



# The Docket

Sharen Wilson, Criminal District Attorney

FALL/WINTER 2015

It continues to be a busy year for our office, as we pursue our mission to see that justice is served for all Tarrant County residents.

## An Update from Your CDA

- Our office prosecuted two capital murder trials in the last two months, the State v. Robert Charles Atlas, and the State v. Michael Henderson. A capital murder charge is attached when a murder involves specific special circumstances, and for which the defendant is eligible for capital punishment or life in prison without the possibility of parole in the case he or she is found guilty. In each of these trials, the defendants were found guilty by their respective juries of Tarrant County citizens, and both received sentences of life in prison without parole.
- Other widely followed cases this Fall included the prosecution of mortuary owner Dondre Johnson, accused of committing fraud against the family members of deceased citizens entrusted to his mortuary for cremation services; the sentencing of “mega-church” pastor Geronimo Aguilar for the sexual abuse of a young parishioner in the late 1990s; and the first use in trial of the new “Kingpin” statute designed to combat organized crime in a variety of its forms.
- The science of DNA continues to evolve, producing both new opportunities and questions for our criminal justice system. Our Post Conviction and Conviction Integrity units are working closely with the Texas Forensic Sciences Commission and our regional labs to stay at the forefront of how new discoveries may impact past, present and future cases and procedures in our county.
- We continue to stress the importance of professional development opportunities to ensure that our ACDAs, investigators and staff remain among the best in the country. Among other projects, we have developed an internal practicum series through which our Misdemeanor attorneys receive regular individualized evaluation and advice from our more senior Assistant CDAs, many of whom are sought after instructors for legal education around the state.



The number of CDA employees involved in community projects outside of our office has grown to more than 80 percent over the last six months. As we seek each day to become more engaged within our community, we hope you will continue to look to our trusted resource. I am blessed to be a part of this team of hardworking men and women who are dedicated to making just decisions as we enforce the laws and protect the citizens of this great county and state.

*Clockwise from top: CDA Wilson joined FW Mayor Betsy Price for a recent meeting with the engaged young professionals of SteerFW; Several senior Tarrant County ACDAs were selected as expert presenters this year at the TX District and County Attorney Association’s Annual Meeting; ACDAs Harry White and Sid Mody speak to reporters following the verdict in the high profile criminal case against mortuary owner Dondre Johnson.*



## CDA Speakers on the Road

CDA experts are available to speak on almost 70 different topics of interest, from bullying to cyber-security to elder abuse.

To request a speaker for your upcoming event, please contact our Community Outreach Coordinator, Amy Bearden at 817.884.3126 or [AHBearden@tarrantcountytx.gov](mailto:AHBearden@tarrantcountytx.gov).

The mission of our office is to enhance public safety through rigorous enforcement of criminal and civil laws in an ethical, honest and just manner. We are here to represent and defend the rights of every person in Tarrant County, seeking justice for all.

## Know Your Rights as a Victim

We work diligently to ensure the rights of all defendants are maintained, but if you or your loved ones are the victims of a crime, you too have rights.

Our CDA Victim Advocates help you navigate the complex criminal justice system with compassion and competence, serving as a liaison between you and the prosecutor on your case.

For more information on the rights and resources available to you as a crime victim or close family member of a deceased victim, please contact our Victim Advocates office at 817.884.2740.



## Did You Know?

Our office is open from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every weekday to offer more accessibility to residents who aren't able to contact us within normal business hours.

Discover useful resources and stay up to date on the activities of our office by regularly visiting our website at [cda.tarrantcounty.com](http://cda.tarrantcounty.com), or by connecting with us on Facebook and Twitter. Updates are posted daily to keep you apprised of the work we're doing every day for and around our shared community!



## Driving While Informed

CDA Wilson was proud to serve as the Honorary Chair of this year's Walk Like MADD event in Fort Worth on November 7th. There were 1,624 DWI-related crashes in Tarrant County last year – that's four or more crashes in our community every day. The way we will ultimately eradicate the problem of drunk driving is by educating drivers about the realities of the offense, and holding the offenders responsible for the damage they cause.

Our office is prosecuting DWIs at a rate of several trials per week, and we are glad to join other law enforcement agencies in standing in partnership with MADD, who has long been a national and local leader in advancing public education and legislation to protect victims, penalize intoxicated drivers, and prevent repeat drunk driving.

## Building Community Bonds

Every day our office works in partnership with other law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute criminal offenders. As they say in football, however, the best offense is often a strong defense. It is by the law-abiding citizens of our community working together to educate our youth, build trusted relationships, and demand responsibility for one's actions that we can make our neighborhoods the safest they have ever been.

In October, CDA Wilson and CDA employees participated in more than 50 neighborhood events around Tarrant County to celebrate National Night Out – an annual community-building campaign that promotes enhanced relationships between neighborhoods and law enforcement. In each neighborhood, our attorneys, investigators and staff were impressed by the willingness of citizens to work with their neighbors to create a renewed sense of community security.

We are very lucky in our country, and especially here in Tarrant County, to have the dedicated police officers who protect us and try every day to do the right thing to keep us safe. It only further strengthens our investment in our neighborhoods to build relationships of trust with our law enforcement officers, through which we can create a community with zero tolerance for a criminal element.

