



Spring 2022

# The Docket



Sharen Wilson – Criminal District Attorney

Speaking out for victims.

That’s one of our core responsibilities in this office, finding justice for them and being their voice.

Our prosecutors do that. They are assisted by Victim Assistance Coordinators (VACs), who help crime victims and their family members by explaining how their case is working its way through the criminal justice system.

VACs go to court with victims and families, explaining the process, ensuring that they understand their rights and referring them to services they may need.

The work of Victim Assistance Coordinators is always needed.

Sometimes it is extraordinary, such as when our VAC reached out to a man in Jordan whose sister was killed in Arlington. He spoke a different language, but our prosecutors and VACs kept him updated on the criminal justice process. When the case came to trial, prosecutors and investigators successfully worked with governmental agencies, homeland security and more to help him get here. They were successful. VACs stayed with him during the trial. Ultimately, he found justice for his sister when his brother-in-law was convicted of killing her.

Our office is highlighting victims – and the work done to help them – during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, which runs from April 24-30, and the work done to help them.

Victims of violent crimes are, and always will be, a top priority for us. We will do everything we can to seek justice for them.



Very Truly Yours,

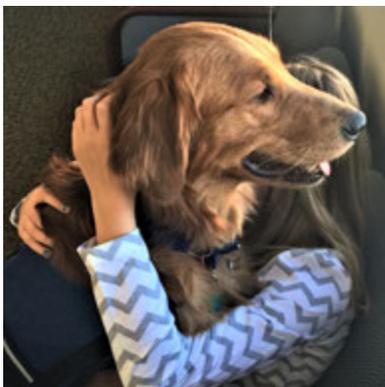


## Happy Birthday Brady

Wishing a happy 7th birthday to our emotional support dog Brady.

Brady, our Golden Retriever Rescue, is beloved by those in our office and by those he comforts in the Tim Curry Criminal Justice Center.

He is well known, having been featured in the 2019 Golden Retriever Rescue of North Texas calendar and starring in his own coloring book, **What Happens in Court?** This sweet canine is a reassuring presence in our office and he has helped many children and adult victims through the emotional process of seeking justice through trial.



## Helping Hands

Jane Smith was happy to be rekindling a romance with her former boyfriend in 2020.

Then alarming things began happening – her car tires were slashed; her car and apartment were spray-painted; negative comments about her were posted on social media; bullets were shot into her apartment, striking a friend whose recovery continues to this day.

It turns out that a woman who had been involved with Smith’s ex wasn’t happy the two were seeing each other. So, she followed Smith around and damaged her property.

The stress in her life grew so great that Smith, who was 19 and pregnant at the time, had a miscarriage. Since she knew her apartment was being watched constantly by the woman and her friends, so Smith moved out.

Then one night in August 2020, Smith – who asked that we not use her real name – showed up at her former apartment to retrieve some belongings. She saw the woman and her friends there, handcuffed by police. The woman had been outside Smith’s former apartment, waving around her gun, saying that she would shoot Smith if she saw her. Her friends filmed it and posted it on social media.

Police charged the woman with stalking.



That’s when Smith met with prosecutors and CDA Victim Assistance Coordinator Laura Flores, who helped her through the legal process.

**Laura Flores** “They were very kind and genuinely cared about what was going on with me,” Smith said. “They were very sympathetic to me, giving me courage to get up on the stand to tell my story.”

Her assailant faced a stalking charge but also had violated terms of probation from a previous offense.

Her probation was revoked and she was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Smith said Flores reached out to her several times to check in on her. “The entire program held my hand through the whole situation,” Smith said.

Smith is telling her story to help draw attention to



National Crime Victims’ Rights Week – April 24-30, 2020 – which is a time to honor survivors and promote resources available to victims.

During that week, we are honoring victims by placing wreaths at subcourthouses throughout Tarrant County. The wreaths are not only a tribute to crime victims, but also a promise that all victims will have the rights and services they need to recover from crime.

