

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

VENTURA COUNTY

TERM REPORT
2015 – 2018



GREGORY D. TOTTEN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Cover photo of Ventura Pier by Thomas W. Temple,
Deputy District Attorney 1996-2002

OUR MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE IS TO PROMOTE JUSTICE AND PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTY OF VENTURA AND THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA BY AGGRESSIVELY AND FAIRLY PROSECUTING THOSE WHO VIOLATE THE LAW.

OUR VALUES

WE EMPLOY INDIVIDUALS OF CHARACTER AND COURAGE WHO PROVIDE THE HIGHEST QUALITY LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE PUBLIC, STEADFASTLY PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS, AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY SEEK TO IMPROVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY.

OUR VISION

OUR VISION IS TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITY, TO BE LEADERS IN QUALITY PROSECUTION, TO AGGRESSIVELY ADVOCATE THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND, ABOVE ALL, TO MAKE VENTURA COUNTY A SAFER COMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE.



COUNTY OF VENTURA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Supervisor
Steve Bennett
FIRST DISTRICT



Supervisor
Linda Parks
SECOND DISTRICT



Supervisor
Kelly Long
THIRD DISTRICT



Supervisor
Peter C. Foy
FOURTH DISTRICT



Supervisor
John C. Zaragoza
FIFTH DISTRICT

Locations



Hall of Justice

800 South Victoria Avenue
Suite 314, Ventura, CA



Special Prosecutions

5720 Ralston Avenue, Ventura, CA



Juvenile Unit

Juvenile Justice Center
4353 Vineyard Avenue, Oxnard, CA



Bureau of Investigation Fiscal / Administrative Services

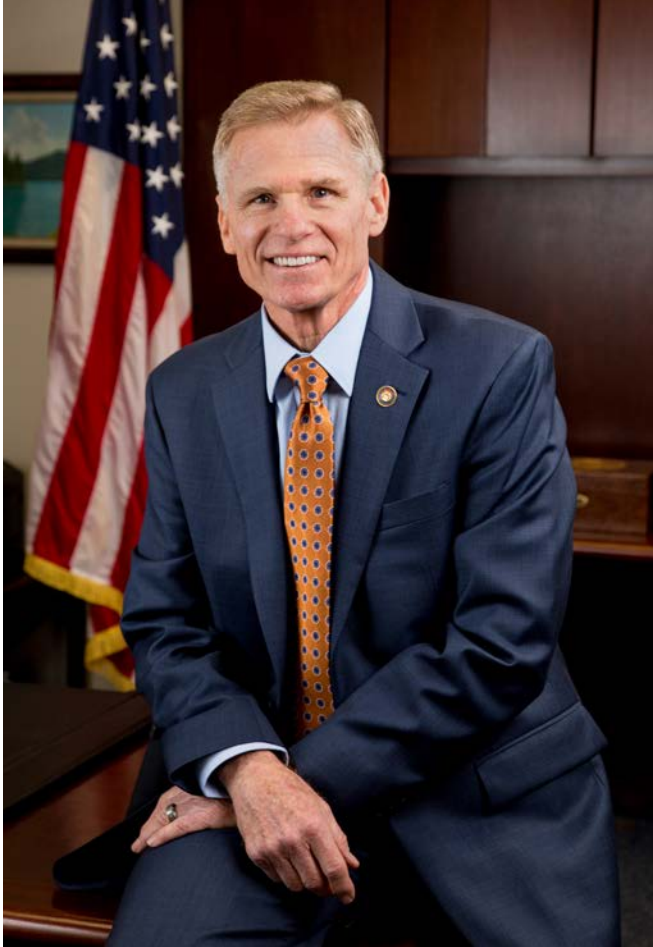
646 County Square Drive, Ventura, CA



East County Office

3855-F Alamo Street, Suite 2088, Simi Valley, CA

A Message From Gregory D. Totten, District Attorney



While the role of the prosecutor and public expectations evolve, the men and women of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office remain deeply committed to our core mission: to seek justice in every case, in every action, and in every decision. We have answered the challenges presented by developing new programs to play a broader role in achieving justice.

Each year, we assist thousands of victims to participate in the court process, seek restitution, obtain restraining orders, and heal. To better serve the community, we will soon open a Family Justice Center that will bring together numerous public agencies, law enforcement, and community-based organizations to provide direct services to victims of domestic violence and other interpersonal violence. This innovative program will also focus on helping children who face challenges due to their exposure to trauma and violence.

Positive messages to youth can help increase their chances of becoming productive, law-abiding adults. In Project LEAD, we teach fifth-grade students each year about personal responsibility and the criminal justice system.

DNA analysis, computer forensics, and other scientific techniques are increasingly essential in the investigation and prosecution of crime. We have engaged in public policy activities to increase funding

to prosecute "cold cases" solved by DNA evidence to bring defendants to justice and bring closure to victims. We also lead a countywide high-tech task force that both investigates computer crimes and analyzes evidence of crimes located on computers, smartphones, and other devices.

The law has long authorized peace officers to use force and, when necessary, deadly force to protect themselves and others. Today, as many of these shootings are captured on video, law enforcement faces intense public scrutiny of its use of force decisions. The objective and independent review of these shootings is among the district attorney's most solemn responsibilities. Consequently, we continue to deploy highly trained and specialized teams to respond to officer-involved shootings. Then, after an exhaustive investigation, we report our findings to the public with complete transparency.

This term report features the challenges, achievements, and expanding role of the District Attorney's Office in our community. Through our commitment to doing justice and implementing innovative programs, we strive to better serve and protect the public.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Totten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

THE PROSECUTOR IS “THE SERVANT OF THE LAW, THE TWOFOLD AIM OF WHICH IS THAT GUILT SHALL NOT ESCAPE NOR INNOCENCE SUFFER.”



BERGER V. UNITED STATES
 UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT (1935)

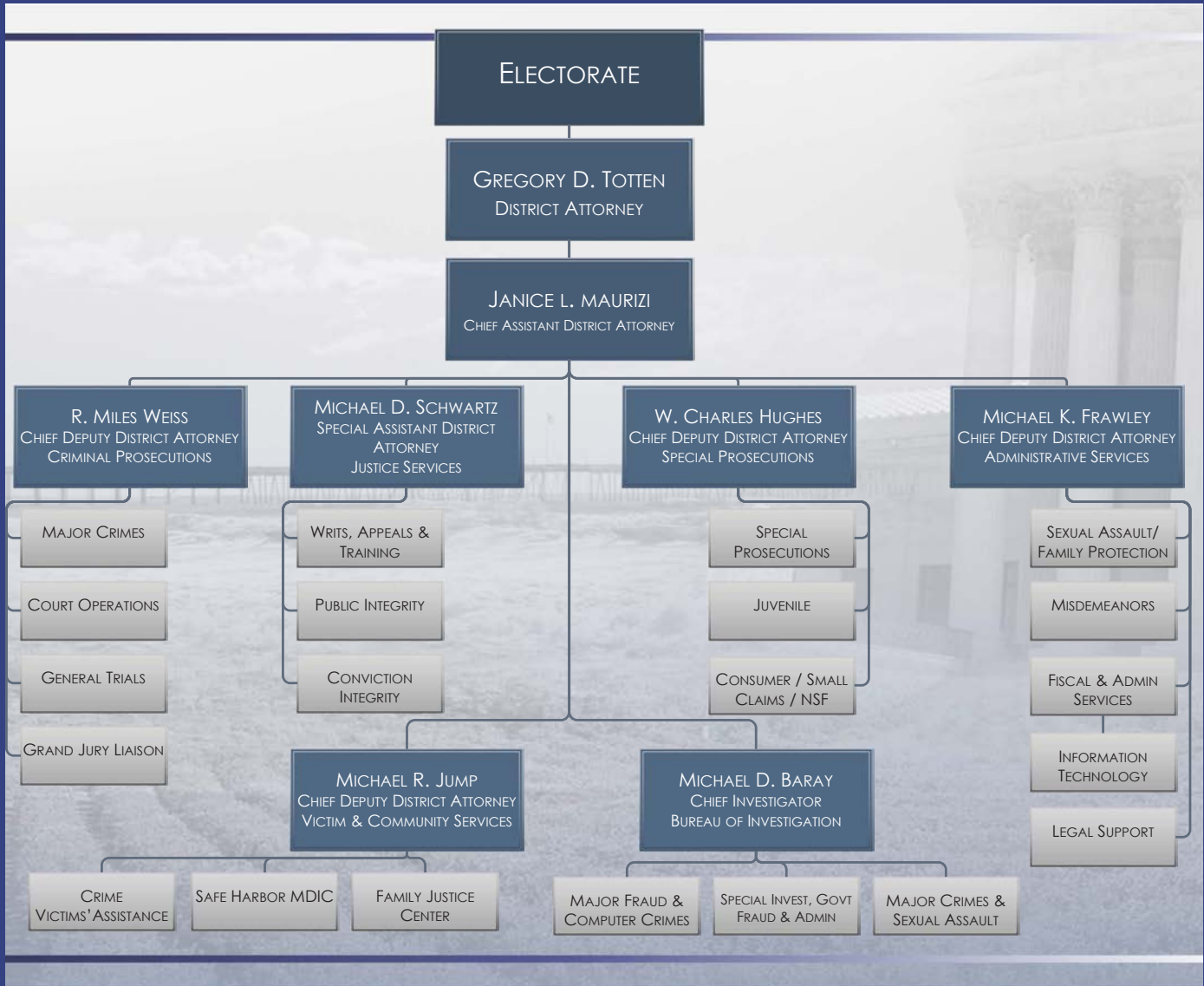


Table of Contents

A Message from the District Attorney	7
The Executive Management Team	10
Criminal Prosecutions	11
Major Crimes Unit	11
General Trials Unit	17
Court Operations Unit	19
Administrative Services	21
Sexual Assault/Family Protection Unit	21
Misdemeanor Unit	25
Fiscal, Administrative, & Legal Services Unit	27
Information Technology Unit	28
Legal Support Services Unit	29
Special Prosecutions	31
Consumer/Environmental Protection Unit	33
Fraud & Technology Crimes Unit	36
Juvenile Unit	39
Consumer Mediation & Small Claims Assistance Units	41
Justice Services	42
Writs, Appeals, & Training Unit	42
Conviction Integrity Units	43
Public Integrity Unit	43
Victim & Community Services	44
Route 91 Shooting	46
Borderline Shooting	47
Ventura County Family Justice Center	48
Bureau of Investigation	52
The Thomas Fire	55
Retirees	56
Awards	56
Elected to the Bench	57
In Memoriam	58

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY Executive Management Team



L to R: Special Assistant District Attorney Michael Schwartz, Chief Deputy District Attorney Chuck Hughes, Chief Investigator Mike Baray, Chief Deputy District Attorney Miles Weiss, District Attorney Greg Totten, Chief Assistant District Attorney Janice Maurizi, Chief Deputy District Attorney Michael Jump, Chief Deputy District Attorney Mike Frawley



Janice L. Maurizi
Chief Assistant District Attorney



Legal Management Assistants Cynthia Klante, Pattie O'Donnell; Program Assistant Joyce Donehue; Legal Management Assistants Carrie Broggie, Edith Ball, Diana Mendoza



Miles Weiss
Chief Deputy District Attorney
Criminal Prosecutions

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS

The 40 attorneys and three paralegals in Criminal Prosecutions are responsible for handling a broad range of criminal cases across the District Attorney's Office. The division includes the Major Crimes Unit, General Crimes Unit, and Court Operations Unit. It is overseen by a chief deputy

and three supervising attorneys. In addition to offering strategic analysis and decision-making on significant cases, the chief deputy of Criminal Prosecutions also serves as a liaison to the civil and criminal grand juries, and to local law enforcement agencies.

MAJOR CRIMES UNIT



Rameen Minoui
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Major Crimes Unit

The Major Crimes Unit is comprised of four teams that prosecute homicides, gang cases, major narcotics cases, and crimes against peace officers (CAPOs). Each team is staffed with attorneys who (vertically) personally handle each stage of their cases from the filing of charges through jury trial.

The Homicide team prosecutes all homicides committed in Ventura County, including current and cold-case homicides. These cases often involve atrocious crimes requiring substantial investigation, forensic evidence collection, extensive case preparation, and complex litigation. From 2015 to 2018, these prosecutors filed 53 homicide cases. They also oversee officer-involved shooting (OIS) investigations which includes responding to shooting scenes, monitoring interviews, and drafting public reports analyzing the legality of the force used. Homicide prosecutors are available 24 hours a day to assist law enforcement with search warrants, crime scene response, and guidance on complex legal issues.

Gang attorneys prosecute crimes committed by members of the approximately 30 active criminal street gangs in Ventura County. These prosecutions often involve complex and challenging issues including uncooperative witnesses and multiple charged defendants. From 2015 to

2018, they filed 424 gang cases. The Gang prosecutors also handle all hate crimes – cases in which the victim was targeted because of disability, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

The Narcotics team handles complicated cases including large-scale drug trafficking, substantial quantities of narcotics, and furnishing narcotics which cause overdose deaths. These cases often involve evidence yielded from confidential informants, undercover officers, search warrants, and wiretap operations. From 2015 to 2018, the Narcotics team filed approximately 695 cases.

The CAPOs prosecutor reviews, files, and handles all cases in which a peace officer was the victim of a violent crime. These filings can range from threats and assaults to attempted murder. From 2015 to 2018, the CAPOs prosecutor filed approximately 127 cases.

