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A MESSAGE FROM WASHOE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY CHRIS HICKS:

*“Smooth Seas Never Made a Skilled Sailor”
– Franklin D. Roosevelt*

As we begin a new and hopefully brighter year for us all, I am pleased to provide a glimpse of the work the Washoe County District Attorney's Office has accomplished in unprecedented times. During the current pandemic, we have continued to fulfill our critical mission to this community and have remained focused. We have used new technology to ensure the public's safety, continued our work to safeguard the rights of victims of crime and provided competent legal expertise to assist local government. Along the way, we have all risen to new challenges, celebrated wins and gained new skills. We have indeed become better sailors and I am truly proud to lead such a capable and dedicated team of professionals. I always appreciate the opportunity to share stories about my office and I am particularly pleased to highlight some of our successes during these difficult times. As always, thank you for taking the time to learn more about your District Attorney's Office.

Have a Happy and Healthy New Year!
Christopher J. Hicks, District Attorney

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<https://www.washoecounty.us/da/>



WCDA Criminal Team Effort Fulfilling Our Mission In A Global Pandemic

Welcome to the
**Washoe County
District Attorney's
Office**

On March 13, 2020 the Washoe County District Attorney's Office notified the community that it was restricting public access following emergency orders issued by the Governor's Office aimed at reducing the spread of the COVID-19. For a time, our community was brought to a halt as protocols and precautions were developed to allow critical services to continue. As the lead prosecuting agency in the County, our office would prove up to the challenge. First steps addressed developing new safety protocols and gathering hard to find supplies, which required some outside the box thinking by Executive Staff. What followed was a move to a new remote work model, which ultimately led to where we are today.

The Office's new normal now consists of ZOOM courtroom appearances and meeting with co-workers over Microsoft Teams. The following are some examples of how far our criminal teams have come in adapting to an ever-changing environment.

Jury Trials in the Age of COVID-19

In early October, The Washoe County District Attorney's Office secured a guilty verdict in the first jury trial to take place since Covid-19 safety restrictions were imposed. Behind the scenes and before trial, the prosecution team, led by Chief Deputy District Attorney Kelly Kossow, prepared remotely and worked closely with Washoe County Judge Connie Steinheimer and Court Administration on the complicated logistics of conducting a jury trial in a pandemic. Ultimately, the case was presented successfully and resulted in a guilty verdict. Jason Marcus Jones was convicted on felony drug charges and being an ex-felon in possession of a firearm. Jones had been arrested by detectives with the Regional Crime Suppression Unit comprised of officers from the Reno and Sparks Police Departments after they received information that he was in possession of firearms. An investigation was conducted and Jones was also found to be trafficking methamphetamine.

Commenting after the trial, District Attorney Chris Hicks said, "The health and safety measures put in place allowed this trial to go forward and I would like to thank the Court for its diligent work in today's challenging environment. Additionally, it is important to thank the jury for their attention and willingness to serve as jurors."



Misdemeanor Team



Katherine Lyon
Chief Deputy
District Attorney



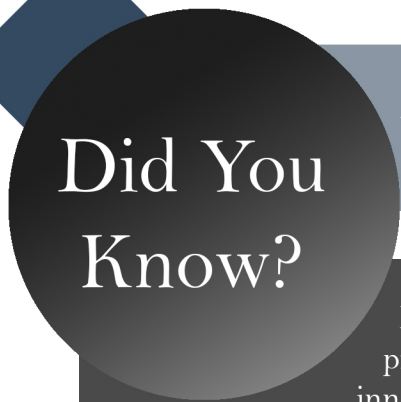
Pictured left to right:
Kenneth Tedford III (Deputy District Attorney),
Brett Dieffenbach (Deputy District Attorney),
Zadora Hightower (Deputy District Attorney),
Hunter Heidrich (Deputy District Attorney),
Abigail Moran (Deputy District Attorney),
Stephen Hollandsworth
(Deputy District Attorney).

WCDA Misdemeanor Team Coping with COVID-19

The Washoe County DA Misdemeanor Team handles a high volume of cases and has adapted to the County’s COVID-19 protocols as well as numerous new court procedures. This team covers a majority of the thousands of cases submitted to the Office each year. They currently appear remotely in Reno and Sparks Justice Courts 5 days a week, morning and afternoon, handling pleas, sentencings, trials, and motions. Until recently, these appearances were in-person.

