

2017

ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the State Attorney

Fourth Judicial Circuit

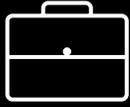
Duval, Clay, and Nassau Counties

Melissa Nelson, State Attorney



Ed Austin Building, 311 West Monroe Street, Jacksonville, Florida

The Office at a Glance



**119 Assistant
State Attorneys**



**209 Investigators
and Staff Members**



34,964 Cases Filed



**119 Felony
Cases Tried**



**\$26.9 Million
Budget**



The State Attorney's Office for Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit is responsible for the prosecution of all crimes committed in Duval, Clay, and Nassau counties. Those crimes fall under Florida statutes and range from misdemeanors such as disorderly conduct, battery, and petit theft, to felonies such as homicide, drug trafficking, and public corruption.

Population for the three-county area is more than 1 million. The elected office is overseen by State Attorney Melissa Nelson, who took office Jan. 3, 2017.

2017 - Year in Review

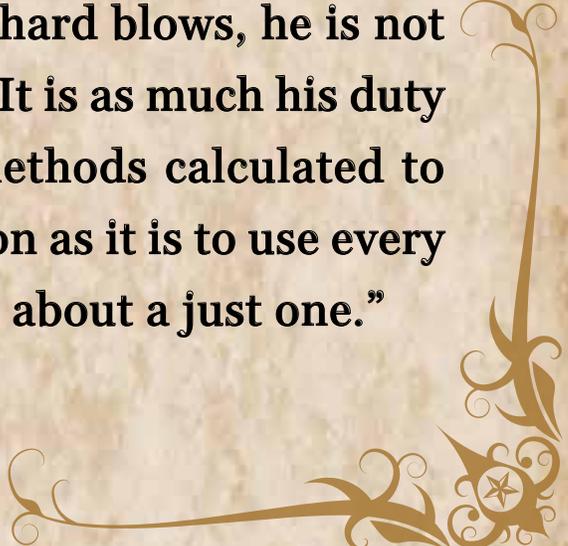
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“The [Prosecuting] Attorney...

is the representative not of an ordinary party to a controversy, but of a sovereignty whose obligation to govern impartially is as compelling as its obligation to govern at all; and whose interest, therefore, in a criminal prosecution is not that it shall win a case, but that justice shall be done. As such, he is in a peculiar and very definite sense the servant of the law, the twofold aim of which is that guilt shall not escape or innocence suffer. He may prosecute with earnestness and vigor – indeed, he should do so. But, while he may strike hard blows, he is not at liberty to strike foul ones. It is as much his duty to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction as it is to use every legitimate means to bring about a just one.”



Berger v. United States, 295 U.S. 78, 88 (1935) (bracketed material added)

A Message From Melissa

Thank you for your interest in the State Attorney's Office for Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit.

We constantly strive to find new and better ways to communicate with the public. This Annual Report — a first for this office — is published with this aim in mind. Here, we highlight the progress we made in 2017 and outline our plans for 2018.

Throughout these pages, you will see the many initiatives we have implemented in the past year. Each is intended to improve public safety, while ensuring that we are fair, accountable, and transparent.

You will see how we have dedicated resources to target the most dangerous criminals plaguing our neighborhoods.

You will see how we have enhanced partnerships with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to combat gang violence; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to target gun crimes; and the U.S. Attorney's Office to strategically prosecute human trafficking cases and heroin/opioid overdose deaths.