Homicides



L to R: Senior Deputy District Attorneys Richard Simon, Catherine Voelker, Tate McCallister, Melissa Suttner, Kelly Keenan

People v. Isaac Sinsun

Murder

Prosecutor: Kelly Keenan
Investigator: Robert Coughlin
Victim Advocate: Lisa Wright

On the evening of November 13, 2005, police officers responded to a call of a gunshot victim in the 900 block of Richmond Avenue in Oxnard. Upon arrival, the officers found the deceased victim, 49-year-old Joaquin Castaneda, lying in the street with a close-range shotgun wound to his head. The victim was wearing a private security guard uniform. He had been shot while inside his car, then removed from the car and left on the street. Evidence also indicated that the victim had been robbed of personal property. The next day, his car was found abandoned in a commercial area of Oxnard approximately 1.5 miles from the murder scene.

Further investigation located a suspicious vehicle linked to Isaac Sinsun that had bloody clothing inside. Analysis resulted in the identification of Castaneda's blood and Isaac Sinsun's DNA on the clothing. However, Isaac has an identical twin brother with identical DNA which created complications in prosecuting the case.

Later while in custody on other charges, Isaac Sinsun made recorded admissions to participating in the shooting death of Castaneda. These admissions included targeting the victim because Sinsun and his accomplices believed the victim was an undercover officer.

In July 2017, a jury convicted Sinsun of first-degree murder. The Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Sinsun to 25 years to life in prison.

People v. Kevin Hogrefe

Second-Degree Murder; Hit and Run Involving Death

Prosecutor: Rebecca Day
Investigator: Kimberly Michael
Victim Advocate: Jennifer Barbettini

On October 28, 2014, Kevin Hogrefe had been drinking heavily at two different bars for over 6 hours with a blood-alcohol level three times the legal limit. He was ousted from the second bar and drove to the northbound 101 Freeway in Camarillo. Sheriff's Deputy Eugene Kostiuhenko had just concluded a traffic enforcement stop on the on-ramp and was about to enter his patrol vehicle when Hogrefe drove towards the patrol vehicle and collided with him. Deputy Kostiuhenko was killed instantly when his body was propelled onto Hogrefe's vehicle. Hogrefe sped away at a high rate of speed attempting to avoid apprehension,

but was involved in another collision approximately 1.5 miles away. In October 2016, the jury found Hogrefe guilty of second-degree murder and fleeing the scene of an accident involving death. The Ventura County Superior Court sentenced him to 15 years to life in prison.

Hogrefe had a history of drinking and driving, including causing a roll-over collision in 2013 while driving with a blood alcohol level over twice the legal limit.



Ventura County Sheriff's Deputy
Eugene Kostiuhenko

People v. Andres Rodriguez and Melissa Salazar

Murder in the Commission of Kidnapping; Attempted Murder; Robbery

Prosecutor: Tate McCallister
Investigator: Corina Wondoloski
Victim Advocate: Patricia Wood

On the evening of July 17, 2013, Andres Rodriguez and Melissa Salazar kidnapped a female victim at gunpoint and forced her to divulge the location of a man and woman who stole property from Rodriguez and his accomplice earlier in the day. The kidnap victim directed Rodriguez and Salazar to the victims' home in Santa Paula. Rodriguez, armed with a semi-automatic pistol and a ballistic vest, entered the home and pursued the couple, who barricaded themselves in a bathroom. Rodriguez fired multiple shots through the bathroom door and then entered as the male victim escaped out a window. Rodriguez killed the female victim, Angela Bryant, shooting her in the head, and left with his recovered property. After releasing the female kidnapping victim, Rodriguez and Salazar fled to Mexico where they were tracked down and arrested by detectives from the Santa Paula Police Department in September 2013.

In September 2017, Rodriguez pled guilty to first-degree murder with a special circumstance of kidnapping, premeditated and deliberate attempted murder, and admitted using a gun in the commission of the crimes. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. For her part, Melissa Salazar pled guilty to kidnapping and robbery, admitted a prior "strike" conviction, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

People v. Jaime Paredes

Murder; Attempted Murder

Prosecutors: Tom Dunlevy
Tate McCallister
Investigator: Sonia Sanchez
Victim Advocate: Carlos Martinez

On July 1, 2009, Jaime Paredes, armed with an assault rifle, drove to the dental office in Simi Valley where his wife and the mother of his child, Mariella Paredes, worked. Once there, Paredes entered the rear of the office, began firing his weapon, and eventually forced his way into a room where his wife and several of her co-workers had barricaded themselves. Paredes shot Mariella multiple times, killing her. He then shot three of her co-workers, inflicting serious injuries. After a brief stand-off with Simi Valley police officers, Paredes surrendered and later confessed.

The grand jury indicted Paredes for murder and attempted murder. Competency proceedings were instituted in 2009. In 2015, a jury found Paredes incompetent to stand trial and he was sent to Patton State Hospital. In 2016, the court found Paredes competent to stand trial. He pled guilty to first-degree premeditated and deliberate murder for killing Mariella Paredes and admitted using a firearm to do so. He also pled guilty to three counts of premeditated and deliberate attempted murder for shooting three of Mariella's co-workers. In August 2017, the Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Paredes to 71 years to life in prison.

People v. Jose Luis Ortiz

Robbery, Attempted Murder of a Peace Officer

Prosecutor: Joann Roth
Investigator: Glenn Utter
Victim Advocate: Felicitia Roy

In May 2012, Jose Luis Ortiz entered an El Rio liquor store, walked straight to the counter, and pulled out a .38 S&W revolver, pointing it at the clerk. Ortiz demanded all the money in the register and robbed the clerk of approximately \$1,000. After Ortiz fled from the store, the clerk called 911.

Oxnard Police K-9 Officer Scott Coe responded to the area and searched for the defendant. While driving down a residential street, Officer Coe used his spotlight to illuminate an individual matching the defendant's description, holding a revolver up to his own chin. Deciding to create some distance between himself and Ortiz, Officer Coe accelerated away. While doing so, Officer Coe heard one gun shot and looked in his rearview mirror to see Ortiz standing in the street pointing the gun in the officer's direction. Ortiz advanced toward Officer Coe and fired several more shots, striking Coe's car. Ortiz was apprehended by Officer Coe's K-9 "Jake" and responding officers.

Ortiz was charged with attempted murder of a peace officer with the use of a gun and armed robbery. In January 2017, a jury found Ortiz guilty of all the charges and allegations. The Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Ortiz to 51 years to life in state prison.

People v. Thomas C. Young

Cold Case Murder in the Commission of Rape

Prosecutor: Rebecca Day
Investigators: Steve Rhods, Greg Hayes
Victim Advocates: Pat Wood, Dave Smith

On July 30, 1980, when Judy Knappenberger left for work at 7:00 a.m., her 15-year-old daughter Stacy was asleep in bed. They had recently moved from a nearby apartment complex to a duplex with a backyard. Mrs. Knappenberger returned home at 4:30 p.m. to find the back door ajar and her daughter raped and brutally killed by multiple stab wounds to her head and neck. No one heard the assault or saw anyone at the home.

Evidence collected at the crime scene included semen, blood, hairs and fingerprints. None of the fingerprint evidence yielded a suspect and forensic DNA analysis had not yet been developed. An autopsy revealed evidence of over 75 injuries, most of which were stab wounds. During an extensive investigation, police talked to family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances, but were unable to identify the killer.

Thomas Coalt Young, age 33 in 1980, was married and lived in the nearby apartment complex that Stacy and her mother had moved from just three weeks prior. The Knappenbergers did not know Young. Over 30 years later, his DNA was found to be a match to the evidence collected from the crime scene of Stacy's murder. In 2012, the cold case task force located Young living in Alabama. Young was arrested and extradited to Ventura.

On February 26, 2015, 35 years after Young murdered Stacy, a jury convicted him of murder in the commission of rape. In March 2015, the Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Young to life without the possibility of parole.

People v. Jane Laut

Domestic Violence Murder

Prosecutor: Rameen A. Minoui
Investigator: Mike Palmieri
Victim Advocate: Pat Wood

Jane Laut had been married to her husband, Dave Laut, for 29 years and lived with him and their 10-year-old son. Dave was an Olympic athlete and won a bronze medal for shot put in the 1984 Olympics. On August 27, 2009, at approximately midnight, Jane lured her husband to the side yard of their home while she secretly armed herself with a fully loaded Ruger revolver. Standing several feet behind Dave in the unlit yard, she shot him six times including twice in the back of the head, once in the back, twice in the face, and once in the arm. She needed to cock the hammer back and pull the trigger for each of the six shots fired from the single-action revolver.

The defendant went back into the house and hid the murder weapon in the bottom of a grandfather clock, changed her clothing, and called 911. In a feigned emotional tone, she told the operator that Dave had gone outside to investigate peculiar sounds and an unknown prowler had shot him.

At trial, the defendant claimed she had been the victim of domestic violence and that she shot the victim in self-defense during an assault that he initiated. On March 30, 2016, a jury found the defendant guilty of first-degree premeditated murder and found true the allegation that she used a firearm during the commission of the murder. In August 2016, the Ventura Superior Court sentenced Jane Laut to 50 years to life.

Gang Unit



L to R: Senior Deputy District Attorneys David Russell, Erin Meister, Blake Heller

People v. Martin Madrigal, et al.

Extortion, Street Terrorism

Prosecutors: Joann Roth
Blake Heller

Investigator: Jess Velasquez

In 2012, gang members throughout Ventura County united under the umbrella and protection of Mexican Mafia member Martin Madrigal to extort local drug dealers and funnel the money to Madrigal in Mexico. Madrigal, who was incarcerated in a Mexican prison, gave a local gang member, Edwin Mora, the order and authority to unite all the gangs in the county to carry out this criminal scheme.

A three-month-long wiretap operation named "Operation Wicked Hand" revealed the scope and breadth of this violent county-wide operation, including conspiracy, extortion, weapons, drugs

and assaultive crimes. When Mora was arrested with co-conspirators during a robbery attempt at a Simi Valley pharmacy, he had two letters from Madrigal in his pocket. One was a "hit" list from Madrigal naming the persons Madrigal wanted killed. The other letter directed Mora to collect \$500 a week in "taxes" from local drug dealers and gave Mora the authority to execute punishment, including killing those who refused to cooperate.

Twenty-seven individuals were charged with various felonies related to their involvement in this extortion conspiracy for the benefit of a criminal street

gang. Twenty-five charged individuals, including Mora, were convicted of numerous charges including attempted robbery, narcotics offenses, weapons and extortion. In May 2015, the Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Mora to 27 years 4 months in prison. The combined incarceration sentences for all 25 co-conspirators was 164 years 8 months. The two remaining co-defendants, Madrigal and his wife, Lina Fuentes, are still at large in Mexico.

Narcotics Unit



L to R: Deputy District Attorney Marine Dermadzhyan; Senior Deputy District Attorneys Taylor Waters, Scott Hendrickson, Joann Roth

People v. Toribio Aros-Osorio

Drug Trafficking of Cocaine and Methamphetamine

Prosecutor: Taylor Waters

Toribio Aros-Osorio was a narcotics trafficker in an organization that utilized stash houses, hidden vehicle compartments, and counter-surveilling drug couriers to transport cocaine and methamphetamine from Mexico throughout the United States. In September 2016, Aros-Osorio was the target of a wiretap investigation conducted by the Ventura County Combined Agency Team (VCCAT) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). By intercepting the co-conspirators' phone calls through court-ordered wiretaps,

executing a multitude of search warrants, and conducting covert surveillance, VCCAT detectives seized more than 80 pounds of cocaine and nearly 40 pounds of methamphetamine.

Aros-Osorio was charged with sale of narcotics, possession for sale of narcotics, and conspiracy to sell narcotics. In September 2017, he pled guilty in two criminal cases for his participation in the criminal enterprise. In the first case, he was convicted of coordinating with a Mexico-based

narcotics supplier to smuggle more than 40 pounds of cocaine into Ventura County in a manufactured compartment inside a vehicle's gas tank. In the second case, he pled guilty to possessing more than 10 pounds of methamphetamine found stashed inside his vehicle. The Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Aros-Osorio to a 15 year 4 month felony jail sentence.

GENERAL TRIALS UNIT



Rachelle Dean
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
General Trials Unit

The General Trials Unit is comprised of 12 attorneys handling nearly 500 felony cases at any given time. Cases are assigned to an attorney based on the complexity of the crime and the experience level of the attorney. Crimes prosecuted by the unit include attempted murder, arson, burglary, robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, battery with serious injury,

kidnap, possession for sales of a controlled substance, identity theft, forgery, weapons, criminal threats, and misdemeanor manslaughter. Animal Cruelty cases are handled by a dedicated prosecutor who partners with local animal control agencies and law enforcement to protect both domestic and wild animals from abuse.



Seated, L to R: Deputy District Attorney Brandon Ross; Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney Rachelle Dean; Deputy District Attorneys Chong-hwa Lee, Jillian Ewan; Standing, L to R: Deputy District Attorneys David Barnes, Jennifer Feldman; Senior Deputy District Attorney Theresa Pollara; Deputy District Attorney Rafael Orellana; Senior Deputy District Attorney Kathleen O'Brien; Deputy District Attorneys Elisabeth Main, Paul Feldman

People v. Noe Reyes; Gabriel Alamillo

Robbery, Auto Theft, Residential Burglary, Assault with a Deadly Weapon (Gang Case)

Prosecutor: Andrew Sullivant
Investigator: Jess Velasquez
Victim Advocate: Felicita Roy

In the early morning hours of November 17, 2015, Noe Reyes stole a vehicle from outside a mechanic shop. Shortly thereafter, Gabriel Alamillo and another gang member stole multiple bottles of alcohol from a store in Simi Valley. Around midday, Reyes burglarized a Simi Valley resident's home. Around 8:30 p.m. that evening, Reyes, Alamillo and a third gang member robbed and assaulted a gym patron in a parking lot in Simi Valley. Reyes repeatedly hit the victim in the head and body with an 18-inch metal pry bar. The victim was rushed to the hospital where he received nine staples for his wounds. Reyes, Alamillo and the third suspect were caught within hours trying to flee the area through a nearby apartment complex.