Led by Chief Deputy District Attorney (CDDA) Kay Lyon, the Misdo Team is also responsible for handling traffic citations cases, which has become a huge effort due to the court closures and associated back-logs. In order to increase efficiency, the team has worked with all area Justice Courts – Reno, Sparks, Incline and Wadsworth, to ensure Deputy District Attorneys experienced with the unique processes of each court appear for remote settings. In addition, The Misdemeanor Team is also responsible for arguing bail in Sparks Justice Court. These hearings are conducted each morning for all arrestees who remain in jail, which ranges from 5 to 20 cases.

Like other DA Office teams, the Misdemeanor Team transitioned to a paperless system in October 2019. This greatly enhanced the ability to work and prepare cases remotely. And while not ideal, the system is working. According to CDDA Lyon, “Serving the public in these trying times is our responsibility. That responsibility is something we all embrace and keep foremost in our minds when faced with challenges – whether figuring out how to present certain evidence, to accommodating witnesses or victims who may not have access to technology.”



WCDA Was Awarded Over \$420,000 in Grant Funds in 2020

Economic impact is yet another huge result of the pandemic. Our office prides itself on diversifying our budget by finding appropriate and innovative ways to bring in dollars and implementation of unique projects in the office. 2020 is no different. This year, our office was awarded \$423,125 in grant funds that will be used to enhance services to our community. These funds will be used to support several projects critical to public safety. From combatting human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault, to assisting with the implementation of Assembly Bill 236 which has a significant effect on our criminal justice system. The office is looking forward to sharing highlights and outcomes of these projects in our next newsletter.

Criminal Division Support Team



Pictured:
Tillena Hicks (LS),
Cece Sixta (LS),
Brandi Mandeville
(LSS), Cathy Silvas
(LS), Amanda
Whitecloud (OAI),
Laura Jimenez (LS),
Sue Councilman (OSS),
Wendy Beltran (OSS),
Tanya Kazantseva
(LS), Debra Krail
(LS), Margy Ford
(LSS), Mayela Lozano
(LSS), Destinee Allen
(LS), Cheryl Bennett
(LS), Dani Rasmussen
(LS), Celina

Gonzalez-Valenzuela (LS), Erin DiPietro (LSS), Carolyn Heddy (OAI), Lola Miguel Garcia (LS), Alma Sena (OAI), Annalise Lockhart (LS), Sally Johnston (OSS), Andrea Lee (OAI), Jenn Spradlin (OAI), Mia Cholico (LS), Gladis Estrada (LS), Diana Altura (OAI), Wanda Jackson (LSS), Lupe Barajas (LS), Lori Delano (LSS), Pat Morrow (LS), Terri Norris (LS), Shelly Luke (LS), Amy Mays (OAI), Odalys Rodriguez (LS), Sara Deyhle (LS), Jenn Mochel (OAI), Rachel Steinman (OAI), Lisa Todd (LS)

2020 began by offering our professional Criminal Support Staff the opportunity to create vision boards in a team building event. During the workshop, participants reflected on the past and sought personal and professional inspiration for the new year. Little did we know what challenging and trying times lay ahead. Support Staff are critical to the Criminal Division and they worked diligently throughout the year to maintain effective and efficient workflow during this pandemic, rotating into the office regularly to cover duties that could not be done remotely. They are the faces that greet the public, the voices who answer the main phone lines and the hands that receive mail and sort documents daily. They have come together more than ever, leaning on and supporting each other while making sure even the little things are handled. Perhaps Legal Secretary Destinee Allen summed it up best by saying “Working together as a team, no matter what division we worked in, contributed greatly to our success.

