

The DOCKET



Sharen Wilson – Criminal District Attorney

Winter 2022



It has been an honor to serve as your criminal district attorney for the past eight years.

It has been no easy task, but every day since I took office on January 1, 2015, I had one mission in mind: Seeking justice for all victims.

As you know, I'll leave office December 31 and Judge Phil Sorrells will be sworn in as the next Criminal District Attorney. Judge Sorrells has the skills needed to be successful and to continue the fight for justice.

I still remember what I told the crowd of family, friends, colleagues, and coworkers gathered for my swearing in ceremony.

Our goal is justice for all, regardless of place in life, where one lives, or background. We will be available to you when you need us.

We will always remember that you provide the financial means for us to serve and will be ever mindful of the resources you give us. We will be respectful of the defense bar who take an oath to represent their clients to the best of their ability. We will be respectful of the laws made by the 181 people in Austin who are charged with that responsibility. And, as a former prosecutor said, we will never apologize for following the letter of the law.

We will remember those who are mistreated as if we ourselves were suffering. We will train not only to be the best and the brightest lawyers, but also to be the leaders of tomorrow in our community.

The oath I took called on me, and those in this office, to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the laws of this state and the United States.

I also asked every CDA employee to remember that no day is unimportant, no decision is irrelevant, and no relationship is immaterial. It is all part of the expression of our conviction to seek justice in Tarrant County.

We have worked every day to make sure those who break the law are held accountable. And we know that justice isn't always about getting a conviction or jail time. Sometimes it can be found through a rehabilitation program or by giving someone a second chance.

Thank you for your support.

I wish you and yours only the best.

Very truly yours,





Just don't do it

Tis the season to be jolly.

Just not behind the wheel.

Make sure this is a merry holiday season for you and your family and schedule a ride home – or get a lift from a friend – from any holiday parties where you imbibe.

Tarrant County is No Refusal all the time. That means any driver pulled over for suspected impaired driving who refuses to take a routine breath test will be subject to a court-ordered blood test instead.



No Refusal is in effect 365 days a year across all of Tarrant County and the cities in it. Police officers and sheriff's deputies have access to expedited judicial warrants and centralized blood draw locations.

"There is no excuse in this day and time – with driving services such as Lyft and Uber available 24/7– to get behind the wheel while intoxicated," Sharen Wilson said. "If you do, we will get your blood and prosecute you."

"We are committed to keeping our community safe by keeping impaired drivers off the road."

A first offense of DWI is a Class B misdemeanor, which comes with a fine of as much as \$2,000 and up to 180 days in jail.

Prosecuting Financial and Elder Crimes

Elder Financial Fraud. Money Laundering. Construction Fraud. Abuse of Office. Official Oppression.

These are among the many crimes that occur in Tarrant County and across the country.

The Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office on October 21 hosted a daylong advanced training seminar on these topics and others – including how to think outside the box to investigate and prosecute these cases – for police officers, banking officials, credit union officers and others.



Around 100 peace officers and representatives of financial institutions attended the training at the Hurst Conference Center. There, prosecutors and investigators with the TCCDA's Office were among those who taught classes about topics including employee theft, computer fraud, public integrity laws, and elder financial fraud.

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Speakers from the Texas Financial Crimes Intelligence Center and Adult Protective Services also taught about skimmers, digital intercept data breaches, and understanding Adult Protective Services Reports.

“Financial crimes are devastating for victims,” said Assistant Criminal District Attorney Lori Varnell, who heads the Elder Financial Fraud Team. “That is why CDA Sharen Wilson wanted to provide training to help financial institutions see the patterns of financial crime and to help investigators track down the necessary evidence for successful prosecutions and good outcomes for victims.”

Fraud cases are much more prevalent today than they were years and decades ago, said Becky Krell, manager of the customer solutions department at the Tarrant County Credit Union.

“The world is changing rapidly, with bitcoin, electronic check fraud. This training helps us identify and deal with that kind of fraud to protect our customers,” Krell said, adding that they see fraud cases every day. “This training is teaching me so I can teach my department on how to deal with the (credit union) member, so they report the fraud to police and to the Criminal District Attorney’s Office.”

Peace officers also said the training was valuable.

“We are getting new tools, learning how to get better evidence from our victims to help the prosecutors build stronger fraud cases that net convictions,” said Ashleigh Casey, assistant police chief in Southlake.

Luis Torres, an investigator with the Hurst Police Department, agreed.

“This is important knowledge to do a better job investigating our fraud cases, day by day,” he said. “I am the first person who comes in contact with our victims, so hearing these presentations ... is extremely helpful for me to get information to our detectives.”

Regarding Elder Financial Fraud crimes, here are some tips to protect yourself:

- Make sure you have five key documents that always are up to date: A will, medical power of attorney, limited statutory durable power of attorney, a designation of guardian and an advanced directive to physicians.
- Know that there’s a one stop-shop to help the elderly – the Financial Exploitation Prevention Center of Tarrant County. We helped create this center with Guardianship Services Inc., an organization that has been a faithful partner of ours in the fight against elder financial fraud. This center is a network of partners from social services to law enforcement who are dedicated to helping vulnerable adults who have been financially exploited. This alliance works to prevent these crimes, help victims recover





Legislative Session

Texas lawmakers soon will be back to work in Austin.



