

For Immediate Release

# Sharen Wilson

## CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Monday, March 21, 2016

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### *Statement re: today's press conference at Dunbar High School*

"When a citizen of Tarrant County is initially arrested and charged with a crime but later pardoned, acquitted, or has the case dismissed, his or her name is often still not fully cleared. That record of arrest and charge can keep a citizen from finding jobs, housing, schooling, or having the career of his or her choice.

"Although expunctions and non-disclosures were created to help prevent a low-level contact with the criminal justice system from following someone for life, less than 5 percent of those who are eligible actually can take advantage of this relief.

"Cost and lack of legal representation are significant barriers to obtaining a non-disclosure or expunction. By lowering the cost to file for one of these orders, Tarrant County will give those who are able to demonstrate they deserve a clean slate the opportunity to re-enter society without the stigma of being labeled a criminal offender."

~CDA Sharen Wilson

## END ##

*Today's event was held at Dunbar High School in Fort Worth to announce the First Annual Expunction & Non-Disclosure Clinic, organized by the Historic Stop Six Initiative and The L. Clifford Davis Legal Association.*

*Expunctions serve to clear a defendant's name by removing an arrest from a record. A defendant is generally eligible to receive an expunction under the following scenarios:*

- They are tried for the offense for which they were originally arrested and were acquitted;*
- They were convicted, but subsequently pardoned;*
- They were found to be actually innocent of the crime for which they were convicted.*

*A district court has the discretion to grant or deny an expunction request. But this discretion is not invoked until the prosecuting office recommends expunction to the district court. When an expunction order becomes final, the release, maintenance, dissemination, or use of the expunged records is prohibited. The defendant may then legally deny that the arrest ever occurred and does not have to reveal the existence of the expunction order. The only exception is if the defendant is later questioned under oath in a criminal proceeding.*