Reyes and Alamillo were charged with many serious gang-related offenses including armed robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, and shoplifting. Reyes was additionally charged with first-degree residential burglary, vehicle theft, and graffiti. In October 2016, a jury found both defendants guilty of those offenses. The Ventura County Superior Court sentenced Reyes to 18 years 8 months in state prison and Alamillo to a suspended 16 year 4 month sentence in lieu of local custody with formal probation.

Military Diversion Program

The mission of the Ventura County Military Diversion Program (also known as Veterans Treatment Court) is to assist current or former members of the United States military charged with a criminal offense who suffer from a mental health disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, or substance abuse as a result of military service. The defendant is provided an individualized treatment regimen to assist in overcoming the disability and resuming life without the stigma of a criminal conviction.

Defendants are screened for eligibility and suitability by the program team that includes representatives from the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Probation Agency, Ventura County Superior Court, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Not all crimes are eligible for Veterans Treatment Court, nor are all defendants suitable. Factors affecting suitability may include the defendant's pending offense, criminal history, the seriousness of the defendant's condition, and suitability and willingness to participate in treatment.

Treatment programs can be in-patient or out-patient, group or individual, and are administered by Veterans Affairs or community-based providers. In addition to regular review by treatment professionals, the Probation Agency supervises the defendant's progress and compliance with the terms of the treatment program.

Upon successful completion of 12 to 24 months of treatment and fulfillment of the program obligations, the charges against the defendant are dismissed and the records sealed. The program graduate is not required to disclose the arrest or treatment except in applications for law enforcement-related jobs.

The program has been an extremely successful collaborative effort. Since its inception in 2010, more than 170 veterans have found help, received restorative treatment, kept their obligations, graduated, and had their criminal matter dismissed. The District Attorney's Office is proud to be part of the rehabilitation path for these men and women who have served our country.

Mental Health Court

The District Attorney's Office actively participates in Mental Health Court, a collaborative justice program that provides mental health treatment and support services to mentally ill offenders. The target population is adult offenders charged with misdemeanor offenses and low-level felonies, who have a primary diagnosis of mental illness. The services provided include mental health assessment, psychological evaluations, integrated outpatient community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment,

medication monitoring, individual therapy, probation supervision, 24-hour crisis services and linkages to supported services, including employment, medical, housing and family. The Mental Health Court partners meet once a week and include members of the Probation Agency, Behavioral Health Department, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office and the Sheriff's Office.

COURT OPERATIONS UNIT



Kevin Drescher
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Court Operations Unit

First formed in December 2015, the Court Operations Unit consists of six unique prosecutorial functions. The DUI (Driving Under the Influence) team vertically prosecutes all drugged DUI cases, felony DUI cases, and vehicular manslaughter cases where the driver is impaired by alcohol or drugs. A dedicated Auto Theft prosecutor vertically handles felony stolen vehicle cases. A senior deputy district attorney provides written input and personally appears at Parole Hearings for defendants sentenced to life imprisonment and is responsible for ensuring that inmates remain incarcerated while they would be a danger to the public. The Complaint Review team reviews felony and certain misdemeanor cases to determine if criminal charges should be filed. The team reviews over 20,000 cases a year and accepts

over 17,500 for prosecution. Another veteran prosecutor is responsible for handling all cases involving sexually violent predators, mentally disordered offenders, and other mental health issues, as well as firearm confiscation/forfeiture hearings. The Calendar Court team advocates for the People at arraignments, sentencings, and motions, including Mental Health Court and Parole/Post Release Offender Supervision/Re-Entry Court.

Proposition 57, approved by the voters, granted the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation the authority to grant early release to “non-violent” felons. The Court Operations Unit reviews each case and submits letters in opposition to early release for those who remain a danger to public safety.



Seated, L to R: Senior Deputy District Attorneys Anne Spillner, Cynthia Nguyen, Rebecca Day; Deputy District Attorneys Melissa Bohl, Ethel Hernandez; Standing, L to R: Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney Kevin Drescher; Deputy District Attorney Edward Andrews; Senior Deputy District Attorneys Linda Groberg, Ernesto Acosta, Lauren Malan; Deputy District Attorneys John Poore, Caroline Sommers

People v. David Andrade-Ruiz

Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated, DUI with Great Bodily Injury, Fleeing the Scene of an Accident

Prosecutor: Taylor Waters
Victim Advocate: Brenda Marquez

On January 23, 2016, defendant David Andrade-Ruiz drove at unsafe speeds on Highway SR-33 while under the influence of alcohol and while his driver's license was suspended. He crashed into the side of the road, ejecting one rear passenger through the front windshield, causing the other rear passenger to suffer a spinal cord injury that left her paralyzed, and causing great bodily injury to the front passenger. After the crash, Andrade-Ruiz fled the scene, leaving the paralyzed passenger lying on the side of the road, and leaving the other passenger stuck in the front windshield of the burning car, resulting in his death. Defendant's blood alcohol content at the time of the collision was determined to be 0.13 percent. The defendant pled guilty to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, fleeing the scene of an accident that resulted in death, and driving under the influence resulting in injuries, with a special enhancement for causing great bodily injury that resulted in paralysis. He was sentenced to 13 years 8 months in state prison.

People v. Joseph Cantrell

Second-Degree Murder, Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated, Fleeing the Scene of an Accident

Prosecutor: Andrew Reid
Investigator: Dan Horan
Victim Advocate: Pat Wood

On August 25, 2015, at 7:45 p.m., defendant Joseph Cantrell was driving on Ponderosa Drive in Camarillo when he ran a red light at Mobil Avenue and struck pedestrian Randall Lee Fillmore in the crosswalk of the intersection. Surveillance video showed Cantrell neither braked nor attempted to pull over and help the victim, but instead immediately turned down a side street, where he lost control of his vehicle. He collided with an unoccupied parked car and fled on foot before being apprehended by nearby residents. A subsequent investigation by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office determined that Cantrell's blood alcohol concentration was over twice the legal limit, registering 0.17. Cantrell had two prior convictions for driving under the influence and driving on a suspended license. A jury convicted Cantrell of all charges, including second-degree murder. He was sentenced to 21 years to life in state prison.

People v. Eduardo Robles

First-Degree Murder

Prosecutor: Edward Andrews
Victim Advocate: Celia Cardona

On May 31, 2018, Eduardo Robles was driving his vehicle on Highway 126 when he intentionally rammed the car in front of him, which was being driven by Benjamin Brown. Mr. Brown was returning from his son's preschool graduation at the time of the crash. The defendant caused the collision in a premeditated attempt to kill his passenger, Jose Gaspar. The impact of the collision caused Mr. Brown's vehicle to veer across the highway and collide with a tractor-trailer. Mr. Brown was killed and Mr. Gaspar was injured.

Following a trial that lasted several weeks, the jury found Robles guilty of first-degree murder of Benjamin Brown, and attempted murder of Jose Gaspar. In December 2018, he was sentenced to 34 years in prison.

Homeless Court

Homeless Court is a partnership between the court, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, Human Services Agency, and Behavioral Health Department to help resolve community problems created by homelessness with practical solutions. Homeless Court provides alternative sentencing for homeless non-violent misdemeanor offenders who are unable to pay fines and fees. This includes substituting community service, volunteer work, counseling and/or participation in agency programs instead of fines, fees, or custody. The alternative sentencing structure is not coercive or punitive in nature, but rather is designed to allow those who want to account for their wrongdoing to make a meaningful contribution to their community.



Michael K. Frawley
Chief Deputy District Attorney
Administrative Services

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services is home to two front-line prosecution units, the Sexual Assault/Family Protection Unit and the Misdemeanor Unit, as well as the units that provide operational support for the more than 270 employees of the District Attorney's Office.

Administrative Services is managed by a chief deputy who works with the managers and supervisors of the Sexual Assault/Family Protection Unit; the Misdemeanor Unit; the Fiscal, Administrative, and Legislative Services Unit; the Legal Support Services Unit; and the Information Technology Unit.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/ FAMILY PROTECTION UNIT



Audry Nafziger
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Sexual Assault/Family Protection Unit

The Sexual Assault/Family Protection Unit includes 20 attorneys and handles some of the most challenging and disturbing cases in the county. Prosecutors work closely with police, medical professionals, and victim advocates to investigate and prosecute crimes, while seeking to avoid further trauma to the victims.

Sexual Assault cases include rape, child molest, other forcible sexual attacks, and failure to comply with sexual offender registration laws. These crimes often have a devastating effect on the lives of the victims.

Family Protection cases include violence by spouses, ex-spouses, persons who are or were in a dating relationship, as well as child abuse and violation of domestic violence restraining orders. These crimes affect all socio-economic groups and are unfortunately prevalent throughout society. Each year, the unit reviews approximately 3,000 domestic violence cases for prosecution. The complex dynamics between the defendants and victims make prosecution of these cases particularly challenging.

Family Protection



Seated, L to R: Deputy District Attorney Christina Catapang; Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney Audry Nafziger; Deputy District Attorney Susan Park; Standing, L to R: Deputy District Attorneys Gregory Agron, Justus Spillner, Brandon Yeaton, Emma Levey; Senior Deputy District Attorney Andrew Sullivant; Deputy District Attorneys Michael Kern, Craig Gardner

People v. Jeffrey Lindquist

Felony Corporal Injury to a Spouse with Great Bodily Injury; Felony Dissuading a Witness from Reporting a Crime; Misdemeanor Child Endangerment

Prosecutor: Amber Lee
Investigator: Chris Borkovec
Victim Advocate: Patricia Caputo

During an argument in their home in March 2015, the female victim fled from her husband, Jeffrey Lindquist, to her 8-year-old son's room. Lindquist broke the door down to get to the victim. He then repeatedly punched the victim in the face resulting in an orbital fracture, so forcefully that he knocked her eye into her sinus cavity. When the victim attempted to call 911, Lindquist destroyed her phone and

forcibly removed the victim's 8-year-old son from the home, causing injury to the child. The victim underwent four different surgeries to her eye as a result of the attack and suffers from a permanent disability.

In July 2017, a jury convicted Lindquist of all charges. The court sentenced Lindquist to the maximum sentence of 11 years in prison.

People v. Thanh Van Jensen

Assault with Force Likely to Cause Great Bodily Injury; Battery with Serious Bodily Injury

Prosecutor: Amber Lee
Investigator: Scott Peterson
Victim Advocate: Lisa Wright

On March 12, 2016, Thanh Van Jensen was at home with his mother and his adult sister, the victim. The victim and

Jensen got into an argument after the victim discovered that Jensen had left the toilet seat up in a bathroom the two shared. During the argument, Jensen became enraged and began punching the victim repeatedly in the face and head. The victim fled to the kitchen where Jensen pushed her to the floor and repeatedly slammed her face into the tile floor. The attack continued until Jensen's elderly mother intervened and Jensen retreated upstairs. The victim suffered a serious injury, a subdural hematoma, commonly

known as bleeding on the brain, as well as multiple contusions.

Jensen was convicted by a jury of assault with force likely to produce great bodily injury and battery with serious bodily injury with the special allegation that Jensen personally inflicted great bodily injury on the victim. Jensen was sentenced to 33 years to life, pursuant to California's Three Strikes Law, having been previously convicted of rape by force, and lewd acts on a 10-year-old child.

Sexual Assault



L to R: Senior Deputy District Attorneys Patrice Koenig and Tom Dunlevy; Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney Audry Nafziger; Senior Deputy District Attorney Erik Nasarenko

People v. Gary Haw

Lewd Act on a Child

Prosecutor: Andrea Haney
Investigator: Kristina Bertilson
Victim Advocate: Pat Wood

Defendant Gary Haw owned a local tanning salon where he employed numerous underage males. Between 2000 and 2002, Haw sexually abused underage victim John Doe 1 who was an employee of the defendant. John Doe 1 and his family lived with the defendant at the time of the abuse, but the victim did not reveal the abuse at the time it happened. When John Doe 1 finally came forward years later, a subsequent investigation revealed numerous prior victims who had also been molested by the defendant. Two victims came forward after seeing a press release by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. On February 28, 2017, the jury convicted the defendant of five counts of lewd act on a child, and he was sentenced to the maximum sentence of 5 years 8 months in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

People v. Thomas Stephen Bork

Sexual Intercourse with Child Under 10, Lewd Acts on Children

Prosecutor: Erik Nasarenko
Investigator: Scott Peterson
Victim Advocate: Elizabeth Elizondo

In 2010, an 8-year-old girl told a social worker that her foster parent had sexually abused her over the summer in his Camarillo home. After conducting forensic interviews, Ventura County Sheriff's detectives learned that both the 8-year-old girl and her 6-year-old sister had been molested by their foster parent.

When another victim of the defendant learned that he had taken in foster girls, she notified social workers and sheriff's deputies that she and a number of other relatives had been sexually abused by the defendant at a family farm in Bradley, California, in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the course of investigating these new disclosures, detectives learned of another victim, whose sexual abuse began in 1970 in Huntington

Beach. Thereafter, a district attorney investigator identified an additional victim in the city of Porterville who had been molested when she was 3.

At trial, the victims of the charged offenses testified, as well as two victims whose crimes fell outside the statute of limitations. The defendant was convicted on all nine counts, including sexual intercourse with a child, continuous sexual abuse of a child, and forcible lewd acts. He is currently serving a sentence of 124 years to life in state prison.

People v. William Beliveau

Penetration by Foreign Object

Prosecutor: Erik Nasarenko

Investigator: Mike Aguilar

Victim Advocate: Patricia Caputo

In June 2016, a 54-year-old woman went to Los Robles Hospital reporting that she had been sexually assaulted earlier that morning. Hospital staff contacted the Sheriff. Investigation determined that the victim was a recovering alcoholic who had met the defendant at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and agreed to live with him

as a friend while he helped to support her sobriety. When she woke up that morning, she was completely nude but for a shirt dangling from her arm, which shocked and frightened her because she went to bed fully clothed. The defendant's DNA was found on her body.