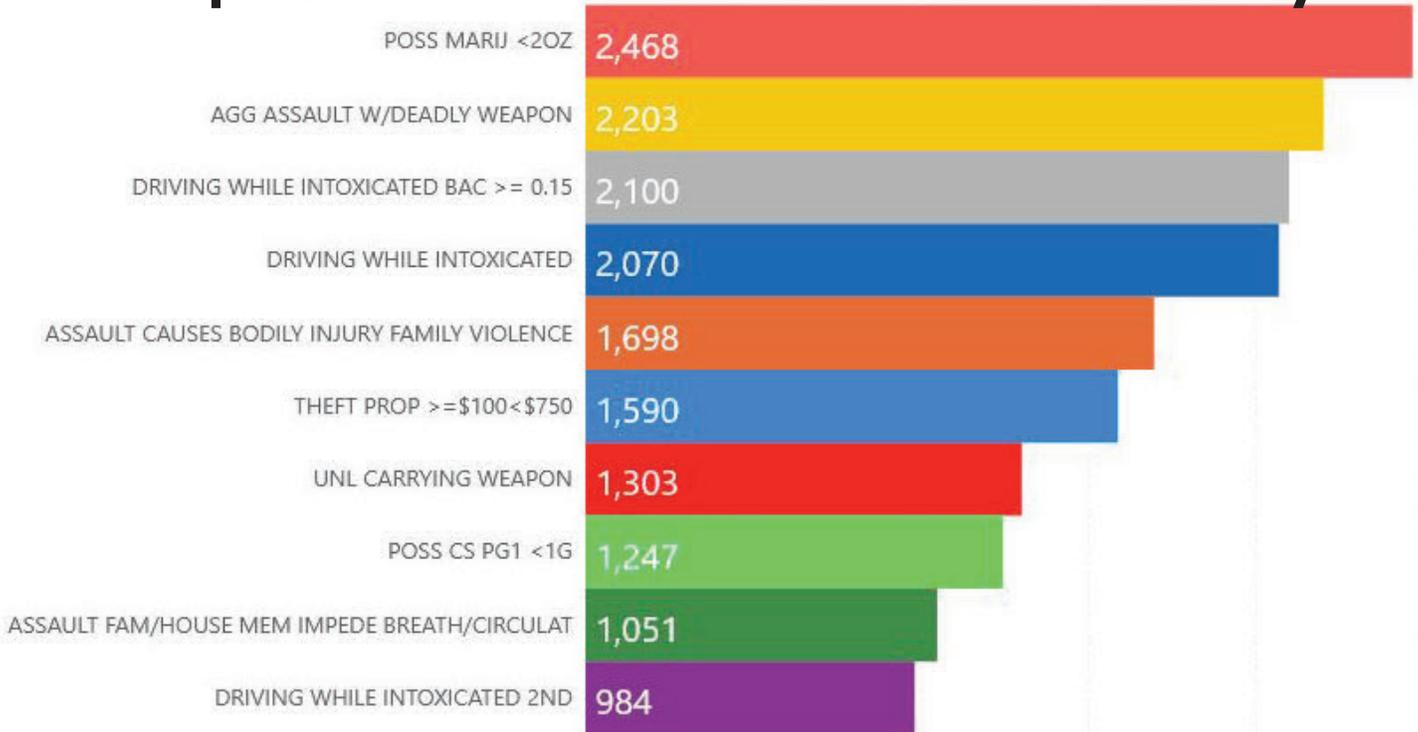
Teams of victim advocates are at local police departments, the Criminal District Attorney’s Office, the Community Supervision and Corrections Department and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. These advocates are crucial in Tarrant County, so much that the Criminal District Attorney’s Office first staffed a team of Victim Assistance Coordinators in the 1980s, before Texas law ever required them.

Last year in Tarrant County, our Victim Assistance Coordinators (VAC) responded to 9,937 cases of victims of violent crimes, helping victims and family members alike.

