

CIRCUIT ATTORNEY'S COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

To Pursue Justice For All Citizens
Within The Highest Standards Of Ethics And Professionalism



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Help Combat Crimes

- If You See or Hear Suspicious Activity, Call the Police -- Trust Your Instinct!

- If You Witness a Crime, Call 911 Immediately, and Remember Key Details

- Get to Know Your Neighbors

- Get to Know Your Neighborhood Police Officers

- Come to Court and the Warrant Office when You Witness or Are the Victim of a Crime

MESSAGE FROM JENNIFER M. JOYCE

St. Louis citizens deserve to live, work and play in a safe city that respects the rights of all people. That's why we at the Circuit Attorney's Office are dedicated to pursuing justice for all, enforcing the laws, and prosecuting the criminals who break them.

Being a victim of or a witness to a crime can be both frightening and challenging. All too often, victims and witnesses struggle to understand and cope with the criminal justice system. I see the heartbreak caused by crime on the faces of victims who enter our courtrooms. I know how innocent lives can be changed forever by criminals who sometimes have no regard for human life or the property of others.



Jennifer M. Joyce
Circuit Attorney

As the Circuit Attorney, I am committed to helping victims of crime get the results they deserve from our criminal justice system. I guarantee that my office will help provide essential services to victims and witnesses to ensure

that each one is treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. I will make sure that each has the opportunity to understand the criminal justice process and his or her rights as a victim in that process.

As we work together to effectively prosecute individuals who break our laws, the Circuit Attorney's Office's Victim Services Unit provides the resources and support victims need to address the negative effects of crime and move on with their lives.

My Victim Services Unit is the best in the State. This edition of our community newsletter shares information on the services provided by the dedicated caseworkers and staff of the VSU.

THE VICTIM SERVICES UNIT

Many St. Louis citizens never come into contact with the criminal justice system until after they are crime victims. The public is therefore often unaware of how to best participate in the criminal justice system and can be unfamiliar with court procedures: making their victimization even more difficult.

The Circuit Attorney's Office is aware of the hardship and frustration that accompany be-

ing the victim of a crime and operates the Victim Services Unit to provide support for all crime victims. The unit is comprised of Director Kathy Tofall, 10 case managers, and two support staff who dedicate themselves to providing comprehensive services to all crime victims in the City of St. Louis.

Case managers are highly trained to work with victims of different crimes. A case manager is assigned to each

victim and is responsible for keeping him or her informed of his or her rights, helping obtain compensation if applicable, referring to social service agencies, keeping a victim apprised of the case's progression through the system and serving as an escort to trial.

On the rare occasion that an individual's safety is threatened, the VSU works with the St. Louis Police Department to provide relocation services for those victims who need it.

From the Courtroom Central Patrol

ACA Charlie Billings and Investigator Michael Graves successfully prosecuted a dangerous purse snatcher who targeted women walking alone. In two separate incidents that occurred three hours apart in Downtown and Central West End neighborhoods, **William Coleman** jumped out of the passenger side of a car driven by his accomplice to grab the ladies' purses- even dragging them until they let go of their possessions. Identified by both victims, Coleman was convicted of two counts of Robbery 2nd. He was sentenced in Division 19 by Judge Hogan to a term of 10 years MDC.

North Patrol

ACA Mary Pat Benninger and Investigator Mark Chambers successfully prosecuted a terrifying case of a gas station hold-up in the Mark Twain I-70 Industrial neighborhood. **Damien Ray** was convicted of Robbery 1st and Armed Criminal Action after robbing his victim at a Shell gas station at I-70 and Goodfellow. The victim had stopped in to "buy a pop and sunflower seeds" when Ray "put a gun at his belly" and threatened to shoot him if he did not give him cash. A jury convicted the defendant of both counts and he was sentenced in Division 11 by Judge Hettentback to 20 years at MDC.

South Patrol

ACA Jason Steinmeyer recently secured a victory with the help of Investigator Len Deschler in two cases of rehab burglary. **Leonard Montegna** stole valuables from two Dutchtown homes and was later caught selling the stolen items at a local scrap yard. Montegna plead guilty as charged in Division 13 to 2 counts of Burglary 2nd, 2 counts of Stealing Under \$500, and 2 counts of Property Damage. Judge Ohmer handed down a sentence of 1 year at MSI.

TOP TEN MYTHS ABOUT VICTIMIZATION

1. It can't happen to me.

Anyone anywhere can be the victim of criminal activity.

2. I would rather just forget about it.

Speaking with a professional counselor is an effective healing process.

