



September 2024 Volume 4, Issue 3

JUSTICE JOURNAL

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

Mahoning County Prosecutor sponsors Nonviolence week

A commitment to peace in our community Since 2010, Nonviolence Week has been a cornerstone event in Youngstown, initiated by the passionate students of Mahoning Valley Sojourn to the Past. These young leaders successfully advocated for resolutions to be passed by Youngstown City Council, The City of Youngstown School Board, and at the state level.

Thanks to their efforts, Ohio now officially observes Nonviolence Week, following a bill introduced by Senator Joe Schiavoni and signed into law by Governor John Kasich in 2013. The first nonviolence parade and rally, held in 2011, was inspired by Sojourn student Janae Ward. The event set the tone for an ongoing tradition that asks all of us to reflect on how we can contribute to creating a safer, more peaceful community.

As Congressman John Lewis, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, once said: "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" These words resonate deeply with the mission of the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office.

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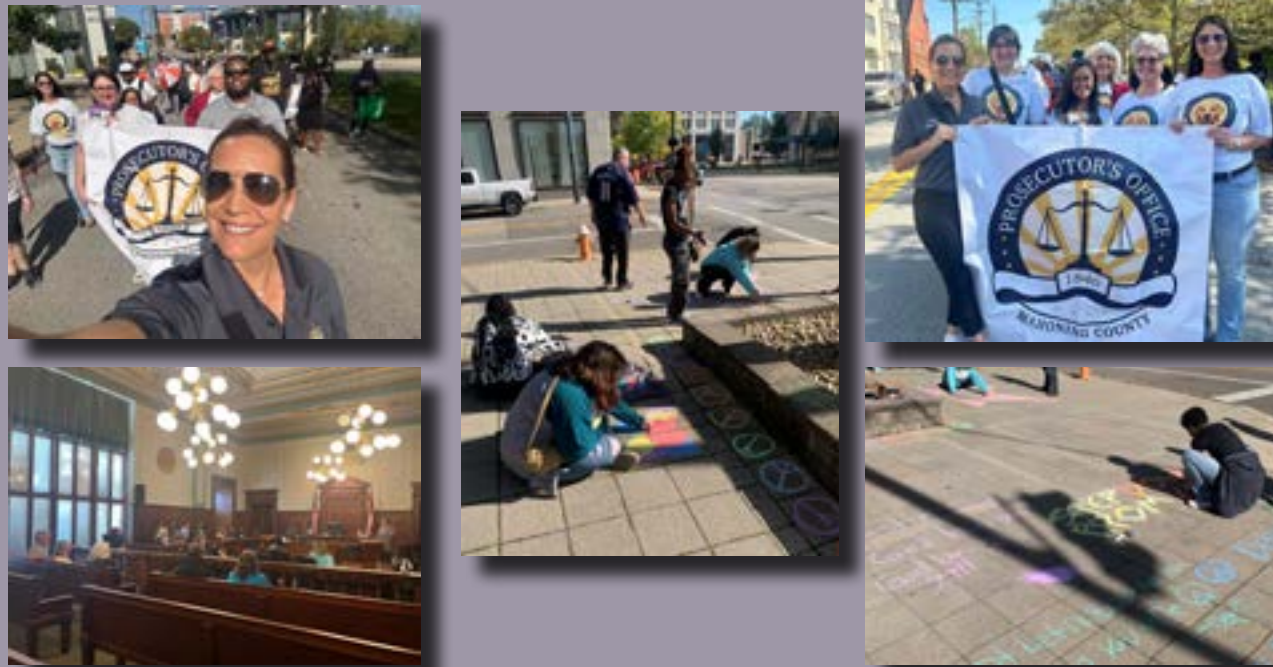
Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office Honors Nonviolence Week

Our commitment to justice goes hand in hand with the belief that nonviolence is essential for the health and safety of our community.

We work each day to address crime while striving for restorative justice, knowing that the best outcomes for our City come through peaceful resolution, respect, and accountability. Nonviolence Week serves as a reminder that ending violence is a collective responsibility.

As public servants, we are dedicated to promoting a culture of nonviolence in Mahoning County—both in the courtroom and in our neighborhoods. It's an opportunity for all of us to pause, reflect, and ask ourselves how we can contribute to lasting peace.

Now, more than ever, we must come together to stop the cycle of violence in our city, country, and world. The Prosecutor's Office will continue to play a pivotal role in this movement, advocating for justice while reinforcing the values of nonviolence that we hope to see reflected in every corner of our community.



This year, the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office proudly participated in several Nonviolence Week events, showing our active commitment to fostering peace.

Our team joined the "Chalk the Walk" initiative, where we helped decorate the community's sidewalks with powerful messages of peace, unity, and nonviolence.

