

Fall 2020



The Docket



Sharen Wilson – Criminal District Attorney

Family violence is the third most frequently committed offense in Tarrant County – and that’s not acceptable. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which makes it the right time for us to repeat our message: This type of violence will not be tolerated here.

Not in my County.

In 2016, I created the Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) special prosecution team to crack down on a crisis level number of cases. That year, there were 16 IPV murders. Unfortunately, that number stayed the same the next year. But by 2018, we saw the number drop to seven and in 2019 there were eight cases.

Then COVID-19 hit this year, preventing many people from being able to get out of their homes and to places where they were safe.

The number of IPV murders through the end of September reached 14 adults and two unborn children. We are back to the crisis level of cases and we are only in October. That’s a big concern. We don’t know what the numbers will look like by the end of the year, but we are not going to put up with it in Tarrant County.



Not in my County



That’s the message that prosecutors, law enforcers and others are stressing in Tarrant County, trying to get the word out that it is past time to stop intimate partner violence.

So, you’ll see the message – in pictures and videos – across social media channels from the Criminal District Attorney’s Office this month.

“Often times victims and survivors of family violence are apprehensive to reach out to law enforcement and participate in prosecution for fear of the unknown,” said Allenna Bangs, chief

of the IPV team at the CDA’s office. “The Not in my County campaign is our month-long media campaign, during Domestic Violence Awareness month, to tell the community that we at the TCCDA are an ally in the fight against domestic violence.

“We want victims and offenders to know that we take these cases seriously and work tirelessly to protect victims and hold offenders accountable.”

Tarrant County was recently honored for the IPV team’s work by the Texas Association of Counties with a 2020 County Best Practices Award.

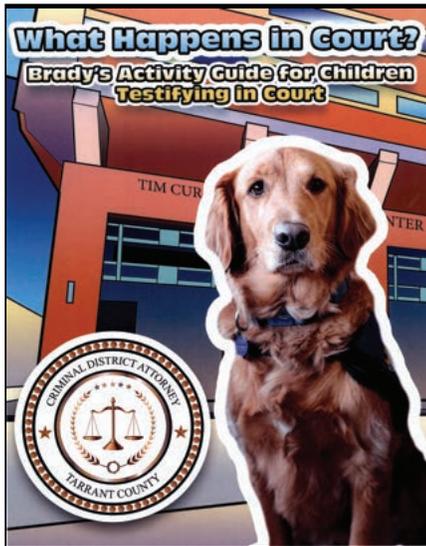
The award recognizes a new intake initiative in the CDA’s Office for misdemeanor Assault Bodily Injury, Family Violence cases. The team – which includes felony IPV attorneys, misdemeanor attorneys and several CDA investigators – has been working to improve the quality of cases as they are filed by focusing on evidence collection and witness and victim contact.

The team has reviewed more than 1,200 misdemeanor IPV cases to determine if they were filed properly. Some cases were rejected for reasons such as the wrong person potentially had been identified. About 18% of those cases were upgraded to felonies because of the seriousness of the defendant’s conduct.

In addition to that, the team contacted 78% of the victims on those cases on the first day or in the first week after an attack, something that’s key to a successful prosecution.

“We commend your efforts to better serve the public,” wrote Susan M. Redford, executive director of the Texas Association of Counties.

Brady - DA Dog



Walk through the CDA’s office and you’re likely to see Brady, the office’s official emotional support dog, lounging on the floor or walking from office to office to check in on people.

Many who stop to pet him have been heard

chuckling, saying that Brady is living his best life.

The five-year-old’s regular job is to comfort children and adult victims and witnesses who come through the office. And he does.

But, with the current shutdown of jury trials, he’s also been offering more comfort to CDA employees. That, of course, will lessen when state

officials give the OK for trials to begin again.

For now, here’s some information about Brady that you may or may not know.

🐾 He has his own trading card, where he’s identified as DA Dog. (Key facts: He’s a Golden Retriever Rescue dog from Midland, loves apples and his favorite song is Who Let the Dogs Out.)