During their upcoming 140-day session – which begins January 10, 2023, and ends May 29, 2023 – they’ll propose, review, and likely pass a variety of bills that could impact the criminal justice system.

While there, the only issue they must address is passing a balanced state budget for the next two years. But they may move forward with measures ranging from addressing overcrowding in the juvenile justice system to legalizing marijuana.

Keep up with the legislation they work on here: <https://capitol.texas.gov>

Ageing Well

Live your best life.

That was the key message delivered during this year’s Ageing Well Expo to the 50 and older crowd that attended the September 29 gathering at the Esports Stadium Arlington & Expo Center in Arlington. It was hosted by the City of Arlington. County Commissioner Devan Allen represents Arlington.

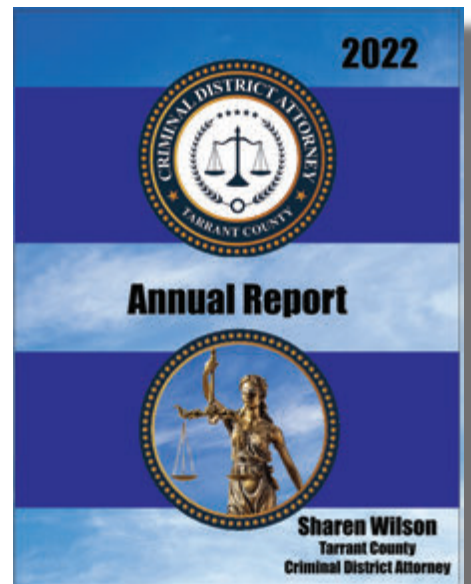
It was a free one-day event that brought the community and businesses together along with more than 100 health professionals and others who talked about wellness. There were vendors, health screenings, fitness demonstrations, hearing evaluations, cholesterol tests and more.

Our office manned a booth and gave out placemats containing information about how to get help if there is concern about elder financial fraud. Anyone worried about this can call the Financial Exploitation Prevention Center of Tarrant County at 817-720-6556.

Read All About It

We recently released our 2022 Annual Report. In it, you can learn about this year’s crime trends, prosecutorial teams Sharen Wilson created during her eight years in office and some of the sentences criminals received this year.

You also can read about different divisions in the office and how justice isn’t always about getting a conviction or jail time. Sometimes it can be found by giving someone a second chance.



Read or download the 2022 Annual Report by going to our website, cda.tarrantcounty.com. On the front page, scroll down and click the “Annual Reports” button.

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Honors and Recognitions



ACDA Matthew Jackson coached a team of Texas A&M Law School students who participated in the 2022 National Criminal Trial Advocacy Competition. There, 28 teams from across the nation competed. Matthew Jackson’s team finished third. Congratulations to all.



ACDA Lindy Borchardt was honored with an award for Community Impact from the Tarrant County 5 Stones Taskforce for her work as the human trafficking prosecutor for this county. These trafficking cases are some of our most challenging cases where the victims are not cooperative and the families are in crisis. These are also some of our worst defendants who actually think they can own women.

Congratulations

Eight Tarrant County Assistant Criminal District Attorneys made Fort Worth Magazine’s Top Attorneys list

2022 top attorneys
FORT WORTH MAGAZINE



William Knight



Allenna Bangs



Aulstin Gardiner



Hanna Bell



Brock Groom



Jessica Theriot



Julie Lugo



Kyle Morris



In January 2022, the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney’s Office became the first district attorney’s office in Texas to be named a “Recognized Law Enforcement Agency” by the Texas Police Chiefs Association Foundation.

The recognition given to the office’s investigators is based on the TCCDA’s participation in the voluntary program where agencies prove they are complying with the more than 168 rigorous Best Business Practices for law enforcement in Texas.

The Investigative Division of Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney’s Office had no complaints filed against our investigators in the past 12 months.

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Your Next Criminal District Attorney



Judge Phil Sorrells is your next Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney.

After 25 years on the bench as a judge, he will return to his roots where he started his career as a prosecutor.

On January 1, 2023, he becomes the 15th elected Criminal District Attorney in Tarrant County's more than 100-year history.

A fifth-generation Texan, Sorrells served as an Assistant Criminal District Attorney under DA Tim Curry after earning his undergraduate and law degrees from Texas Tech University. He prosecuted cases ranging from theft to murder and learned how to use Texas law to ensure violent career criminals serve the maximum time behind bars.

He went on to serve as judge of Tarrant County Criminal Court No. 10 for 25 years before he retired to run to replace Sharen Wilson – who did not seek re-election – as Criminal District Attorney.

"Judge Sorrells has the skills needed to be successful and to continue the fight for justice," said Sharen Wilson, who will leave office December 31, 2022. "I wish him only the best."

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