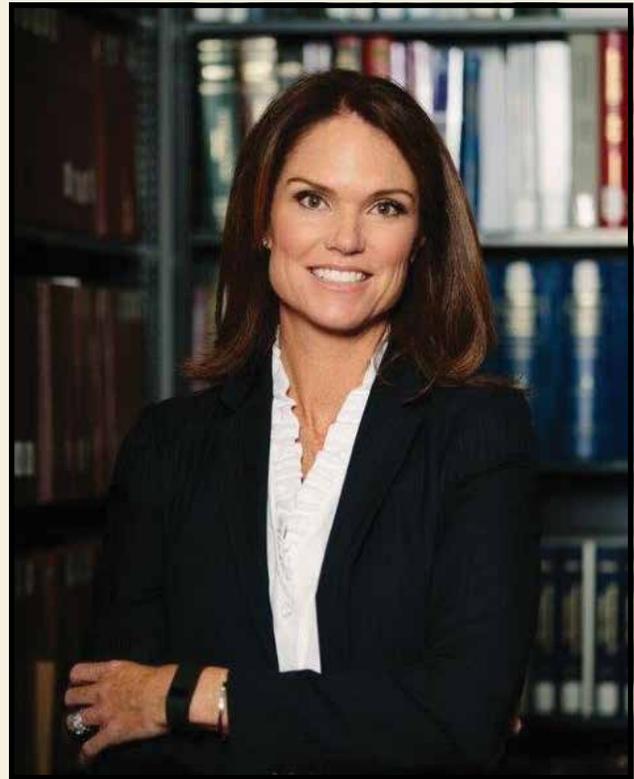
You will also see how we have implemented more thoughtful approaches to our pursuit of justice, such as the increased use of alternative treatment courts and our support for giving law enforcement more latitude to issue juvenile civil citations.

We are looking forward to the year ahead. This next year, we will continue to bring innovative approaches to our work.

We are developing a Community Prosecution pilot program that will focus on solving problems in high-crime areas and developing relationships with the citizens who live and work in those areas.

We are improving our support of and communication with those most impacted by crime: victims.

We are researching how we can employ data-driven methods in our work.



It takes a team approach to achieve these results. I am humbled and inspired by the effort and dedication of the men and women in this office. Together, we are committed to improving the communities of Duval, Clay, and Nassau counties.

This report is just a sampling of the good work we have done. While not every case or person could be recognized, I would like to thank everyone for the hard work they do for the people of the Fourth Circuit.

And thank you for your continued support as we continue to serve you in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa W. Nelson".

Melissa W. Nelson

Follow Melissa on Social Media



@MelissaNelson4SAO



@Nelson4SAO

Uniformity and Fairness

People expect uniformity and fairness in the criminal justice system. In 2017, the office made strides to ensure both.

— The Death Penalty —

In 2017, the State Attorney's Office changed the way decisions are made related to the death penalty. Among the changes:

- Established the Grand Jury Indictment Review Panel, a nine-member group of attorneys with decades of experience. When an attorney believes a case merits capital punishment, the panel reviews the facts, law, and the case's strengths and weaknesses. The panel then presents those findings to the State Attorney, who ultimately makes a decision.
- Published policies and procedures to ensure fair, uniform, efficient, and transparent handling of all homicide cases. This 11-page document also details how the Grand Jury Indictment Review Panel was formed and operates.
- The Grand Jury Indictment Review Panel roundtabled 32 cases. Those included 17 past death-penalty cases returned to the office by state and federal judicial rulings.



The Officer-Involved Shooting Panel reviews a case in 2017.

— Officer-Involved Shootings—
The State Attorney's Office serves as an investigative agency when law enforcement is involved in incidents using deadly force. In 2017, the office improved the way it reviews these situations. Among the changes:

- Established the inaugural Officer-involved Shooting Panel with attorneys and investigators with more than 350 years of combined experience.
- Published procedures for the newly created Officer-Involved Shooting Panel, which convenes to review cases and determine proper legal outcomes.
- Thoroughly reviewed and provided legal analysis for six cases in 2017.

— Juvenile Justice Through a New Lens —

The youngest offenders require a different approach than adults. In 2017, the State Attorney's Office reshaped that approach to ensure the most appropriate outcomes. Among the changes:

- Revamped the decision-making process for charging juveniles as adults.
- Hired Juvenile Director Laura Lothman Lambert, a former federal prosecutor, who has helped shape the division with talented attorneys who have a passion for juvenile justice.
- In 2018, the office will publish its written policies and procedures that will be used as guiding principals for the certification of a juvenile in the criminal justice system.

