

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Violent Crimes Team calls cases for trial

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A man who pistol-whipped employees and a customer during a robbery at a Verizon store was among the six defendants convicted during a two-week trial session led by the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Violent Crimes Team. The proceedings were held during the weeks of April 24 and May 1, 2023, before The Honorable Reggie E. McKnight, The Honorable David H. Strickland, and The Honorable Gregory R. Hayes, Superior Court Judges.

The State called Craven Withers, 30, for trial, and during jury selection three days later, Withers pled guilty to 1) four counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon, 2) attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon, 3) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon, and 4) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Judge Strickland sentenced Withers to a total of 114-158 months in prison. In February 2018, Withers and an unknown accomplice entered a Verizon store on Tyvola Road in Charlotte. Three employees and one customer were inside. Withers, who was armed with a handgun, pistol-whipped the victims, causing facial injuries to two of them. Withers and his accomplice demanded access to the store's cellphones, and when they were unable to gain access to the phones, they stole personal property from each of the victims. The suspects' vehicle led to the identification of Withers as a potential suspect, and latent fingerprint examination performed by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Crime Lab confirmed that a palm print left at the scene of the robbery was a match to Withers' palm print.

Damian Fenton, 51, was tried for 1) assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury and 2) felony hit and run. A jury returned verdicts of *not guilty*.

Justen Carney, 25, was tried for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury found him *not guilty*.

Dontray Pharr, 25, pled guilty to 1) second-degree kidnapping, 2) three counts of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, 3) two counts of felony flee to elude arrest with a motor vehicle, 4) assault on a law enforcement officer causing injury, 5) felony breaking or entering, 6) being a habitual breaking or entering status offender, 7) larceny of a motor vehicle, 8) possession of a stolen motor vehicle, and 9) misdemeanor breaking or entering. Judge Hayes sentenced Pharr to 58-104 months in prison.

Andy Perez-Bentancourt, 20, pled guilty to robbery with a dangerous weapon. Judge McKnight sentenced Perez-Bentancourt to 38-58 months in prison.

Davis Barber, 21, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit common law robbery. Judge Hayes sentenced Barber to 24 months of supervised probation.

Jadel Brailey, 29, filed a motion to suppress certain evidence obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Judge Strickland granted his motion, and, without sufficient evidence, the State could not proceed with the trial for the charges of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and misdemeanor carrying a concealed gun.

Damian Hammond, 19, pled guilty to robbery with a dangerous weapon. Judge Strickland sentenced Hammond to 38-58 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 36 months of supervised probation.

Whitney Kennedy, 30, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. Judge Strickland sentenced Kennedy to 20-36 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending her successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation.

*Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com). For updates and other information, follow @CharMeckDA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).*

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