We also took part in honoring those who have made significant contributions to nonviolence by attending the Simeon Booker Award ceremony, recognizing the work of individuals who champion peace and justice.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

This quarter the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office welcomed a new employee within the CSB division. Brittney Schofer will serve as a legal secretary in our office.

Brittney Schofer, graduated from Lordstown High School and obtained her cosmetology license from Trumbull Career & Technical Center (TCTC). Before joining the Prosecutor's Office, Brittney worked at Mahoning County Children Services. As a proud mom of two daughters, she loves every moment of being a girl mom. Fall is her favorite season, making it a perfect time for her to start this new chapter in her career.



From left to right: Kelly (Indiana University), Tom (The University of Toledo College of Law), Brooke (Youngstown State University), Jonah (University of Mount Union), Alexis B. (Akron Law School), Alexis E. (Mount Vernon Nazarene University), Jack (Youngstown State University), John (Akron Law School Fall 2025).

This quarter, we celebrated the hard work and fresh perspectives of our incredible interns. Their contributions make a difference every day and our Office is grateful for all that they bring to our team.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey!

Please help us celebrate our interns from over the Summer. They did a fantastic job helping usher in new ideas and perspectives.

We wish them luck on their future collegiate journeys and hope that they will eventually make their way back to our Office.



OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach

Blue Envelope Initiative Continues to Make an Impression

This summer members of our Office continued to expand our Blue Envelope initiative. Our Office has been working on this program for about a year. It is an inclusive addition to Mahoning County that will help facilitate communication between law enforcement and community members with conditions or disabilities such as autism, anxiety, physical disabilities, or other conditions that may require additional accommodations or awareness during an interaction with law enforcement.

If you are interested and need a Blue Envelope for you or a loved one, please visit The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County for more information. There are Blue Envelopes available at every Mahoning County Public Library location.

This quarter our Office conducted a drive-thru event at the Leonard Kirtz School in Austintown. The Mahoning County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office helped community members navigate the new program by conducting simulated traffic stops and handing out additional information and material.



MAHONING COUNTY
BLUE ENVELOPE
PROGRAM



OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach

4th of July Celebrations



Members of our Office gathered around family, friends and community to come out and support our local townships during this 4th of July! You could spot our Office at several local events. Including, the Austintown Fireworks Celebration, the Austintown 4th of July parade and the Canfield 4th of July parade!



Members of our Office were excited to again participate in the 4th of July parade in Canfield.

OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach



Prosecutor DeGenova was honored to speak with the people of Beaver Township.

Our Office shared helpful information about potential elder fraud and our Special Needs Registry as well as our Blue Envelope Program.

Thank you to Beaver Township officials for organizing this monthly meeting and allowing our Office to speak and participate.



This quarter the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County invited us to the first Community Day at the Boardman branch.

Our Office and other organizations were invited to share information with the public about what we do, some of our programs, and information that could help the public.



Celebrating Community Days around Mahoning County



This quarter our Office had a fantastic time at the first annual Austintown Community Day! It was great to meet so many residents and engage with our community in a positive way. We also attached Jackson Milton Community Safety Day. It was great to connect with even more of our community members and be part of such an inclusive event. A special highlight of the day was our comfort therapy dog, Hope, getting to visit with Bubba, the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office electronic detection K9.

OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach



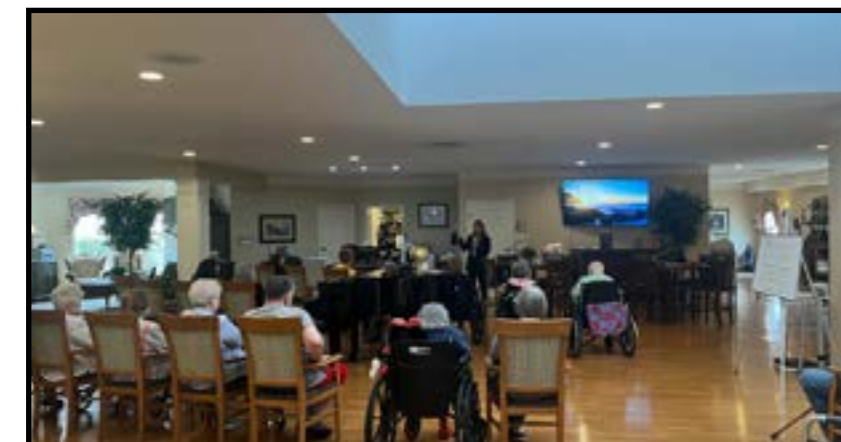
Assistant Prosecutor Anissa Modarelli recently visited the Canfield Local School District to present information on the critical issue of child safety and sexual abuse prevention under Senate Bill 288.

