Prosecutor’s 29th Annual Homicide Victim Memorial Service Held

On Monday, December 9th, Prosecutor Heck and his Victim/Witness Division held the 29th annual Homicide Victim Memorial Service. For those families and friends who have lost someone to violence, the holiday season can be a time when the sense of loss is overwhelming. The intent of the service is to help survivors through the holiday season. Originally started as a small gathering of families and friends, the service has grown over the years, with well over 500 in attendance in 2019.

During the service, the names were read of those who lost their lives to violence over the past year in Montgomery County. The family and friends of those victims were invited to hang an ornament on a memorial tree in honor of their loved one. At the end of the service, there was a balloon launch. Many of the balloons carried cards with memorial or inspirational messages from survivors to those who have died. Afterward, everyone in attendance was invited inside the Montgomery County Common Pleas Court Building for refreshments in the Victim/Witness Division offices.

Prosecutor Heck noted, “Twenty-nine years ago we started this service during the holidays as a means to help those who have lost a loved one through violence. They need to know that they are not alone and their loved one is not forgotten. My victim advocates and my office are ready to assist them in any way we can.”
Ms. Sandy Hunt, Director of Victim/Witness Division Receives Recognition

On Monday, October 28, 2019, at a ceremony at the Dayton Convention Center, the Ohio Crisis Response Team presented a plaque to Ms. Sandy Hunt, the Director of our Victim/Witness Division. The plaque was to recognize Sandy for her efforts in facilitating and expediting a supportive response during a time of community-wide crisis.

The award presented was the Outstanding Community Leadership Award, given for the hard work of Sandy and her victim advocates in the aftermath of the Oregon District shootings.

Sandy commented, “I am proud of the assistance and support the victim advocates provided to the victims and the families of the deceased immediately after the shooting and in the days and weeks that followed. The Oregon District shootings were a very traumatic event not only for those directly impacted, but also for our entire community. I am honored to be recognized for the difficult work done by our division.”

The victim advocates from the Victim/Witness Division arrived in the Oregon District almost immediately after the shootings and started providing grief counseling and help to locate and connect people. The team spent about 18 hours in the Oregon District the day of the shootings.

The Victim/Witness Division has eight full-time advocates and also relies on a number of volunteers. Advocates are available 24/7 to respond to crime scenes and local hospitals.

Prosecutor Heck added, “The Oregon District shooting was a large scale event that no one could have predicted would happen in our community. The staff of my Victim/Witness Division went above and beyond to help as many victims and families as possible. Such an event is emotionally difficult even for those trained to respond to such events. I offered counseling for our staff as a result.”

Sandy added, “As taxing as it was on my staff, it was a privilege to be able to serve the victims.”
Six Dayton Police Officers Recognized by the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

On Thursday, December 12, 2019, the six Dayton police officers who responded to the Oregon District shooting that occurred on Sunday, August 4, 2019, were honored by the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA) at a luncheon. The officers, pictured above, were Vincent Carter, David Denlinger, Brian Rolfes, Jeremy Campbell, Ryan Nabel, (Prosecutor Heck) and William Knight. Also pictured at the far right are Chief Richard Biehl and Lieutenant Colonel Eric Henderson.

A little after 1:00 am on August 4, 2019, 24-year-old Connor Betts, wearing a mask and bullet-proof body armor, fatally shot a victim in an alley off of Dayton’s Fifth Street. He then walked onto East Fifth Street and opened fire into the crowd of people there with a .223 caliber AR-15 style assault rifle equipped with a 100-round drum magazine. On this warm summer night, the streets were crowded with many citizens outside or on sidewalk patios and cafes.

The six Dayton police officers, already in the area, rushed directly toward the shooter and engaged him within 32 seconds of his first shot. The officers returned fire, fatally striking the assailant. Tragically, in that short amount of time, Betts managed to fatally shoot eight victims and injured another 32. The officers shot Betts just outside the entrance to a bar he was about to enter. Many citizens had just entered the bar in order to take cover. If the assailant had managed to enter the bar, the death toll would have been much higher.

Prosecutor Mat Heck, Jr. nominated the Dayton police officers to receive the OPAA’s Outstanding Peace Officer of the Year Award in late October. The awards committee agreed that the officers deserved the recognition.

Prosecutor Heck said, “If not for the quick, heroic actions of these officers, the shooter would have killed many, many more victims. The residents of Dayton and the Miami Valley can be proud of the skill and bravery these officers displayed. With everyone else running to take cover, these officers ran towards the shooter and put a quick end to the senseless shooting.”
Prosecutor’s Office Staff Work Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following staff of the Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office who celebrated work anniversaries in October, November, or December:

October Anniversaries

24 years—Greg Flannagan, 10/10/1995
13 years—Kim Melnick, 10/30/2006
5 years—Laura Jordan, 10/27/2014
4 years—Katrina Merkle, 10/26/2015
3 years—Karen Clift, 10/31/2016
2 years—Reagan Willis, 10/10/2017
2 years—Nathaniel Dodd, Jr, 10/30/2017
2 years—Emily Kleiner, 10/30/2017
1 year—Brian Titus, 10/1/2018

November Anniversaries

38 years—Leon Daidone, 11/16/1981
4 years—Jacob Mosher, 11/17/2015
3 years—Randi Rhodus, 11/14/2016
2 years—Whitney Crim, 11/15/2017
2 years—James Staley, 11/21/2017
1 year—Patricia Riley, 11/14/2018

