



JUSTICE JOURNAL

Presented by The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office
Paul J. Gains, Prosecutor

Newly Launched Mahoning County Special Needs Registry Provides Lifesaving Information

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, in joint collaboration with the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office and the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners, is pleased to announce the creation of the Mahoning County Special Needs Registry. The Registry is a wonderful and extremely useful tool that will allow citizens of Mahoning County to have direct communication with law enforcement and other first responders in times of need. Many people with developmental disabilities, mental health disorders, and other impairments appear atypical which can sometimes cause an issue when they encounter law enforcement. This registry will provide citizens with special needs an opportunity to inform law enforcement about their condition. The focus is to give law enforcement and first responders the tools to understand the needs of those they encounter.

Under this program, critical information is collected through an online application process accessible through a secure portal within the Mahoning County Prosecutor's website at prosecutor.mahoningcountyoh.gov. Once the information is received, a member of the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office uploads all data into the County-Wide Computer Aided Dispatch System for 911 to match information with an individual through his/her name, address and personal identifier, such as a social security number, Driver's License or State Issued ID number. Once this information is uploaded into the Dispatch System, if an emergency call comes in, 911 Dispatchers will receive an audible alert that the individual is on the special needs registry. This alert will then enable the dispatcher to access and disseminate critical data regarding an individual's special needs, including but not limited to information about their cognitive disorder or development disability, triggers associated with the condition, emergency contact information and a recent photograph.

We are confident that the Mahoning County Special Needs Registry will help build bridges between our citizens with special needs and our law enforcement agencies, enhancing their ability to protect and serve our most vulnerable residents of our community.

Additional information may be obtained through our website at prosecutor.mahoningcountyoh.gov, by emailing us a request at prosecutor@mahoningcountyoh.gov or calling our office at 330-740-2330.



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OFFICE NEWS

NEW APPOINTMENTS

We are pleased to announce the appointments of Ray Hartsough, Ed Czopur, Ashley Lanz and Patrick Fening as Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys in Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office.

Attorney Hartsough will be working in the Civil Division handling litigation and other matters. Prior to joining the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney Hartsough served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in the Summit County Prosecutor's Office where he handled various civil matters for the office. He also serves as a volunteer judge for moot court and speech and debate teams at Youngstown State University and Austintown Fitch High School. Attorney Hartsough holds a B.A. from Youngstown State University and a JD from the University of Akron School of Law.

Attorney Czopur will be working in the Appellate Division where he will oversee the entire appellate docket. Prior to joining the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney Czopur was associated with the law firm of DeGenova & Yarwood, Ltd where he practiced primarily in the area of criminal and appellate law. He also serves as an adjunct professor with Youngstown State University where he teaches criminal law. Attorney Czopur holds a B.S. from Youngstown State University and a JD from University of Akron School of Law.

Attorney Lanz will be working in the Criminal Division, serving as a felony prosecutor. Prior to joining the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney Lanz served as an Assistant Prosecutor with the City of Akron where she handled a full misdemeanor docket. She also serves as a volunteer coach with the Akron Trial Team. Attorney Lanz holds a B.S and M.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and a JD from the University of Akron School of Law.

Attorney Fening will be working in the Criminal Division, serving as a county court prosecutor. Prior to joining the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney Fening served as an Assistant Prosecutor Attorney with the Cuyahoga and Summit County Prosecutor's Office. He also serves as a volunteer with the Rescue Mission of the Mahoning Valley. Attorney Fening holds a B.A. from Washington & Jefferson College and a JD from the University of Akron School of Law.



Ray Hartsough



Ed Czopur



Ashley Lanz



Pat Fening

OFFICE NEWS

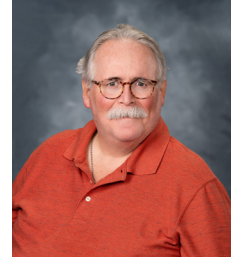
RETIREMENTS

Laraine Durkin, Susan Schell and Jimmy Hay have been trusted and valued members of the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office for many years. It is with mixed emotions that we bid them farewell on their well-deserved retirements.

The friendly voice of the Prosecutor's Office, Laraine Durkin, has served us well since joining the office in 2001. As a receptionist and office assistant, Laraine was quick to lend a helping hand to each office caller and visitor. Friendly, compassionate and an esteemed professional; you will be missed Laraine!

Serving this community since the 1990s, Jimmy Hay, has held his job as an office investigator with distinction. Always volunteering to assist, Jimmy's knowledge of the inner workings of our office has proven to be a huge asset. Often the comedian, Jimmy's sense of humor and ability to make people laugh always made an impact on daily office life. We will miss you and your yearly March Madness pools, Jimmy!

