



July 2022 Volume 2, Issue 2

JUSTICE JOURNAL

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

New initiatives aimed at helping the mental health of law enforcement

Mental Health awareness is a topic at the forefront of society, and this quarter our office took time to speak about the issue. With help from the Mental Health and Recovery Board, Upholders, Oak Hill Collaborative, and the SOAP Gallery, we were able to help spread awareness about mental health for first responders. Our law enforcement and first responders deal with some of the most egregious scenes, whether a crash, crime, evidence photos, etc. These constant horrifying scenes could cause several different issues like PTSD or depression. There are now new initiatives aimed at helping law enforcement receive the treatment they need to continue working their job and assisting Mahoning County. The Mahoning County Mental Health and Recovery Board, the Sheriff's Department, and various other townships throughout this county provide a week-long CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) course for police officers that provide the resources and help them understand how to respond during specific situations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

—	PAGE 2 Mental Health and Law Enforcement
—	PAGE 3-4 New Appointments
—	PAGE 5-7 Community Outreach
—	PAGE 8-11 Criminal and Civil Division News
—	PAGE 12 News around town

Continuing the conversation

This month the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion about Mental Health issues surrounding our community. The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Common Pleas Court and the Mental Health and Recovery Board implemented a multitude of approaches dealing with mentally ill offenders. The goal is to move the mentally ill out of the criminal justice system by helping them make healthy changes affecting their lives. This program provides comprehensive mediation and conflict resolution services. Civil mediations include landlord/tenant, neighborhood, family, small claims, consumer, property, and interpersonal disputes. The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office would also like to thank all those involved in the roundtable discussion, including Oak Hill Collaborative, Upholders, and The Mental Health and Recovery Board.



Promotions

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office proudly announces the promotion of Attorney Lori Shells-Simmons to the position of Senior Counsel/CSB. The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office is charged with prosecuting child abuse, neglect and dependency cases. Attorney Shells-Simmons has worked as an assistant prosecutor prosecuting these CSB cases for over 30 years with pride and passion. In her new position she will utilize her vast knowledge and experience to coordinate the cases and provide training for assistant prosecutors and CSB caseworkers. Congratulations to Attorney Shells-Simmons!



Lori Shells Simmons

Senior Counsel/CSB

OFFICE NEWS

New Appointments

We are pleased to announce the addition of several new employees this quarter. The new employees are already making big impressions on our office!

Kathrine Jones will be working in the Criminal Division, serving as an Assistant Prosecutor assigned to the county court. Before joining the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Assistant Prosecutor Jones was a legal intern for the Columbiana County Prosecutor's Office and served as an Emergency Dispatcher with the Columbiana County Sheriff's Office. Assistant Prosecutor Jones is a Boardman High School graduate that made her way to YSU to major in Criminal Justice. She attended Akron Law School, where she was also a Student Animal Legal Defense Fund member.

Paige Dill was hired as an Administrative Assistant within our Criminal Division. She will help organize case files and work collaboratively with paralegals and Assistant Prosecutors around the office. Paige is a Boardman native who graduated from Boardman High School in 2018. Paige went to Geneva College to play softball and graduated with a BA in Criminal Justice and Human Services.

Bella Caruso was hired as our new Victim/Witness Coordinator. Bella received her BA at Ohio State University and her MA at Queens University Belfast. After working and studying victims of conflict internationally, she is excited to be back in her hometown, supporting the community.



OFFICE NEWS

2022 SUMMER INTERSHIP PROGRAM

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office welcomed the 2022 Summer Interns, who began their internships in May and June. Throughout the summer, this group will receive hands-on experience with the legal system by completing various tasks. They also have the opportunity to attend seminars, hearings, and trials.

Anthony Carbone, a second-year law student at Ohio Northern Petit College of Law, works primarily in the Criminal Division, assisting with various criminal prosecutions. Anthony graduated from Youngstown State University, obtaining a B.A. in English. This is Anthony's second year working as a law clerk for our office.

Kyle Hilles is a second-year law student that attends Charleston School of Law. Kyle completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Akron where he majored in social sciences with an emphasis in Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics.

