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# JUSTICE JOURNAL

Presented by the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office  
Gina DeGenova, Prosecutor

## Concerns rise about the use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and challenges for the senior population, especially concerning scams and the court system. Seniors are often targeted by scammers, and with the development of AI, these scams have become more sophisticated and difficult to detect. AI-powered phishing emails, fraudulent phone calls, and even deepfake scams can deceive seniors into divulging personal information or transferring money unknowingly. Seniors who may be less tech-savvy are particularly vulnerable to these manipulative tactics, which could lead to financial loss and compromised security.

Additionally, AI's influence on the court system is transforming the way criminal and civil cases are handled. AI technologies, such as predictive analytics and facial recognition, have the potential to impact the fairness and privacy of legal proceedings. Predictive algorithms might be used to assess a defendant's likelihood of committing future crimes, potentially leading to biased decisions. Moreover, facial recognition technology could raise concerns about civil liberties, as it may infringe on the privacy rights of individuals involved in legal processes.

However, it is essential to recognize that AI can also be harnessed to support and protect the senior population. AI-powered fraud detection systems can identify and flag potential scams, helping to safeguard seniors' financial assets. Furthermore, the court system can leverage AI to improve efficiency and access to justice. AI-powered legal research tools can assist lawyers in analyzing vast amounts of data, while virtual courtrooms may enable remote participation, benefiting both seniors and others with limited mobility.

To mitigate the risks posed by AI, it is crucial to implement robust regulations and ethical guidelines. Striking the right balance between technological advancements and safeguarding vulnerable populations is vital in leveraging AI's potential while addressing its possible dangers for seniors and the legal system.

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## Protecting yourself from AI

Protecting the senior population from potential AI scams requires a multifaceted approach that combines awareness, education, and technological solutions. Here are some strategies that can be implemented:

- 1. Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Initiating public awareness campaigns specifically targeted at seniors can help educate them about the various AI scams and tactics employed by fraudsters. Informative workshops, community seminars, and educational materials can empower seniors to recognize and avoid potential scams.
- 2. Tech Literacy Programs:** Implementing tech literacy programs tailored for seniors can bridge the digital divide and help them understand how AI technologies work, including common scams and security risks. Teaching seniors how to identify suspicious emails, texts, and phone calls can go a long way in preventing falling victim to AI-powered scams.
- 3. AI-Driven Fraud Detection:** Financial institutions and technology companies can develop sophisticated fraud detection systems that use AI algorithms to identify suspicious transactions or communication patterns. By leveraging AI for good, these systems can alert seniors or their caregivers about potential scams in real-time, preventing losses.
- 4. Multi-Factor Authentication:** Encouraging the use of multi-factor authentication for online accounts can add an extra layer of security. This prevents scammers from gaining unauthorized access to personal information or financial accounts, even if they have gained access to some sensitive data.
- 5. Strong Password Policies:** Educating seniors about creating strong and unique passwords for each online account is essential. Weak passwords make it easier for scammers to gain unauthorized access to accounts.
- 6. Trusted Sources of Information:** Encourage seniors to verify the authenticity of information and offers they receive. Reliance on official websites, emails from known contacts, and verified phone numbers can help to avoid falling for fraudulent AI-generated messages.
- 7. Family and Community Support:** Family members and friends can play a vital role in protecting seniors from scams. Regularly checking in, discussing potential risks, and offering assistance with technology can create a supportive safety net.



# OFFICE NEWS

## New Appointments

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

Lindsay Hospodar is a paralegal who believes that organization is the key to success. She has a love for all colors, shapes and sizes of Post-it notes. Lindsay graduated from YSU with a degree in Criminal Justice and Forsyth Tech Community College in Winston-Salem, NC with a degree in Criminal Justice – Latent Evidence. She was one of two students out of 200 chosen for an internship with the Greensboro, NC Crime Lab. She has worked in a legal setting for over 20 years. Lindsay also has tax and bookkeeping experience as well as experience in the construction industry. Her favorite quote is “A jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one.” Lindsay wants to travel more. She currently lives in Youngstown with her fiancé, Ralph and four cats.