We have continued to collaborate well as a team to this day, knowing we are all in this together and working towards the same goal; achieving justice and protecting the welfare of our community.” The criminal teams had moved to paperless workflow in the fall of 2019, which meant when the pandemic began, most of the kinks and bumps had been worked out. As a result, many felt the transition to remote work went relatively smoothly. “Working remotely has at times been a challenge, but it has forced all of us to get innovative in the way we work and connect with each other” shared Margy Ford, Legal Secretary Supervisor. Amy Mays, Office Assistant II added that “Teams meetings allow us to stay connected with our co-workers and has been a useful tool in feeling ‘normal.’ Throughout this year, this group of professionals has continued to maintain a high level of service. In addition, a recent Nevada Supreme Court opinion issued in April dramatically changed the way case information is received and

processed for post-arrest bail hearings. This dramatically increased discovery duties and imposed tight deadlines for preparing necessary information for court hearings that require a team of on-site personnel working on very short timelines each day. As court appearances and procedures change in response to the most current recommendations of State officials, the Health District and the CDC, the team responds by finding innovative solutions. Examples include filing more documents electronically, setting up areas to safely offer computer access to virtual hearings for witnesses or victims who would not otherwise have access. Lastly, several new members have joined the team this year and although not ideal, new ways were found to successfully offer training both virtually and in person. For Jenn Spradlin, Office Assistant II these efforts helped in “...making this the smoothest career transition I have experienced.”

Juvenile Team Responds to the Challenge of Remote Court

Almost all offenses committed by juveniles that result in court action occur in only one court – Washoe County Juvenile Delinquency Court. The Deputy District Attorneys who are assigned to the juvenile delinquency team for the District Attorney’s Office are the only prosecutors for juveniles appearing in juvenile court. In response to the early stages of COVID-19, the District Attorney’s Office Juvenile Delinquency Team worked with the juvenile court master, the Washoe County Public Defender’s Office and the Washoe County Alternate Public Defender’s Office to address hundreds of already-scheduled court hearings with the hope of avoiding unnecessary exposure to health risks until a safer system could be developed. For a short time, only court hearings for youth who were detained or being held in juvenile hall occurred. Within several weeks, however, based on continued coordination by the juvenile team, the defense attorneys, the juvenile court, juvenile probation and youth parole, all types of hearings resumed. Additional processes have been developed to ensure that victims could also attend and participate in juvenile court. Between February 2020 and the end of September 2020, more than 1,500 hearings occurred in juvenile court, and most occurred after the beginning of the pandemic via Zoom.

Pictured left to right: Jo Lee Wickes (Chief Deputy District Attorney, Shelley Scott (Deputy District Attorney, Ericka Jackson (Deputy District Attorney, Benjamin Newman (Deputy District Attorney, Debra Krail (Legal Secretary), Mia Cholico (Legal Secretary).



Throughout the DA’s office, our mission continues. The Civil Division continues to provide expert legal guidance to County Government and our elected officials. The Criminal Division remains focused on the public’s safety and the rights of victims of crime. Together, WCDA district attorneys, investigators, advocates, administrative and support staff remain dedicated to the work of the office, **FROM WHEREVER WE ARE.**

Division Spotlight: Civil Division – New Faces and the New Normal in Civil

If 2020 has taught us anything, it’s that everything can change just like that. Usually this means retirements or promotions within the office. But as we all know, the pandemic introduced a new magnitude of change to all our lives, and in a hurry.

With the retirement of longtime Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Paul Lipparelli and veteran Deputy District Attorney Leslie Admirand, the WCDA Civil Division was left with some big shoes to fill. Dave Watts-Vial was promoted to Civil ADA, and Nathan Edwards was promoted to Chief Deputy District Attorney (CDDA) of the Civil Team. This happened back in February, just in time for a worldwide pandemic and a (so far) 9-month long shutdown of vast swaths of our economy and daily lives. Needless to say, the learning curve has been steep, starting with the drafting of the county’s declaration of emergency back in March, and activation of the Regional Emergency Operations Center and its Incident Management Team (IMT), both of which were stood up to address the COVID outbreak. The IMT required a complex legal structure best described as a joint effort of the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, and Washoe County. The Health District also played an integral role (continued on pg 6).



Pictured left to right: David Watts-Vial (Assistant District Attorney), Nathan Edwards (Chief Deputy District Attorney), Michael Large (Deputy District Attorney), Lindsay Liddell (Deputy District Attorney), Herbert Kaplan (Deputy District Attorney), Mary Kandaras (Deputy District Attorney), Wade Carner (Deputy District Attorney), Keith Munro (Deputy District Attorney), Chaz Lehman (Deputy District Attorney).

Division Spotlight (Continued):

Civil Support Staff



Pictured left to right: Molly Coin (Legal Secretary Supervisor), Brenna Bull (Legal Secretary, Suzanne Haldeman (Office Assistant II), Crystal Theumer (Legal Secretary).