The presentation focused on the steps we can all take to support our children, recognize the signs of abuse, and ensure their safety.

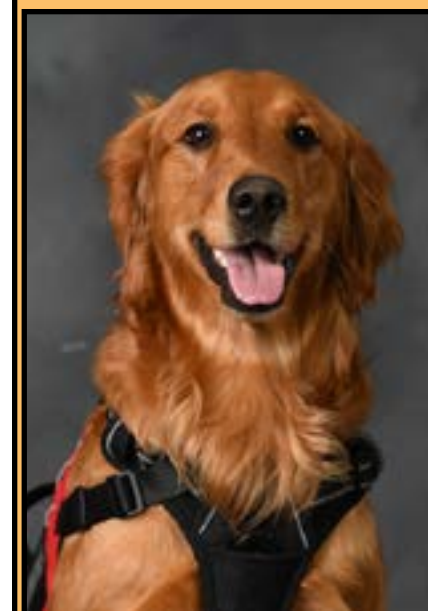
Thank you to Assistant Prosecutor Modarelli, the Canfield School District, and local law enforcement for your commitment to keeping our children safe.

Mahoning County Prosecutor Gina DeGenova recently visited Victoria House Assisted Living and provided information to help educate residents on protecting themselves from fraud and scams.

During her presentation, Prosecutor DeGenova shared valuable tips and resources to help seniors avoid potential scams, including romance, internet, and AI scams.



HOPE'S CORNER



This year, Hope has been highlighting different friends from Animal Charity of Ohio. We call this new campaign Hope's Paw Partner of the month! As a rescue herself, Hope features an adoptable pet each month as her "Paw Partner" from our community partner, Animal Charity of Ohio. Help them find their "forever home!" Hope highlighted two different friends, including Ginger, a 2 year-old pitbull mix and Zuri, who was recently adopted! You can find Hope's paw partners on our Facebook page.

OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach



This quarter our S.T.O.P team made a visit to The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County's Poland branch to teach the attendees several self-defense techniques.

Thank you to the Library, their staff, and everyone who attended the class.



Members of our Office were invited to the South Side Renaissance Tour and the Mutt Strut 5K Run and Walk this quarter.

During the south side Renaissance Tour, members of our Office were able to tour the south side of Youngstown, learn about the city's history, some thriving businesses, and meet and talk with the people behind the scenes working to make it a better place.

Our Office also happily participated in the Mutt Strut 5k Run and walk All benefits from the Mutt Strut 5K Run and Walk went to Animal Charity of Ohio. The walk/run was held at Firestone Farms in Columbiana County.

OFFICE NEWS

Community Outreach

The Canfield Fair is always something to crow about!

Our Office celebrated 170 plus years of the Canfield Fair by showing up and being part of the community. Visitors to our tent were able to play games, win prizes, talk to staff members and learn about our office

Our office had fun and participated in the opening ceremony while also having a Blue Envelope distribution event.

We look forward to the Canfield Fair every year and cannot wait to see everyone again in 2025.



This quarter we are continuing our collaboration with the Sokolov Honors College at Youngstown State.

Prosecutor DeGenova and Chief Criminal Prosecutor Ralph Rivera were invited to speak with the students in Professor Hartup's magazine editing and production honors seminar.

During the presentation, our Office presented several topics that students will research and create content for their class, our quarterly Justice Journal, and our website.



NOTABLE CASES

State v. Brandon Crump

On July 29, 2024, Brandon Crump was sentenced to 52 to 53-and-a-half years to life for the aggravated murder of 4-year-old Rowan Sweeney and attempted murders of Andrew McCoy, Yarnell Green, Alexis Schneider and Cassandra Marsicola, as well as aggravated burglary, aggravated robbery, conspiracy and firearm specifications.

Rowan Sweeney was two weeks away from his fifth birthday party when he was killed during the 2020 home invasion robbery. Crump burst in the home with a gun on September 20, 2020, as part of a plan to steal a large amount of money from Yarnell Green, the boyfriend of Rowan's mother. Rowan was asleep on the couch and his mother tried to cover him, but he was shot and killed and she was wounded.

"He is a menace to society and deserves to be locked up for the rest of his life. The murderer of Rowan Sweeney has finally faced justice," said Prosecutor Gina DeGenova. She commended the hard work of her team of lawyers on the case.

Judge Anthony D'Apolito stated: "Mr. Crump, you were the cause of it all. You went through that door. You shot that little boy. You shot the others. You did it."

Since he was a juvenile at the time the crime was committed, Crump was not eligible for the death penalty. He will be eligible for parole after 25 years.