VACs listen to victims, go to court with them and make sure they understand all that’s happening at trial. They also make sure they understand their rights and refer them to services that can help.

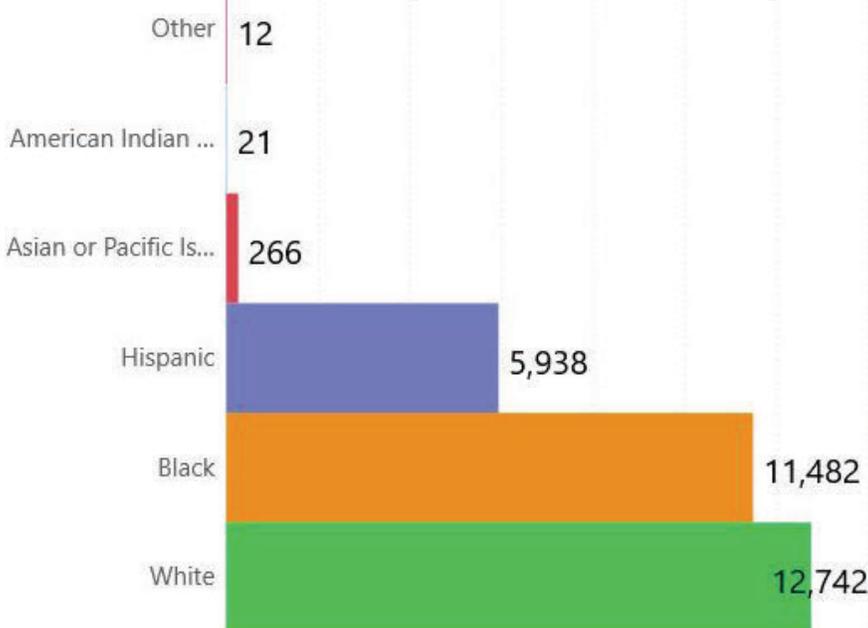
“Victim Assistance Coordinators are here to educate victims about the process, provide resources when they are needed and when we have a trial, be there for them and then decompress with them afterwards,” Flores said.

## Top 10 Committed Crimes in Tarrant County

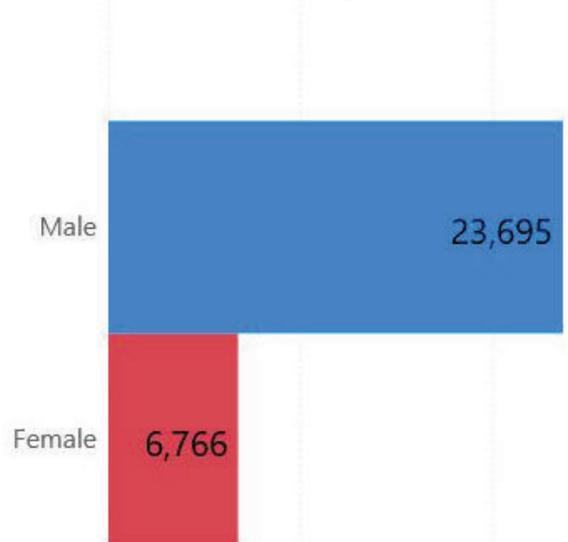


Follow all of the statistics on pending cases in the Criminal District Attorney’s Office on our official website, [cda.tarrantcounty.com](http://cda.tarrantcounty.com). Just click the “Dashboard” button on the opening page. The graphics on this page depict case data as of the first week of March, 2022.

### Defendants by Race and Ethnicity



### Defendants by Sex



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## Stepping up for kids

When this office was asked to help with an annual program geared to help Tarrant boys and girls, there was only one answer to give: Yes.



We took our growing Prosecutors in High School program – a virtual class that teaches students about the criminal justice system – and used it to educate youth at Boys and Girls Clubs in Tarrant County about arrests, searches and seizures, First Amendment Rights, the process of a trial and how investigations work.