The Sheriff's Office sent out a press release seeking additional victims. In response, a separate victim, also a recovering alcoholic who had met the defendant through Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, told detectives that she was assaulted in her Thousand Oaks home after

the defendant had supplied her with vodka. Two additional women came forward and later testified that, despite knowing that they were alcoholics, the defendant would regularly provide them alcohol.

The defendant was convicted at jury trial of two counts of sexual penetration of two victims – one count while the victim was unconscious, and the other while the victim was intoxicated. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse



Julia Snyder
Deputy District Attorney

The Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse prosecutor is responsible for prosecuting crimes committed against people aged 65 and older and against dependent adults ages 18-64. The unit handles all physical, financial, and sexual abuse crimes against these victims. From 2015 through 2018, the Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse Unit filed over 400 criminal complaints. Physical crimes include manslaughter, attempted murder, battery, sexual assault, physical abuse, mental abuse, and neglect. Financial crimes against elders include identity theft,

fraud, and financial abuse. The prosecutor receives specialized training concerning unique issues such as cognitive impairment, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and developmental delays. Working closely with law enforcement, Adult Protective Services, Tri-Counties Regional Center, and Behavioral Health, the District Attorney strives to bring justice to vulnerable victims and minimize the stress and emotional impact of criminal conduct on their lives.

MISDEMEANOR UNIT



Brent Nibecker
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Misdemeanor Unit

The Misdemeanor Unit is staffed with 11 prosecutors and two paralegals. The unit's prosecutors handle a wide range of criminal violations including driving under the influence of alcohol, battery, theft, narcotics offenses, and brandishing of weapons. In 2014, the voters approved Proposition 47, which reduced many crimes previously prosecuted as felonies, dramatically increasing the number of cases handled by the Misdemeanor Unit. In 2017, the unit handled over 16,400 cases, nearly a 70 percent increase over the number of cases handled by the unit in 2013.

Designated prosecutors in the Misdemeanor Unit handle Fish and Wildlife cases, Contractors State Licensing Board cases, and Alcoholic Beverage Control cases, working closely with law enforcement by providing training and assisting with investigations. As part of the office's effort to combat the demand side of the human trafficking problem, a unit prosecutor is also assigned to handle prostitution cases with a focus on prosecuting sex purchasers.



Seated, L to R: Deputy District Attorneys Susan Sabry, Stephanie Ramirez, Tyler Zarembo, David Kwon
Standing, L to R: Deputy District Attorneys Alexa Leibl, Megan Rayburn, Heather Sweatman; Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney Brent Nibecker; Deputy District Attorneys Paul Benjamin, Hayley Moyer, Michael Brenn

People v. Isias Moo

Driving Under the Influence; Driving Without a License

Prosecutor: David Kwon
Investigative Assistant: Dean Phaneuf

On May 19, 2009, Isias Moo was caught driving under the influence of alcohol for the third time. A California Highway Patrol officer first noticed Moo at 1:35 a.m. when Moo was driving 90 miles per hour on the southbound 101 freeway in the city of Thousand Oaks. Upon contacting Moo, the officer could smell an odor of an alcoholic beverage and saw that Moo had red and watery eyes. After conducting a series of field sobriety tests, Moo was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. A chemical test revealed that his blood-alcohol level was 0.08. He was in possession of cocaine and was driving without a valid driver's license.

Moo provided false identification and a false name to the arresting officer during the investigation.

After Moo was released from custody, he failed to appear at his next court date. An arrest warrant was issued but law enforcement was unable to locate him. Moo was able to avoid the court process for over seven years. In 2017, Moo was finally arrested on his warrant and brought to trial. A jury found Moo guilty on all counts. For Moo's third driving-under-the-influence conviction, he was sentenced to serve 210 days in jail and 60 months formal probation.

Misdemeanor Diversion Program

In October 2017, the District Attorney instituted a Misdemeanor Diversion Program for low-level misdemeanor offenders. The program is an effort to reduce recidivism by providing meaningful education and rehabilitation. Those who choose to participate have their charges deferred while they complete rehabilitative classes and pay any restitution owed to the victims. Programming is based on a therapeutic concept known as cognitive behavioral therapy and addresses the core cause or causes of an offender's conduct with topics such as victim impact, theft prevention, life skills, substance abuse education, and anger management. Excluded from the program are more serious crimes such as driving under the

influence, domestic violence, gang-related offenses, crimes exhibiting criminal sophistication, and crimes of significant violence. Those who complete the diversion program as required do not face prosecution.

Participation in diversion is voluntary. This program is entirely funded by offenders, with neither cost nor revenue to the District Attorney's Office or the County of Ventura. A portion of the fees paid is placed in an indigent offender fund which is used to reduce program fees for qualifying indigent offenders.

While offender eligibility for diversion is determined by a deputy district attorney, the program is administered

by Pacific Educational Services, Inc. (PES), a leader in California diversion programs. A study conducted by the Orange County District Attorney's Office found that while 21 percent of those who declined diversion re-offended within one year, only 6 percent of those who completed the PES program committed a new crime in that timeframe.

This program provides offenders with an opportunity to address the issues that led them to offend in the first place. If that aim is achieved, this program will improve the safety of our community, make victims whole, reduce the burden on the court system, and help offenders change their lives for the better.

FISCAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, & LEGISLATIVE SERVICES UNIT



Stuart Gardner
Senior Deputy District Attorney
Fiscal and Administrative Services Director

The Fiscal, Administrative, and Legislative Services Unit is an integral part of nearly every operation at the District Attorney's Office. The unit's staff handles an array of functions, including preparation and administration of a \$53 million budget, the management of grants and other revenue sources that substantially reduce the Office's net county cost, the recruitment and on-boarding of highly talented employees, administration of employees' benefits, payroll functions for its staff of 275 employees, application of internal fiscal controls and coordination of external audits,

accounts payable and receivable, contracting for services and expert witnesses, all employee and witness travel, facility maintenance requests for approximately 80,000 square feet, and a variety of special projects. Many of these functions require coordination with the County Executive Office, Human Resources, Labor Relations, Risk Management, General Services Agency, and the Auditor-Controller's Office. In short, the unit ensures the Office has the resources it needs to accomplish its mission.



L to R: Accounting Assistant Edwin Sampang; Staff Services Manager Judy Coronado; Fiscal and Administrative Services Director Stuart Gardner; Administrative Assistant Karen Simpson; Accountant Joseph Fienberg

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIT



Gene Mecagni
Director
Information Technology Unit

The Information Technology Unit (ITU) provides the technological tools and services necessary to keep the District Attorney's Office functioning effectively. Under the leadership of the Information Technology director, the ITU is responsible for the design, development, implementation, and support of all technology hardware and software. The ITU maintains case and content management systems, and supports community outreach and prosecution efforts in the courtroom.

The ITU also provides direct support to local law enforcement in the use of the Ventura County Integrated Justice Information System (VCJIS) case management database.

The ITU supports the office's state-of-the-art communication network, linking the five office locations and hundreds of desktops, mobile devices, scanners, and printers to more than 20 virtual servers. In addition, the ITU provides on-demand technical support to all calls for assistance. The team continues to examine emerging technologies to improve capabilities and services. The unit also manages the office's intranet and public Web site. More recently, with the assistance of ITU, the District Attorney's Office has launched a Twitter account to keep the public informed of news releases and other announcements.



L to R: Mike Sanders, Charles Swaim, Alfredo Valenzuela, Steve Davidson



Ann Phelps
Staff Services Manager

LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES UNIT

The Legal Support Services Unit provides essential clerical and secretarial support to attorneys, investigators, managers, and paraprofessionals in the District Attorney's Office. This unit has 54 highly skilled employees who support numerous unique operations within the office. Support services include witness coordination, which prepares and mails subpoenas, keeps witnesses apprised of case status through our on-call system, and alerts witnesses to when they are needed in court. Clerical staff open files, track them in our database, and make sure files and documents get to where they are needed for prosecution. Our word processing staff converts audio recordings into transcripts for investigation and court, and prepares other essential documents. The discovery staff provides police reports and other documents to defense counsel and processes billing. Legal secretaries finalize, serve, and file documents for court. Other services include reception, criminal history (rap sheets), legal management assistance, and mail room/courier services.

prosecution effort. In 2015, staff processed and printed almost 90,000 subpoenas and in 2018 approximately 101,500. Between 2015 and 2018, staff prepared a yearly average of one million photocopies and duplicated a yearly average of 11,500 DVDs and CDs. Staff prepared and processed an average of 245 felony cases, 1,828 misdemeanor cases, and 226 juvenile cases per month, and word processors typed an average of 8 million words per year.

For many years, clerical staff has sequentially numbered (Bates stamped) all pages of reports in felony cases to ensure that defense counsel has received complete discovery; during this term, that process was expanded to misdemeanor cases once the case is set for trial or pretrial.

The Legal Support Services Unit is extremely proud of its accomplishments and is committed to maintaining a professional level of support services and programs designed to enhance the efficiency of the criminal prosecution process.

The Legal Support Services Unit is an essential component of the



Carmen Marquez, Receptionist



L to R: Legal Processing Assistants JoAnn DelaCruz, Erika Garcia;
Clerical Supervisor Laura Lovio; Legal Processing Assistant Mary Medina

Legal Support Staff



Felony Records
 Seated, L to R: Legal Processing Assistant Louise Alfieri; Clerical Supervisor Marlana Tovar; Legal Processing Assistant Lesly Cervantes. Standing, L to R: Legal Processing Assistants Clara Lascano-Limas, Cyndy Villa, Sandra Carmona, Paulina Alvarado



L to R: Office Assistant Yolanda Chavez and Courier Pernell Winbush



Misdemeanor Records
 L to R: Legal Processing Assistant Marlen Cabada; Clerical Supervisor Linda Vivian; Legal Processing Assistants Francine Litada, Dulce Zellmer



L to R: Information Processing Operator Bobbie McQueen; Clerical Supervisor Francine Garcia; Information Processing Operator Suzanne Quam



Felony Secretaries
 L to R: Legal Processing Assistants Daniel Cruz, Pam Dixon; Clerical Supervisor Linda Vivian; Legal Processing Assistants Analia Silva, Veronica Moreno



L to R: Legal Processing Assistants Eduardo Duran, Laura Garibay; Clerical Supervisor Francine Garcia; Legal Processing Assistants Jessica Ramirez, Chantra Siggard, and Mariana Villsaenor.



L to R: Clerical Supervisors Francine Garcia, Laura Lovio, Linda Vivian, Marlana Tovar

SPECIAL PROSECUTIONS



W. Charles Hughes
Chief Deputy District Attorney
Special Prosecutions

Special Prosecutions investigates and prosecutes some of the most complex cases in our criminal justice system, many of which result in significant financial losses to victims. Depending on the type of crime, Special Prosecutions cases may be assigned to Consumer and Environmental Protection, Fraud and Technology Crimes, Real Estate Fraud, Asset Forfeiture, Code Enforcement, Child Abduction Recovery, Automobile Insurance Fraud, or Workers' Compensation Fraud. Special Prosecutions also oversees the Juvenile Unit, where juvenile offenders are handled separately from adult offenders in the criminal justice system, regardless of the type of crime committed; and the recovery of losses through the Non-Sufficient Funds Checks Unit.

Cases investigated and prosecuted by Special Prosecutions typically involve computer crimes, insurance fraud, securities fraud, embezzlement, white collar thefts, and real estate fraud. The cases are complex and often involve thousands of documents. Victims, who may be private citizens, large corporations, insurance companies, or elderly retirees on limited incomes, often suffer cumulative losses in the millions.



Brian Rafelson
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Special Prosecutions

Special Prosecutions cases continue to increase in both size and complexity. To meet this challenge, the unit uses a team-and-technology approach in investigating and prosecuting fraud cases within specific specialized areas. Teams are often made up of prosecutors, investigators, and support staff. In some instances, investigators and support staff are provided by other agencies, such as the High Technology Task Force, the Department of Insurance, the Department of Corporations, the Employment Development Department, the Department of Labor Standards Enforcement, the State Contractors License Board and the State Franchise Tax Board, among others. These specialized teams, using the latest technology, are effective in the war against major fraud.

Asset Forfeiture/Code Enforcement



Karen Wold
Senior Deputy District Attorney

The Asset Forfeiture/Code Enforcement prosecutor works with local law enforcement to reduce the profitability of crime by bringing civil forfeiture actions to confiscate the proceeds of crime, including cash and property. When criminals profit from their crimes, state and federal laws allow law enforcement agencies to seize the ill-gotten gains in specific circumstances. This attorney also prosecutes violations of laws relating to building and safety, weights and measures, and environmental health.

Auto Insurance Fraud



Chrystina Jenson
Senior Deputy District Attorney

Auto Insurance Fraud prosecutes cases of fraud committed against auto insurance providers and carriers, which drive up insurance costs for everyone. Cases may involve false injury claims, fraudulent repair shop billing, staged accidents, and after-acquired insurance claims. The section is funded by a grant from, and works closely with, the Department of Insurance.

Child Abduction & Recovery



L to R: Investigative Assistant Lisa Simmons; Investigators William Miller and Thomas Radwan; Senior Deputy District Attorney Kathy LaSalle

Child Abduction and Recovery works on behalf of the court to enforce child custody and visitation orders. Often dealing with highly emotional family dynamics, the unit focuses on securing voluntary compliance with court orders, but enforces compliance when voluntary efforts fail. Navigating the differing laws in other states and nations, attorneys and investigators return abducted children from anywhere in the world to the jurisdictions in which they belong. In appropriate cases, abducting parents are charged with criminal violations.

People v. Ira Brown

Child Abduction

Prosecutor: Kathy LaSalle
Investigator: Tom Radwan
Investigative Assistant:
Dominique Rosales

Defendant Ira Brown and his wife were married for seven years, during which time they had three children, aged four, five, and seven. The defendant regularly abused drugs, suffered from mental health issues, and routinely committed acts of domestic violence in front of the children. After a violent episode in June 2015, the defendant's wife packed to leave and tried to take all three children with her. The defendant would not allow her

to take the four-year-old, ultimately fleeing the state with the child and moving to Nevada.