🐾 He’s the star of a new coloring book – “What Happens in Court? Brady’s Activity Guide for Children Testifying in Court” – that will be given to young victims who come to the CDA office.

🐾 Just call him Mr. September. That’s the month a picture of him was featured in the 2019 Golden Retriever Rescue of North Texas calendar.

🐾 He has his own support dog – Scout, a three-year-old Labradoodle who also can be seen walking through the CDA office at any time. Scout came to us from Patriot Paws.

🐾 When he’s not working, he loves to chase squirrels in the back yard, go for long walks and greet other dogs – and cats – in the neighborhood where he lives with one of our Assistant Criminal District Attorneys and her family.

Back to School



A handful of Tarrant County prosecutors are heading back to high school.

A new partnership between the Fort Worth Independent School District and the Criminal District Attorney’s Office will bring prosecutors into the classroom for more than 700 students taking government classes this year.

It's called "Prosecutors in High Schools" and those prosecutors will teach topics ranging from First Amendment Rights to Digital Forensics. "We always have had speakers going to schools to talk to students. When asked, we go," said Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson. "Then we learned something when we had to go virtual in the court system this year because of COVID-19.

"We realized if we could do these classes virtual, rather than in person, we would reach hundreds of students at a time instead of just those in one classroom," she said. "That's the goal – teaching as many students as possible."

In addition to building trust in the criminal justice system, we will educate about the criminal justice process, provide information about career opportunities, and exchange information about the impact of criminal justice actions.

Starting Oct. 27, prosecutors, investigators and staff from the CDA's Office will provide four virtual webinars for students each semester.

They are:

-  What are your First Amendment Rights?
-  Arrest, Search and Seizure
-  Introduction to a Jury Trial
-  Evidence, Investigations, Forensics and Trial Exhibits

These virtual classes will be woven into the FWISD government class curriculum, highlighting these topics, and explaining how parts of the criminal justice system work.

So far, 758 students are scheduled to participate in these classes from Dunbar, Polytechnic, Diamond Hill-Jarvis, O.D. Wyatt, Eastern Hills and Western Hills high schools.

Honors



Our very own Tarrant County CDA Investigator Jose "Joe" Carrizal has been named the 2020 Peace Officer of the Year by the Texas Gang Investigators Association.

Carrizal, an investigator in the Gang Unit, joined the Tarrant County CDA's office four years ago after a career that took him from El Paso to Afghanistan and to Austin before finding his way to the Metroplex.

He was nominated by officers from three departments who noted his "diligence, attention to detail and his willingness to help," according to a statement from the Texas Gang Investigators Association.

He was assigned a Capital Murder case and his investigation uncovered a second homicide. The search warrants he wrote and executed led to new evidence that ultimately ended up helping the prosecution with the case that ended in a death sentence.

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“Beyond his investigative ability, Joe is called a cop’s cop and is always willing to go out of his way to help another officer,” the association stated. “Joe is the consummate team player.”

One of the people who nominated Carrizal said this: “As a gang investigator, Joe has seen and heard many things most can’t envision, but he still manages to keep a positive outlook on life and be a light that shines bright through darkness.”



He was honored at a CDA celebration Oct. 9.

I have reached the end of the program and am now 9 months sober. This is a huge personal accomplishment for me because I didn't think that ~~that~~ sobriety ^{on back} would be a thing for me. This program allowed me clearer view, a healthier life, and better friends. I used marijuana to avoid life for a while and this program made me take life head on. While I shouldn't had made the mistake to begin with, I'm beyond glad I got the wake up call when I did and not before it was too late.

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Proof - DPP Works

The Deferred Prosecution Program (DPP) is a program geared to give young people in trouble for the first time a chance to rehabilitate without a criminal conviction.

Sometimes you may wonder if what you are doing is making a difference, or if the program works. There is no better proof of performance than hearing back from a young participant in our DPP program

We will keep the person’s name private, but we thought you should see the letter in their own handwriting.

Time to Fall Back



Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020.

So be prepared to set your clocks back an hour – and gain one extra hour that day.

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