



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

RECOVERY

Recovery Courts offer hope, treatment

When Assistant District Attorney Maria Long reflects on her time working in recovery courts, she recalls the struggles against addiction, the tears—of both frustration and joy—and the successes. Mothers who re-connected with children. Families who secured stable housing. Graduates who returned to court to help others fighting the same battles. She has witnessed miracles, she says. Drug treatment court began here in 1995 as the first in North Carolina, and when the state legislature cut the funding in 2011, Mecklenburg County stepped up to support the programs, which provide treatment to people when they are accused or convicted of non-violent crimes and are experiencing substance use disorders and mental illness. The goal is to interrupt the cycle of crime that affects not only them and their families but also the safety of the entire community. In recovery courts, a prosecutor, defense attorney, judge, and treatment providers form a team that meet with participants every two weeks. They check in and have honest conversations about their challenges, needs, and progress. They met virtually when COVID-19 caused court closures and have since returned to in-person sessions. Despite the hardships of the pandemic, 46 people enrolled last year in the following [Supervision, Treatment, Education and Prevention \(STEP\) programs](#): District Recovery Court, Superior Recovery Court, Wellness Court, and DWI Recovery Court. We celebrated 28 people who graduated from these programs in 2021. Having worked in these courts himself, DA Merriweather is a strong proponent of recovery courts, and he applauds the recent graduates, as well as the dedicated treatment teams.



DATING ABUSE

One in three U.S. teens will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a relationship before adulthood. That is a startling statistic that requires community action. If you are a parent or have young people in your life, educate yourself about the [warning signs](#) of teen dating abuse. [Talk with young people](#) about healthy relationships. Encourage teens to get involved in prevention. [Click here](#) to learn about Courage Clubs and the work the Jamie Kimble Foundation for Courage is doing with young people. February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

HISTORY

In 1981, DA Merriweather was a child when his mother took him to a protest march in Mobile, Alabama, after the lynching of a Black man at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. The man who helped organize the march, [Alabama Sen. Michael Figures](#), the first attorney DA Merriweather ever met, became part of the legal team that would eventually bankrupt the United Klans of America. This Black History Month, follow us on social media to hear from Black members of the District Attorney's Office about who has inspired them, both in their personal lives and in their work as ministers of justice.

FAQ: How can I get out of jury duty?

Don't! [Jury service](#) is a duty that is essential to the fair [administration of justice](#) across our nation and here in [Mecklenburg County](#). If you are summoned, you must appear unless you've been excused. There are reasons you could be excused, such as if service would cause an undue burden on you, or if you are friends with a party in the case. It is illegal for employers to fire/demote employees because they are called for jury service, and the courts have COVID-19 protocols in place. Serving as a juror may be the best way to see how your courts operate. (Trust us. It's different than TV shows!)

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