Since joining the Prosecutor's Office in 1994, Susan Shell, has proved to be a wealth of knowledge and experience for our Delinquent Tax Department. Susan's drive and ability to grasp the ever changing law regarding delinquent tax in Mahoning County has helped make the department a success. You will be missed Susan!



Jimmy Hay



Susan Shell

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE RECOGNIZED

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Lori L. Shells Simmons, who recently completed her 30th year of service with the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office. APA Shells Simmons graduated from Cardinal Mooney High School in 1981. She then attended The University of Akron where she achieved a Bachelor of Science degree in 1985 and her Master's degree in Public Administration in 1991. While simultaneously pursuing her Master's degree, APA Shells Simmons attended the University of Akron School of Law where she earned her Juris Doctorate in 1991. After passing the bar, she joined the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office in 1991 as an Assistant Mahoning County Prosecutor. Throughout her tenure with the Prosecutor's Office, APA Shells Simmons worked in the juvenile and common pleas court divisions until being transferred to the Mahoning County Children Services Board where she presently serves.



Lori Shells Simmons

APA Shells Simmons is also avidly involved in the community as well, currently holding memberships on several community boards, such as YSU's IRB (Institutional Review Board), Mahoning County Bar Association, The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, The National Bar Association, The National Black Prosecutor's Association, The Ohio Prosecutor's Association and the National District Attorney's Association. Very active in her church, New Bethel Baptist Church in Youngstown, she is a newly nominated Deaconess and in training to be a Sunday School Teacher.

OFFICE NEWS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Chief Assistant Prosecutor, Gina DeGenova and Assistant Prosecutor, Civil Division, Dionne Almasy served as guest speakers to members of the Gathering Place during their September 2021 meeting held at Greasel Park in Canfield. Attorneys DeGenova and Almasy provided information on Elder Fraud and Mahoning County's Adult Protective Services. The mission of The Gathering Place is to provide a safe, social, recreational, and educational atmosphere for senior citizens.



Chief DeGenova also served as a guest speaker to members of the Public Employee Retirees, PERI, Mahoning County Chapter 18 during their October 2021 meeting. Attorney DeGenova explained the Mahoning County Special Needs Registry, recently launched in September 2021. The mission of PERI is to ensure that public employee retirees have information regarding their retirement benefits.



The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office sponsored training for area law enforcement personnel on October 13, 2021. The areas discussed included public records, sexual assault prosecution, trial testimony and report writing, OVI law, ghost guns, digital evidence, grand jury, and the law governing marijuana arrests. Presentations were given by Chief DeGenova, Grand Jury Prosecutor Mike Yacavone and Assistant Prosecutors Kevin Day, Caitlyn Andrews, Don Duda, Nicholas Brevetta, Edward Czopur and Steve Maszczak.



OFFICE NEWS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Anissa Modarelli, Assistant Prosecutor, Juvenile Division, participated in an informative meeting sponsored by the Boardman Local Schools on the dangers of social media and the internet. Attorney Modarelli and others discussed topics such as bullying, cyber bullying, sexting, healthy relationships, etc.



Attorney Modarelli also recently became certified as a Trauma Informed Trainer by the Mahoning County Juvenile Court.

Attorney Modarelli, also, along with representatives of the Mahoning County Juvenile Court participated in a cyber-safety discussion hosted by the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 25. This event was part of the BSA's Cyber Chip program designed to educate youth and scouts on how to use technology safely and appropriately. This event held on November 17, 2021. During this discussion, panel members gave tips to parents and students in grades 6-12 on how to stay safe online.



Chief DeGenova along with other community leaders were guest speakers during Youngstown's first Walk For Freedom, hosted by the A21 organization, a faith-based, nonprofit organization working to combat human trafficking. The event was held on October 16, 2021 at Austintown Township Park.

On October 30, 2021, members of the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office participated in Safe Trick or Treating Night at the Covelli Centre hosted by the Youngstown Phantoms. Area youth enjoyed a costume parade and trick or treating before the Youngstown Phantoms hosted the Chicago Steel.



OFFICE NEWS

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office sponsored a donation drive benefitting the Sojourner House Domestic Violence Program. During the month of October, the Prosecutor's Office accepted various wish list items. Members of the South Range High School Key Club, organized by junior, Macenzee Gaal also collected and organized donations from students, faculty and staff of the South Range Local Schools. In all, we collected over 4,000 items and nearly \$1,000 in cash and gift cards. Thank you to all who supported this drive!