Combined, these unprecedented times have called on the Civil Team to engage in numerous pandemic response efforts and provide legal guidance to County government working on response efforts ranging from arrangements for hospital surge capacity, acquisition of COVID testing kits, procurement of recovery and quarantine housing for individuals with limited means, the acquisition of PPE, receipt and disbursement of grant funding, and much more.

These promotions also meant the arrival of new faces to the Civil DA Team. Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Lindsay Liddell, formerly of our office's CPS Team, was newly assigned to Team Civil. Along with her, DDAs Wade Carner and Chaz Lehman were hired to fill a vacant spot and one left open when DDA Stephan Hollandsworth left civil for the Criminal Team. According to CDDA Edwards, all three are "go-getters" with quite a bit of experience among them, which has let them thrive in their new roles.

Both ADA Watts-Vial and CDDA Edwards are thankful to work with such an experienced, talented, and enthusiastic team of lawyers. The pandemic has been rough on all, but being part of a good team has made life easier on those in the office and for the community that depends on an array of county-provided services every day. We look forward to 2021 and getting back to the "old normal" that everyone misses so much.

The Angel Tree - An Annual Giving Tradition



As we all know this year has been challenging and brought many changes. However, one thing that has not changed is the generous hearts of the staff of the Washoe County District Attorney's Office. Coordinated by Legal Secretary Supervisor Lori Delano, the office has been Partners in Education with Mount Rose Elementary school since 2005. Each year, our employees help with many areas needed for these students. This holiday season, with a heartwarming response, the office came together and "adopted" 100 children to make their Christmas special.



Pictured left to right: Sharon Flanary (Administrative Assistant II), Donna Wenstrom

Community Partner: Nevada Woodchucks Bring Holiday Cheer to Children's Advocacy Center

Since 1987, the Nevada Woodchucks have provided an opportunity for local woodworkers to share their craft, learn from each other, and give back to the community. The group officially became a non-profit in 2007, and has various subgroups, including a group that makes beautiful, hand-crafted toys. Among their many creations are toy cars, puzzles, animals, stick horses, and doll cradles. Each takes several hours to complete, and represents a group effort, with members working together to design, cut, assemble, and paint the toys.



Community Partner (continued)

Every year, the Woodchucks create and donate between 1500-2500 toys to children in our community. They often work together in their workshop, and the COVID-19 crisis challenged their normal ways of doing things. But these real-life elves adapted, creating room for social-distancing in the workshop, meeting via zoom, and working on toys in their homes.

Each year, the Washoe County Child Advocacy Center and the Washoe County District Attorney's Victim Witness Assistance Center receive some much-welcome holiday cheer courtesy of the Nevada Woodchucks. Thanks to their generous annual donation, children who encounter the criminal justice system have their day brightened by receiving beautiful, hand-crafted toys. "We feel blessed to help out these kids, and to use our talents for something charitable and rewarding," explained Toy Group Leader Donna Wenstrom, who added that the best part of her job handling quality control is "getting to play with every single toy."

In addition to making toys, the Nevada Woodchucks also help with various projects throughout Northern Nevada. Their past efforts include crafting flag stands for the Fernley Veteran's Cemetery, creating large planter boxes for disabled veteran housing in Reno, helping to repair paneling in the Sparks Museum, and crafting a wooden ladder for an old-fashioned fire truck. Anyone interested in learning more about the Nevada Woodchucks can visit <https://www.nevadawoodchucks.org>.

Employee Spotlights

Stephanie Shuman Investigations Supervisor

Supervising District Attorney Investigator (SDAI) Shuman began her law enforcement career with the Division of Parole and Probation in 2004. During that time, she held assignments within the Sex Offender Unit, where she was responsible for piloting the State's first GPS monitoring program for high risk sex offenders and was a training officer for the agency. She was also a part of several task forces, to include, the US Marshals Task Force, Regional Repeat Offender Program, and the Regional Sex Offender Notification Unit. In 2010, SDAI Shuman transitioned her career to the Washoe County District Attorney's Office, seeking a role closely tied to prosecution and complex investigations. She quickly found her footing on the team and promoted to Supervising Investigator in April of 2015.