Spearheaded by Community Outreach Coordinator Amy Bearden, these classes were taught online over the course of a month, leading up to the February 22 Courageous Conversations For Kids panel discussion put on by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Tarrant County.

The goal of this annual interactive discussion between teens and public leaders was to make this community stronger.

Sharen Wilson, along with Fort Worth Police Chief Neil Noakes and Arlington Police Chief Al Jones, participated in a panel discussion that focused on community policing and safety. They spoke about their organizations, goals, opportunities and challenges.



“I’m so pleased that my office can help teach today’s youth,” Sharen Wilson said. “They will be tomorrow’s leaders.”

## A clean record

More than 1,000 people in Tarrant County were able to wipe their criminal records clean of felony charges last year.

Whether through the annual expunction and nondisclosure clinic we hold each year with the L. Clifford Davis Legal Association, or individually, more than 1,200 people had felony crimes erased from their criminal records.

Expunctions are only possible when charges are dismissed or no billed by a Grand Jury; a person is acquitted or pardoned; or he or she completes a diversion program.



### CDA Expunction Review

“Having a criminal record can keep someone from getting a job or even a place to live,” Sharen Wilson said. “Erasing the criminal record – when a person has been cleared of the charge – gives many people a fresh start at life.

“Then they contribute to society again,” she said. “People deserve a second chance.”

An expunction is when a charge is erased from a person’s record. A nondisclosure is when an arrest record is sealed.

Expunctions and nondisclosures were created by the state Legislature to help prevent a low-level crime

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from staying with someone for life, but we have found that less than 5% of eligible people take advantage of this relief.

Our office has held a joint annual Expunction and Nondisclosure Clinic since 2016. Tarrant County Commissioner Roy Brooks has been a great partner in this effort, working for years to reduce filing fees for expunctions and supporting the clinic.

This work couldn't be done without our prosecutors and area attorneys volunteering their time to review applications and move expunctions and nondisclosures through the legal process.

## Victory

Chalk one up for Assistant Criminal District Attorneys Jim Hudson and Matthew Jackson.

Hudson, the new Chief of the Misdemeanor Section, coached a team of Texas A&M Law School students to regional victory in the National Trial Competition. His team of second year students won the Region 11 rounds in February and now advance to the national finals in Fort Worth. This is the first time the Texas A&M Law School has advanced to the national finals of this prestigious mock trial competition, according to the school.



Jackson, one of our felony prosecutors, also coached a Texas A&M Law School team. His team placed first in the 2022 Southwest Regional Mock Trial Competition for the National Black Law Students Association 4th Annual Regional Convention in Dallas. His team of students also now heads to their national competition.

Good luck, teams!

## A long time coming

Times have changed in Tarrant County, and justice for women who are sexually assaulted, or victims of Intimate Partner Violence, (IPV) is now the rule, not the exception.

Seven years ago, those accused of sexual assault or IPV rarely saw trial. Immediately after taking office, Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson changed that practice. She went to work creating a special team of prosecutors to ensure charges of sexual

assault are taken to trial and that those convicted are punished.

The proof is on the CDA trial board. Click the icon you see here on the main page of our website; cda.tarrantcounty.com.

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This Week's Trials

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One week in February, for instance, the board showed 10 trials. Eight of those were related to sexual assault charges; convictions in those cases netted decades in prison.

Sixteen prosecutors, nine investigators and seven victims’ advocates all worked diligently on behalf of victimized women in Tarrant County to hold offenders accountable.

Tarrant County Assistant Criminal District Attorney Allenna Bangs noted the trend: “Can you imagine a time seven years ago when we would have a trial board full of sexual assaults with guilty verdicts and penitentiary sentences?”

