



Winter 2021

The Docket



Sharen Wilson – Criminal District Attorney

Did you hear my big news?

I have decided not to seek re-election and my last day will be at the end of this term, on December 31, 2022.

It has been a great honor serving as your Criminal District Attorney for the past seven years and I'm proud of accomplishing what I set out to do when I first took office – seek justice for all; be accessible and ethical; and uphold the letter of the law.

I created new teams of prosecutors to focus on specific crimes: Conviction Integrity, Intimate Partner Violence, Law Enforcement Incident, Elder Financial Fraud, Trafficking, Adult Sexual Assault and Auto Crimes. Those changes were based on data, showing where we needed to focus added attention.

I also have worked to give people opportunities to rehabilitate. First-time offenders can get a second chance through programs such as Deferred Prosecution Program and Deferred Prosecution Initiative. And anyone charged with misdemeanor possession of marijuana can get their case dismissed if they have three clean drug tests in three months.

There's plenty more work that I want to do over the next year.

For now, I'm glad to see the courthouse back in business again.

Courts essentially were closed for 18 months because of the pandemic. Now judges have started back to work, docket calls are being held, jurors are being summoned and trials are being held.

It's encouraging that cases are moving forward – and that juries are convicting criminals, sending many to prison for life. A strong message is being sent to criminals in Tarrant County: If you do the crime, you really will do the time.

I have high hopes for 2022 and all it may bring to us.

Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season, a Merry Christmas – and a happy New Year.

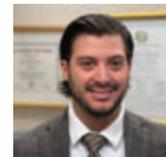
Very Truly Yours,
Sharen Wilson



There are a lot of great attorneys at the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office.



FW Magazine in November recognized several of our attorneys this year as top attorneys, including Collin Ashworth, Aulstin Gardiner, Brock Groom, William Knight, Tim Rodgers and Shelby White. Congratulations to all on a job done well!



Porch Pirates



'Tis the season to watch out for porch pirates – people who steal packages delivered to homes.

“This will not be tolerated in Tarrant County,” Sharen Wilson said. “We will prosecute these thieves trying to cash in by stealing people’s packages.”

Many of us, not wanting to wait for presents stuck on a container ship, are opting for the convenience of online shopping and door-to-door delivery. And so are porch pirates.

Package theft is at an all-time high. UPS, FedEx and the U.S. Postal Service report 1.7 million packages are stolen every day. If a porch pirate is caught, they could face up to one year in jail and a \$4,000 fine.

How to protect your packages from porch pirates?



Track your package so you always know where it is.



Consider shipping your packages to work – or to a friend or relative who will be home and receive them.



Consider in-store pickups, Amazon and UPS secure lockers or a post office box.



Install security cameras or package theft alarms at your home.



Schedule your packages to arrive when you are home.

If you become a victim, make sure to file a claim with the merchant and the shipper. If you have any evidence of the theft – like video from a Ring doorbell camera– contact your local police department and make an official report. We prosecute.

No Refusal

When you go to holiday parties this season, make sure you have a designated driver or schedule a ride to pick you up.

Tarrant County is No Refusal all the time and any driver pulled over for suspected impaired driving – who refuses to take a routine breath test – will be subject to a court-ordered blood test instead. That’s in effect 365 days a year across Tarrant County and in all its 41 cities.



Police officers and sheriff’s deputies have access to expedited judicial warrants and centralized blood-draw locations.

“We are committed to arresting and prosecuting those who put others in danger when they decided to drink and drive,” Sharen Wilson said. “We are committed to getting them off the streets every day of the year.”

A first offense of DWI is a Class B misdemeanor, which comes with a fine of as much as \$2,000 and up to 180 days in jail.

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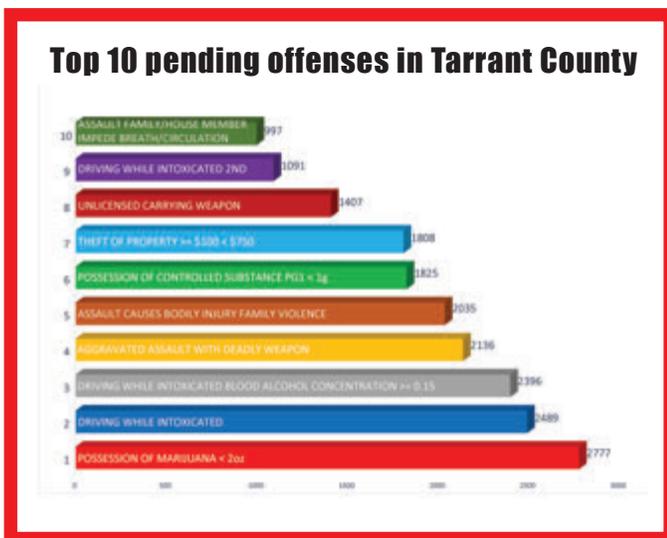
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CDA Dashboard

If you are curious about the criminal justice system, there's a new dashboard you should check out on this office's website.

