



**OFFICE OF AMY ASHWORTH
COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY**

Prince William County
Cities of Manassas & Manassas Park

THE RUNDOWN

9311 Lee Ave. Suite 200, Manassas, VA 20110

Letter from the Commonwealth's Attorney

January 2022 marks the halfway point of my first term as your elected Commonwealth's Attorney. I could not be prouder of the achievements made in the past two years and of the team of prosecutors and staff that I am honored to lead. In just two short years, we have grown the office by nine new positions to better serve our community, enacted an open-file discovery process to ensure a fair and just system, focused our efforts on crimes of violence and crimes that impact our community the most, harnessed the power of technology to reduce redundancies and improve efficiency, and improved our working relationship with the various police departments to better support our mission of seeking justice for our community and fighting crime.

While the impact of Covid continues to be felt, we adapt as best we can in an ever-changing environment. The Judicial Emergency first declared on March 16, 2020, has remained in effect with few changes. We are still limited in the number of jury trials that can occur in the Circuit Court which has created a tremendous backlog of cases that must be tried. While every case has a trial date scheduled, the number of jury trials scheduled exceeds the spaces available to try them, so many are continued to a new date. The jury trials taking priority are ones in which the defendant is incarcerated while waiting for trial on a charge, alleging a crime of violence. We are still busy with necessary pretrial hearings that are heard by a Judge without a jury. Recently, I joined Chief Judge Kimberly Irving in requesting an additional Circuit Court judgeship in Prince William County. Senator Surovell submitted legislation this General Assembly session to add an additional judge to assist with the backlog of cases in the Circuit Court.

On the personnel front, our Violent Crime Unit is now headed by Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Teresa Polinske. Deputy Tara Mooney is leading the Juvenile Unit and Deputy W. Michael Phipps is now heading up the Domestic Violence Unit. We are excited to welcome two new Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys to the team: Garrett Jagtiani and Christian Vega. We also have eight interns this semester from various colleges and law schools who are interested in pursuing a career in criminal justice.

Looking forward, we are excited to partner with Vice-Mayor Monae Nickerson and Councilwoman Selonia Miles of the Town of Dumfries and our Clerk of Court, Jacqueline Smith, for our first ever Expungement Clinic where we assist people in expunging arrests from their criminal record in which they were not found guilty. The clinic will be held in Dumfries in March of 2022.

- Amy Ashworth
Commonwealth's Attorney

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

**SEASON OF SERVICE
EVENT 2021**

Wellness Fair 2021

Employees from our office attended the Wellness Fair event hosted by the Prince William County Community Foundation. This event was held in October, which is also Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Our employees talked to individuals about how our office is involved when there is a victim of Domestic Violence.

At this event, our office was able to meet many community partners that offer a lot of great information. This included mental health help, community services assistance, and financial assistance. We look forward to having the opportunity to work with Prince William County Community Foundation again!



Trunk or Treat

We had the pleasure of attending the annual Trunk or Treat SPOOKTACULAR event hosted by the Prince William County Police Department. The event took place on October 27, 2021 at the Manassas Mall. Our office decorated our two vans following the SPOOKTACULAR theme and a 60's-inspired theme.

The attendance estimate was around 3,000 people including parents! There were many costumes that were worn at the event, but our favorite had to be the Nightmare Before Christmas family costume!

Season of Service 2021

Our office was excited to host our second annual Season of Service event! We collected over 200 items and delivered them to 8 thankful families. The Season of Service event is a holiday drive that our office holds near and dear to our hearts. This is because we are able to assist those in the community who have been impacted by crime during hard times. Members from the Prince William County Bar Association Cassie Chin, Andrea Morisi, Tasneem Ahmed, Jane Smith, Kathy Farrell, Cathy Croft also participated. Items that were collected include family board games, gift cards, children's toys, and activities for the family to do together.

Our office began by contacting families throughout the county on what they needed for the holiday season. We then collected items from October 1st, 2021 until December 5th, 2021. During this time, all items were sanitized and organized. Our office got together on December 16th, to wrap all the items as a team. Afterwards, groups from the office hand-delivered the gifts to families throughout Prince William County.