Maria Baglieri is a paralegal who brings a wealth of experience to the Prosecutor’s Office. Maria started her career as a Legal Secretary to Attorney William E. Pfau, Jr., at the firm of Pfau, Pfau & Pfau, which specialized in insurance defense litigation. Upon Mr. Pfau’s retirement, Maria accepted a position as Legal Secretary and Paralegal to Attorney Richard N. White, a sole practitioner in the areas of Personal Injury, Wrongful Death, Estate Planning, General Corporate and Probate Law. After eighteen years of working with Attorney White in his private office, Maria accepted a position as Case Manager and Administrative Assistant to Chief Magistrate White at the Mahoning County Juvenile Court. Chief Magistrate White presided over the Sex Offender and high felony Dockets, Crossover Youth cases, Re-Entry and ODYS Re-Entry Court, Sealing and Expungements and Judicial Release. Maria also served as Case Manager to Magistrate Samuel G. Amendolara on the Third Party Custody Docket and Magistrate Mark A. Latas on the Child Support and Paternity Docket. After eleven years with the Juvenile Court, in March, 2023, Maria accepted the position of Paralegal with the Mahoning County Prosecutor’s Office. Born and raised on the west side of Youngstown, Maria currently lives in Austintown with her husband, Vince Baglieri.

Sherry Sharpsky is a wonderful addition to our office and works for the Juvenile Division. Sherry grew up in Chareleston and Wheeling West Virginia. She attended Wheeling Park High School and graduated from West Virginia University with a Bachelor’s in English. Sherry has 22 years of expereince as a paralegal and 10 years of experience as an Account Operations Supervisor. Sherry recently worked for law firms specializing in personal injury, medical-malpractice, asbestosis and nursing home neglect. She was an Account Operations Supervisor for Williams Lea, a global provider of skilled business-critical support services to financial, legal and professional services firms. Sherry has two children and one granddaughter. Sherry currently lives in Canfield and in her sparetime enjoys being with family and working out.



Lindsay Hospodar  
Paralegal



Maria Baglieri  
Paralegal



Sherry Sharpsky  
Paralegal

# OFFICE NEWS

## Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney General, and Boardman Township Police update community on 1975 Cold Case

Mahoning County Prosecutor Gina DeGenova joined Boardman Township Chief of Police Todd Werth and Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost to announce the resolution of a 1975 cold case homicide.

In 1975, the Boardman Township community was left searching for answers after a teenage boy, David Evans, was reported missing and later found dead. The discovery of Evans' body came 1,023 days after the murder of another young boy, Bradley Bellino.

With help from detectives with the Boardman Township Police Department and the Ohio Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) forensic laboratory, Joseph Norman Hill Sr. was identified as the offender linked to both homicides.



In both cases, the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office determined that the forensic evidence would be sufficient to present the cases to a grand jury for indictment if Hill was still alive.

"Due to the hard work of our law enforcement partners, the killer of David Evans has been identified," said Prosecutor DeGenova. "While no words can ever bring David back to those who loved him, I pray that this information will bring some closure to his family. Mr. Hill ruined so many lives. I only wish he lived long enough to have been brought to justice. May David Evans and Bradley Bellino rest in peace."

Prosecutor DeGenova praised the work of investigators, saying they never abandoned the case and stuck with it over the years as DNA technology advanced.

"Over 50 years and they did not let go," she said. "They didn't stop."

Thank you to the Boardman Township Police Department, Chief of Police Todd Werth, Ohio Attorney General, Dave Yost, and Ohio BCI for their hard work in giving these families the answers they deserve after decades of heartbreak.

# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach

### Hope Makes First Public Appearance

In April, Hope, the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office Comfort Therapy dog in training, made her first public appearance at the Austintown Park Kite Festival. She was greeted by excited attendees who couldn't wait to meet her. Hope is currently being trained to serve as a comfort dog to assist victims and witnesses of crime. We want to thank Brenda Rider, who organized the event, and everyone who came out to meet Hope. All proceeds from this event benefit the Leonard Kirtz School. If you didn't get to meet Hope this yet, don't worry, she will make her way around the county soon enough!