In June of 2020, SDAI Stephanie Shuman completed her National Certified Public Manager (CPM) program after two years of dedicated course work. The Certified Public Manager program is a nationally accredited comprehensive management development program open to managers in federal, state and local government organizations. This professional credential requires over 300 hours of coursework and completion of an extensive CPM Capstone Quality Improvement Project. SDAI Shuman completed the CPM course as the pandemic hit, so graduation celebrations were placed on hold. Nevertheless, this a big accomplishment for the 16-year veteran law enforcement officer.

Highlight of Career: In 2018 SDAI Shuman worked diligently with the Marsy's Law team to implement office wide changes to meet recently passed legislation ensuring constitutional rights of Nevada crime victims. In addition, she spearheaded a new court notification system called ecourt, which has assisted the office in decreasing employee hours and time spent on notifying victims of upcoming court hearings.



Kelly Kossow Chief Deputy District Attorney



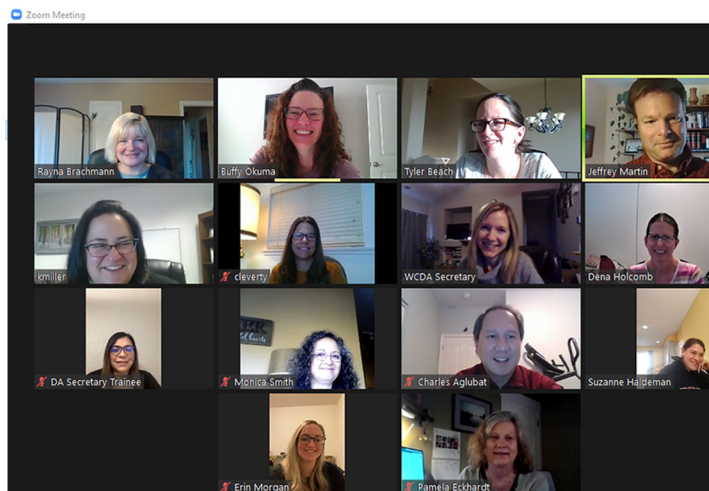
Chief Deputy District Attorney (CDDA) Kelly Kossow has been a prosecutor since 2001 after graduating from Golden Gate Law School in San Francisco and beginning her career in Susanville, California. A native Nevadan, CDDA Kossow returned home in 2005 and joined the Washoe County District Attorney's Office Criminal Division where she has handled a wide variety of cases. She is especially proud of her time on the Domestic Violence Protection Unit where she prosecuted serial domestic batterers, sexual assaults and cases involving crimes against children. CDDA Kossow was promoted to the Major Violators Unit in 2014 and to a Team Chief position in 2015 where she currently oversees one of three felony teams within the DA's Office. In addition to her supervisory duties, CDDA Kossow handles some of the most complex homicide cases prosecuted by the office. She is also chair of the Washoe County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, which takes on multiagency reviews of fatalities and near fatalities in domestic violence cases with a goal of improving investigation and prosecution of these difficult cases. When not at work, Kelly can be found hanging out with her husband, son and two dogs.

WCDA Child Protection Service Unit

Good Wishes and Good Work in 2020

Like everyone, the Washoe County DA Child Protection (CPS) Unit has had its struggles this year, but its members could not be prouder of its work and being a part of the Washoe County District Attorney's Office. One challenge involved CPS court hearings, which are required to be held within certain time periods under federal law, and the federal government indicated that it expected those hearings to continue – because after all, children's lives continue. In addition, like law enforcement, Washoe County Human Services Agency (WCHSA) work is an essential function and this agency depends on the assistance of Deputy District Attorneys assigned to the CPS Unit. Together, they jumped into action to figure out ways to respond to reports of abuse, conduct investigations, place children in foster care when necessary, keep education and medical care going and, meet a new challenge, helping foster parents, who were struggling with managing their own responses to the pandemic and the issues that arose with children entrusted to their care.

With incredible teamwork, DAs in the CPS Unit and WCHSA researched policies and procedures such as how to have children in foster care safely visit with parents without potentially exposing their foster home and other foster children. Plans even had to be made for foster children in quarantine after exposure or a positive test for Covid-19. Following the initial cancelling of all court hearing from March to early April, court hearings resumed and there were 746 of them conducted between April and October. Trials also resumed and are now held remotely, including one that continued over the course of 4 days with over 1000 pages of documents. Several team pets pictured below even made court appearances during the year!