The Ventura County Family Superior Court Law Division appointed the District Attorney's Child Abduction and Recovery Unit to locate and return the child to California. The defendant was eventually located and, with the assistance of the Nevada Attorney General's Office, was arrested. The child was recovered and returned to his mother in California. The defendant was extradited back to California where he pled guilty to two counts of child abduction. In October 2015, he was placed on probation for 60 months and ordered to serve 132 days in the Ventura County jail.



L to R: Senior Deputy District Attorneys Mitchell Disney, Mickye Coyle, Dominic Kardum; Staff Services Manager Christine Mitchell; Deputy District Attorney Danny Lo; Program Administrator Stephen Mattern

Consumer and Environmental Protection investigates and prosecutes individuals and businesses who violate environmental laws such as improper handling, disposal, or transportation of hazardous waste and materials, as well as unlawful air or water pollution.

Consumer offenses commonly involve unfair business practices and false advertising, which give offending businesses an unfair competitive advantage over those businesses who diligently follow the law. These cases may be filed in either civil or criminal courts. A key component is public outreach to alert the public to emergent scams and deceptive activities.

People v. Albert Solano

Financial Elder Abuse; Residential Burglary; Insurance Fraud

Prosecutor: Mickye Coyle

Albert Solano operated a fraudulent plumbing scheme, largely targeting seniors. Solano advertised a \$49.95 drain cleaning special as a “bait and switch” tactic to gain entry into victims’ homes. Once inside, Solano or his employees deceived victims into believing their plumbing problems were more severe than just a clogged drain. Solano used scare tactics to rush victims into signing contracts for thousands of dollars, then immediately began jackhammering floors to prevent the homeowners from seeking a second opinion.

Solano and his workers deliberately broke pipes, clogged drains, and created water damage to increase the scope of unnecessary work. Solano routinely submitted fraudulent invoices to his victims’ homeowners’ insurance carriers, sent victims to collection for sums they did not owe, and filed false mechanics liens on his victims’ homes.

On January 24, 2017, Solano pled guilty to 30 felony counts involving residential burglary, elder abuse, filing a false instrument, insurance fraud, and grand theft. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and was ordered to pay full restitution to his victims.

People v Green Compass Environmental Solutions, LLC, Santa Clara Waste Water Company, et al.

On November 18, 2014, at approximately 3:45 a.m., an explosion occurred in Santa Paula at a wastewater treatment facility owned and operated by Santa Clara Waste Water Company and Green Compass Environmental Solutions, LLC. The explosion was caused by the reckless handling and disposal of a hazardous chemical, which was pumped into a vacuum truck containing incompatible chemicals. Numerous employees and first responders were injured by the explosion of the vacuum truck, or by inhaling toxic fumes of chlorine dioxide gas resulting from the explosion, or from a large chemical fire that erupted after the explosion.

A post-explosion investigation by the District Attorney's Office with support from local and federal and regulatory agencies, including VCEH, USEPA and USDOT, revealed the defendants illegally accepted and disposed of hazardous waste, recklessly handled hazardous waste, falsified lab results they provided to the City of Oxnard, violated labor laws and OSHA regulations, and engaged in other unlawful activities including moving chemicals off site to a local storage lot prior to inspections by VCEH personnel. On August 7, 2015, a grand jury returned a 71-count indictment against the corporate defendants, as well as nine individuals.

Approximately one year after the November 2014 explosion, the defendants concealed their possession of approximately 5,500 gallons of a hazardous chemical,

Petromax, in leaking, unmarked and improperly stored totes and barrels at the Santa Paula facility. Petromax had not been reported by the defendants as mandated by law. On March 18, 2016, a grand jury returned a 13-count indictment against the corporate defendants as well as four individuals.

The indictments were consolidated and the cases against 10 of the 11 charged defendants were concluded by plea, with a restitution order of \$3,597,621. To date, the victims in this case have received \$950,000 in restitution as a result of this successful prosecution.

People v. O'Reilly Auto Parts

Civil Violations of Hazardous Waste Laws

Prosecutor: Mitchell Disney

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office, with the district attorneys' offices of Alameda and Yolo counties, led a 50-prosecutor investigation and civil prosecution of hazardous waste violations by Missouri-based O'Reilly Auto Parts. A stipulated judgment resolved allegations that more than 525 California O'Reilly Auto Parts stores unlawfully handled, transported, and disposed of hazardous waste and materials including motor oil, alkaline batteries, electronic waste, aerosol cans and other toxic, ignitable and corrosive wastes.

During 2013 and 2014, investigators from the Ventura County District Attorney's Consumer and

Environmental Protection Unit, along with investigators from other district attorney's offices and environmental regulators statewide, conducted a series of undercover inspections of waste bins originating at O'Reilly stores. The inspections revealed that O'Reilly routinely and systematically disposed of used oil, used oil filters, and hazardous wastes to local landfills throughout California that were not permitted to receive those wastes. The investigation also revealed that O'Reilly regularly transported hazardous wastes from its stores to its California distribution centers without required licenses. The statewide waste inspections revealed that 42 out of 43 O'Reilly stores and both O'Reilly

distribution centers were in violation of state law. Eight of those O'Reilly stores are in Ventura County.

Under the settlement entered November 2016, O'Reilly paid \$6 million in civil penalties and \$500,000 to reimburse the costs of the investigation. An additional \$1.51 million was paid by O'Reilly to fund supplemental environmental projects furthering consumer protection and environmental enforcement in California, and \$1.85 million was paid to fund hazardous waste minimization and enhanced compliance projects. The retailer is bound under the terms of a permanent injunction prohibiting similar future violations of law.

People v. Avi Gozlan

Conspiracy, Grand Theft, Theft from Elders, Filing False Document, Eavesdropping

Prosecutor: Karen Wold
Investigator: Jeff Barry

Between 2005 and 2013, defendant Avi Gozlan operated a fraudulent remodeling and home improvement business across Southern California under several company names. Gozlan and his co-conspirators sold home improvement services to consumers, largely targeting seniors, using a sophisticated network of telemarketers who were each required to make hundreds of solicitation calls daily. They misled consumers into believing the companies were properly licensed contractors.

The defendants set up the businesses using legitimate license numbers of semi-retired contractors and then paid them a monthly fee to use their licenses. The licensed contractors did not oversee or participate in the contracting business. A majority of the contracting work was either substandard or never actually performed. In addition, numerous homeowners were overbilled for their projects. Nine Ventura County homeowners were victimized as a result of damage to their homes caused by Gozlan's illegal contracting businesses.

Gozlan pleaded guilty to 13 felonies, paid \$400,000 in restitution to his victims, and in February 2015, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The other co-conspirators all pled guilty to a variety of charges, including financial elder abuse, and paid more than \$600,000 in restitution.

People v. Wells Fargo Bank

Civil Violations of California Privacy Laws

Prosecutor: Mitchell Disney

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office, together with the California State Attorney General's Office and district attorney's offices from Los Angeles, Riverside, Alameda, and San Diego counties, prosecuted a civil enforcement action against Wells Fargo Bank for repeated violations of California's privacy laws. The complaint, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleged that Wells Fargo failed to timely and adequately disclose its automatic recording of phone calls with members of the public.

Wells Fargo did not comply with California's requirement that a caller must be advised at the outset if a call is being recorded so that he or she can object or terminate the call if he or she does not wish to be recorded. Once notified of the alleged deficiencies in the recording disclosures, Wells Fargo worked cooperatively to implement changes in the bank's policies nationwide.

Under the terms of the judgment, approved by the court in March 2016, Wells Fargo was ordered to pay civil penalties totaling \$7,616,000 and to reimburse the prosecutors' investigative costs of \$384,000. In addition to the above penalties and investigative costs, Wells Fargo was ordered to contribute \$500,000 to two statewide organizations dedicated to advancing consumer protection and privacy rights. Wells Fargo agreed to implement an internal compliance program to ensure that the policy changes are made.

People v. Abraham Zafrani

Involuntary Manslaughter; Violation of a Safety Order Leading to Death

Prosecutor: Maeve Fox

Defendant Abraham Zafrani, an unlicensed contractor, agreed to build a retaining wall into a steep slope between a residence and the Pacific Coast Highway. Zafrani failed to consult a qualified engineer to address the dangers of building on the unstable hillside. He obtained a building permit by substantially misrepresenting the project. A building inspector visiting the worksite immediately recognized that the project did not match the permitted plan and issued a notice requiring Zafrani to consult an engineer and resubmit an appropriate plan before continuing construction.

Zafrani ignored the directive, hiring day laborers, including the unsuspecting victim, to continue digging the footing for the wall. On September 18, 2011, due to Zafrani's improper construction techniques, Antonio Mejia was crushed to death when a wall of earth collapsed into the trench in which he was working. The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) was the lead agency to investigate the cave-in.

Zafrani was charged with involuntary manslaughter and violating a safety order leading to death for ignoring the required Cal/OSHA standards. After a three-week jury trial, he was found guilty on both counts. In October 2017, he was sentenced to 180 days in jail.



Senior Deputy District Attorneys Marc Leventhal and Howard Wise

Prosecutors in Fraud and Technology Crimes handle some of our most significant financial fraud cases, as well as cases in which computer technology is used to commit crime. Section attorneys team with highly trained forensic computer analysts to prosecute such crimes as possession or distribution of child pornography, identity theft, and possession of fraudulent or counterfeit documents.

People v. Kristin Davis

Grand Theft; Forgery; Tax Evasion

Prosecutor: Howard Wise

Forensic Accountant: Jim Adriansen

From 2007 until 2009, Kristin Davis owned and operated Paradigm Association Management Group (Paradigm), which managed homeowners' associations. Davis used her position to steal more than \$2 million from homeowners associations in Simi Valley and Calabasas. Davis and Melissa Hoff, Paradigm's chief financial

officer, wrote and signed checks from the homeowners' associations to Paradigm, without the boards' knowledge or approval. Davis forged contracts with both homeowners' associations that appeared to justify higher fees than had been agreed upon by the previous board members. Davis made unauthorized internet transfers from the bank accounts of both homeowners' associations. Davis also failed to file personal or corporate taxes for Paradigm. After criminal charges were filed for not filing tax returns, Davis then filed false tax returns.

In February 2016, after an eight-week jury trial, Davis was found guilty of 16 felonies, including grand theft, forgery, insurance fraud, tax evasion, and failure to file tax returns. Davis was sentenced to serve 12 years in state prison and was ordered to pay restitution of more than \$2 million. Hoff testified against Davis at her trial. Hoff was placed on felony probation and was ordered to serve 270 days in jail and pay \$64,670 in restitution.

People v. James Schmitt

Possession of Child Pornography

Prosecutor: Marc Leventhal

Investigator: Catherine Mano

In 2014, Yahoo, an internet service provider, and Xoom, an online money transfer service, determined that hundreds of customers all over the world were using their services to acquire and pay for child pornography. The child pornography was produced in and distributed

from the Philippines, and in some instances the producers streamed live sex acts involving minors to paying customers.

In 2015, the FBI traced the locations of the U.S.-based customers and referred the case to local prosecution agencies. One Yahoo account was traced to Oxnard resident James Schmitt, a probation officer. Analysis of computers seized from Schmitt's home revealed that Schmitt actively sought and obtained child pornography for several years.

Schmitt pled guilty to two felony counts of possession of child pornography. He was sentenced to one year in jail and placed on probation for five years, including a lifetime requirement that he register as a convicted sex offender and strict terms prohibiting him from contacting children.



Senior Deputy District Attorney Anthony Wold; Forensic Accountant Jim Adriansen

The Real Estate Fraud team was formed in 2005 to address a rising wave of real estate and mortgage fraud crimes. Using both sophisticated schemes and simple deceit, unscrupulous individuals most often target unsophisticated, elderly, or monolingual Spanish-speaking victims to steal their homes or their life's savings. Cases commonly involve foreclosure rescue schemes, unauthorized home rental scams, charging advance fees with the promise of lowering mortgage payments, equity theft, securities fraud, and recording of forged deeds to change home ownership without the owner's knowledge. Real Estate Fraud personnel work closely with local police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Secret Service, California Department of Corporations, California Bureau of Real Estate, and California Franchise Tax Board to deter, investigate and prosecute real estate fraud crimes. Our prosecutors and investigators team with real estate professionals on the Ventura County Real Estate Fraud Advisory Team (REFAT) to alert the public and the industry to common and emerging fraud schemes.

People v. Gregoria Mendoza

Grand Theft

Prosecutor: Stephen Slyker
Investigators: Heather Tallent, Chris Borkovec

Defendant Gregoria Mendoza used at least six separate theft schemes to steal more than \$500,000 from ten Spanish-speaking homeowners. Mendoza manipulated the victims into cashing out equity from their houses and "investing" the money into "investment properties." Mendoza then used the investors' money to pay her own personal bills and the interest returns promised to the investors.

Mendoza also made fraudulent loans, created false investments, and illegally accepted up-front fees for loan modification services. Taking advantage of relationships with family members and business partners, Mendoza's criminal activity spanned

over nine years, creating a trail of fraud, deceit, and manipulation that ruined the financial lives of her victims.

In May 2016, Mendoza pled guilty to seven felony counts and admitted both excessive loss and aggravated white-collar crime enhancements. She was sentenced to 7 years 4 months in state prison and was ordered by the court to pay over \$500,000 in restitution. The District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Unit was able to secure a substantial portion of the victim restitution by using the aggravated white-collar crime enhancement and seizing various assets controlled by Mendoza.