### Mahoning and Columbiana County Prosecutors Speak to YSU Students

Youngstown State University Professor Susan Laird invited several different prosecutors as guests to lecture her class this quarter. Prosecutor Gina DeGenova, Columbiana County Prosecutor Vito Abruzzino, and Columbiana County Assistant Prosecutor Steve Yacovone all made time to speak with Professor Laird's Sociology class. The prosecutors spoke to the students about local human trafficking cases, sex crimes, and Ohio law concerning both. Thank you Professor Laird and YSU for the invitation!



# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach

### World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15th was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. At a luncheon honoring organizations across the valley that lend a helping hand to the senior population, Assistant Prosecutor Dionne Almasy was recognized for her hard work with the elderly population and the organizations representing them. Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutor Almasy for her award. Thank you for all your hard work for our Office and Mahoning County. This award is much deserved!

Assistant Prosecutor Dionne Almasy and Prosecutor DeGenova were both guest speakers at the luncheon. They shared some experiences about their work with Adult Protective Services and our Office's role in handling elder abuse cases. Prosecutor DeGenova spoke about the programs our Office has initiated, including the Special Needs Registry and our Senior Citizen Safety and Resource Calendar.



# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach

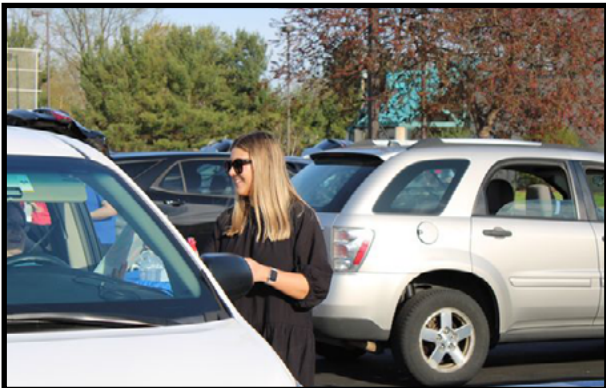
### Prosecutor's Office Speaks to Youngstown Elementary Students

Prosecutor DeGenova and staff members met with Youngstown Elementary School students this quarter to discuss the functions of the Prosecutor's Office and highlight several different types of jobs within the Office for students interested in local government and law enforcement. They also described their own pathways to success and encouraged students that it is never too early to begin to plan for their futures. Joining Prosecutor DeGenova in the discussion were Chief Assistant Linette Stratford, Senior Attorney Lori Shells-Simmons, Director of Communications and Community Outreach Alan Rodges, Project Development and Grants Coordinator Isabella Caruso, and Investigator Randy Malleske. Prosecutor DeGenova and her team intend to continue engaging with area youth and plan to meet with more students soon.



### Prosecutor's Office Participates in Reverse Parade

Thank you to the Mahoning County Board of Developmental Disabilities – Mahoning County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Autism Society of Mahoning Valley for throwing such a fantastic event. Being able to provide information to families about our Special Needs Registry is always vital to the program's success. Also, giving away other items like coloring books and candy is always fun. Thanks to all who came out to participate. We enjoyed the weather and the interactions with the families and other organizations in attendance! If you would like more information on our Special Needs Registry just visit our website.



# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach

### Senior Summer Days

Senior CSB Attorney Lori Shells-Simmons was asked to speak at the Boardman Township annual Senior Day program this summer. Attorney Shells-Simmons spoke to seniors about resources in the Mahoning Valley that will help them ask questions about their estate postmortem. She also answered general questions about our Office and some exciting upcoming programs. Thank you to Boardman Township Park for having our office out to speak at this informative event!



