



# 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

### MOVING FORWARD

#### Advancing justice in 2022

The new year brings new opportunities for your District Attorney's Office. Our mission—to seek justice and pursue outcomes that provide a safe and vibrant community where every person can live in peace—has not changed, but we are constantly evolving to better meet the needs of our community, create more access and equity, and confront the unprecedented challenges facing the court system in the wake of COVID-19. DA Spencer Merriweather has set a number of goals for 2022:



1. Lead the justice system to a full rebound from the pandemic. With courts largely shuttered since 2020, the case backlogs are significant, but so is our drive to get these cases into court to ensure justice and resolution for both victims and defendants.
2. Transform courts into ones that serve victims and communities faster, more fairly, and more effectively as we collectively recover from COVID-19.
3. Develop early intervention practices that divert those suffering from mental illness out of the criminal justice system.
4. Continue pushing for the completion of a full-service [Family Justice Center](#) in Mecklenburg County to support survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking.
5. Continue advocacy at the N.C. General Assembly for a full investment in a 21st century justice system. After decades of underfunded courts, it is past time that courts statewide have the resources they need to serve their communities.

### IN COURT

There is much work to be done in 2022, and the DA's Office is hitting the ground running. In Mecklenburg County's first Superior Court trial of the year, the DA's Special Victims Team called a man for trial on charges of attacking two women in uptown Charlotte. The brave women testified about how Jordan Douglas held a gun to one woman's head and shot at the other before dragging one into a construction site and sexually assaulting her. Her friend struck Douglas with rebar, allowing them to escape. A jury found Douglas [guilty of multiple crimes](#). The Felony Crimes Team secured 17 guilty pleas over the course of a week while the Violent Crimes Team secured 39 guilty pleas in administrative court this month.

### ON DISPLAY

The DA's Office is currently hosting an exhibit featuring artwork by the talented students of the Holt School of Fine Art! Their work will be on display until Feb. 11. Over the years, we have been fortunate to partner with students, galleries, and artists' guilds to showcase Mecklenburg County's artists. If your organization is interested in having an exhibit at the DA's Office, please email [meghan.c.mcdonald@nccourts.org](mailto:meghan.c.mcdonald@nccourts.org).



### FAQ: What's a bench trial, and when would a defendant have this type of trial?

In a bench trial, a judge—not a jury—hears the evidence and determines whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty. In North Carolina, all misdemeanor trials are held as bench trials in District Court. If a District Court judge finds someone guilty of a misdemeanor offense, that person can appeal to Superior Court for a jury trial. Even in Superior Court, where felonies are prosecuted, state law allows a defendant to opt for a bench trial, forgoing their right to a jury trial.

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