



FROM THE DESK OF DA MERRIWEATHER

The District Attorney’s Office is responsible for the prosecution of criminal offenses in Mecklenburg County. Each month, this newsletter provides information about court happenings, initiatives being used to combat crime, the DA’s work in the community, and more.



Mecklenburg County District Attorney’s Office

SPOTLIGHT

Special Victims Team supports survivors

The Mecklenburg County District Attorney’s Office is passionate about securing justice for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. In 2017, DA Merriweather created the Special Victims Team, which prosecutes domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and human trafficking. The team works daily to break cycles of violence in homes, hold offenders accountable, and save lives. They are also active outside court, participating in [local trainings](#) and advocating for a [family justice center](#) in Mecklenburg County.

Our Special Victims Team began the month of July working in administrative court, where 26 defendants entered guilty pleas. The team ended the month with a trial session that resulted in a child molestation conviction.

The team convicted Jovontay Lewis, who pled guilty to a felony assault offense and child abuse. He was sentenced to at least 10 years in prison for stabbing a woman during an argument about custody of their child. David Anthony Johnson pled guilty to attempted statutory rape and was sentenced to more than 20 years in prison. Upon his release from prison, he must register as a sex offender for the rest of his life. During the team’s trial session, prosecutors called Ivan Dawkins for trial. Dawkins thought he was alone with two young girls at a Charlotte park when he began to sexually assault them, but a homeless Good Samaritan saw what was happening, called 911, and followed Dawkins while shouting, “I saw you with my own eyes!” The jury deliberated for less than an hour before finding Dawkins [guilty of multiple sex crimes](#). He was sentenced to at least 25 years in prison and will register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

COMMUNITY

At the DA’s Office, we care deeply about the communities across Mecklenburg County, and we know how crime can impact our neighborhoods. That is why DA Merriweather and his staff were so grateful for the opportunity to [hit the streets for National Night Out on Aug. 3!](#) We visited neighborhoods county-wide to share information about our work and learn what is happening in the communities we serve. [Click here](#) to request a representative from our office at your next community event!



NATIONAL

DA Merriweather was recently elected to the National District Attorneys Association’s Board of Directors, becoming the first Mecklenburg prosecutor to serve on the Board in over a decade. His participation will allow him to exchange ideas and innovations with other District Attorneys, with an emphasis on violent crime and community engagement, to better serve Mecklenburg County and communities across the country. DA Merriweather is also the vice chair of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ Major County Prosecutors Council.



FAQ: What’s the difference between “probable cause” and “beyond a reasonable doubt?”

To make an arrest, police must have “probable cause,” meaning it’s more likely than not that someone committed a crime. But to convict, prosecutors must meet the highest burden of proof in our legal system, which is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Proof beyond a reasonable doubt “[fully satisfies or entirely convinces](#)” you of someone’s guilt. Reasonable doubt is “a doubt based on reason and common sense.” Prosecutors have an ethical duty to only proceed in cases that have evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Visit www.charmeckda.com for the latest news, information about the courts and more. Follow @charmeckda on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