## Warrior's Event

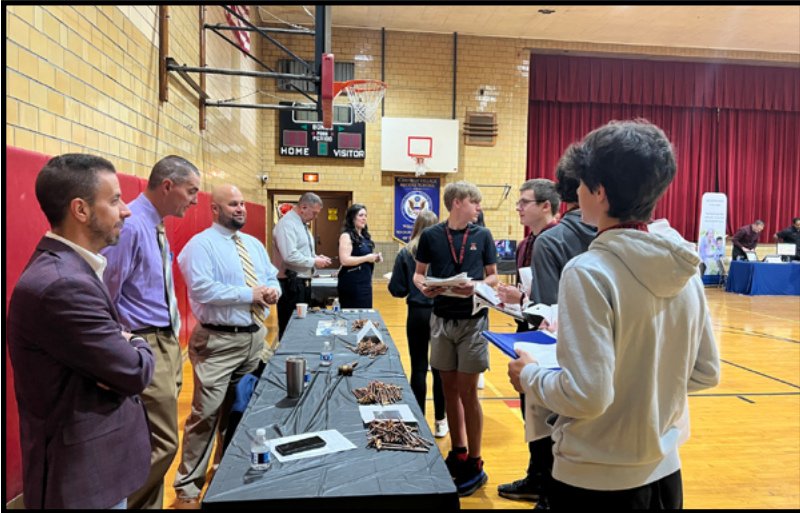
This year's Warriors event at the Canfield Fairgrounds was amazing. The Autism Society of Mahoning Valley created an inclusive opportunity for all families in Mahoning County and the Mahoning Valley. This year's Warriors event was nothing short of a great time. Our office was able to connect with so many different valley organizations and families. Congratulations to all of the winners that competed in the slew of different events held. We look forward to next year.



# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach Canfield Middle School Career Day

Talking to potential future attorneys, our Office was well represented at Canfield Village Middle School this quarter for Career Day. Assistant Prosecutor Steve Maszczak, and Edward Czopur, and Chief Criminal Prosecutor Ralph Rivera answered questions from 8th graders today about the criminal justice system and what it takes to become an attorney. Thank you to Canfield Schools for inviting our Office and thank you to the outstanding students who participated in this fantastic event.



## Pinwheels for Prevention

This quarter our Office was invited to the Pinwheels for Prevention Event where Mahoning County Children Services honored several organizations and contributors across the County who continue to combat child abuse. The event also featured ambitious students from around Mahoning County. The Youngstown East High School Army Junior ROTC led the event in the Pledge of Allegiance, while the Boardman High School Jazz Ensemble showcased their musical talent in the morning. April is National Child Abuse Month and the pinwheels represent an individual who provided a voice on behalf of an abused child. Anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect can report via the Mahoning County Children Services' 24/7 report line at 330-941-8888.



# OFFICE NEWS

## Community Outreach

### Letter from Birmingham Jail

This quarter we honored Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The Mahoning Valley Sojourn to the Past organized the event, which featured 27 different readers, including Judge Carla Baldwin, Judge Anthony D'Apolito, and Janice Kelsey, a participant in the 1963 protests in Birmingham. Mahoning Valley Sojourn to the Past's Executive Director Penny Wells played an intricate part in honoring the 60th anniversary of Dr. King's letter. The readers may have been different, but the message stayed consistent. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail



Judge Anthony D'Apolito reading a portion of Dr. King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail'



Prosecutor Gina DeGenova with Mahoning Valley Sojourn to the Past's Executive Director Penny Wells



Prosecutor Gina DeGenova with Janice Kelsey, a participant in the 1963 protests in Birmingham, Alabama.

# CRIMINAL DIVISION NEWS

## State v. Alexander

On May 18, 2023 a jury found Matthew Alexander guilty of two counts of Aggravated Arson, a felony of the second degree and one count of Breaking and Entering, a felony of the fifth degree for breaking into a home on South Beverly Avenue in Austintown and setting fire to items in the garage. First responders were able to track down Alexander and his accomplice by identifying the car they drove along with a video of their actions. Alexander was sentenced to 10 to 14 years in prison.

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutors Jennifer Paris and Patrick Kiraly who successfully tried the case against Alexander.