The dashboard displays up-to-date statistics ranging from the most committed crimes in Tarrant County to the race and sex of current defendants. It does not include information from the courts.

"This is about accountability and transparency," Sharen Wilson said. "I want the public to be able to get current numbers at any time and learn about what is happening in Tarrant County prosecution."



"I hope this dashboard prompts discussions between the community and this office."

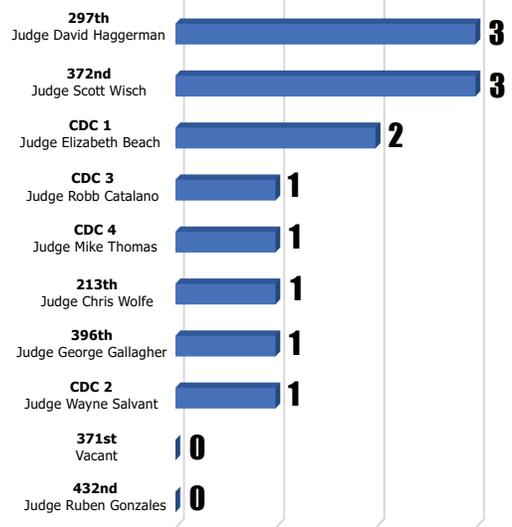
Other information on the dashboard includes the number of pending cases and fun facts like a list of the law schools our prosecutors attended.

There also is a place on the dashboard to add suggestions about other information you'd be

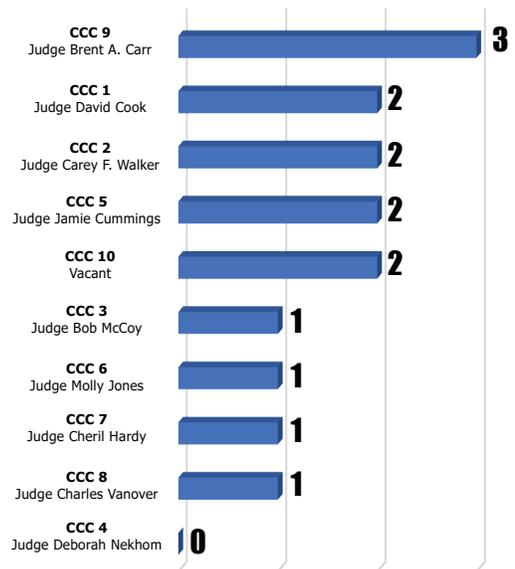
The dashboard is updated regularly. To access it, go to our website, at cda.tarrantcounty.com, and click on the Information Dashboard button.

Courts that held trials in November after reopening post-pandemic shutdown

Felony Courts



Misdemeanor Courts



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The “Money Doctor”

More than a dozen senior citizens, some in wheelchairs, took the stand to tell their stories.



Each explained to Judge Elizabeth Beach how they invested with a Christian financial advisor they believed in – and lost all their money. On November 1, the judge sentenced William Neil “Doc” Gallagher, the self-styled

“Money Doctor,” to more than three life sentences in prison for running a Ponzi scheme that bilked senior citizens out of more than \$30 million.

“Doc’ Gallagher is one of the worst offenders I have seen,” said Lori Varnell, chief of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney’s Elder Fraud team. “He ruthlessly stole from his clients who trusted him for almost a decade.”



Neil “Doc” Gallagher

Knock at the front door

Four life sentences for a Fort Worth burglary rapist.

A Tarrant County jury on October 22 found Jacob Kosine guilty on four counts of breaking into his next-door neighbor’s home, beating an 18-year-old woman and her mother, using a deadly weapon to choke the young woman and then raping her in front of her mother who he held to the floor by her hair.

It all started with a knock at the front door. The young woman thought it was her brother coming for a visit, but what happened next was an attack that was caught on a front porch security camera. It shocked the jury into tears.

Assistant Criminal District Attorneys Danielle Bonanno and Stephanie Simpson guided the jury through a complicated case in which Kosine had pled not guilty by reason of insanity.

The jury didn’t buy his claim of insanity nor his version of the attack in May of 2017, which he described as a romantic sex fantasy.



Jacob Kosine

After the verdict, the young woman, now 22, gave an allocution in the packed courtroom, looking Kosine in the eyes and telling him, “I hope my screams on that video haunts you for the rest of your life, and that you know while you are rotting in prison, I will be living my life.”