Assistant Prosecutors Lori Shells Simmons, Ebenezer Appiagyei and Tia Brown were guest speakers at a meeting held by the Foster Parent Association of Mahoning County at the Gate Church in North Lima on October 25, 2021. These attorneys discussed issues impacting foster parents in Mahoning County and were available to answer questions. The Foster Parent Association of Mahoning County is comprised of licensed foster parents who work in cooperation with Mahoning County Children Services to improve foster care and adoption services.



CRIMINAL DIVISION NEWS

NOTABLE CASES

State of Ohio v. Traeshaun Turner

Defendant Traeshaun Turner was sentenced on August 12, 2021 to a term of life imprisonment with parole eligibility after 25 years after being convicted of Murder, Attempted Murder, Felonious Assault and Having Weapons While Under Disability. The Defendant was convicted after a four day jury trial in which the jury heard testimony that the Defendant shot and killed Ishmael Bethel outside the Southern Tavern in Youngstown and also wounded a juvenile. The Defendant testified that he acted in self-defense, however, the jury ultimately rejected this defense finding the Defendant guilty of all charges. Assistant Prosecutors Nicholas Brevetta and Kevin Day tried this case before the Honorable Judge John M. Durkin.



Nicholas Brevetta



Kevin Day

State of Ohio v. Guillum Chism

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office successfully opposed the parole Guillum Chism during a full board hearing held before the Ohio Parole Board on September 14, 2021. Chism was convicted of two counts of aggravated robbery with a firearm specification and one count of attempted aggravated murder in 1989. He was sentenced to a term of 10 to 25 years in the penitentiary for each count of aggravated robbery and 7 to 25 years in the penitentiary for attempted aggravated murder. According to Jennifer McLaughlin, Chief of the Criminal Division of the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, a review of Chism's Institutional Report Summary revealed that although he has participated in numerous programs and activities while incarcerated, his disciplinary history includes multiple contraband infractions and a violent altercation with another inmate on May 22, 2020. The Prosecutor's Office opposed this request also arguing that his victim will never be able to put this behind him and get on with his life. The Parole Board agreed, voting 7 to 3 in favor of denying parole.



Jennifer McLaughlin

CRIMINAL DIVISION NEWS

NOTABLE CASES CONTINUED

State of Ohio v. Stephon Hopkins and Lorice Moore

On November 12th, the jury found Stephon Hopkins and Lorice Moore guilty of murder, attempted murder, and felonious assault. Hopkins, Moore, and another man, Brian Donlow, were back seat passengers in a car driven by Carlos Davis and also occupied by front-seat passenger Christopher Jackson, both from Warren. The three defendants opened fire on the other two occupants, killing Jackson while Davis managed to run away. Jackson was shot nine times and Davis twice, all gun shot wounds in the back.

Hopkins was sentenced to 35 years to life in prison, while Moore was sentenced to 32 years to life in prison. In April, Donlow was convicted following a bench trial and is currently serving a sentence of life in prison without parole plus fourteen years.

Hopkins's and Donlow's sentences are to run consecutive to the sentences imposed for the June 2018 murder of Brandon Wylie.

The Mahoning County Prosecutors Office would like to thank the Youngstown Police Department, specifically Detective Mike Lambert, for a thorough investigation that, in spite of a lack of cooperation from Carlos Davis, yielded the DNA evidence and video confession used to bring justice to the Jackson family. This case was tried by Grand Jury Prosecutor, Michael Yacavone and Assistant Prosecutor, Jennifer Paris. It is our hope that convictions and sentences like these will deter young men from similar acts of senseless violence, using firearms to settle disputes.



Michael Yacavone



Jennifer Paris

TO PROTECT AND SERVE...

The Mahoning County Sheriff's Office was named Law Enforcement Partner of the Year by the U.S. Marshals Office at its annual awards ceremony held on September 16, 2021 at Progressive Field in Cleveland, Ohio. Mahoning County Sheriff, Jerry Greene, was on hand to accept the award on behalf of his agency.

Thanks for your hard work and dedication Sheriff Greene!



CIVIL DIVISION NEWS

SCAM ALERT!

It's that time of year again! The leaves on the trees have turned and are falling, the temperatures are getting colder, warmer clothes come to the front of the closet, and families are coming together to enjoy the magic of the holidays.

But this time of year also brings out something much less magical: holiday scammers. Whether you are young or old, holiday scammers are looking to make a quick buck off of a number of scams that may be difficult to avoid.