December Anniversaries

24 years—Jamie Oliver, 12/4/1995
14 years—Michelle Grodner, 12/19/2005
5 years—Kelsie Carson, 12/29/2014
4 years—Thomas Hale, 12/9/2015
4 years—Brandon Myers, 12/14/2015
3 years—Ashley Adkinson, 12/6/2016
1 year—Cheyanne Soloman, 12/3/2018
1 year—India Taste, 12/3/2018
1 year—Elizabeth McCormick, 12/31/2018

Holiday Adopt-a-Family

Once again this year, the office participated in an annual Adopt-a-Family event. Our office “adopted” 10 large families this year for Christmas. A “giving tree” was set up in the main office lobby that was adorned with gift tags. Staff could take a tag and then donate the gifts listed on it. On December 23rd and 24th the gifts were delivered to the deserving families.

In addition, the office offered $10 jean Fridays. Every Friday, from November 15th through December 20th, staff were permitted to wear jeans to work if they made a $10 donation to the Adopt-a-Family fund.

Finally, the office participated in No Shave November, December and January. For a $50 donation to the Adopt-a-Family fund, men could grow their beards. In January a vote will decide who has grown the best beard.

While the fundraisers were fun, they also raised some serious cash—over $3,000! The money will be used to buy gift cards and groceries for the needy families whom the office adopted.

Presents fill the office halls and an office full of gifts that Prosecutor’s Office staff donated to 10 needy families.
Staff Updates

Since the last edition of The Prosecutor, we have hired a number of additional staff to replace retiring staff or those who left to pursue other employment:

On September 23, 2019, Ms. Hannah J. Bakosh joined the staff of the office as a Victim Advocate in the Victim/Witness Division of the office. Hannah received a Bachelor of Science degree in Family Sciences, with a focus on Human Development, from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, in May, 2019. Hannah has previously worked at a psychologist’s office, and served as a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Intern at the Women’s Recovery Center in Xenia.

On October 28, 2019, Ms. Haley E. Napier joined the staff of the office as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, assigned to the Juvenile Division of the office. Haley received her undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice from Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio, in 2016. She received her law degree in 2019 from the University of Dayton School of Law. Haley is originally from Beavercreek, Ohio.

On November 18, 2019, Ms. Courtnie L. Fields joined the staff of the prosecutor’s office as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, assigned to the Child Protection Unit of the office. Courtnie received her undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice from Wright State University in 2016. In 2019, she received her law degree from the University of Dayton School of Law. Courtnie was an intern in our office from September 2018 to May 2019, and was previously an intern in the City of Dayton Prosecutor’s Office in 2016.

On November 18, 2019, Ms. Morgan L. McConnell joined the staff of the office as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney. Morgan is assigned to the Child Protection Unit of the office. She received her undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice in 2015 from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. In 2019, she received her law degree from the Salmon P. Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights, Kentucky. Morgan was a law clerk in our office during the summer of 2017. She previously was an intern at the Family Violence Prevention Center in Xenia in 2015.

On November 18, 2019, Mr. Jamie J. Rizzo joined the staff of the prosecutor’s office as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, assigned to the Appellate Division of the office. Jamie received his undergraduate degree in Political Science and Criminal Justice in 2016 from the University of Akron. In 2019, he received his law degree from the University of Akron School of Law. Jamie was enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserve from 2009 to 2013. In 2011 he was deployed to Afghanistan.

ARRIVESAFE UPDATE

Prosecutor Heck’s ArriveSafe Program, offered over major holidays, provided over 170 cab rides home over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. This brings the total to nearly 7,500 cab rides provided by the program since its inception in 2007.

Prosecutor Heck said, “I applaud the residents of Montgomery County who realized they should not be driving because they were impaired. These people made the smart decision to not get behind the wheel, and instead took advantage of our free, and safe, ride home. There is no way to know just how many OVI arrests, injuries, and fatalities were prevented, but clearly taking over 7,000 impaired drivers off the roads over a dozen years has had a positive impact.”

ArriveSafe was also active over the Christmas and New Years holidays, but as of publication time, the number of rides provided was still unknown. Look for announcements for ArriveSafe over the upcoming St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in March, 2020!
The Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office

Dayton-Montgomery County Courts Building
301 West Third Street
Dayton, Ohio, 45402.

Our mailing address: P.O. Box 972, Dayton, Ohio, 45422.

Our email address for general inquiries: info@mcpo.com.

By phone:
- Main Office (937) 225-5757
- Appellate Division (937) 225-4117
- Child Abuse Bureau (937) 641-4545
- Civil Division (937-225-5654
- Child Protection Unit (937) 276-6580
- Consumer Fraud Unit (937) 225-4747
- Diversion Unit (937) 225-4864
- Juvenile Division - (937) 225-4253
- Grand Jury/Intake - (937) 225-3498

Also, be sure to visit us online at www.mcpo.com and follow us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/MatHeckJr/  www.twitter.com/MCPOPROS

The Prosecutor is published as a public service by the Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office. For questions or comments about articles appearing in The Prosecutor, or to recommend topics you’d like to see, please contact: Mr. Greg Flannagan, Public Information Officer at 937-225-5610 or e-mail info@mcpo.com