125 years in prison

Desiree Boltos was called the “Sweetheart Swindler.” After her trial three years ago, she was sentenced to 263 years in prison after being convicted of scamming elderly people and stealing their life savings.

On November 11, her common-law husband Paul Hill was sentenced by Judge Robb Catalano to 125 years in prison for participating in some of the crimes Boltos was convicted of committing. Assistant Criminal District Attorney Lori Varnell prosecuted the case.

During Boltos’s trial, prosecutors said she teamed up with Hill to scam several elderly people out of vehicles and money. She often introduced Hill as her brother. The total amount Boltos, with help from Hill, stole was at least \$3 million. Boltos, 40, is in the Hobby prison in Marlin.



Paul Hill

After her conviction, Hill – who was indicted on separate charges – fled Tarrant County. He was arrested in Las Vegas in 2019 under the alias of John Ray. Las Vegas police have said John Ray was arrested on suspicion of committing three business robberies.

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Teacher Accountability

A high school teacher who admitted he had sex with a student at his school will be behind bars for quite a while.



Albert Jason Robles, a former Trimble Tech High School teacher, pleaded guilty to sexual assault of a child under 17 and indecency with a child under 17. A Tarrant County jury on September 15 sentenced him to 15 years and five years in prison, consecutively.

Jason Robles Assistant Criminal District

Attorneys Julie Lugo and Matthew Jackson told the story of how Robles groomed a 15-year-old sophomore student and eventually sexually assaulted her in 2019.

The student, who is now 17, had an unhappy home life and at times spent the entire school day in Robles's classroom. Ultimately Robles sexually assaulted the student at his home.

would a burglar ever kill an infant? ... It's absurd. It doesn't add up, no matter which way you look at it."

Callaghan and Emily Dixon explained the case to the jury and noted that investigators found documents showing Craig Vandewege stood to claim more than \$700,000 in life insurance after the deaths of his wife and son.

On November 4, 2021, a Tarrant County jury found the now 40-year-old guilty. He received an automatic sentence of life without the possibility of parole for the crime.

Shanna Vandewege's family attended the trial every day. Many silently wept when the verdict was announced.

During the trial, Craig Vandewege's coworkers testified about how disparaging he was about his wife.

They said this case was similar to a puzzle and that all the pieces needed to be put together to solve it.

"All these pieces ... show you a picture of only one thing, that he's guilty," Callaghan said. "There are no other answers."

Guilty



Nearly five years after Shanna Riddle Vandewege and her 3-month-old son Diederik were found dead in their home, Craig Vandewege – her husband and the baby's father – was convicted of capital murder.

Craig Vandewege Craig Vandewege called 911 about 9:30 p.m. December 15, 2016, to report finding Shanna and Diederik with their throats slashed at their Fort Worth home. Shanna was in her bed; Diederik was nearby in his bassinet. Both were pronounced dead at the scene.

Their home appeared staged to simulate a burglary. "This was never a burglary," Assistant Criminal District Attorney Lisa Callaghan told the jury. "Why

Celebrating the holidays



Our office will be closed for the holidays. We will be closed December 24, 27 and 31 celebrating Christmas and New Year's. Until then, we are open from 7:45 a.m. until 5 p.m.

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Crack down on auto crimes



ACDA Zane Reid

Zane Reid, assistant criminal district attorney in Tarrant County, has been appointed to work with the Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Task Force and only prosecute auto crime cases.

He is the first prosecutor in Texas named to solely work with an auto crimes task force.

“We are dealing with a very, very evolving field of auto crimes now,” said Bryan Sudan, commander of the Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Task Force. “We are now seeing very organized groups using sophisticated methods to steal vehicles.” We need more coordination with the prosecution of these cases.”

In the past, auto crimes were sent to the DA’s Office and assigned to various prosecutors. All now will go to Reid, who will be able to spot trends or see if there are multiple cases involving the same defendant that should be grouped together.

“My goal will be to provide greater consistency and availability to our law enforcement agencies to ensure successful prosecution,” said Reid, a prosecutor with Tarrant County since 2015. “The hope is to increase the prosecution rate and strength of sentences for auto crimes committed in Tarrant County and the surrounding area.”



Law Enforcement Memorial

Three more names were added to the memorial on the west lawn of the historic Tarrant County courthouse honoring Tarrant County law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty during an October 22 ceremony.

“We will forever remember each fallen Tarrant County law enforcement officer on this memorial,” Sharen Wilson said. “It’s heartbreaking that the number of officers who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect Tarrant residents continues to grow, but we were blessed to have these officers who chose to serve.



“We honor all of them,” she said. “They will never be forgotten.”



Security Control Specialist Jerry William Jones.
Lieutenant Craig Lavorrowous King.
Corporal Charles Edward Holt, III.

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