Restoring Trust

To instill public trust, one goal in 2017 was a dedicated effort to make decisions in an open, transparent way.

Transparency

Among the examples of heightened transparency in 2017:

- In September, the office proactively released every public record relied upon to reach its legal conclusion in the 2016 officer-involved shooting of Vernell Bing Jr. This included hundreds of documents and reports, along with a digital recreation of the high-speed chase leading to the incident. See the work at: <http://bit.ly/2hejtLR>.
- In June, the office publicly released its detailed review of the April anti-war protest at Hemming Park. The report explained the facts and legal basis behind the office's decisions on the incident. See the report at: <http://bit.ly/2ED0TZv>.
- Formalized written policies and procedures were created for many areas of the office.



The office recreated the high-speed chase in the Vernell Bing Jr. incident.

Public Records

The State Attorney's Office receives a significant amount of interest from the public and media. In turn, the office works with each to ensure accurate, timely responses. In 2017, the office received more than 1,880 records requests from the public, the media, and attorneys representing clients. During that same time, the office was able to resolve 1,728 such requests.



New Website

In May, the State Attorney's Office launched a new and improved website – sao4th.com. The goal is for the public to easily access information about the office, its initiatives, and news. In addition, it is a place where visitors can see key court results and have the opportunity to request public records through an accessible, automated form.

Check us out on social media!



@SAO4FL



@SAO4Florida

The Work We Do

FELONY CASES
7,108

MISDEMEANOR
CASES 27,856

TOTAL CASES FILED 34,964



The State Attorney's Office prosecutes criminal cases in the Fourth Judicial Circuit, many of which generate significant community interest. Here's a snapshot of some of the office's 2017 successes told through local headlines with office news releases. For a full list of courtroom successes, initiatives, and office news, visit: sao4th.com/news.

Combating Violent Crime

The Florida Times-Union
jacksonville.com

Middleburg Man Sentenced to 45 Years After Terrorizing Crime Spree; Victims Raped, Kidnapped, Robbed

Brian Eugene Fogarty, 41, of Middleburg, pleaded guilty to three counts of Kidnapping, two counts of Sexual Battery, one count of Home Invasion Robbery, one count of Grand Theft Auto, and two counts of Armed Robbery. In July 2016, Fogarty entered a Jacksonville Beach real estate office and sexually assaulted and kidnapped the agent on duty. He then drove the victim to her home and kidnapped her family, taking them to area ATMs to withdraw cash. He let them go and fled. The next day he entered a female's residence on the Westside, forced her into a vehicle, tied her up, and drove to ATMs to withdraw cash so he could purchase drugs. Fogarty then took the victim to Clay County and sexually assaulted her. He was apprehended through the efforts of multiple law enforcement agencies. Fogarty was sentenced to 45 years in Florida State Prison. The case was successfully prosecuted by Rachel Algee and Adair Newman.



Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Murder of Girlfriend in Jacksonville

Courtney Lamar Davis, 31, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Second-Degree Murder, Abuse of a Dead Human Body, and Tampering with Evidence. In March 2015, Davis murdered his girlfriend, Brittany Foote, after an ongoing argument about money. Davis then purchased a chainsaw and rented a moving van. He made a call to a tow truck driver from a secluded field on the Northside. The driver later told police about Davis' unusual behavior and an odd smelling mound in the back of the moving van. Police later discovered a melted trash can that contained Foote's DNA. Davis was sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison. The case was successfully prosecuted by Chris Huband.