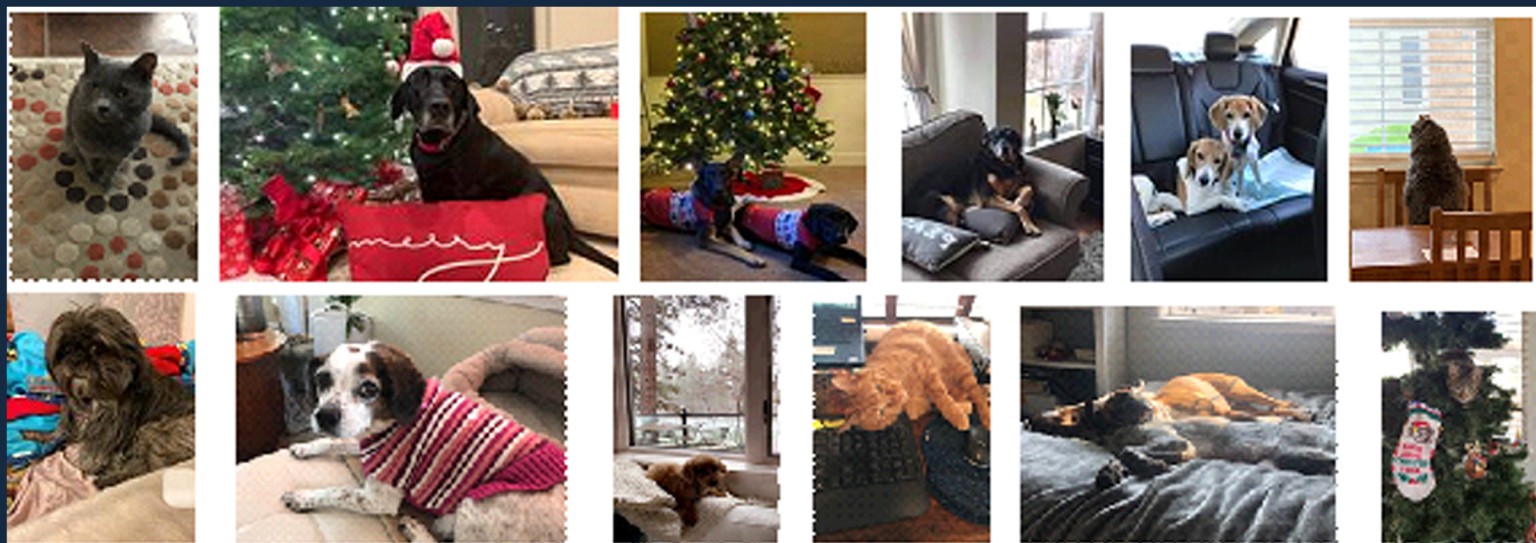


Pictured left to right: Rayna Brachmann (Deputy District Attorney), Buffy Okuma (Chief Deputy District Attorney), Tyler Beach (Deputy District Attorney), Jeffrey Martin (Deputy District Attorney), Katie Miller (Deputy District Attorney), Courtney Leverty ((Deputy District Attorney), Stephanie Larkin (Legal Secretary Supervisor), Mayra Deanda-Manriquez (Legal Secretary), Monica Smith (Legal Secretary), Charles Aglubat (Deputy District Attorney), Suzanne Haldeman (Office Assistant II), Erin Morgan (Deputy District Attorney), Pamela Eckhard (Legal Secretary).

While there are a few cases that must wait until in-person trials resume due to their complexity, such as termination of parental rights, the team relied on each other and stayed connected. Together, they figured it out!

CPS Pet Parents:

This Is Us – Dena, Suzanne, Pam, Monica, Mayra, Stephanie, Jeff, Tyler, Courtney, Charles, Katie, Rayna, Erin and Buffy



“If this year has taught me anything it’s that you can’t control everything and sometimes you just have to roll with the punches.”



Mayra DeAnda-Manriquez
Legal Secretary

CPS Support Staff have the unique responsibility of attending court along with the attorneys and were some of the first employees to navigate this new aspect of remote court attendance.

