prison.

In recent years, the Drug Team has increasingly referred drug users to Mecklenburg County's drug treatment court programs. The county's first such program celebrated its 20th anniversary in February. The programs are aimed at those grappling with drug or alcohol addictions and who are accused or convicted of non-violent criminal offenses. These courts hold defendants accountable for their actions while attempting to ensure the public's safety. This is accomplished by connecting defendants with the treatment and counseling services necessary to combat addictions.

Nationally, 75 percent of drug treatment court graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years after discharge from the programs. In Mecklenburg County, 80 percent of graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years.

Due to budget constraints, the state legislature cut funding to treatment court programs in 2011. That's when Mecklenburg County, which recognized the successes of such programs, assumed the funding of the county's treatment courts.

"Putting an end to the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse is a crucial step in stemming future crime," District Attorney Murray said in February. "Drug use is the first step in a dangerous path of crime, often leading to thefts and even homicides. Mecklenburg County's gracious support of these programs is an investment not only in people's lives but also in the overall safety of our community."

Community outreach

To request a prosecutor to speak at your community meeting or event, please visit the DA's website at www.charmeckda.com.



A student in the District Attorney's Office Exploring program questions a witness with the help of Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Wilson during a mock trial at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse in May. Below: District Attorney Andrew Murray speaks with Court College participants in October about the work of prosecutors.

Teaching students about criminal justice

District Attorney Murray is proud of his office's outreach to young people, particularly through the District Attorney's Office Exploring program. Thanks to a partnership with the Boy Scouts of America, this program allows students who are interested in law careers to explore the criminal justice system by participating in monthly evening meetings with prosecutors. The program culminates with mock trials in which students act as the prosecutors and defense attorneys.

Assistant District Attorneys also reached out to high school students in April at the Charlotte Career Discovery Day, which allowed hundreds of students to learn about career paths in various fields. They spoke with students about college majors, law school and their work as prosecutors.

Outreach to students didn't end with the school year in 2015. During the summer, prosecutors welcomed each session of the Trial Court Administrator's Court Camp into the District Attorney's Office for a tour and then answered questions about the office's work. And Assistant District Attorney Anna Greene discussed the importance of the U.S. Constitution in the criminal justice system with young students participating in "Law Leaders: Constitution and Court Camp" at UNC Charlotte.

Connecting with our neighbors

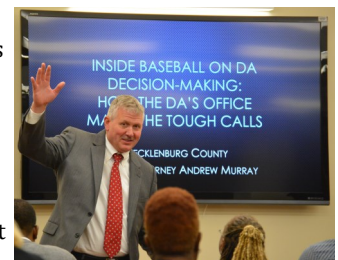
One of DA Murray's earliest initiatives was the creation of a team of prosecutors who would create an open dialogue between his office and the community and answer people's ques-

tions about the criminal justice system. That initiative continues today, and in 2015, prosecutors visited with dozens of neighborhood associations, civic clubs and other organizations.

Over the course of 2015, DA Murray attended a Historic West End Neighborhood Association meeting in Charlotte to discuss public safety, and he spoke about his office's partnership with law enforcement during a breakfast forum. In presentations to police departments' citizen academies and the Trial Court Administrator's Court College program, he explained how prosecutors make tough decisions when evaluating cases. His prosecutors also joined police to participate in a number of panels.

For the fourth year, DA Murray sent prosecutors to 28 neighborhoods across Mecklenburg County in August to participate in National Night Out, a crime prevention and community building event. More than 50 prosecutors visited with residents, speaking with them about the work of the District Attorney's Office.

The District Attorney's Office also worked alongside child advocates to support a public awareness campaign that aimed to educate people about the signs of child abuse, prevention measures and state law that requires everyone to report suspected abuse. The third annual campaign was led by the Mecklenburg Child Abuse Prevention Team in April.





In the wake of a domestic violence-related homicide, members of the community march in uptown Charlotte in May to raise awareness.

The Domestic Violence Team

The Domestic Violence Team is tasked by District Attorney Murray to prosecute crimes that occur between people in intimate relationships. This team of six Assistant District Attorneys prosecutes men and women in both District and Superior Court, tackling charges ranging from communicating threats to attempted murder.