Assistant Prosecutor  
Jennifer Paris

## State v. Herns

On March 29, 2023, 30-year-old Franklin Herns was found guilty by a jury of Rape, a felony of the first degree, for the rape of an 18-year-old in September of 2013. Herns was sentenced to 11 years and will also need to register as a Tier 3 sex offender and have no contact with the victim. Herns is already serving time for another rape case where he was found guilty in September of 2022 wherein he was sentenced to 11 to 16.5 years in prison.

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutors Caitlyn Andrews and Jennifer Paris who successfully tried the case against Herns.



Assistant Prosecutor  
Caitlyn Andrews



Assistant Prosecutor  
Jennifer Paris

# CRIMINAL DIVISION NEWS

## State v. Ward

On May 3, 2023, 26-year-old Waylynn Ward pleaded guilty to a crash that killed a man in 2022. On September 7, 2022, Ward and the victim were both speeding through the Cornersburg intersection when the accident took place. The two vehicles were going south on Tippecanoe Road and were parallel with each other as a two lane road merged into one. The two vehicles then collided head-on with a third vehicle. The third vehicle and Ward's vehicle both caught fire. Judge Krichbaum handed down a sentence to Ward, of a 6 month local incarceration, 3 year driver's license suspension and a \$1,000 fine.

Thank you to Assistant Prosecutor Michael Rich for his excellent work on the case.



Assistant Prosecutor  
Michael Rich

## State v. Klink

On January 19, 2023, 24-year-old Jaycee Klink pleaded guilty to aggravated vehicular homicide and vehicular assault. The charges stemmed from a wrong way crash on I-680 in December of 2020. Klink entered the interstate going the wrong way on the exit ramp off Marshal Street, continuing south in the northbound lane. Klink was swerving to avoid crashing, but ended up in a head-on collision with another vehicle. The passenger in that vehicle died in the accident. The driver of the car survived but sustained serious injuries. Judge Anthony Donofrio handed down a sentence to Klink on April 5, 2023, to 1 year in prison, a 5 year driver's license suspension, and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$500.00.

Thank you to Assistant Prosecutor Martin Hume for his excellent work on case.



Assistant Prosecutor  
Martin Hume

# CIVIL DIVISION NEWS

## Township Association Meeting

This quarter Prosecutor DeGenova was tasked with explaining the changes to Marsy's Law to the Mahoning County Township Association. Prosecutor DeGenova explained that there were more than 50 changes made to the Ohio Revised Code as a part of the new law including a victims' rights to privacy, redaction of victim names and identifying information from public records, and the right to be heard and be present in public proceedings. For a list of all of the changes in regards to Marsy's Law please visit our website.



## Prosecutor's Participate in Engineers Meeting

Assistant Prosecutor John Heino was asked to present at the County Engineers Association of Ohio to discuss the procedure for road vocation. This year the organization held the 2023 Land Records Modernization Conference. The County Engineers Association of Ohio works to unify its members in providing the highest quality transportation, drainage, surveying and land record keeping services, from the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services to continuing land development needs. Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutor Heino for representing Mahoning County during this conference. Thank you to Mahoning County Engineer Patrick Ginnetti and the County Engineers Association for inviting our Office to participate in this informative event.



# NEWS AROUND TOWN

## From Rescue to Hero

From a rescue to the newest member of the Poland Township Police Department, K-9 Pogo inspires us all! The two-year-old Dutch Shepherd/Pitbull mix was sworn in this quarter. Pogo will work as a Narcotic Detection K-9. Good luck to Pogo and Officer Moncilovich!



## YPD Honors Officers Going Above and Beyond

We celebrated the Youngstown Police Department this quarter! The Department had its yearly awards ceremony, recognizing the great work officers in Youngstown provide. Forty-three awards were presented, including; Departmental Commendation, Meritorious Service, Firearm Reduction, Investigative, and Excellent Duty. Congratulations to all of the hardworking officers who received awards. Thank you to all YPD officers for your dedication and service to Youngstown, Mahoning County, and Ohio.