People v. Patrick Abrahamian, Michelle Abrahamian, and Taline Indra

Recording a False Document; Forgery

Prosecutor: Anthony Wold
Investigator: Heather Tallent

In 2012, Patrick Abrahamian approached a 65-year-old man with an offer to help him negotiate a modification of his mortgage. In return, the victim agreed to lease his home to Abrahamian and his wife, Michelle Abrahamian, while the modification was negotiated. At the end of the

lease term, the Abrahamians refused to vacate the home. The victim later learned that the Abrahamians had forged and recorded a grant deed conveying his home, as a gift, to Michelle Abrahamian.

The forged deed was fraudulently notarized by defendant Taline Indra, who is Michelle Abrahamian's sister. Patrick Abrahamian subsequently impersonated the victim in a lawsuit filed by Abrahamian against the victim's mortgage lender, resulting in additional false documents being filed in both the Ventura County Superior Court and the County Recorder's Office.

The investigation revealed that the defendants had been involved in a series of highly similar real estate frauds elsewhere in Ventura County and Los Angeles County.

In February 2018, after a three-week jury trial, all three defendants were convicted of felony counts involving recording a false document and forgery. Patrick Abrahamian was sentenced to 11 years 4 months in state prison. Michelle Abrahamian and Taline Indra were each sentenced to 7 years 8 months in state prison.

Workers' Compensation Insurance Fraud



Deputy District Attorney Andrew Reid and Senior Deputy District Attorney John Vanarelli

Attorneys and investigators in Workers' Compensation Fraud work closely with insurance companies and the California Department of Insurance to prosecute employees and employers who violate California's workers' compensation laws. Common offenses include employees making fraudulent claims for workers' compensation benefits, employers failing to obtain workers' compensation insurance for employees, employers underreporting their payroll to avoid paying required insurance premiums, and doctors submitting inflated invoices for services provided to injured workers.



Stacy Ratner
Supervising Senior Deputy District Attorney
Juvenile Unit

JUVENILE UNIT

The Juvenile Unit prosecutes crimes committed by minors under the age of 18. The unit consists of one supervisor, four attorneys and a paralegal. The cases handled by the unit include misdemeanors such as driving under the influence and school fights, as well as serious felonies such as gang robberies and sexual assaults. From 2015 through 2018, the unit prosecuted approximately 3,000 delinquency (criminal) cases and approximately 2,000 status offenses (truancy or curfew). Using a collaborative approach, prosecutors assigned to the unit emphasize rehabilitation and juvenile crime prevention for all but the most serious offenders; working with parents, school officials, local law enforcement, and community-based organizations to achieve these goals.

Because juvenile and subsequent adult crime are frequently linked to school truancy, the unit takes a leadership role in School Attendance Review Boards, working to keep at-risk youth in school. Prosecutors review student attendance issues, educate parents and students about truancy impacts, conduct mediations, and, when appropriate, file petitions against truant students and those parents who habitually fail to ensure attendance. Between 2015 and 2018, the Juvenile Unit served approximately 7,000 students in the SARB program.



L to R: Legal Processing Assistant Sasha Alcantara; Victim Advocate Maria Campos-Davies; Senior Deputy District Attorneys Stephen Slyker and Jennie Thrift; Legal Processing Assistant Bruce Holler; Senior Paralegal Yvonne Pampalone; Senior Deputy District Attorney Maureen Byrne

In re Phillip G.

Second-Degree Robbery, with Infliction of Great Bodily Injury

Prosecutor: Stephen Slyker

Sixteen-year-old Phillip G. entered an Oxnard laundromat with another minor while armed with a four-foot-long stick with a six-inch nail imbedded into the end. The minor demanded money from an elderly man working at the business.

When the 84-year-old man told the minor that he did not have any money, the minor struck him in the face and jabbed the stick into his eye. The minor then told the man to give him the money or he would kill him. The victim's eye was swollen shut from the attack and he suffered a large laceration above and below his eye from the stick and nail striking him in the face.

The minor admitted the charges of robbery with infliction of great bodily injury and was ordered to serve 450 days in the Juvenile Facility.

In re Guillermo H.

Assault with a Firearm; Shooting at an Inhabited Dwelling House

Prosecutor: Jennie Thrift

On August 30, 2015, 16-year-old Guillermo H. went to an El Rio home and asked that a male occupant step outside. When the male and a female occupant went outside, the minor began firing a handgun at them. The victims took cover behind a large truck parked in their driveway. The male victim reported hearing two or three gunshots, a clicking sound, a pause, and several more gunshots, after which the minor ran from the residence. No one was injured in the shooting.

Sheriff's deputies located the minor in the area and pursued him into the yard of a nearby residence. After he was detained, deputies found a .38 special revolver in the yard and a spent .38 caliber bullet casing in the minor's shoe. A Ventura County Forensic Sciences Laboratory scientist determined that the bullet had been fired from the recovered .38 special.

Although a complaint was initially filed in adult court, the passage of Proposition 57 mandated that the minor be returned to juvenile court. After a contested juvenile trial, the minor was adjudged a ward of the court and committed to the California Department of Juvenile Justice until the age of 23.

In re Edgar L.

Gross Vehicular Manslaughter while Intoxicated; Fleeing a Collision Involving Death

Prosecutor: Jennie Thrift

During the early morning of June 24, 2016, Edgar L., an intoxicated 17-year-old, sped through an Oxnard neighborhood in a Ford Expedition. The minor struck a bicyclist riding on the roadside, throwing the victim a considerable distance from the point of impact. The victim later died of blunt force trauma. The minor fled the scene on foot, but was quickly apprehended. Blood sample analysis revealed Xanax and cannabinoids in his blood. The minor admitted his crime and was declared a ward of the court. He served 540 days in the Juvenile Facility.

Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) Check Restitution Unit



Robin Tribbitt
Administrative Assistant
NSF Unit

The Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) Check Restitution Unit has a two-fold aim: to secure restitution for individuals and businesses who have received bad checks and to reduce recidivism. Program participants are given 15 days to pay full restitution. If restitution is not timely made, the participant must also complete a diversion class about the proper handling of a personal checking account. Participants who do not complete these requirements may face criminal charges. Between 2015 and 2018, the NSF program returned hundreds of thousands of dollars to local bad check recipients.

Camco Pacific Construction

Administrative Assistant:

Robin Tribbitt

On September 19, 2017, Camco Pacific Construction issued a \$65,790 check to a glass company in Ventura as payment for significant glass work done during the remodel of a local auto dealership. When the check was returned for non-sufficient funds, the glass company contacted the District Attorney's Office for help. After contact by the NSF Check Unit, Camco Pacific made full restitution to the glass company on December 15, 2017.

People v. Hanna Linda Haskell

Passing Checks with Insufficient Funds for Payment

Prosecutors: Brian Rafelson and Kevin Drescher

In late 2000, the District Attorney's Office's NSF Check Unit received complaints from nine business owners who received NSF checks written by Hanna Linda Haskell totaling \$10,991. After unsuccessful attempts to locate Haskell and to recover restitution, felony charges for passing bad checks were filed against her and a warrant was issued for her arrest. In 2015, Haskell, who had left the jurisdiction, contacted the District Attorney's Office with a request to make full restitution in exchange for dismissal of the charges. Haskell's offer was accepted, and all nine victims recovered the full amount of their losses.

Consumer Mediation & Small Claims Assistance Units

The District Attorney's **Consumer Mediation Unit** serves as a free service to assist Ventura County residents resolve disputes between consumers and businesses, and landlords and tenants, without court action. Addressing a wide variety of business and consumer-related conflicts, the unit also provides information regarding consumer protection laws and makes referrals to specialized state or federal agencies. Recent examples of successful mediations include settlement of a dispute between a consumer and a manufacturer involving a defective product and a settlement involving unpaid fees between a homeowner and a local homeowners' association, which allowed escrow to close on a sale of the property.

Between 2015 and 2018, mediators responded to nearly 2,000 inquiries from the public each year. During this time period, mediators handled more than 1,200 formal mediations, resulting in voluntary settlement payments exceeding \$1.2 million.

The **Small Claims Assistance Unit** provides information to litigants regarding Ventura County Small Claims Court procedures for filing and presenting claims, defending claims, and collecting judgments. Responding to both telephone and in-person inquiries, small claims advisors at the District Attorney's Office in Ventura and the East County Courthouse in Simi Valley assisted approximately 10,000 people per year between 2015 and 2018.



Michael D. Schwartz
Justice Services
Special Assistant District Attorney

JUSTICE SERVICES

The Justice Services Division is managed by the Special Assistant District Attorney. It includes the Writs, Appeals, and Training Unit, the Conviction Integrity Unit, and the Public Integrity Unit. The division also enforces the Ralph M. Brown Act (public meeting law), responds to the public's requests for information under the California Public Records Act, coordinates civil cases involving the District Attorney's Office, and handles special projects. The division ensures that defense attorneys

receive information that could have a bearing on the credibility of peace officer witnesses, as mandated by the due process requirements of *Brady v. Maryland*.

From 2015 through 2018, the division assisted over 400 crime victims apply for U Visas, which allows temporary residency for victims of designated crimes who are cooperative in the investigation and prosecution of their cases.

WRITS, APPEALS, & TRAINING

Writs, Appeals, and Training initiates, briefs, and argues appeals and writs of mandate/prohibition in state and federal appellate courts. The unit also responds to defense petitions for writs of habeas corpus and responds to defense misdemeanor appeals. These writs and appeals ensure the correctness of trial court decisions, correct erroneous decisions by the trial courts, and create legal precedent for other cases throughout the state. The unit provides ongoing training to our attorneys as a certified provider for Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE), runs the training program for new prosecutors, and provides training for District Attorney investigators and other law enforcement agencies.



Deputy District Attorney Michelle Contois; Special Assistant District Attorney Michael D. Schwartz; Deputy District Attorney Tom Frye; Senior Deputy District Attorney Lisa Lyttikainen

People v. Superior Court (Daryl Johnson)

Appellate Prosecutor:
Michael Schwartz

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office was one of the first in the state to ensure defendants' rights to fair trial by developing a procedure for prosecutors to request judges to review and disclose to defendants incidents of peace officer misconduct contained in the officers' personnel files. A Court of Appeal ruling arising from San Francisco County invalidated that process. As statewide leaders in this area, we filed an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief in the California Supreme Court, which resulted in a ruling allowing our disclosure procedures to continue.

CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT

The District Attorney's obligation to seek justice does not end when the trial is over. This unit evaluates post-conviction claims of factual innocence, obtaining additional investigation where appropriate. In the vast majority of cases, the protections of our criminal justice system ensure that defendants are properly convicted. But when DNA evidence or other new evidence undermines confidence in the conviction, the unit takes action to vacate the conviction, including releasing individuals from prison for crimes they may not have committed.

Craig Coley

Conviction Integrity Prosecutor:

Lisa Lyytikainen

Investigator: Robert Coughlin

Craig Coley was convicted in 1980 of the 1978 murders of Rhonda Wicht and her four-year-old son Donnie Wicht, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole. In response to Mr. Coley's consistent denials of guilt and his application for a pardon, a conviction integrity investigation began in November 2016. Extensive investigation by the Simi Valley Police Department and the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation resulted in the discovery of biological samples that had previously been thought to have been destroyed. DNA testing not possible at the time of the original trial was conducted and excluded Mr. Coley as the source on key pieces of evidence. Additional investigation uncovered weaknesses in trial testimony, and raised suspicions as to other individuals. With the agreement of the District Attorney and the Simi Valley Chief of Police, Governor Brown issued a pardon and released Mr. Coley from custody. The District Attorney also agreed that the court vacate the conviction and make a finding of factual innocence. The District Attorney also supported Mr. Coley's successful application for compensation by the state for his period of incarceration.

Michael Hanline

Conviction Integrity Prosecutors:

Michael Schwartz

Michael Lief

Investigators: Tom Mendez,
Scott Peterson

Michael Hanline was convicted in 1980 of the 1978 murder of J.T. McGarry and sentenced to life in prison without parole. The California Innocence Project requested review by the District Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit and filed a habeas corpus petition seeking his release. Investigation by the District Attorney's Office and DNA testing not possible at trial found that the tape used to bind the victim's hands did not contain the DNA of either Mr. Hanline or the person thought to be his accomplice, but instead contained the DNA of an unidentified male. Additional investigation supported an argument that others may have committed the murder and cast doubt upon the correctness of the conviction. Without conceding that Mr. Hanline was or was not involved in the murder, the District Attorney's Office agreed that the case be dismissed and that Mr. Hanline be released from prison.

PUBLIC INTEGRITY UNIT

The Public Integrity Unit evaluates and prosecutes corruption and other misconduct in office by public officials, government employees, and other persons in positions of public trust such as officials of nonprofit organizations. Violations include embezzlement, conflicts of interest, misuse of public resources, public meeting law violations, and elections violations.

People v. Tammy Jean Ferguson

Misappropriation of Public Funds; False Public Account; Taking Over \$200,000

Prosecutor: Thomas Frye

Investigator: Michael Aguilar

The former Chief Financial Officer of Santa Paula Blanchard Community Library embezzled \$499,254 from the library district by using the district's credit card for personal purchases, transferring district funds to her personal account, and withdrawing cash using the district's ATM card. She pled guilty, was sentenced to four years prison, and was ordered to pay restitution.

People v. Joanne Abruzzese

Grand Theft; Forgery

Prosecutor: Thomas Frye

Investigator: Chris Borkovec

The Executive Director of the non-profit Simi Valley Community Foundation embezzled \$44,977 by writing checks from the foundation's bank account to pay her home mortgage. She pled guilty and was placed on 60 months' probation and was ordered to serve 180 days in jail. She paid restitution in full to the victim before sentencing.