Jackson Guilty of Second-Degree Murder in Gang-related Killing

Keith Dion Jackson II, 27, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Second-Degree Murder. The gang-related incident took place on April 27, 2016, when 23-year-old Keith Thompson went to a drug house of one of Jackson's acquaintances to obtain a firearm. He was unaware Jackson and others were planning to kill him for a suspected burglary. The group was armed and held Thompson captive until Jackson arrived and confronted him. He then shot him 12 times with a gun he had taken from Thompson. Ultimately, Thompson sustained 27 gunshot wounds, eight of which were considered fatal. The entire incident was captured on surveillance cameras. Jackson was sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison. The case was successfully prosecuted by London Kite and Tonya Patterson-Barge.

Combating Violent Crime



Man Who Shot Jacksonville Undercover Officer Found Guilty of Attempted Murder

Kevin Ryan Rojas, 21, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Attempted First-Degree Murder of a Law Enforcement Officer, Attempted Manslaughter, two counts of Aggravated Assault, Grand Theft Auto, and Fleeing or Attempting to Elude a Police Officer. In March 2016, Rojas was pulled over by an off-duty undercover Jacksonville Sheriff's Office detective for driving recklessly. The officer was taking his teenage son to school. Immediately after being stopped, Rojas exited his vehicle and fired shots at the detective, striking him once in the head, twice in the abdomen, and once in the hand. Rojas then fled, stole a truck, and was apprehended shortly after. Rojas was sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison. The case was successfully prosecuted by Bernie de la Rionda and Tom Mangan.



Man Accused of Killing a Father Outside of Blind Rabbit Pleads Guilty to Murder

Erron Markese Coleman, 26, of Jacksonville, pleaded guilty to Second-Degree Murder and Armed Robbery. As part of the plea agreement, Coleman faces 35 years to Life in Florida State Prison – the State has recommended Life. In July 2015, Coleman shot and killed Daniel Rowe, an on-duty employee of the Blind Rabbit restaurant in Riverside. The plea agreement requires Coleman to testify truthfully in future proceedings about the facts and circumstances of Rowe's murder. A sentencing hearing is set for March 2018. The case was successfully prosecuted by Alan Mizrahi and L.E. Hutton.

Combating Violent Crime



Nassau County Man Faces Life in Prison for Sexual Battery, False Imprisonment

Jeffrey Alan Weddington, 27, of Fernandina Beach, was found guilty by a jury of Sexual Battery with Force, False Imprisonment, and Felony Battery. In 2014, Weddington and his girlfriend, the victim, had been living together for a few months. He used common household items to get high, then became violent. He beat the victim and held her against her will. This continued throughout the night until the victim escaped into a bathroom and was able to call police. The case was successfully prosecuted by Beverly Collins and Cate Waugh.



Jacksonville Man Convicted of 2015 Attempted Murder of Girlfriend

Joshua Council, 29, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Attempted Murder in the First Degree. In October 2015, Council shot his girlfriend multiple times after an argument. Lifesaving measures were performed by paramedics on the way to the hospital, where the victim acknowledged Council was the shooter. She later recanted those statements, saying she did not remember anything. However, significant amounts of evidence detailed Council's actions. He was sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison. Council, a convicted felon, was released from prison less than three months before the shooting. The case was successfully prosecuted by Chris Huband and Trey Atkinson.



Jurors Convict Man in Attempted Murder of 16-year-old Jacksonville Boy

Devraughne Terrell Owens, 27, of Jacksonville was found guilty of Attempted Murder in the First Degree, and Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon. In 2015, citizens in the Edgewood Avenue area called to report a man in a traffic vest with two guns chasing another man into a backyard. Owens, the man with the guns, shot the victim multiple times before leading officers on a foot chase through the surrounding neighborhood. Owens was sentenced to 30 years in Florida State Prison. The case was successfully prosecuted by Lauren Huish and Chyna-Michele Makarowski.

Targeted Prosecution



Beside Sheriff Mike Williams and Assistant Chief Scott Dingee, State Attorney Melissa Nelson speaks at a news conference announcing the arrests of members of “Problem Child Entertainment.”

