



THE DOCKET

SPRING 2015



Sharen Wilson *Criminal District Attorney, Tarrant County*

AN UPDATE FROM YOUR CDA

The mission of our office is to enhance public safety through rigorous enforcement of criminal and civil laws in an ethical, honest and just manner. We are here to represent and defend the rights of every person in Tarrant County, seeking justice for all.

- As Criminal District Attorney (CDA), one of my top priorities is to increase awareness for, and the protection of, the most vulnerable among us – the children, elderly and disabled. Among the first changes I implemented was the creation our new Special Victims unit, focused on prosecuting violent crimes against members of these three groups, and led by Chief Martin Purselley.
- Our new Conviction Integrity program, designed to reexamine past cases as warranted, spurred the development of our Post-Conviction unit, which centralizes our work on appeals, extraditions and expunctions, and is overseen by Chief Debra Windsor.
- Financial crime is one of the fastest rising criminal segments in our modern age. Managing our strengthened focus in this area, is new White Collar Crime-Public Integrity Chief, Harry White, a long-time Assistant Attorney General, and former Chief of the State's White Collar & Public Integrity Section. These prosecutors recently hosted more than a dozen area bank presidents and CEOs in an open forum discussion on ways to collaboratively safeguard Tarrant residents from financial exploitation.

We meet regularly with dozens of community organizations and agencies to hear their concerns and share our goals, and this is the launch of our first quarterly newsletter. There's a new CDA website (access.tarrantcounty.com/en/criminal-district-attorney.html), and Facebook (facebook.com/TarrantCountyDA) and Twitter (twitter.com/TarrantCountyDA) accounts, each regularly updated with information on our trials and activities, and all with the intent to inspire open conversations about the services your CDA's office provides.

Change can be a positive, and I'm grateful for the diligent work of the CDA attorneys, investigators and staff in the first quarter, but in the pursuit of justice for all, there is always more work to do.



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF A BOOMING ELDERLY POPULATION

May is Elder Abuse Prevention Month in Texas. The Baby Boomer generation is entering its senior years, creating record numbers of elderly, and America's fastest growing population segment consists of those 85 and older. By 2050, people age 65 and older are expected to comprise 20% of the total U.S. population (up from only 13 percent in the 2010 Census).

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As the numbers of elderly citizens increase, so do incidents of elder abuse. It is a sad reality that 90% of abuse against the elderly is perpetrated by family members. Seniors are reluctant to report this abuse because they don't want to get the abuser in trouble, fear retaliation, or lack the physical and/or cognitive ability to report, and only an estimated 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse is reported to law enforcement.

One of the fastest growing types of elder abuse is financial exploitation. The estimated annual financial loss by elderly victims is \$2.9 billion and rising, and our White Collar Crimes unit focuses on prosecuting those who target elderly victims. In one recent high profile case, Asst. CDA Lori Burks successfully prosecuted Hector Orozco. A former employee of Terminix, Orozco used the company's customer list to prey on dozens of elderly victims around the county, who allowed him into their homes as a trusted vendor. Orozco was found guilty of stealing more than \$200,000 in jewelry, silver and other irreplaceable items, and received the maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Through prosecutions such as this one, our office sends a very strong message to those who think the elderly are easy financial prey.

As a community, we must work together to raise awareness of this growing issue, and protect our seniors from becoming targets. In April, our White Collar Crimes Chief, Harry White met with area bank presidents to discuss ways their employees can detect and report elder financial abuse, and a U.S. National Institute of Justice grant is being invested toward training regional emergency personnel to distinguish potential signs of elder abuse from the physical deterioration that can come with advanced age.



On Thursday, May 7th, our office will be participating in County Judge Glen Whitley's *Senior Synergy Expo* at Will Rogers Auditorium. CDA experts will be on hand to provide information on elder abuse and answer questions for seniors, and investigator Greg McNeese from our White Collar Crimes unit will lead a 10:45am seminar on protecting against elder fraud. Admission to the *Senior Synergy Expo* is free; you can learn more by visiting www.SeniorSynergyExpo.com.



Thank you to the Tarrant County Information Technology staff for their recent generous donation to provide Teddy bears to comfort child victims & witnesses in CDA court cases.

LOOKING FOR AN EXPERT SPEAKER?

Since January, experts from the CDA staff have been scheduled to speak at 53 events around the state.

Our attorneys, investigators and support staff are experienced subject matter experts, and are highly sought after to speak on issues covering more than 60 topics.

If you are interested in requesting a CDA speaker for your school, organization or conference, please contact
Community Outreach Coordinator,
Amy Bearden at 817.884.3126

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Help protect the seniors in your lives by learning the signs of elder abuse and neglect. Call or visit elderly loved ones and friends regularly to see how they are doing. And if you suspect someone you know may be a victim of elder abuse, please reach out to local law enforcement for assistance. For more information on identifying the red flags of elder abuse, please visit: http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/Resources/Publication/docs/NCEA_RedFlags_web508.pdf



CDA team members at 2015 Victory Over Violence 5K, supporting The Women's Center.

CDA BY THE NUMBERS

- 4 Divisions
- 147 Attorneys
- 49 Investigators
- 102 Support Staff
- 72% are involved in community service
- 60+ expert speaker topics