Michael R. Jump
Victim & Community Services
Chief Deputy District Attorney

VICTIM & COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Victim and Community Services Division consists of the Ellie Liston Crime Victims' Assistance Program, multidisciplinary interview centers, Safe Harbor, Camp HOPE, and the Ventura County Family Justice Center. These programs and other victim services efforts were consolidated into this new division in 2016 to enhance assistance to victims of crime by improving access to services and providing referrals that help victims stabilize, recover and feel empowered. Many of the roughly 20,000 criminal cases filed in Ventura County annually leave in their wake victims and witnesses who have never interacted with the criminal justice system before. Victims may suffer physical or emotional trauma, financial harm, and fear of retaliation; and often are confused as to the purpose of court proceedings and the rights the court must afford to them. The division's

Crime Victims' Assistance Program supervisor, two victim advocate supervisors and two Safe Harbor program coordinators, along with 21 victim advocates and six volunteers, are all dedicated to helping victims better understand their rights, access services that can minimize further trauma, and recover in the aftermath of crime.

In addition, the division is responsible for the development of the Ventura County Family Justice Center, a multi-agency center specifically designed to provide victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, human trafficking, and other crimes with improved access to existing and innovative governmental and nonprofit services in one easily accessible location.



Rachel Watkins
Crime Victims' Assistance
Unit Supervisor

ELLIE LISTON CRIME VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE UNIT

In the aftermath of crime, victim advocates assist crime victims through what is often one of the worst times of their lives via a trauma-informed service model. Victim advocates work closely with victims to understand the victims' unique experience and the impact the crime has had on them and their families. Victim advocates provide victims with meaningful and appropriate resources and referrals.

rights are honored, and assist them in obtaining services to help them cope with the trauma they suffered. These services include crisis intervention, emergency assistance, advisement of constitutional rights, updates on the progress of cases, assisting with Victims of Crime Compensation applications, and many other services.

Between 2015 and 2018, the Unit provided assistance to approximately 18,000 victims of crime, providing them with nearly 48,000 services. Operating largely under grant funds awarded through the California Office of Emergency Services, advocates guide victims through the criminal justice process, ensure that their

In addition, victim advocates run a domestic violence restraining order clinic. The clinics are held in both English and Spanish each week, and include an educational component to provide victims with information including the cycle of abuse, the effects of domestic violence on children, and the serious effects of non-fatal strangulation. The clinics incorporate community partners

from Interface Children and Family Services, the Coalition for Family Harmony, Cal Lutheran University, and the Ventura County Department of Child Support Services to provide victims with community-based mental health services, emergency shelter placement, and child support services. Through the Restraining Order Clinic and walk-up window in Room 311, advocates and volunteers assisted approximately 3,600 members of the general public in obtaining restraining orders against their abusers between 2015 and 2018.

The Crime Victim's Assistance Unit is staffed by 20 victim advocates, two supervising victim advocates, and a legal processing assistant, and is

overseen by a Program Supervisor. The Unit is augmented by a volunteer program that trains volunteers to provide crisis intervention, assist victims through the process of obtaining domestic violence restraining orders, and provide court accompaniment during often emotionally charged restraining order/custody hearings. Volunteers provide nearly 5,000 hours of services per year to crime victims.

Victim advocates provide outreach and education to community and law enforcement agencies, and presented at roughly 75 events between 2015 and 2018. Outreach includes training on non-fatal strangulation to medical providers, law enforcement agencies

and community partners; the unique needs of human trafficking victims; elder abuse; and other topics.

The Unit responded to the Borderline mass shooting on November 8, 2018. With all staff involved, victim advocates worked tirelessly to coordinate death notifications to families, and established overnight the Thousand Oaks Victims Assistance Center to co-locate multiple services for victims under one roof. The Unit maintained the Center for nearly two weeks working from 7 AM to often 10 PM seven days a week amidst the backdrop of road closures and evacuations as the Woolsey fire raged, serving 233 Borderline victims with grace, dignity, and dedication.

Camp HOPE

In 2015 the Ventura County District Attorney's Office was offered the opportunity to participate in Camp HOPE as part of the effort to open a Family Justice Center in Ventura County. Camp HOPE is the first evidence-based camping and mentoring program in the United States for children exposed to trauma. During that first summer, 10 children between the age of 7 and 12 from various communities in Ventura County attended Camp HOPE at Lopez Lake near Arroyo Grande. For five days and nights, the children experienced overnight camping, a variety of activities, and a therapeutic curriculum specifically designed for children exposed to domestic violence. In 2016 and 2017, 12 children from Ventura County attended the camp, several of whom have returned each year. During camp the children participate in activities such as zip lining, arts and crafts, kayaking, fishing, tubing and archery. They choose their own level of participation based on a "Challenge by Choice" philosophy. This allows

them to build self-confidence and resiliency at their own pace. They also learn about historical figures who have overcome great adversity and receive praise in the form of "Character Trait Awards." In a nightly campfire gathering they answer the question: "Where have you seen hope today?"

There are many programs for adults who are affected by domestic violence, but few for children. Yet it is with children that we can make the most profound impact by helping them set a new course for their lives. Research shows that children who have been exposed to domestic violence often have trouble learning,

are subject to chronic disease, and have a shortened life expectancy. Their chances of becoming the abused or the abuser are greatly increased. They often end up in the juvenile justice system and later in prison. The Camp HOPE program is an effort to break the generational cycle of domestic violence and help these children find their own pathway to a brighter future. It is also a crime prevention strategy that benefits the entire community.

In 2018, we expanded our program to include a second week of camp for older children, aged 12 through 17. We also established an ongoing mentoring program with activities for our campers and their counselors/mentors throughout the year. Camp HOPE is a program that gives kids their childhood back.



*"Hope is all around us."
"Camp HOPE was the best week of my life."
- A young camper*

ROUTE 91 SHOOTING

The world was horrified by the mass shooting during the Route 91 Harvest festival in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 1, 2017. A gunman shot and killed 58 and injured more than 500 concertgoers. As many as 55 percent of the concertgoers present originated from southern California, including 798 Ventura County residents. Of the 58 people killed, five had ties to Ventura County.

The District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit began assisting survivors the morning after the tragedy, providing support and aid in obtaining counseling, therapy, emergency assistance, funeral and burial expenses, property return, and notification to friends and family. They worked in close collaboration with local, state, and federal officials to ensure the needs of the survivors were being met. They served as liaisons with the Clark County, Nevada Coroner's Office to provide accurate and timely information to the families of deceased victims, and coordinated with the FBI to register all victims and next of kin.

On October 15, 2017, in answer to a request from the California Office of Emergency Services, a team of three victim advocates was sent to the Las Vegas Family Support Center that had been established inside the Las Vegas Convention Center. Victim Advocates Sandra Avila, Kelly Muklevicz, and Marie Villa worked shifts at the center from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m every day for a week, assisting the Nevada Attorney General's Office and other local and federal agencies in providing services to the more than 22,000 victims present at the Route 91 event. Although the work was difficult, the advocates were inspired by the resilience and courage of the victims and were proud to be working alongside advocates from across the country.

Through on-going outreach efforts including news releases, county-wide emails, newspaper articles, community events, collaboration with local therapy centers, nonprofits, and community agencies, the number of survivors reached continues to grow. A total of seven advocates were assigned to meet the needs of the survivors. This work is being done on top of their full caseloads. Advocates have helped over 120 survivors in Ventura County.

The Crime Victims' Assistance Unit worked closely with staff from the federal Office for Victims of Crime and the California Victim Compensation Board to host and facilitate informational forums in Ventura County for victims and family members of the tragedy. The forums provide a place where survivors and family members share information regarding their current and long-term needs as well as receive information on resources to assist with recovery; coping with trauma, grief and depression; and what to expect in the months and years to come.

Recognizing that psychological or physical injuries may manifest themselves weeks, months or years after the tragedy, the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit continues to work with state, federal and community agencies and is seeking additional resources to address the short-and long-term needs of survivors.

"Fifty-eight lives were lost and hundreds of others were injured at the Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting. You came to Las Vegas and worked alongside my staff when we needed it most. . . at the Family Assistance Center to provide services to all those in need. I am deeply grateful for your selfless efforts and partnership throughout the course of this important mission."

**Nevada Attorney General Adam P. Laxalt
to a Ventura County District Attorney advocate.**



BORDERLINE SHOOTING



Ventura County Sheriff's Sargant
Ron Helus

On November 7, 2018, at 11:18 at night, a shooting rampage began at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks. Armed with a pistol and high capacity magazines, suspect Ian David Long entered the bar and killed 11 employees and patrons: Justin

Meek, Kristina Morisette, Mark Meza Jr., Noel Sparks, Tel Orfanos, Sean Adler, Jake Dunham, Cody Coffman, Alaina Housley, Blake Dingman, and Daniel Manrique. Over 30 others were injured and/or hospitalized, and more than 200 patrons who survived the rampage were traumatized.

Ventura County Sheriff's Sergeant Ron Helus and CHP Officer Todd Barrett entered the bar and exchanged gunfire with the suspect. Helus was fatally wounded. The gunman then turned the gun on himself and ended his own life.

Attorneys and investigators from the Ventura County District Attorney's Office promptly arrived on the scene and, together with the Ventura County Sheriff and the FBI, began the work of investigating the tragedy. District Attorney investigators interviewed some 60 witnesses. When the investigation is completed, the District Attorney's Office will issue a full public report.

Victim advocates from the District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit immediately were deployed to assist the victims and their families. With assistance from the FBI, other state and local agencies, and mental health professionals, and using office space provided by Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, the Thousand Oaks Assistance Center was established to provide information, immediate counseling, assistance in obtaining financial compensation, property return, and other services. County and District Attorney Information Technology staff immediately set up computer systems in the center. Working long hours, District Attorney employees assisted 232 victims and their loved ones in the first week alone. The trauma from this event will have long-lasting effects for many in our community. We will continue to assist the survivors in the months and years ahead.

*Conejo Recreation and Parks District
General Manager Jim Friedl presents Chief
Deputy District Attorney Michael Jump with
a poster signed by CRPD staff thanking the
District Attorney's Office for services provided
to Borderline victims and family members.*



VENTURA COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

In October 2015, the District Attorney began the development of a Family Justice Center (FJC) in Ventura County. FJCs are based on a successful national model of multi-agency, co-located services that provide assistance to victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and elder abuse, and their families. FJCs integrate government services, nonprofit organizations, local law enforcement, civil legal assistance, and other victim advocacy resources at one location. Integrating these services provides easier access for victims and assists service providers in identifying children exposed to significant adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that place them at elevated risk for a lifetime of risky behaviors, criminal justice interventions, mental and health conditions such as anxiety, obesity, heart disease, and a host of other preventable ailments. The program's director will be a District Attorney employee. The goal of the FJC will be to minimize the risk of immediate physical danger and death while at the same time serving as a proactive crime prevention model focusing on breaking the generational cycle of violence in at-risk homes.

As of this writing, progress toward the opening of an FJC includes:

- In 2016, FJC development efforts focused on building a base of support for the FJC concept via hundreds of one-on-one meetings with law enforcement, nonprofit service providers, and governmental agencies; and presentations before educators, service clubs, religious and community groups.
- In February 2017, a Study Tour and Community Forum was held with over 90 attendees to discuss the FJC concept.
- With the will and intention of bringing an FJC to Ventura County established, efforts then turned

to the task of developing a viable strategic plan. In August 2017, a highly successful Strategic Planning Event was held over two days, with over 130 representatives from government and community organizations in attendance. A strategic plan has been developed and published.

- 40 Stakeholders from nonprofit, law enforcement and other governmental agencies have joined and are chairing regular meetings of five workgroups.
- A Ventura County Family Justice Center Foundation has been established to serve as an independent fundraising entity for the FJC effort.
- A Ventura County Camp HOPE program has been established and has successfully accompanied 48 child victims and witnesses of domestic violence (to include domestic violence homicide) to an evidence-based trauma-informed camp specifically designed to mitigate ACEs trauma.
- A VOICES of Ventura County group has been formed consisting of survivors of crimes ranging from attempted homicide to homicide of a family member, child molestation,

domestic violence, and other crimes of physical abuse. VOICES members serve as a guiding voice in the development of the FJC to ensure that services remain victim- and survivor-focused.

- An e-newsletter, The Wave, is now in publication and distributed to over 400 FJC supporters providing readers with updates on workgroup activities, FJC-related topics and opportunities.
- A Return on Investment study has been initiated in partnership with California Lutheran University based on three years of domestic violence crime reports submitted to the District Attorney's Office for review and filing consideration.
- Grant funding has been received, and we are pursuing additional grants.
- A grant was obtained in partnership with Ventura County Legal Aid to provide free civil legal assistance to victims, including family law, immigration assistance and other issues.

It is anticipated that a fully functioning FJC will begin operations by the fall of 2019.



Expressions of Gratitude to Our Victim Advocates. . .

*“I feel you have been an angel to us
in this dark time.”*

- A family member of a Borderline shooting victim.

*“I cannot express enough how comforting the support
and love has been in this very difficult time.”*

- The mother of a Borderline shooting victim.

“We are so blessed to have you by our side.”

- A family member of a Borderline shooting victim.

*“You all really are the gems we wish
we never would have needed. Thank you.”*

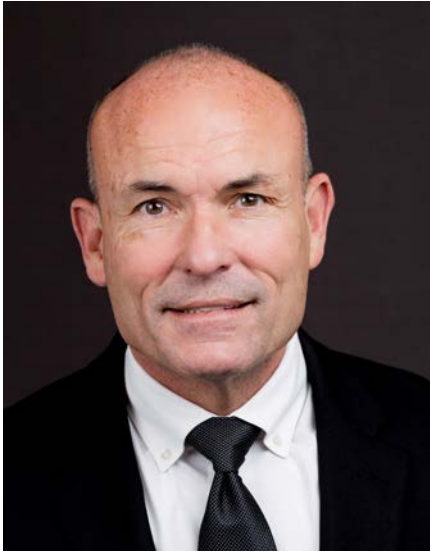
- A family member of a Borderline shooting victim.