Every community has criminal elements, with some separating themselves as more dangerous and violent than others. The Fourth Judicial Circuit is no different.

In early 2017, the office sought to directly combat those heightened threats by establishing its Targeted Prosecution Unit. The group of dedicated prosecutors, investigators, and support staff works with law enforcement agencies to identify, gather intelligence on, and swiftly stop the most violent organized crime groups, dangerous individuals, and harmful drug operators. Their committed approach toward intelligence gathering helps build stronger leads and cases.

Dismantling these groups and capturing such dangerous individuals will continue throughout 2018 and beyond.

Focused Resources Produce Results

- *Success Story: Dismantling ‘Problem Child Entertainment’* -

One of Targeted Prosecution’s highest-profile successes came in late 2017, when law enforcement agencies throughout the region announced the arrests of multiple members of “Problem Child Entertainment.”

This organized criminal street group is responsible for murders, attempted murders, robberies, dealing in stolen property, and a litany of other offenses. Ten members of the criminal group were arrested and charged with violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statutes.

The investigation and arrests on RICO charges were an important success for the Targeted Prosecution Unit, which spent much of 2017 investigating the group. Several prosecutors in the office are working together on these upcoming cases.

With the unit’s effort and crucial teamwork by the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and FBI Jacksonville Division, there is one fewer organized street gang disrupting our community.

- *Success Story: Correcting an ‘affront to the justice system’* -

In April 2014, Quintae Hudson threw a garden stone through a vehicle’s window and injured a child. The crime was witnessed by security guard Michael Wright.

Hudson, a high-ranking member of the Neighborhood Bloods Rollin 20s gang, orchestrated Wright’s murder from his jail cell prior to his trial. Hudson’s fellow gang members carried out the murder of the witness, described by State Attorney Melissa Nelson as “an affront to the justice system.” An investigation by



Assistant State Attorney London Kite talks about gang groupthink to the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office and prosecutors led to a grand jury indictment and first-degree murder charge for Hudson. Prosecutors successfully navigated the complex case and secured a guilty verdict and life in prison for Hudson. His fellow Rollin 20s gang members who carried out the murder have since been indicted on first-degree murder charges and await trial.

Special Assault Division

Success Story: Cold Case Closed

In November, Terrence Keith Payne, 44, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of Armed Sexual Battery, a crime he committed more than 20 years ago. He was sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison.

The trial was complex and the outcome was a major victory for the office's Special Assault Division and Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit.

On Oct. 19, 1996, Payne went to the victim's Arlington home, where he raped her at knifepoint in her bedroom. The victim fought back and was left with cuts to her neck and hands. She was unable to provide a description of Payne because his face was concealed. Her rape kit was tested for DNA in September 2014 and results identified Payne as the perpetrator. The case was successfully prosecuted by Coreylyn Crawford and Erin Wolfson.



Jacksonville Man Found Guilty of 3 Counts of Sexual Battery

Victor Vaughn Reed, 51, of Jacksonville, was found guilty by a jury of three counts of Sexual Battery and sentenced to Life in Florida State Prison.

There were two victims, the first in 2007, when Reed approached a female in his car and offered her a ride. He took her to an abandoned building and forcibly raped her. The second crime was in 2008 when Reed approached a female at a bus stop and offered her a ride. She accepted and Reed took her to an abandoned location, where she was forcibly raped at knifepoint.

The case was successfully prosecuted by Rachel Algee and Leigh Rosenbloom.



Jacksonville Man Charged with 2nd Rape in 2 years Gets 2 Life Sentences

Sion Khadeem Henry, 26, of Jacksonville was found guilty by a jury of two counts of Sexual Battery and one count of Robbery, and sentenced to two Life sentences in Florida State Prison.

The victim was walking with her 7-month-old child from a Bartram Park grocery store when she was attacked by Henry, who threatened to harm the child before he sexually assaulted the mother along a wooded path. DNA evidence collected through the victim's rape kit came back and matched Henry.