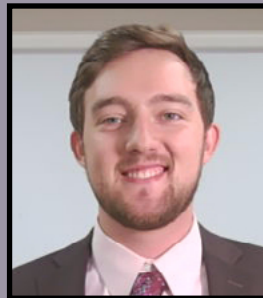
Alexis Eaton is a graduate of Valley Christian High School and attends Mount Vernon Nazarene University where she is majoring in history.

Geordyn Conne is an Ursuline High School graduate that attends the University of Akron. She majors in Political Science and joins the Prosecutor's Office for the summer as an intern to gain valuable experience.

Dominic Adams is an Ursuline High School graduate. He is currently a Prelaw and Philosophy major at Youngstown State University. He will be a sophomore at the university, where he participates in many activities, including Moot Court, Ethics Bowl, and some theater productions.



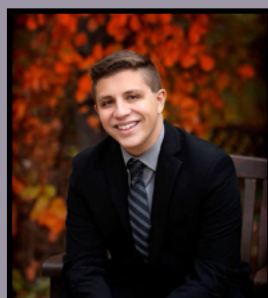
Alexis Eaton



Kyle Hilles



Anthony Carbone



Dominic Adams



Geordyn Conne

OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach

Drug Education is changing the community



Drug education is an essential topic within our community. In April, Assistant Prosecutor Joseph Maxin spoke with the Jackson-Milton community about how the Prosecutor's Office handles drug-related cases. Assistant Prosecutor Maxin informed the community about how drug diversion programs work (i.e., drug court, veterans court) and what role the Juvenile Court plays in the criminal justice system. Thank you to the Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force for bringing the community together, and thank you to Jackson-Milton Local School District and Western Reserve Schools for hosting!

Austintown Mock Trial Team visits County Common Pleas Court and Prosecutor's Office

We had a blast hosting the Austintown-Fitch Mock Trial Team during law week. The team was able to tour the Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas and sit in on a civil trial. We would like to thank Judge Donofrio for allowing the students into his courtroom for the afternoon. Chief Assistant Prosecutors Gina DeGenova and Linette Stratford, Assistant Criminal Chief Ralph Rivera, and Assistant Prosecutors Martin Hume and Mark D'Apolito spoke to the high school students, educating them on their roles and duties. Our victim-witness coordinators were also able to share their experiences with the students. We hope to see some of these bright young minds back in the courtroom practicing law! A big thanks to the Austintown School District, the Mahoning County Courthouse, the team's Legal Advisor and Mahoning County Assistant Prosecutor Raymond Hartsough for helping this field trip come together.



OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach

Prosecutor's Office participates in the Autism Warriors event

A great event was thrown by the Autism Society of Mahoning Valley! The Mahoning Valley Warrior's event featured hundreds of people from all walks of life. The event allowed our office to spread the word about the Special Needs Registry. Our office also competed in the people-powered tractor pull event! Everyone had fun, and we can't wait for next year! A big thanks to the Autism Society of Mahoning Valley for bringing everyone together.

The Mahoning County Special Needs Registry is a voluntary service open to all citizens with special needs who reside in Mahoning County. The registry was created to help police officers and other emergency service personnel better assist residents with special needs in the event of an emergency by providing those first responders with vital information regarding a registrant's special needs, emergency contact information, physical description and a current photograph. The goal of the Special Needs Registry is to ensure all Mahoning County residents who may be in need of special assistance are able to get help and support they need in time of emergency or during interaction with Law Enforcement, Fire or EMS personnel.



Career Day

In March, Investigator Randall Malleske talked to the students at St. Christine School during career day! Investigator Malleske talked to the students about how our office operates and his responsibilities. A big thanks to St. Christine School for allowing us to talk with the energetic and intelligent students. The future of Mahoning County is bright!



OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach Creating art to help mental health

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and this year the HELMS Foundation of the Mahoning Valley displayed and sold several works of art that contribute to art therapy. Art Therapy is a form of therapeutic relief that helps some deal with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal thoughts or feelings. None of this would've been possible without our clients, the Mahoning County Mental Health & Recovery Board, and the Mahoning County Commissioners. Executive Director Duane Piccirilli represented the Mahoning County Mental Health & Recovery Board, and Carol Rimedio-Righetti represented the Commissioners. Some of the pieces of art were created by people from Mahoning County. For instance, the piece titled "Fellowship," (Piece #10) was created by Holly Queen. Queen is a Mahoning County native that graduated from Poland High School and Youngstown State University. She is an experienced Art Therapist with a demonstrated history of working in the hospital & healthcare industry with vital healthcare services professional skilled in Grief Counseling. Queen says her inspiration for the "Fellowship" painting was the Fellow Riverside Gardens. Queen recalls fond memories of taking family visits and seeing beautiful flowers there. She says it was a little oasis in the city of hope, growth, and beauty. Thank you to all that participated or purchased a piece of artwork.



State of Ohio v. George Hill

Mahoning County Prosecutor Paul Gains announced that Judge Anthony D'Apolito sentenced George Hill, 46, to life behind bars with a chance of parole after 15 years served. Hill was found guilty of murdering 36-year-old Jennifer Mullen in May of 2020. A jury found Hill guilty of 4 charges: two counts of Murder, one count of Felonious Assault, and one count of Domestic Violence. On May 31, Jennifer Mullen was found unconscious at her house on Shields Road in Boardman. When police arrived, Mullen had sustained brutal injuries to her head and had bruises all over her body. Hill told police that Mullen had an accident after drinking too much. But, upon further investigation, it was clear that Mullen had little to no alcohol in her system at the time of the incident. It was made clear that the injuries Mullen sustained were from abuse at the hands of Hill. Mullen died from her injuries sustained during that deadly confrontation.



Kevin Day
Assistant Prosecutor



Jennifer McLaughlin
Chief, Criminal Division

State of Ohio v. Luis Johnson

A Mahoning County jury found Luis Johnson, 24, of Youngstown, guilty of Attempted Murder from a shooting incident that occurred in October of 2020. He was also found guilty of one count of Felonious Assault, with Firearm Specifications, a Felony of the 2nd Degree. On October 12, 2020, Tevin Gregory was shot multiple times outside of a house on Fairfax Street. Gregory told police that someone in a Burgundy Lincoln shot him; he sustained gunshot injuries to his right wrist and abdomen. Officers spoke to several witnesses who described the scene of the crime. Once officers from the Youngstown Police Department located and searched the vehicle, they obtained a warrant for the arrest of Luis Johnson and Tyree Robinson for Attempted Murder. A few days following the shooting, Johnson turned himself over to the US Marshal Service at his mother's house. The evidence showed that Johnson was stalking his ex-girlfriend, whom Gregory was dating. Gregory was gunned down when leaving the home to travel to work.



Kevin Trapp
Assistant Prosecutor



Robert Andrews
Senior Trial Counsel

State of Ohio v. Robert Shelton

46-year-old Robert Shelton pleaded guilty to Voluntary Manslaughter with a Firearm Specification for the shooting death of Dymond Ortello in the parking lot of the Brothers of Power Nightclub on Logan Avenue. Judge Sweeney sentenced Shelton to 13 to 18 years in prison. Shelton shot Dymond Ortello in the parking lot as club patrons were fleeing in the club, Shelton took a gun from another man's body inside the club and shot Dymond Ortello twice in the back as a city police officer pulled up. Senior Trial Counsel Robert Andrews and Assistant Prosecutor Patrick Fenning handled the case.



Robert Andrews
Senior Trial Counsel



Patrick Fenning
Assistant Prosecutor

State of Ohio v. Richard Sickelsmith

In May, Judge Anthony D'Apolito ordered a man to pay \$1 million in restitution after pleading guilty to solid and hazardous waste charges involving the closed Sebring Industrial Plating facility. 63-year-old Richard J. Sickelsmith was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay \$1 million in restitution to compensate the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Environmental Protection Agency for the cost of removing the hazardous material and restoring the site to a safe condition. Assistant Prosecutor Martin Hume handled the case. Sickelsmith was ordered to pay at least \$400 of restitution per month during the five years of probation. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency investigation revealed that Sickelsmith once owned the property where approximately 38,000 pounds of hazardous waste were stored. The company didn't have a permit to store the hazardous materials at the facility.