CRIME VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE UNIT



Seated, L to R: Dina Zuhric, Rachael Watkins, Brenda Marquez. Standing, L to R: Sandra Avila, Elizabeth Elizondo, Jennifer Barbettini, Stephen Goodin, Patricia Caputo, Caitlin Kearns, Kelly Muklevicz, Patricia Wood, Celia Cardona, Felicita Roy, Andrea Stewart

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



Michael Baray
Chief Investigator



Ken Valentini
Deputy Chief Investigator



Commander Tracey Towner

The Bureau of Investigation is staffed with peace officer investigators who prepare criminal and civil cases for trial by locating and interviewing suspects and witnesses, preparing and serving search warrants, obtaining and analyzing evidence, and assisting in the presentation of evidence to the Grand Jury and court. The Bureau conducts original investigations in areas including public corruption, various forms of fraud, and internal investigations. The Bureau is staffed with a chief investigator, a deputy chief investigator, three commanders, 48 district attorney investigators, a welfare fraud investigator and 13 investigative assistants.

All of the investigators serving within the Bureau are experienced sworn peace officers who have been recruited from law enforcement agencies throughout California. These highly-trained investigators are available 24 hours a day to respond to investigative requests and critical incidents such as homicides and officer-involved shootings. The Bureau has a Special Response Team trained and prepared to serve search warrants and respond to threats against District Attorney staff and other critical incidents throughout the county.

The Bureau of Investigation is divided into three divisions. The **Major Crimes** Division investigates crimes such as homicides, gang crimes, cold case homicides, sexual assault and domestic violence, and supports the service of subpoenas by a team of three investigators. The **Major Fraud** Division investigates major fraud, real estate fraud, consumer and environmental crimes, child abduction, auto insurance fraud, workers' compensation fraud, and computer crimes, and includes an auto theft task force and a human trafficking task force. The Southern California High Tech Task Force is a multi-agency collaboration that examines computers, cell phones, and other electronic evidence for a variety of crimes. The **Administrative** Division conducts background investigations on prospective employees; conducts original investigations involving public corruption, public assistance fraud and government fraud; investigates citizen complaints involving members of the District Attorney's Office; and conducts internal administrative investigations. Each of these divisions is supported by investigative assistants and clerical staff that assist in the investigation and preparation of case filings and trial.



Commander Juan Reynoso



Commander Cloyce Conway



Ralph Martinez
Supervising Investigator



Tom Mendez
Supervising Investigator



Joey de los Reyes
Supervising Investigator



Frank Huber
Senior District Attorney Investigator



Adam Wittkins
Supervising Investigator



Major Crimes Unit



Seated, L to R: Investigator Sonia Sanchez, Senior Investigator Tom Mendez, Investigator Heather Tallent. Standing, L to R: Investigators Chris Brackpool, Dan Horan, Mike Young, Jess Velasquez, Paul Walsh, Jim Seitz

Major Fraud Unit



Investigators Brandon Conger, Mike Scherbarth; Investigative Assistant Joanie Bazaldua; Investigator Cliff Williams

Administrative Unit



Seated, L to R: Investigative Assistant Diane Van Scoy, Commander Juan Reynoso, Senior Investigator Joey de los Reyes. Standing, L to R: Investigative Assistant Nicole Sansone-Hall, Investigator James Espinoza, Senior Investigator Ralph Martinez, Investigator J'amie Cain

Government Fraud Unit



Seated, L to R: Office Assistant Marianne Coblenz, Senior Investigator Joey de los Reyes, Office Assistant Mayela Ramirez. Standing, L to R: Investigator Randy Haumann; Investigative Assistant Michelle Serrano; Investigator Von Gilbert, Gene Martinez

Litigation Support



Digital Media Coordinators
Jacob Topolinski
Paula Miller (Not pictured)

Sexual Assault Family Protection Unit/ Subpoena Unit



Seated, L to R: Investigator Kristina Bertilson, Senior Investigator Tom Mendez, Investigator Brenda Lemos. Standing, L to R: Investigators Jon Hixson, Paul Krueger, Chris Borkovec, Adam Delgado

THE THOMAS FIRE - DECEMBER 2017

On December 4, 2017, a fire ignited near St. Thomas Aquinas College in the city of Santa Paula. Named the “Thomas Fire,” it fast became the largest fire in California’s modern history. The fire, fueled by strong Santa Ana winds, burned 281,900 acres, consumed 1,063 structures and damaged another 280. Two lives were lost during the fire. Mandatory evacuation orders were in place for parts of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

A number of employees suffered significant damage to their homes and property. Many staff members were evacuated from their homes and displaced for several days. Many other staff members continued to be on alert for possible evacuation. Stories of staff members extinguishing embers and brush fires near residential property lines were all too common. Despite the tragedy of the Thomas Fire, solidarity was seen in the staff’s willingness to help those affected by the fire.

As the Thomas Fire grew and threatened life and property, the District Attorney’s Bureau of Investigation responded to a mutual aid request from the Ventura Police Department (VPD) and the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office. Investigators and support staff were immediately called into action. A contingent of investigators was deployed as first responders throughout the city to assist VPD by responding to calls for service, assisting with traffic control and helping fire personnel with various tasks. Jacob Topolinski, Rosario Gonzalez, and Dean Phaneuf served with the Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services. They assisted with maintenance of the VC Emergency website, Spanish translation, and other crucial services. Over the next four days, investigators battled the unpredictability of the fire and winds as they partnered with fire personnel and other first responders to assist as needed.

The Thomas Fire burned for 40 days before it was fully contained on January 12, 2018. Over 800 District Attorney employee hours were allocated to fight this epic disaster. The Ventura County Board of Supervisors honored the District Attorney’s Office for its contributions to the Thomas Fire response and recovery.

As often happens in the wake of disasters, the Thomas fire raised consumer protection issues. The District Attorney’s Office sent out news releases warning about price gouging, insurance and contractor scams, and FEMA-related scams. District Attorney investigators worked in conjunction with the Contractors State License Board and the California Department of Insurance to educate residents and conduct compliance sweeps in fire affected areas. The District Attorney’s Office also established a Thomas Fire fraud hotline.

These proactive measures, coupled with community involvement, resulted in a number of complaints regarding rental price gouging, retail price gouging, and false advertising. Compliance sweeps among recovery businesses operating in fire-damaged areas uncovered several instances of contracting without a license and workers’ compensation law violations.



District Attorney Investigator
Terry Dobrosky



District Attorney Investigator
James Espinoza

RETIREEES January 2015 - December 2018

	Start Date	Retire Date		Start Date	Retire Date
Roberta Ann Parada <i>Clerical Supervisor</i>	01/14/74	04/01/16	Bonnie Mesinoff Legal Processing Assistant	10/28/02	10/06/17
Donna W. Thonis <i>Attorney</i>	03/10/80	06/18/16	Kenneth A. Valentini Deputy Chief DA Investigator	02/03/03	03/30/18
Ann Marie Phelps <i>Staff/Services Manager</i>	09/07/80	05/19/18	Jacqueline L. Richardson Program Administrator	10/24/04	07/28/18
Minerva Loya <i>Legal Processing Assistant</i>	02/23/81	03/26/15	Vilma Gamboa Fullante Legal Processing Assistant	10/02/15	11/30/15
Robin Hunt Estes <i>Administrative Assistant</i>	06/21/81	11/05/16	Christina Lee Alvarez District Attorney Investigator	04/23/06	06/06/16
Kim George Gibbons <i>Senior Attorney</i>	09/09/84	12/30/17	Russell L. Robinson District Attorney Investigator	05/21/06	12/17/16
Sandra Marron Molina Investigative Assistant	09/29/86	06/03/17	Sean Michael Conroy Senior District Atty Investigator	09/05/06	09/09/17
Thomas Bruce Johnson Senior Attorney	01/09/92	12/16/17	Linda Jean Kelley Accounting Officer	12/03/06	10/10/15
Judith Christine Burschgens Staff/Services Manager	04/26/92	05/01/18	Thomas Jerome Rigali District Attorney Investigator	05/13/07	05/20/17
Eugene C. Kinsey Jr. Attorney	09/07/93	07/01/17	Michael Palmieri District Attorney Investigator	06/10/07	08/26/17
Agnes Ann Willis Clerical Supervisor	11/21/94	8/25/17	Lori Liane Erickson Senior District Atty Investigator	04/06/08	09/23/17
Diana Marie Mendoza Management Assistant	12/01/97	12/01/18	Patricia Ann Caputo Victim Advocate	07/13/08	08/17/18
Jacqueline Shelley Grant District Attorney Investigator	05/03/99	10/08/18	Robert John MacInnes District Attorney Investigator	01/10/10	04/01/17
Catherine Marie Duggan Senior Program Administrator	12/04/00	05/30/15	Glenn A. Utter District Attorney Investigator	06/20/10	10/21/17
Wayne Allen Simmons Senior District Atty Investigator	09/09/02	06/05/15	Janice Lynn Maurizi Chief Assistant District Attorney	04/02/13	06/30/18

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

2015

Karen Wold	Prosecutor of the Year
Melissa Suttner	Prosecutor of the Year
Kim Gibbons	Prosecutor of the Year
Kimberly Michael	Investigator of the Year
Analia Silva	Employee of the Year
Shaun Gildroy	Employee of the Year
Carlos Martinez	Employee of the Year
Mayela Ramirez	Employee of the Year
Special Response Team	Team of the Year
Misdemeanor Unit	Unit of the Year
Glen Utter	Top Gun Award

2017

Kathy LaSalle	Prosecutor of the Year
Scott Hendrickson	Prosecutor of the Year
Brenda Lemos	Investigator of the Year
Conan Perdomo	Employee of the Year
Jan Aston	Employee of the Year
Laura Garibay	Employee of the Year
Robin Tribbitt	Employee of the Year
Steve Mattern	Employee of the Year
Route 91 Victim Advocates	Team of the Year
Dan Horan	Top Gun Award

2016

Erik Nasarenko	Prosecutor of the Year
Ryan Sheahan	Prosecutor of the Year
Lisa Lyytikainen	Prosecutor of they Year
Sonia Sanchez	Investigator of the Year
Mary Grace Courselle	Employee of the Year
Jennifer Barbettini	Employee of the Year
Jacob Topolinski	Employee of the Year
Misdemeanor Support Unit	Unit of the Year
Ken Valentini	Top Gun Award

2018

John Barrick	Prosecutor of the Year
Linda Groberg	Prosecutor of the Year
James "Kimo" Hildreth	Investigator of the Year
Carmen Marquez	Employee of the Year
Crime Victims' Assistance Unit	Unit of the Year
Mike Young	Top Gun Award

ELECTED TO THE BENCH



The Honorable Anthony J. Sabo

Elected to the bench June 2018

Education

University of North Dakota
School of Law – J.D.

Indiana University – B.A.

Public Law Practice

City Attorney, Rising sun, Indiana
(2002-2006)

Deputy Prosecutor, Indiana
(1997-2008)

Ventura County District
Attorney’s Office
(2008-2014)

Ventura Superior
Court Commissioner
(2014-2018)

Private Law Practice

Sabo Law Office
(1995-2008)



The Honorable Derek M. Malan

Elected to the bench June 2018

Education

Pepperdine University
School of Law – J.D.

University of Washington – B.A.

Public Law Practice

Ventura County District
Attorney’s Office
(2000-2016)

Ventura Superior
Court Commissioner
(2016 – 2018)

In Memoriam



Barbara Dixon

Barbara “Pansy” Dixon joined the office in 1998 and served as a Program Administrator in the Fiscal/Administrative Unit for many years. She served the office with professionalism, dedication and pride. Everyone that knew Barbara was touched by her genuine smile and love of life. Barbara cared deeply about her colleagues and co-workers, made lifelong friends in departments throughout the County, and opened her home to people who needed a place to stay or a good meal. Barbara was an avid golfer and helped contribute to many Corporate Games medals. She was involved with numerous civic organizations including City Impact and helped organize fundraisers and golf tournaments for charity, as well as the Benchwarmer Golf group she served for many years. Throughout her illness, Barbara maintained her strong faith in God. Her upbeat, positive, can-do attitude was evident throughout her life. Barbara was able to return to work for a short time in 2016, before losing her battle with LLC Leukemia and Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma on July 4, 2017. Barbara’s legacy lives on as so many have been touched by her grace, compassion, generosity and kindness.



Luis Vasquez

Luis Vasquez joined our office in 1999 where he served as an office systems coordinator. He was an essential resource in keeping our computers operational and served as a lifeline in solving computer problems for our employees. His dedication to excellence was immediately apparent. His smile, laughter, and optimistic outlook filled our office with positive energy.

Luis was dedicated to bettering the community. He served as chapter president and in other officer positions for the International Order of Foresters, raising funds for cancer research and many other projects. He initiated and directed an award-winning youth honor guard team. He was a talented musician, a great cook, and above all a dedicated husband and father.

Luis died following an illness on April 21, 2016. With his passing, we lost a beloved member of the District Attorney’s Office and the County lost an extraordinary public servant. He is missed by all of us who were lucky enough to have known him.



David Smith

On June 26, 2018, our office lost a compassionate and talented voice for victims with the passing of Senior Victim Advocate David Smith. Dave was funny, kind, a terrific advocate and a great friend to his colleagues. With his remarkable and consistent compassion and skill, Dave helped thousands of victims in the course of 22 years with our office who were seeking restraining orders, dealing with the trauma of victimization and struggling to understand the complexities of the criminal justice system. As a senior victim advocate, school teacher and law school graduate, Dave was a mentor and a source of quiet strength for his fellow advocates and volunteers, guiding, teaching and sometimes bracing up his colleagues with a quick quip or sage advice. Dave had a passion for helping elderly clients and was well known as an advocate who went the extra mile to help elderly victims by arranging for transportation, accompaniment and other special needs. He is dearly missed by his coworkers in the Crime Victims’ Assistance Unit and by the many friends and colleagues he made throughout the office.



Ventura County District Attorney

Term Report 2015-2018