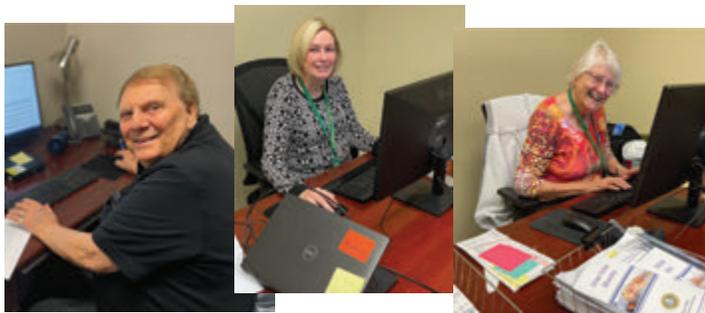
Seven years ago, no. Today, yes.

This is the trend and result of enforcing the law in Tarrant County, fulfilling our mission to seek justice.

## Thank you!

This is a great time for our office to thank volunteers who help in our office – and everywhere.

So many programs and projects would be stalled, some likely never even started, without the countless volunteers who step up to help.



We want to say thank you to all of you, especially during National Volunteer Week, April 17-23. This week is a time to shine the light on those who selflessly give their time to help their communities.

We have three invaluable volunteers – Paul Vigiletti, Pamela Morin, and Mary Meador – who have been helping our Victim Services team since 2018. The

three gained interest in volunteering after completing the Citizen Prosecutors Academy.

They love to assist with written notifications to victims, identify community resources, monitor the victim lounge area, organize snacks, and provide victim support under the direction of Victim Assistance Coordinators. Together they have put in more than 2,500 volunteer hours.

Thank you for all you do, and Happy Volunteer Week!!!

## Best Practices



CDA officials were proud to accept a first-of-its-kind recognition early this year from the Texas Police Chiefs Association Foundation.

We are the first district attorney’s office in Texas to be named a “Recognized Law Enforcement Agency”

by the Texas Police Chiefs Association Foundation. The honor, which went to our investigators, shows that this office is complying with the more than 168 rigorous Best Business Practices for law enforcement in Texas.



This is a voluntary program, and the recognition lasts for four years. These Best Practices cover aspects of law enforcement operations such as use of force, protection of citizen rights and patrol and investigative operations.

“We are honored to be the first District Attorney’s Office to receive this recognition,” said Maria Hinojosa, chief investigator.

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### Honors



The Eldon B. Mahon Inn of Court has named Tarrant County Assistant Criminal District Attorney Katherine Owens its 2022 Serjeant of the Inn. The Mahon Inn of Court is an organization comprised of judges, lawyers, law professors, and law students in Tarrant County dedicated to advancing the legal profession through professionalism, civility, and ethics. This award recognizes attorneys for special service and leadership through example, education, and mentoring. Owens, who was nominated by attorney Warren St. John, was chosen to be the award recipient for the Fort Worth Mahon Inn of Court in part for her service to the community in coordinating the 2021 and 2022 Texas Region 11 High School Mock Trial Tournament.



Cami Wimberley passed the Texas Board of Legal Specialization-Paralegal Exam in Criminal Law. She is one of only 14 Board Certified Paralegals in Criminal Law for the entire state of Texas, and the first ever in our office.



Texas Board of Legal Specialization  
**BOARD CERTIFIED PARALEGAL**

### Extra! Extra!

We recently published our 2021 Annual Report.

In it, you can learn about everything from the top five crimes in Tarrant County to capital murder convictions and key honors this office received last year.

You also can learn about Tarrant County’s new way of fighting auto crimes and how mentally ill people caught criminally trespassing are now getting a second chance.

Read or download the 2021 Annual Report by going to our website, [cda.tarrantcounty.com](http://cda.tarrantcounty.com). On the front page, scroll down and click the “Annual Reports” icon you see pictured on the right. 

To receive our quarterly newsletter and annual report, send an email to [CDA-PIO@tarrantcountytx.gov](mailto:CDA-PIO@tarrantcountytx.gov) and put “Newsletter” in the subject line.



Annual Report / Budget

**Tarrant County  
Criminal District Attorney**



**2021  
Annual Report**



**Sharen Wilson**

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