3. No one can help me.

The Victim Services Unit has access to a wide network of social, medical, and financial resources and assists victims as their cases proceed.

4. I can't recover my property.

The court may order a defendant to pay restitution.

5. I'm afraid the perpetrator will harm me again.

Victims who do not assist in bringing defendants to justice put themselves and the entire community at risk.

6. Most crimes are committed by strangers.

Many kinds of crime, ranging from domestic violence to fraud, can be perpetrated by friends or family members.

7. The victim is sometimes at fault.

A crime victim is never responsible for any harm done to him or her- only the criminal is at fault.

8. Victim participation is

not necessary for justice to be pursued.

Witness and victim participation is often the key to a successful prosecution.

9. Victims do not have rights in the system.

Missouri victims have guaranteed rights under the Missouri Constitution.

10. The community cannot be a victim.

When one person is victimized by crime, the entire community suffers. Drug crime harms us all.

CHILD SUPPORT UPDATE

The drug money seized and re-allocated by the Child Support Unit so far in 2009 is an incredible \$25,179.85! **That's money taken out of the hands of drug dealers and given to needy families instead.**

VICTIM SERVICES UNIT:

CASEWORKER PROFILES

Kathy Tofall Director

For 20 years, **Kathy Tofall** has dedicated her professional career to tirelessly advocating for victims' rights and ensuring that all victims who enter the criminal justice system have access to all necessary resources. As the Director of the CAO Victim Services Unit for 9 years, Tofall oversees a staff of 12 case management personnel.

Tofall maintains, "The greatest lesson I've learned in this field is the importance of being a presence for a victim. That is the best reward: to help that individual have a voice in the system. Sometimes, advocates have to be that voice."

Initially serving as a caseworker who worked closely with victims of serious crimes and on countless significant trials, Tofall currently devotes much of her time

to providing training to Missouri victims' advocates as a Steering Committee member of the Missouri State Victim Assistance Academy.

She has been a member of over 20 advocacy organizations, including serving as President of the Missouri Victim Assistance Network, Inc., on the Board Advisory Committee of the St. Louis Family Violence Council, on the Advisory Committee on the St. Louis Metropolitan Sexual Assault Center at the YWCA, as Chairperson on the St. Louis Council of Child Abuse and Neglect, and on the City of St. Louis Mayor's Taskforce on Police Response to Victims of Sexual Assault.

Lance Berra Caseworker

Lance Berra is a caseworker who specializes in assisting victims of a wide range of serious crimes in-

cluding Hate Crimes, Burglary, Assault, Arson, and Elder Abuse. With a background in Education and Social and Behavioral Sciences he has worked at the Circuit Attorney's Office for nearly 7 years.

Berra's daily work entails attending court hearing with victims, acting as a support and guide to available resources, and providing victims with status updates pertaining to their case. Recognizing that criminal activity does not stop for the weekends, Berra readily dedicates his Saturdays to facilitating victim assistance in the Warrant Office.

Berra operates every day under the principle that the victims of the often violent and destructive crimes he works with "no longer have to live their lives in fear and can take charge of their lives."

VICTIM SERVICES UNIT: CASEWORKER PROFILES

Danielle Berkley Caseworker

Danielle Berkley has served for three years as the Circuit Attorney's Homicide Victim Caseworker. With a background in Criminal Justice and Legal Studies, Berkley has dedicated her career to providing a voice for those who are unable to navigate the system alone.

Like Berra, Berkley is responsible for advising crime victims of their rights and keeping them informed of the status of their offender's case. She works directly with families of homicide victims and spends much of her time in the courtroom where she provides immediate support during the defendant's trial.

Berkley notes, "Working in

the Circuit Attorney's Office allows us all the opportunity to be part of the larger community." She regularly devotes much of her personal time to attending memorial services and community benefits, maintaining that it is merely her "small way of offering support and showing that someone truly does care."

"INSPIRE ME TO BE... GUN, GANG AND DRUG FREE"

"Inspire Me to Be... Gun, Gang, and Drug Free" is a Circuit Attorney prevention program established in 2002 with the goal of deterring schoolchildren at specific St. Louis area schools from joining gangs *before* they have been exposed to or adopted criminal behavior.



Collaborating with elementary schools Walbridge, Froebel, Ashland, and Adams, "Inspire Me" exposes students to a variety of speakers and activities including presentations from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department's Gang Unit, former gang members who left their negative lifestyles to become productive members of the community, and a Career Day event featuring local professionals. The program concludes with a trip to a local courthouse, where students take an oath to be gun, gang, and drug free.