For more information on how you can participate in this event, please call Gabe at 703-792-6050! We look forward to continuing this event in 2022.

Pictures from the event are included on the back of the newsletter

Phone: 703-792-6050

Email: CWOffice@pwcgov.org

Victim Witness Program Spotlight

Tammie Thomas, Director of Victim Witness has been with the department for 24 years. The Victim Witness Assistance Program helps victims and witnesses of crimes navigate the criminal justice system. The program currently employs twelve case managers. These case managers ensure that victims and witnesses of crimes receive fair and compassionate treatment. They encourage all crime victims and witnesses to cooperate with both law enforcement officers and prosecutors. Case managers also accompany victims and witnesses of crimes to court for meetings, hearing, motions, etc.

The Victim Witness Assistance Program is partially grant funded. In her role, Tammie Thomas completes all grant writing and ensures that the program is in compliance. Ms. Thomas ensures that all case managers provide direct services in accordance with the Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act. Along with the daily management of the Victim Witness Assistance Program, Ms. Thomas assists families of homicide victims throughout the court process. The toughest aspect of her job is time. Ms. Thomas said that "There is just not enough time in the day. We have such a backlog of cases due to COVID-19. Some victims or witnesses have to wait 1-3 years for a case to finish."

When talking about how she sees the program developing in the next five years, Thomas said "Growth. My goal with a new position is to dedicate it to enforcing restitution which is a small but important part in victims or witnesses becoming whole again." Ms. Thomas also plans to develop specialized units dedicated to stalking, elder abuse, and the underserved population.



Early Diversion Program Spotlight

In July of 2021, Thomas Scartz joined our office as a Domestic Violence Staff Attorney. In this role, Mr. Scartz oversees the operation of the Early Diversion Program for Domestic Violence cases. The Early Diversion Program recognizes that there are some victims of domestic violence who do not wish to criminally proceed against loved ones. Amy Ashworth, Commonwealth's Attorney thought that early interaction and early intervention with some victims of domestic violence could be helpful. Through early intervention, the families are able to focus on the solutions to issues. This could be through taking anger management classes, mental health help, domestic violence courses, or substance abuse courses. If a defendant is offered to be a part of the early diversion program and they are able to complete the necessary course, they are given an offer prior to court. The early interventions are seen as helping the issues with hope to dismiss the case afterwards.

In his role, Mr. Scartz reviews all of the Domestic Violence cases and selects certain cases that meet the requirements for the Early Diversion Program. Speaking with both the law enforcement officers and also the victims is critical in these situations. Mr. Scartz investigates and identifies the necessities that the victims in domestic violence cases need in their homes.

When speaking with Scartz, he said "I hope that in the next five years, the office will be able to mesh this program into more cases throughout the system. Select situations that we in the Domestic Violence Unit deal with impact families directly by listening to issues. We give them insight on behavior and educate them on coping." The toughest challenge that Mr. Scartz comes across is reaching out to members of non-English speaking families. He said that luckily, our office has so many individuals that speak many different languages, that he is able to ask for assistance when necessary. Our office currently employs individuals who speak Spanish in addition to French, Portugese, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, and Memon.



Internship Opportunities

The Commonwealth's Attorney's Office for Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park provides numerous internship positions for the Spring, Summer, and Fall Semesters. We host both Undergrad and Law Students during that time. These internships provide students a way to further their legal education.

Our internship program provides an opportunity for students to earn valuable hands-on experience by participating in the day-to-day work of a prosecutor's office. Interns will be fully immersed in the criminal justice system and work with a diverse array of attorney's and administrative staff.

Since beginning our internship program, we have had a strong selection of individuals who have participated in the program. Many of our intern graduates have used this opportunity as a stepping stone to further their careers. Two of our Third-Year law students, Courtney White and Brandon Parker, have been accepted as Circuit Court Law Clerks starting in the Fall of 2022.

To apply for this program, please email a copy of a cover letter, resume, and writing sample to cwoffice@pwcgov.org.



Commonwealth's Attorney's Office employees gathering to wrap gifts for the Annual Season of Service event.



Employees from the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office wrapping gifts for families.

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