"We hope this sentence provides a measure of closure and peace to Rowan's loved ones. Today, we mourn the loss of Rowan, but we also find solace in knowing that his killer will no longer be a menace to our community and others, for a very long time," said Prosecutor DeGenova.



Michael J. Yacovone

Former Assistant Prosecutor



Jennifer M. Paris

Grand Jury Prosecutor



Jennifer McLaughlin Bonish

Assistant Prosecutor

NOTABLE CASES

State v. Vashuad Dwayne May

After a two-day trial, on September 12, 2024, 22-year-old Vashuad May was found guilty of the murder of 24-year-old Rawsheem Aponte and the shooting of two others, including a child.

Rikya Wright testified that on April 26, 2022, while riding in the car of her fiancé, Rawsheem Aponte, she watched as Aponte warned her about two men he saw alongside the road, fled from them, then found himself on a dead end road with the men firing at their car. Aponte's vehicle ended up in the front yard of a home. Wright jumped into the back seat to shield her two children from the barrage of gunfire. Wright was injured with a bullet wound of the leg. Their 4-year-old daughter suffered a gunshot wound to the leg. Surveillance video taken from the house where the car came to rest showed the defendant chasing down the family's vehicle and firing at point-blank range multiple rounds at the passenger side window.

Wright testified during the trial that Aponte had a feud with members of the May family.

One thing she will never forget, Wright said, is the man who killed her fiancé in front of her and their children. The man, who was wearing a mask and stood four feet from her while shooting into the car, was Vashuad May, she said. She stated she would never forget his eyes. She said her children are traumatized by seeing their father killed in front of them.

A few days before Aponte was killed May made a rap video where he wielded a rifle similar to the one used to kill Aponte and that May held the rifle the same way the person who shot Aponte did. The jurors were able to view this video and the surveillance video.

On September 16, 2024, Judge R. Scott Krichbaum sentenced May to life in prison with no chance of parole. He called the shootings "unforgivable" and said May chased down Aponte until he was trapped before opening fire. "This is as bad as it gets," the judge stated. "If this is how you want to roll, this is going to be the toll."

"I want to thank Assistant Prosecutors Stephen Maszczak and Michael Rich for their hard work and dedication in this case," said Prosecutor Gina DeGenova. "I also want to thank all of the law enforcement agencies that were able to put this murderer behind bars."



Stephen M. Maszczak
Assistant Prosecutor



Michael Rich
Assistant Prosecutor

CIVIL DIVISION NEWS

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office is paying tribute to those who have recently passed away and that have worked to make a difference in Mahoning County.

Former Green Township Trustee Donald Kuhns

Donald Kuhns is a former Green Township Trustee who is also an U.S. Army veteran and was recognized with the prestigious Purple Heart Medal of Honor.

Kuhns in addition to being a township trustee, has served Green Township in a variety of ways including his time as a volunteer firefighter and a dispatcher. Thank you Donald for all your hard work for Mahoning County, you will be missed.



Longtime Boardman Officer Rick Balog

Our Office was saddened to learn about the passing of Lieutenant Rick Balog.

Lt. Balog proudly served the community as a member of the Boardman Police Department for 34 years.

We extend our deepest condolences to Lt. Balog's family, friends, and the Boardman Township Police Department.



Former Trustee and County Commissioner David Ludt

The Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office was saddened to hear about the passing of our former colleague David Ludt. David was a former Poland Township Trustee and played a vital role in the creation of the Poland Township Police Department.

David was also a proud veteran who served as a U.S. Army Special Forces as a Green Beret in the 82nd Airborne. David also served Mahoning County as a Commissioner, he clearly had a calling to public service which he did exceedingly well.

Those who worked with David from our Office have only great things to say about him and also that he will be missed. Thank you David for all your hard work for Mahoning County.



NEWS AROUND TOWN

Exercising your Right to Vote

As Election Day approaches, it is important to remember that your vote is your voice.

Voting is a fundamental right, and every vote contributes to shaping the future of our communities. Whether you are voting early or heading to the polls on Election Day, take a moment to create a voting plan.

Check your polling location, review the ballot, and make sure you are prepared to cast your vote. Your participation matters—make sure to exercise your right!

2024 MAHONING COUNTY EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING

Where: 345 Oak Hill Ave., Youngstown, OH 44502

When:

- Monday, October 21 thru Friday, October 25, 8 AM to 5 PM
- Saturday, October 26, 8 AM to 4 PM
- Sunday, October 27, 1 PM to 5 PM
- Monday, October 28 thru Friday, November 1, 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM (Tuesday until 8:30 PM)
- Saturday, November 2, 8 AM to 4 PM. Sunday, November 3, 1 PM to 5 PM

What: You will need to show photo ID to vote