Program coordinator **Betty Skinner** asserts, "The goal of the program is to impress upon the students that if they have a dream for their future, they can only reach that dream by staying away from drugs, guns and gangs."

POLICE OFFICERS OF THE QUARTER: SERGEANTS JOHN BLASKIEWICZ AND MIKE MCQUILLEN

We are extremely pleased to announce that the Spring 2009 Police Officers of the Quarter are **Sergeant John Blaskiewicz** and **Sergeant Mike McQuillen**.

When both Sergeants were detectives assigned to the Sex Crimes Unit of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, their dedicated investigations of rapist Gerrek French ensured another conviction by ACA Beth Orwick. In French's harrowing acts of random violence, "all three victims had especially challenging circumstances," Orwick recalls. "John and Mike treated them with the

respect due any victim, showing these women that the law truly applies to everyone."

Sgt. Blaskiewicz became involved in the first case when he personally accompanied French's frightened first victim to the Circuit Attorney's Warrant Office so she could share her story of being forcibly taken to a vacant lot in French's truck, forced to engage in acts of sodomy and raped. Sgt. Blaskiewicz not only conducted the search warrant on French's home but even swabbed the defendant for DNA which was later matched to the condom used during the rape.

Sgt. McQuillen's invaluable contributions to the case came when he personally sought out the second victim after Gerrek French's DNA was identified on a condom used in another rape. He again located the rapist's third and final victim and was integral in ensuring that these shocking acts of violence could be joined together in a single case.

Orwick maintains that both officers' riveting testimony and unwavering cross examinations "secured the conviction of this dangerous criminal," adding that she "could not even begin to quantify the officers' skill and devotion to seeking justice for the citizens of our City."

From the Courtroom Central Patrol

Drug dealer **James Conner** will no longer frighten residents of the Jeff VanderLou neighborhood thanks to ACA Jennifer Matthew and Investigator Dave Davis. The defendant, who had been on probation serving a 12 year Suspended Execution of Sentence for Possession of Cocaine Base, was apprehended by officers in on the same block where his prior arrest took place with a bag of drugs. Conner's probation was revoked and a Division 24 jury convicted him of Possession of Cocaine Base and Possession of Marijuana. Judge Hogan handed down a sentence in January 2009 of a total of 10 years and 30 days for both new counts.

North Patrol

Cortez McDowell will no longer intimidate the Walnut Park West community thanks to ACA Krista Boston and Investigator Christine Agnew-Danback. McDowell was convicted of Robbery 1st after stealing from two sisters, hitting one woman in the face and threatening to cut her throat. A jury convicted McDowell in February 2009 of one count of Robbery 1st and he was sentenced in Division 2 by Judge Mullen to 15 years at MDC.

South Patrol

The Benton Park West neighborhood is a safer place after ACA Jason Steinmeyer and Investigator Len Deschler prosecuted a ruthless burglar. Police watched as **James Bledsoe** entered a vacant home to search for valuables. He was immediately arrested as he walked out carrying a screw driver, wire cutters, and electric wiring he had stolen. With a long criminal history, Bledsoe pled guilty to Burglary 2nd, Possession of Burglar's Tools, and Stealing Under \$500. In January 2009, Judge Grady handed down a 9 year Probation sentence and 90 days at MSI.

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Jennifer M. Joyce,
 Circuit Attorney

OFFICE INFORMATION AND IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

The Circuit Attorney is the prosecutor for State-level criminal cases in the City of St. Louis. The Circuit Attorney's Office stands against those who break the law by holding them accountable for their actions. The Circuit Attorney is elected by the citizens of the City of St. Louis. The current Circuit Attorney, Jennifer M. Joyce, works with a staff of lawyers, investigators, and other professionals to protect the public by pursuing justice for all.



Mel Carnahan Courthouse

The Office is one of the largest law firms in the St. Louis region. It has more than 60 attorneys, 30 investigators, 11 victim professionals, and 20 support professionals. The Office handles approximately 4000 felonies and 8000 misdemeanors per year; and has a remarkable 98 percent over all conviction rate.

Fire, Police & Ambulance -----	911
Victim Services -----	(314) 622-4373
Child Abuse Hotline -----	1-800-392-3738
Circuit Clerk -----	(314) 641-8622
Orders of Protection/Adult Abuse Hotline -----	(314) 622-4434
City Hall -----	(314) 622-4000
Sexual Abuse Response Team (SART) -----	(314) 531-7273
Neighborhood Stabilization Office -----	(314) 622-4628
Fraud Assistance Line -----	(314) 612-1412