Martain Hume
Assistant Prosecutor

CRIMINAL DIVISION NEWS

State of Ohio v. Sharday Bing-Dixon

The Honorable Judge Anthony D'Apolito sentenced 35-year-old Sharday Bing-Dixon to 20 years behind bars for causing the death of her 2-year-old son in 2018. Bing-Dixon had previously pleaded guilty to Involuntary Manslaughter and Permitting Child Abuse; both are Felonies of the first degree. Senior Trial Counsel Rob Andrews and Assistant Prosecutor Caitlyn Andrews handled the case.



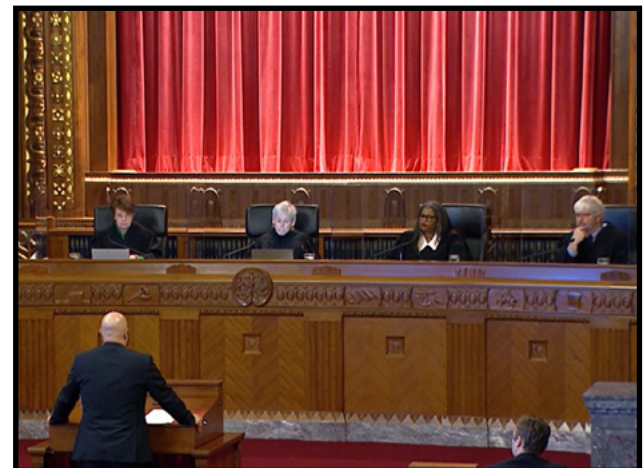
Robert Andrews
Senior Trial Counsel



Caitlyn Andrews
Assistant Prosecutor

Arguing before the Supreme Court of Ohio

In April, Assistant Criminal Chief, Ralph Rivera, argued before the Supreme Court of Ohio following an appeal in the case of State of Ohio v. Chaz Bunch. Chaz Bunch was convicted for the violent and callous kidnapping, robbery and rape of a YSU student in 2001. The defense counsel argued that Bunch's defense attorney cross-examined an eyewitness without consulting with or calling an expert to question the witness' credibility, thus denying Bunch a fair trial. Assistant Chief Rivera argued that the victim/witness was consistent in identifying Bunch and his co-defendant as her attackers, and utilizing an expert would not have altered the jury's verdicts.



Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office helps secure ARPA funds for animal Charity

In 2021, the United States Congress allocated certain funds to communities across the United States through the American Rescue Plan Act to help build back communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including Mahoning County. With the funds allocated to Mahoning County, many programs to enhance our county have been able to apply with the Mahoning County Commissioners to receive some of these funds. The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office has been integral in helping ensure that specific legal requirements and benchmarks are met before any of these funds are allocated. Each month, we will feature one of these fantastic programs and how they are assisting

a better place. This Animal Charity Humane Society covers all responded to 700 calls and The Animal Charity Hu- because of the influx of 2020 to 2021. The hu- strong increase of res- deceased, or in custody.



in 2020 to 120 in 2021. They outline that the number of abandoned animals will steadily increase as the pandemic continues. The humane society works closely with nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and local hospitals. There was also an increase of abandoned animals, which started to say the eviction moratorium was lifted. To ensure that the humane society could keep up with the influx of animals, they suggested they needed another full-time agent to help manage all the calls they continuously received. The Mahoning County Commissioners awarded the Animal Charity Humane Society \$252,000.00.

in making Mahoning County month, we are featuring the Society. The Animal Charity Hu- of Mahoning County. They re- also took in 529 animals in 2021. mane Society was seeking funds assignments they acquired from mane society says there was a cued animal owners hospitalized, The number tripled in from 45

JACKSON POLICE CHIEF RETIRES

After 39 years of service, Jackson Police Chief Greg Taillon retired. Best of luck Chief Taillon on a well-deserved retirement. We thank you for all the hard work and for your unwavering service!



Left to Right: Assistant Prosecutor Nicholas Modarelli, Jackson Police Chief Greg Taillon, Assistant Criminal Chief Prosecutor Gina DeGenova