The case was successfully prosecuted by Justin Dixon and Coreylyn Crawford.

Success Story: Clearing the Kits

The office's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit in 2017 reached a milestone. In February, the unit sent out its final 31 kits for testing, the conclusion of a methodical submission of 120 kits a month — in all, more than 1,700 kits were sent for testing. As of December, the initiative resulted in more than 300 DNA hits that the office's unit continues to investigate for possible sexual assault prosecutions.

Keeping the Community Safe



Identity Thief Sentenced to 6 Years in Prison

Christopher Sean Riley, 31, was sentenced to six years in Florida State Prison for three counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification Information, and ordered to repay more than \$20,000 in restitution. Riley created fraudulent identification cards with pictures of his criminal associates, but contained personal information of identity theft victims throughout the country. Riley opened fraudulent lines of credit at retail stores in Jacksonville. The case was successfully prosecuted by Joe Licandro and Katharine Skinner.

The Florida Times-Union
jacksonville.com

Bryceville Woman Guilty of Stealing \$1.5 Million from Homeowners Associations

Lauren Eileen Carr, 58, of Bryceville, was found guilty by a jury of Organized Fraud and sentenced to 12 years in Florida State Prison. From 2008-2015, Carr owned Stazac Management Co., which managed several homeowners associations. During that time, Carr diverted more than \$1.5 million for her and her family's everyday personal use and paying off debt. A whistleblower alerted law enforcement to the fraud. The case was successfully prosecuted by David Johnston and Terry Livanos.

Success Story: Trial Support Services

If “seeing is believing,” then in 2017 the State Attorney’s Office made a key addition in the pursuit of justice with the creation of its Trial Support Services.

The work is led by Jim McMillan, a veteran law enforcement officer turned forensic artist, who serves as an invaluable resource to the office’s trial attorneys. McMillan creates demonstrative aides that help attorneys better prepare and present their cases to juries and the public.

“I try to create unique exhibits that allow jurors to better see and understand the evidence that’s being presented,” said McMillan.

Located on-site, McMillan is accessible to prosecutors and his expertise provides the office an edge in its recruiting efforts.



Jim McMillan heads the office’s Trial Support Services.



The workshop is located in the office for better access.

Forging Partnerships

Every law enforcement agency has a role in keeping the community safe. They are most effective when working together.

A Thorough Review of Gun Crime Cases



One of the office's first announced initiatives of 2017 was the enhanced relationship with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

The strategic initiative includes having a Special Agent from ATF on-site at the State Attorney's Office to review all criminal firearm cases. The objective of the partnership is to ensure appropriate referral and federal prosecution of violent criminals and drug dealers who illegally use and possess firearms.

Success Story: Local Funding to Combat Gun Crimes

The State Attorney's Office will have a new addition underway in 2018 — one that will be a key part in addressing gun crimes.

Early in 2017, elected leaders discussed available opportunities to address Jacksonville's violent crime. Not long after, Mayor Lenny Curry, Sheriff Mike Williams, City Council members, State Attorney Melissa Nelson, and law enforcement agencies announced a \$250,000 emergency proposal to fund an Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) — used to analyze ballistic evidence — for the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

In the summer, the Mayor and the City Council acted swiftly to allocate \$1 million for a Crime Gun Intelligence Center at the State Attorney's Office. This center will house multiple law enforcement agencies that will work together to quickly pursue leads generated from IBIS and other technologies to fight crime.



Throughout 2017, Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry, Jacksonville Sheriff Mike Williams, and State Attorney Melissa Nelson joined efforts to combat violent crime.



Officials in 2017 allocated \$1 million toward the build-out of a Crime Gun Intelligence Center in the State Attorney's Office.

United in a Common Goal

Preventing a Mass Tragedy



Sheriff Mike Williams at a news conference announces the arrest of Bernardino Bolatete.