Since 2012 — when DA Murray created this team to address what he believed was an epidemic of domestic violence in Mecklenburg County — prosecutors have been trained to handle the sensitive issues that arise in cases of domestic violence. In 2015, the team prosecuted a number of violent offenders, including Joseph Brown, who was sentenced in August to 127-165 months in prison after pleading guilty to felony assault and weapon charges. During an argument, Brown aimed a shotgun at the victim and pulled the trigger, but the gun did not discharge. Then, he grabbed a razor and cut the victim across her throat. She temporarily escaped to call 911, but Brown began cutting her again before responding officers broke through the front door to save her.

The District Attorney's Office was grateful for the opportunity to partner with Beasley Media Group for the second year to create the "Be Their Hope" public service announcements. The 2015 public service announcement, which aired in July and again in November on Beasley Media Group's seven local radio stations, emphasized the tragic — and even fatal — consequences of ignoring domestic violence.

"We all need to step up, take responsibility and keep victims safe," DA Murray said in the radio message. "As Mecklenburg's chief prosecutor, I need you to call police, come to court and take a stand if you see abuse."

On December 1, 2015, a new state law went into effect that allows prosecutors to request additional punishment for defendants who commit felonies that are seen or heard by a person who is under age 18. This law was one recommended and advocated by the Mecklenburg County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. Two prosecutors are members of this multidisciplinary team, which reviews previous domestic violence-related deaths in an effort to prevent future homicides and increase safety for victims.

PROSECUTORS RECEIVE IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FROM NATIONAL EXPERTS

At the direction of District Attorney Murray, Mecklenburg County prosecutors participated in a training in which nationally-recognized experts helped them explore implicit biases and strategies to ensure that the prosecution of cases remains unaffected by factors such as race or socioeconomics.

The District Attorney's Office welcomed law professors John A. Powell, Rachel Godsil and L. Song Richardson to lead the training session, which was mandatory for all Assistant District Attorneys, in October. Their presentation, titled "Why race is hard even when people are good: Lessons from the mind sciences on implicit bias and racial anxiety," described empirical research concerning implicit bias, as well as the history of racial disparity in the court system.

Research shows that everyone harbors implicit biases. These biases are often subconscious and unintentional but can affect a person's attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance. Professors Powell, Godsil and Richardson engaged in conversation with prosecutors about their work and introduced them to intervention methods that attorneys and law enforcement can use to not only identify personal biases but also reduce any effects of those biases on their work.

"All of my prosecutors come from different walks of life, and they all have experiences that shape their outlooks and actions," DA Murray said in October. "As prosecutors, it is essential that we be able to set aside any biases, allowing us to follow the law and administer fair and equal justice to everyone in this community."

The Crimes Against Property Team

The Crimes Against Property Team prosecutes cases such as burglary, felony larceny and financial crimes — crimes that have the ability to destroy victims' sense of security. Since taking office, District Attorney Murray has instructed prosecutors to place an emphasis on defendants who commit residential break-ins.

The team's work in 2015 resulted in convictions of numerous defendants responsible for break-ins. In April, John Moree was convicted of first-degree burglary. Moree was sentenced to 67-93 months in prison.

The team also placed an emphasis on cases involving elderly victims who have been financially exploited. When called for trial in July, Vieron Orlando Jones pled guilty to embezzlement and exploitation of an older or disabled adult. After suffering a heart attack, the victim gave Jones her power of attorney over her finances but later discovered that several of her credit cards had been maxed out with purchases for airfare, musical instruments, clothing and vehicle repairs. Police determined Jones defrauded the victim of \$130,000.

Assistant District Attorney Reed Hunt, who supervises this team, gave a presentation to a local senior citizens group in October to educate participants about scams that target elders.

The team continues to aggressively prosecute habitual breaking or entering status

offenders. A conviction as such allows prosecutors to request longer prison sentences to protect Mecklenburg County residents and businesses. Rondrico McQueary, a habitual breaking or entering status offender, was sentenced in June to 23-40 months in prison for breaking into vehicles and a Charlotte home.

In May, then-Chief Rodney Monroe of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department presented a Chief's Award for Excellence in Policing to Assistant District Attorneys Reed Hunt and Nate Proctor for their work in the Habitual Misdemeanor Larceny Project. This initiative focused on defendants who repeatedly committed thefts. CMPD and prosecutors worked together to utilize the habitual misdemeanor larceny law, which allows for a defendant to be charged with felony larceny if he or she has four prior misdemeanor larceny convictions. A felony conviction results in a more severe punishment.