While most criminal and civil courts came to a halt in March 2020, many child welfare cases continued to operate without much interruption. Throughout the pandemic, social workers have tirelessly continued to remove children from unsafe environments and many CPS hearings were deemed statutorily essential. As a result, the workload in the WCDA CPS Division never decreased. In fact, additional weekly court dockets have since been added in response to the growing need for court calendar space.

“It’s an honor to be part of a team that exhibits such dedication, tenacity, and adaptability as the CPS division. I’m truly thankful for the ability to continue to assist our client in serving the children of Washoe County during such an erratic time.”

– Stephanie Larkin, Legal Secretary Supervisor



Prosecution Corner

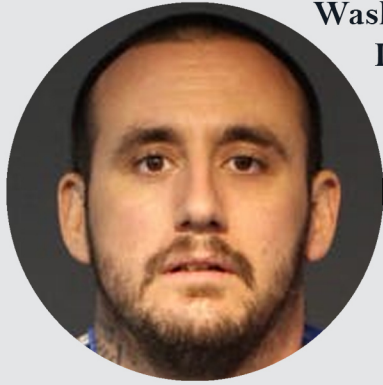
Defendant Convicted on Sexual Assault Against a Child Offenses Sentenced to Life Terms in Prison



In July, Patrick Ian Brymer, was sentenced in District Court to life in prison with the possibility of parole after a minimum of 45 years has been served. Brymer had pled guilty to one count of Sexual Assault on a Child Under the Age of 14 years old, one count of Lewdness with a Child Under the Age of 14 years old and one count of Use of a Minor in Pornographic Video.

The case against Brymer was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Nicole Hicks and began on January 6, 2020 when the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office (WCSO) received a report of child sexual assault, which had been disclosed at a school. An investigation was coordinated through the Washoe County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and included significant work by the Washoe County Human Services Agency, WCSO detectives and this office. Brymer was subsequently arrested based on statements from two young female victims, statements by the defendant and evidence collected from Brymer’s home pursuant to a search warrant.

Patrick Ian Brymer



Patrick Michael Wootan

Washoe County District Attorney Report on Officer Involved Shooting Incident Involving Habitual Criminal Patrick Michael Wootan and the Reno Police Department

In September, Washoe County District Attorney Chris Hicks determined that the January 27, 2019 Officer Involved Shooting (OIS) of Patrick Michael Wootan by an officer with the Reno Police Department was justified under Nevada law. The shooting occurred after a brief pursuit, which ended when Wootan crashed the stolen vehicle he was driving and fled the scene on foot. Wootan, who was armed with a stolen handgun when confronted, repeatedly pointed the handgun at the officer while ignoring commands to drop his weapon and was shot. The investigation determined that Wootan had an extensive criminal history and had made statements immediately prior to the shooting that he would not go back to prison.

Wootan was criminally charged in the case and pled guilty to one count of Assault on an Officer with a Deadly Weapon Committed by a Parolee, one Count of Possession of a Stolen Firearm and one count of Possession of a Stolen Motor Vehicle. These convictions marked the 10th, 11th and 12th felony conviction for this defendant, who was on parole at the time of this incident for a previous habitual criminal burglary conviction. In October 2019, he was again sentenced as a habitual offender and given a life term in prison with the possibility of parole after 10 years has been served. Following the sentencing, District Attorney Hicks released a detailed 41-page report containing the facts of the case and his findings on the shooting. Copies of all completed OIS reports are available on the Washoe County District Attorney's Office's website at <https://www.washoecounty.us/da/newsroom/reports.php>



Alexis Cynthia Alegria

First Degree Murder Conviction Results in Life Sentence for Woman Accused of Beating Elderly Parents to Death Before Setting Fire to Home

In June, life sentences were secured in a double murder prosecution by Deputy District Attorney Michael Bolenbaker. Alexis Cynthia Alegria was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole and an additional 5 to 20 years for associated deadly weapon enhancements. Alegria was also sentenced to a 15-year prison term for a related arson charge, with a parole eligibility of 6 years. All three sentences were set by the court to run consecutive to each other.

Alegria, who had a significant history of mental illness, was found competent to stand trial for the murders of her elderly parents. After the murders, Alegria intentionally set the fire to the home she had shared with her parents in an effort to cover up the murder, a key fact presented in the case. Autopsies of both victims determined that each died from blunt force head trauma. Alegria's father also had sharp force injuries to his head.

