



Sharen Wilson, Criminal District Attorney

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SPRING 2018

The Docket



One of the commitments I have made as your Criminal District Attorney is to ensure this office is both transparent with and accountable to the people of Tarrant County. In this pursuit, I created the first Annual Report for this office, and have published one in the first quarter of each of the last 3 years.

An Update from

Sharen Wilson
Criminal District Attorney

The newly-released 2017 Annual Report shows continued growth in nearly every area of our workload here at the Criminal District Attorney's Office. There were 44,522 total criminal cases filed (up from 41,542 in 2016), including 18,185 felonies and 26,337 misdemeanors. The most common felony case in Tarrant County is drug possession, followed by theft and aggravated assault. The most common misdemeanor offense is possession of marijuana under 2 oz. In support of these almost 45,000 cases, more than 121 TERABYTES of digital media evidence (DME) was submitted to our office by law enforcement. DME includes any digital evidence from surveillance video, police dash and body cam videos, to the information obtained from people's cell phones and home computers. Each Terabyte accounts for up to 1,000 viewing hours, depending on resolution. Every piece of evidence must be reviewed by the prosecutor on the case. As technology continues to reach every corner of our lives, the DME volume exponentially continues to grow.

In addition to their work on cases, our prosecutors and investigators were very busy out in the community in 2017, with more than 241 speaking engagements to various schools, businesses, law enforcement agencies and other organizations. More than 80% of our employees are also involved in a community group or activity. By staying engaged personally in our neighborhoods, we can further earn your trust as individuals and promote group partnerships to improve our community as a whole.

And, as we have each year I've been your Criminal District Attorney, the office once again came in under budget last year, even in light of the necessary hires we made of additional employees to handle our increasing volume of work. I will continue to honor my commitment to each of you to ensure a system of equal justice for all in Tarrant County, with accountability for and transparency in the work that we do. If you would like to view a copy of our 2017 Annual Report, please visit our website at cda.tarrantcounty.com.

With best wishes,

SERVING THE PUBLIC

Board certification by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) recognizes the top attorneys in Texas. Certification is only granted to those whose law practice is primarily in the area of specialization, and then only after stringent testing and peer review. The TBLS was established by the Supreme Court of Texas in 1974 as the only governing board authorized to certify attorneys in 24 legal specialty areas.

Five of our attorneys recently achieved this honorable designation:

- Molly Davis, Prosecutor, Juvenile Unit – Juvenile Law
- Kacey Fickes, Prosecutor, 297th trial team – Criminal Law
- Ryan Hill, Prosecutor, 396th trial team – Criminal Law
- Tracey Kapsidelis, Prosecutor, trial team – Criminal Law
- Jeanette Strange, Prosecutor, Conviction Integrity Unit – Appellate Law

This brings the number of Board Certified attorneys in our office to 25 (with 3 certified in more than one specialty). That's more than twice the state average! Only 7% of the more than 100,000 attorneys licensed to practice in Texas have earned the right to be publicly recognized as Board Certified specialists in select areas of the law.

We are proud to have the best attorneys in the state here in the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office, prosecuting offenders and representing Tarrant County's residents.



Clockwise from top left: Hill, Fickes, Kapsidelis, Strange



FOCUS ON OUR PARTNER: ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, an opportune time to highlight the exemplary work of our local partner, Alliance for Children (AFC).

The prosecutors and investigators of our Special Victims unit, who handle violent crimes against children, the elderly and disabled, work closely with AFC to minimize the trauma child abuse victims experience as they navigate the criminal justice and healing processes. AFC is a non-profit here in Tarrant County that protects children from abuse through coordinated team investigations involving law enforcement, Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (formerly CPS), Cook Children's Medical Center, and our office.

Since 1992, AFC has served over 50,000 children in Tarrant County at no cost to the child's family, providing counseling, clinical services, community education programs, and conducting forensic interviews of child victims. These specialized investigative interviews done by highly-trained interviewers, gather valuable information about a child's experiences in a neutral, non-leading and legally defensible manner.

One in 10 children will be sexually abused by their 18th birthday, and 90% of those are abused by someone they know. Often children are threatened or confused by their abuser. It is critical that children who report abuse have ready access to compassionate, well-trained advocates who are there to support them and their family, and to secure the resources they need to move forward.

With 5 locations accessible to our county's children (2 in Fort Worth, 2 in Arlington, 1 in Hurst and 1 in Lakeside), AFC is truly a Tarrant County service agency.

Whether you know a child who may be in danger, or whether you would like to learn more about becoming involved with this outstanding organization, we encourage you to visit allianceforchildren.org, and follow AFC via their Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (@AllianceforChildrenTarrant).



Pictured: Our Special Victims unit joined with Alliance for Children's team to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month at Commissioners' Court last April.

REFUSE TO DRIVE WHILE INTOXICATED

In 2017 our office prosecuted more than 5,200 DWI cases, including 37 Intoxication Manslaughters/Assaults. With all the options available to prevent any necessity to drive while intoxicated, this is simply unacceptable. There will be 2 DWI No Refusal periods in March for Tarrant County. During these periods, if you are pulled over for suspicion of DWI and refuse a breathalyzer, you will be subject to a court-ordered blood test. Be smart – don't drink and drive!

St. Patrick's Day Weekend No Refusal Period
9:30 pm, Friday, March 16 - 5:30 am, Tuesday, March 19, 2018

March Madness Finals Weekend No Refusal Period
9:30 pm, Friday, March 20 - 5:30 am, Tuesday, April 3, 2018

Recent Trials of Note

The State of Texas v. Ricci Bradden

Termed the "Good Samaritan" murder in the local news, this intimate partner violence case unfolded in the parking lot of an Arlington Walgreens. Ricci Bradden laid in wait for his wife, a Walgreens employee, to come out of the store, and then angrily opened fire on her. Injured, she was able to crawl into the store, and hearing her cries for help, veteran and married father of three Anthony "TJ" Antell rushed forward to prevent Bradden from leaving the scene before law enforcement could arrive. Bradden then shot Antell, killing him instantly in front of his own wife and young children. The jury convicted Bradden of Murder for Antell's death, and Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon for the initial shooting of his wife.

Sentence: 75 years and 20 years in prison

Prosecutors: Page Simpson, Allenna Bangs

CDA Investigator: Clint Leach

CDA Victim Advocate: Cecelia Jones

Arlington Police Department: Detective Ben Lopez

The State of Texas v. Patrick Lee Smith

John Williams, Jr. was a young father of 4, married to his high school sweetheart. He and a group of friends had rented a party bus to celebrate his wife's birthday, and in the parking lot of a Fort Worth night club, an argument ensued with other patrons. Patrick Lee Smith ended that argument by pulling out a gun and killing John Williams, Jr. and shooting another man on the scene. Smith was also charged with being involved in another shooting at a second bar later that night. The jury did not believe Smith's claims of self-defense, and found him guilty of Murder, Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, and Unlawful Possession of a Firearm.

Sentence: Life, 99 years and 18 years in prison

Prosecutors: Kim D'Avignon, Matt Rivers

CDA Investigators: Mike Weber

CDA Victim Advocate: Cecelia Jones

Fort Worth Police Department:
Detectives Randy Watkins & Tom O'Brien