The Juvenile Team

The prosecutors of the Juvenile Team work to hold young people accountable for their actions while also connecting them with treatment and other community resources to prevent at-risk youth from reoffending or returning to the criminal justice system as adult defendants.

In North Carolina, defendants are considered adults at age 16 for criminal proceedings. Those who commit a crime when they are ages 15 or younger fall under the jurisdiction of the state's Juvenile Court. The Juvenile Team prosecutes these misdemeanor and felony cases, which range from shoplifting to sex offenses or even homicides. In 2015, the team prosecuted 498 juveniles charged with 2,345 crimes.

The team is also involved in local efforts to ensure that juveniles receive equal treatment. Assistant District Attorney Heather Taraska, who leads the Juvenile Team, represents the District Attorney's Office on the leadership team for Race Matters for Juvenile Justice. This collaboration of local judges, police, social workers, school system personnel, service providers and community partners works to reduce the disproportionality of children and families of color in the juvenile justice system. Throughout 2015, RMJJ hosted "Dismantling Racism" workshops for court personnel, including Juvenile Team prosecutors, as well as other District Attorney's Office staff. In October, the organization hosted a conference, inviting stakeholders and the public to engage in a conversation about implicit bias and its contributions to disparities and disproportionality in the community.

DEPUTY DA BART MENSER HONORED WITH RAISING THE BAR AWARD

In April, Justice Initiatives presented the 2015 Raising the Bar Award to Deputy District Attorney Bart Menser, who has served the state as a prosecutor for more than 30 years.

Mr. Menser was nominated by District Attorney Murray, who described Mr. Menser as a moral compass and an irreplaceable mentor to prosecutors.

"His quiet but strong leadership and his institutional knowledge of the local courts system, which can't be matched, have established him as one of the most respected members of this office and of the Mecklenburg County Bar," DA Murray wrote in his nomination.

Justice Initiatives, an organization that works to educate the community about the court system, presents the award each year to an employee "who has made a significant and notable contribution to the advancement of the Mecklenburg County court system."

In his role as Deputy District Attorney, Mr. Menser is the direct point of contact to the District Attorney's Office for local law enforcement leaders, and he frequently meets with police to discuss policies and best practices. He attends monthly case management meetings with court officials to examine the use of local courtrooms, working to ensure that available courtroom time is used efficiently, and he has worked to make the entire judicial process — from arrest to resolution — as effective as possible. Mr. Menser also attends community meetings and panel discussions as part of the office's community outreach program to educate people about the work prosecutors do in the courts.

SEEKING JUSTICE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS IN 2015

Drayton Thompson, a serial rapist, was sentenced to three consecutive sentences of life in prison after a jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting three women.

Andrew Hostetler, who sexually abused two young family members while photographing and making video recordings of the abuse, pled guilty in the midst of his trial. He was sentenced to at least 75 years in prison.

A jury found Fitzgerald Rice guilty of raping and strangling a woman. He was sentenced to a minimum of 70 years in prison.

Jesus Martinez was sentenced to at least 50 years in prison after a jury found him guilty of molesting a child over the course of more than a year.

Clairy Mbaya, who raped a 15-year-old girl, was convicted by a jury and sentenced to at least 50 years in prison.

A jury found Frederick Sullivan guilty of sexually assaulting a woman on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University. He was sentenced to a minimum of 36 years in prison.

Davan Bynum and Resean Lindsay pled guilty to attacking and raping a woman as she walked home. Both were sentenced to a minimum of 34 years in prison.

Dragan Blazevic was sentenced to at least 28 years in prison after a jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting an 11-year-old girl.



The Crimes Against Persons Team

The Crimes Against Persons Team prosecutes violent offenses such as felony assaults, robberies and sexual assaults. As part of a 2015 effort to more quickly seek justice and closure for victims, District Attorney Murray devoted additional resources and court time to the team's Assistant District Attorneys who prosecute cases of sexual assaults against adults and children.

In 2014, the Homicide Team utilized a similar trial initiative — which involved securing additional courtrooms and judges and partnering prosecutors with experienced colleagues on other prosecution teams — to reduce the number of homicide cases pending trial. This year, the Crimes Against Persons Team applied the same approach to sexual assault cases, resulting in the convictions of numerous rapists and child molesters.