In December, Bernardino Bolatete, of Jacksonville, was arrested on federal charges of knowingly receiving and possessing a firearm silencer not registered to him. Bolatete is alleged to have been planning a mass shooting at an Islamic Center in Jacksonville. Assistant State Attorney Joe Licandro (second from left) and the office worked with several other law enforcement organizations to investigate and arrest Bolatete and prevent a mass tragedy.

An Open Door to Collaborate

In November, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida and the State Attorney's Office expanded its working relationship. Federal prosecutors make themselves available on a weekly basis to discuss firearm, drug, robbery and other cases that could potentially be better suited for federal prosecution and the best end result.



Partnerships in Pictures



State Attorney Melissa Nelson joined U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department, and others for a roundtable discussion on the opioid crisis.



Assistant State Attorney Chris Huband helps prepare an FDLE forensic expert for trial testimony during a training session. The office regularly assists its partners with courtroom preparation.

Thank you to our law enforcement partners
for your hard work and dedication throughout 2017.

Alternative Programs that Work



Drug Courts • Veterans Treatment Court • Mental Health Court

When cases arrive at the State Attorney's Office that may be appropriate for an outcome other than prosecution, the office can — and should — seek to use those programs that bring justice and fairness outside the traditional court system.

These include referrals to Drug Courts, Veterans Treatment Court, and Mental Health Court, all of which provide relevant services and establish regimented programs to those whose issues contributed to their offense.

A Fair-minded Approach to Justice

In 2017, the State Attorney's Office increased support of alternative courts and diversion programs. When offenders are eligible, these courts and programs provide accountability for actions, and offer better long-term public safety outcomes for the community.



All smiles: David Fisher and Joshua Abplanalp after their July graduation from Adult Drug Court.

A National Model



In May, the Fourth Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court was named one of only four national mentor courts by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Model courts host officials from other jurisdictions to grow these successful programs.

The office used 'smart justice' at a greater rate in 2017.

— Adult Drug Court —

For defendants arrested for the purchase or possession of drugs, as well as non-violent felonies deemed drug-related.

Referrals increased 78% in 2017

— Juvenile Drug Court —

Part of the office's juvenile diversion programs that address criminal activity driven by substance abuse.

Referrals increased 51% in 2017

— Veterans Treatment Court —

Provides substance abuse treatment and mental health services to current/former military service members arrested when there is a relationship between the offense and the military service.

Referrals increased 9% in 2017

— Mental Health Court —

Works with community providers to assist individuals with mental health issues in obtaining services.

Referrals increased 10% in 2017

These courts provide treatment, drug-testing, counseling and other helpful programs.

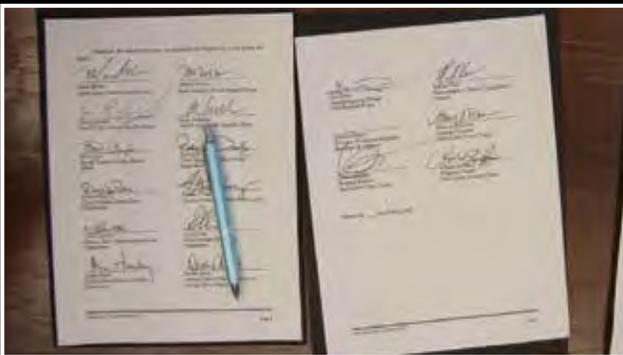
A Path Toward Smart Justice



Seeking Fair,
Effective
Solutions.

Civil Citation
is one option.

A New Day for Civil Citations



Law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies signed a new agreement for the expanded use of civil citations.



Stakeholders from 22 different agencies took part in the official signing ceremony.

In May 2017, law enforcement from every agency in the Fourth Judicial Circuit as well as juvenile justice representatives took part in signing a new Memorandum of Understanding for the expanded use of juvenile civil citations.