Here are a few different types of scams you can watch out for:

1. Charity scams: A study conducted by Network for Good showed that nearly one-third of all charitable giving is done in December. Holiday scammers target and take advantage of this more charitable, holiday spirit by posing as a charity. These scams range from phone calls to fake websites to people standing outside of shopping centers.
2. Online Shopping scams: A more recent trend in shopping for the holidays involves searching for the best deals on the most coveted gifts for friends and family alike. Holiday scammers take advantage of this by sending out scam emails or pop-up ads showing incredible deals. These links then redirect you to disreputable websites that harvest your personal information or websites that are infested with malware and other viruses.
3. Delivery scams: As many of us start turning to online shopping for the holidays, sometimes we lose track of all the packages coming in. Holiday scammers take advantage of this by disguising emails from UPS, FedEx, or the United States Postal Service to send notifications that you have missed a delivery. Just like with online shopping scams, the links attached to these emails may lead to websites harvesting your personal information or websites that are infested with malware and other viruses.
4. Travel scams: With so many people traveling for the holidays, holiday scammers have developed fake travel websites that are meant to look like the real thing. Oftentimes, these website will have travel rates that are just too good to be true. However, while you are putting in your personal information to claim your amazing deals or prizes, these websites are harvesting this information to sell it to the highest bidder.
5. Letter from Santa scams: The AARP identified a scam that asks for people to provide information about your kids or grandkids so that "the jolly old elf" can send them a custom gift or holiday treat based on their personal preferences. This information is then sold to the highest bidder and can be used for nefarious means. While some legitimate companies offer something similar, there are many more scams than the real thing with these Letters from Santa.

CIVIL DIVISION NEWS

SCAM ALERT! CONTINUED

How do I avoid being scammed: The best thing you can do is to do your homework. If someone asks you to donate to a charity, search for information on that charity. You may be surprised about what you learn, and you may find a great cause to support, but you may have just avoided a scam and can help others do the same. If you weren't expecting a package, then go back into your records and double-check that you aren't forgetting something. If you don't recognize a website that is offering deals that are just too good to be true, do your research and look into whether this website is real before clicking on the link. You may find out that this website is a great new source for deals, but you may find out that this website is up to no good.

Warning signs: Some of the warning signs that make it easy to spot holiday scammers are: offers of huge discounts, spelling errors and shoddy grammar on a website or in an email, travel sites that do not list addresses or phone numbers to contact the company, websites that do not have privacy policies, and unsolicited emails that come from an email address you do not recognize.

For more information on holiday scams, check out information put out by both the [AARP](#) and the [FBI](#).

TOWNSHIP CORNER

Happy Retirement Officer Schweers!

Congratulations to Poland Township Police Sergeant Dennis Schweers on his recent retirement. Sergeant Schweers served as a law enforcement officer for 25 years. He graduated from Kent State University with a degree in Criminal Justice and from the Akron State University Police Academy. During his 25 years with Poland Township, Sgt. Schweers served as a field training officer, firearms instructor, school resource officer, and union representative. Thank you for your service Sgt. Schweers! You will be missed!



CIVIL DIVISION NEWS

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN MONIES UPDATE

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in full force, and our lives were all changed in countless ways. One of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was a huge financial hit to individuals and communities across the entire country.

In response to some of the systemic issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government took action and approved the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act as a financial stopgap in the middle of 2020. The federal government was then able to take another step in 2021 and passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP). The short-term goal of both CARES and ARP is to help provide some financial stability to local communities so that they can in turn reach out and provide direct assistance to individuals who need the most help. The long-term goal of both CARES and ARP is to turn that stability into a constant and long-lasting way of life.

Together, CARES and ARP have provided Mahoning County a historic opportunity to strengthen our community through targeted social service programming and infrastructure improvements. In order to do this properly and to make sure that funds go to the right place, Mahoning County has entered into countless contracts with many more improvements and contracts on the horizon.

That's where the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office comes in. To date, the MCPO has advised the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners on contracting involving over twenty million dollars (yes, \$20,000,000.00) in American Rescue Plan Allocations.

Some of the early projects that have been funded include: \$1,000,000.00 to the ABC Water District for the construction of a new storm water park on the former Market Street Elementary School property; \$40,000.00 to the Hope House to continue meeting the need in our community for supervised visitation; \$500,000.00 to Y.N.D.C. for emergency home repairs throughout Mahoning County; and \$3,000,000.00 to Valley Partners to assist small business and non-profit agencies with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the CARES and ARP funds, none of these projects would have been a realistic possibility.

But the best is yet to come! The MCPO is excited to continue working with the Mahoning County Commissioners as we all work to turn the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic into future opportunities to make stability a way of life throughout Mahoning County – both now and for years to come.