In August and September, a grueling six-week trial session allowed prosecutors to try six defendants, including four sex offenders. Each of the sex offenders tried during this session was convicted by a jury. Among them was Drayton Thompson, a serial rapist who was brought to justice 24 years after he raped three Charlotte women. The investigation of the 1991 assaults went cold until the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit discovered DNA evidence that linked Thompson to each of the three assaults. Thompson received three consecutive sentences of life in prison.

The Crimes Against Persons Team was also responsible for the 2015 conviction of Fitzgerald Rice. In April, he was sentenced to at least 70 years in prison after a jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting a woman in 2012. At trial, prosecutors introduced the testimony of three other victims who had previously been assaulted by Rice, establishing his pattern of violent attacks on women. The victims' willingness to take the stand was critical in prosecutors' efforts to ensure that Rice will never harm anyone in the community again.

Over the course of the year, the Crimes Against Persons Team also targeted armed robbers and felons in illegal possession of guns. In June, the team convicted codefendants of a robbery in which they pistol-whipped victims at a party and stole their property. In September, a jury found Jamel Whatley guilty of attacking a man with a brick and then robbing him.



The Habitual Felon Team

The Habitual Felon Team continues to lead the way to accomplish District Attorney Murray's goal of targeting offenders who repeatedly harm the community. In 2015, the team sent 247 defendants to prison. The team convicted 110 defendants as habitual felons, as well as an additional 12 as habitual breaking or entering offenders.

Under North Carolina law, someone with three prior felony convictions who commits another felony may be eligible for prosecution as a habitual felon. A habitual felon conviction allows prosecutors to obtain longer prison sentences to protect the public. From larcenies to felony assaults, the Habitual Felon Team prosecutes a broad range of crimes. Prosecutors evaluate each case in roundtable discussions as they consistently weigh a defendant's criminal record and his threat to the community.

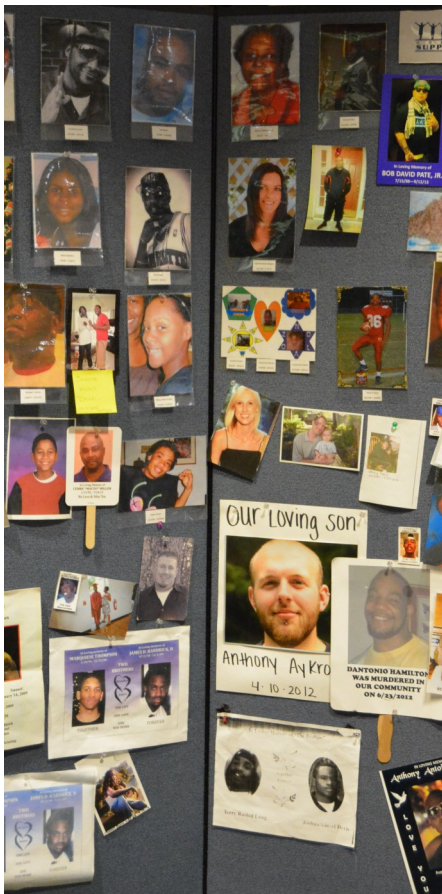
Habitual felon Terry Dennis was convicted in July for injuring a police officer and two others as he recklessly attempted to flee

from police after an officer found him passed out at the wheel of his car in a parking lot. Police later discovered 335 grams of methamphetamine in his vehicle. Dennis was sentenced to at least 18 years in prison.

Wesley Boyd Patterson, who spent years avoiding significant jail sentences by stealing items with a value lower than what is necessary to constitute a felony charge, was sentenced in May to 9-12 years in prison. A jury found him guilty of stealing a laptop and an iPad from a Charlotte office building. Patterson, who is known to steal from office buildings, had multiple prior convictions for misdemeanor larceny. State law sets the punishment for misdemeanor larceny as only a few months in jail. In this case, the Habitual Felon Team prosecuted him for felony larceny in part because the team utilized the habitual misdemeanor larceny law, which allows prosecutors to charge a defendant with felony larceny if he has four prior misdemeanor larceny convictions.



The Homicide Team



In 2015, the Homicide Team built on the success it achieved in recent years to maintain a manageable caseload, allowing prosecutors to quickly seek justice for victims and closure for their families.

The previous year, the team completed an initiative that called for an aggressive trial schedule in order to reduce the backlog of homicide cases that had amassed before District Attorney Murray took office. The 2014 initiative successfully culminated DA Murray's four-year effort, which reduced the number of homicide cases pending trials by about 50 percent.

The Homicide Team, which prosecutes cases of murder, manslaughter and felony death by vehicle, worked diligently again in 2015. Prosecutors tried 10 defendants charged in homicides. By the end of the year, the team had a pending caseload of 79 murders. When DA Murray took office in 2011, there were 147 pending murders.

Many of the year's trials led to murderers being sent to prison for the rest of their lives. In October, a jury found Bobby Johnson guilty of first-degree murder in the killing of 45-year-old

Anita Jean Rychlik. Ms. Rychlik was murdered during the robbery of a Charlotte motel in 2007. Johnson and his codefendants were arrested years later after DNA evidence linked Johnson to the crime. Johnson was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

In the team's final trial of the year, Jeremy Bishop was convicted by a jury of murdering Che Cadfi Matoorah, 29. Bishop shot Mr. Matoorah at close range in a gas station parking lot after the two strangers had briefly argued. Bishop was also sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The 2014 homicide trial initiative involved partnering homicide prosecutors with experienced prosecutors from other teams throughout the office to try more cases. In 2015, the Homicide Team returned the favor. Homicide prosecutors tried four sexual assault cases, assisting the Crimes Against Persons Team in its yearlong goal of targeting sex offenders. A homicide prosecutor also tried a defendant charged with discharging a firearm into occupied property.



During the inaugural District Attorney's Office awards ceremony, District Attorney Andrew Murray recognized Assistant District Attorney Marina Fulton, Quaysan Patterson, Chasity Reese, Sgt. Troy Armstrong and Landon Bush.



DA presents awards honoring bravery, service

The District Attorney's Office hosted its inaugural awards ceremony in December to recognize individuals who have provided outstanding service to promote the mission of the office and to improve the community as a whole. District Attorney Murray plans to make the awards ceremony an annual tradition.

The Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Quaysan Patterson and Chasity Reese

Mr. Patterson was 16 years old and his sister, Miss Reese, was 12 when their mother was involved in an argument with her boyfriend, who had struck her across the face. She told him to leave, and as he removed his belongings from the home, he produced a gun and began firing. Mr. Patterson used his body to attempt to shield his mother and two younger siblings from the gunfire. Mr. Patterson was shot twice, and his mother was also shot. Miss Reese ran to a phone to call 911 and dashed outside to flag down officers. With the help of these brave victims, who testified at trial, the man was convicted by a jury of multiple assault charges.

The Above and Beyond Citizen Award: Landon Bush

As Mr. Bush was driving home at 4 a.m. from his shift as a paramedic, he swerved to avoid hitting a car that was sitting across three lanes of traffic on Interstate 485. Mr. Bush stopped and rushed into the road to check on the driver, who was impaired and had passed out at the wheel. Mr. Bush pulled the man from his car, took him to safety at the side of the road and returned into the interstate to move the man's car to the road's shoulder, saving the driver and other unsuspecting motorists. He then

called police and later provided testimony at trial that allowed prosecutors to secure a conviction of the impaired driver.

The Above and Beyond Law Enforcement Award: CMPD Sgt. Troy Armstrong

In April 2015, a jury found Fitzgerald Rice guilty of multiple sex offenses, and he was sentenced to a minimum of 70 years in prison. The conviction of this dangerous offender would not have been possible without the work of Sgt. Troy Armstrong of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. While preparing the case for trial, prosecutors determined that, to be successful at trial, they needed to find women whom Rice had previously sexually assaulted and convince them to testify about the assaults. Sgt. Armstrong went to extraordinary lengths to help prosecutors identify and locate the women, even traveling across the state to look for them at their last known addresses.

The Bryan Crocker Award: ADA Marina Fulton

Assistant District Attorney Marina Fulton has logged approximately 100 volunteer hours alongside her dog, Mandamus. After seeing the many benefits that pet therapy provided to her father while he battled cancer, ADA Fulton decided to volunteer her time at Brookdale Senior Living. ADA Fulton and Mandamus, who are pet therapy certified, spend about three hours every other weekend visiting patients who can no longer live without the assistance of health care professionals. This award is named for Assistant District Attorney Bryan Crocker, who dedicated his career to public service and passed away in 2015 after a brave battle with cancer.



CONTACT US

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