The citations are alternatives to arrest for eligible juvenile offenders who commit misdemeanor or municipal law violations. Civil citations are an effective means of smart justice that provides swifter punishment, quicker accountability, savings to taxpayers, and better long-term outcomes for youthful offenders. Research has shown citations and the completion of intervention programs lead to significantly lower recidivism rates for youth.

The use of civil citations is increasing — issuance was up 24% in 2017.

Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee



After months of planning, the State Attorney's Office launched the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee in September. The group of community members is focusing on juvenile diversion and began meeting that month, with the work continuing monthly through 2018.

Creating the JJAC

There are many community stakeholders who share an interest in furthering public safety and improving juvenile justice. In September, the State Attorney's Office announced the creation of a panel that seeks to do both.

The Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) began meeting in late 2017 as a way to bring together a willing group of community members to review the office's juvenile diversion programs along with efforts from around the country.

Thus far, the 23-member group has heard about the office's current efforts, emerging practices, data-driven decision-making, and gang-related groupthink. The group also has heard the successful story of local teens making a positive influence in the community.

The committee's work continues into late 2018, concluding with a report making recommendations to State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

Upcoming meetings:

Feb 2 March 9 April 6 May 11 June 1
July 13 August 10 Sept. 14

You can find the most up-to-date information, materials from past meetings, and updates at the JJAC's dedicated page on the sao4th.com website. Unless otherwise noted, meetings will be 9-11 a.m. at the Downtown Jacksonville office of Holland & Knight.

Committee Members

- Buddy Schulz (chair)
- The Honorable Suzanne Bass
- Jim Clark
- The Honorable Brian Davis
- Pamela Davis
- Rory Diamond
- Kevin Gay
- Nat Glover
- Dr. Jeff Goldhagen
- Shelley Grant
- Marcus Haile
- Gretchen Hamm
- Elder Lee Harris
- Bill Hodges
- Alan Louder
- Michael Meyers
- Lara Nezami
- Deloris Patterson
- The Honorable Jack Schemer
- Anthony Stinson
- Nina Waters
- Vicki Waytowich
- Donna Webb

A Voice for the Vulnerable

HUMAN RIGHTS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

EXCESSIVE FORCE

HATE
CRIMES

ELDER ABUSE

Forced Servitude

One of the early 2017 initiatives of the State Attorney's Office was the establishment of a Human Rights Division, the first of its kind in Florida and modeled after the U.S. Department of Justice program.

The division is staffed with prosecutors, investigators, and support staff who focus on areas of human trafficking and elder abuse — two crimes on the rise nationwide — along with hate crimes and excessive use of force. Attorneys and investigators from the office traveled to Orlando to receive training on Hate Crime prosecution from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A Voice for the Vulnerable

The office further expanded its efforts against elder abuse, human trafficking, hate crimes, and excessive force by creating a Human Rights Division hotline. Those who can provide tips about crimes are encouraged to call and leave information with details of the possible offense.

Cases involving elements of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of the elderly, are sent to the Human Rights Division for enhanced review. Likewise, cases involving human smuggling or trafficking also are sent for extra oversight and potential prosecution. Florida's unique geography and population, particularly Northeast Florida, have provided ample opportunity for the rise in these crimes.

The office created several hotlines in 2017 seeking information on potential crimes:



Human Rights: (904) 255-3099

Storm-related Crimes: (904) 255-3099

Public Corruption: (904) 255-3098

Success Story: Elevating the Conversation

The State Attorney's Office served as a community partner in the focus on human trafficking in 2017.

- It began early in the year when law enforcement and community organizations came together to recognize January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, which calls for awareness and action to end all forms of slavery. It was also when State Attorney Melissa Nelson announced the office was dedicating resources toward the cause as part of the Human Rights Division.

- Throughout the year, the office has maintained that commitment by engaging with the City Council to support enhanced signage in Jacksonville-area businesses; speaking opportunities at community events; and work with the nonprofit sector, all to raise awareness to the issue.

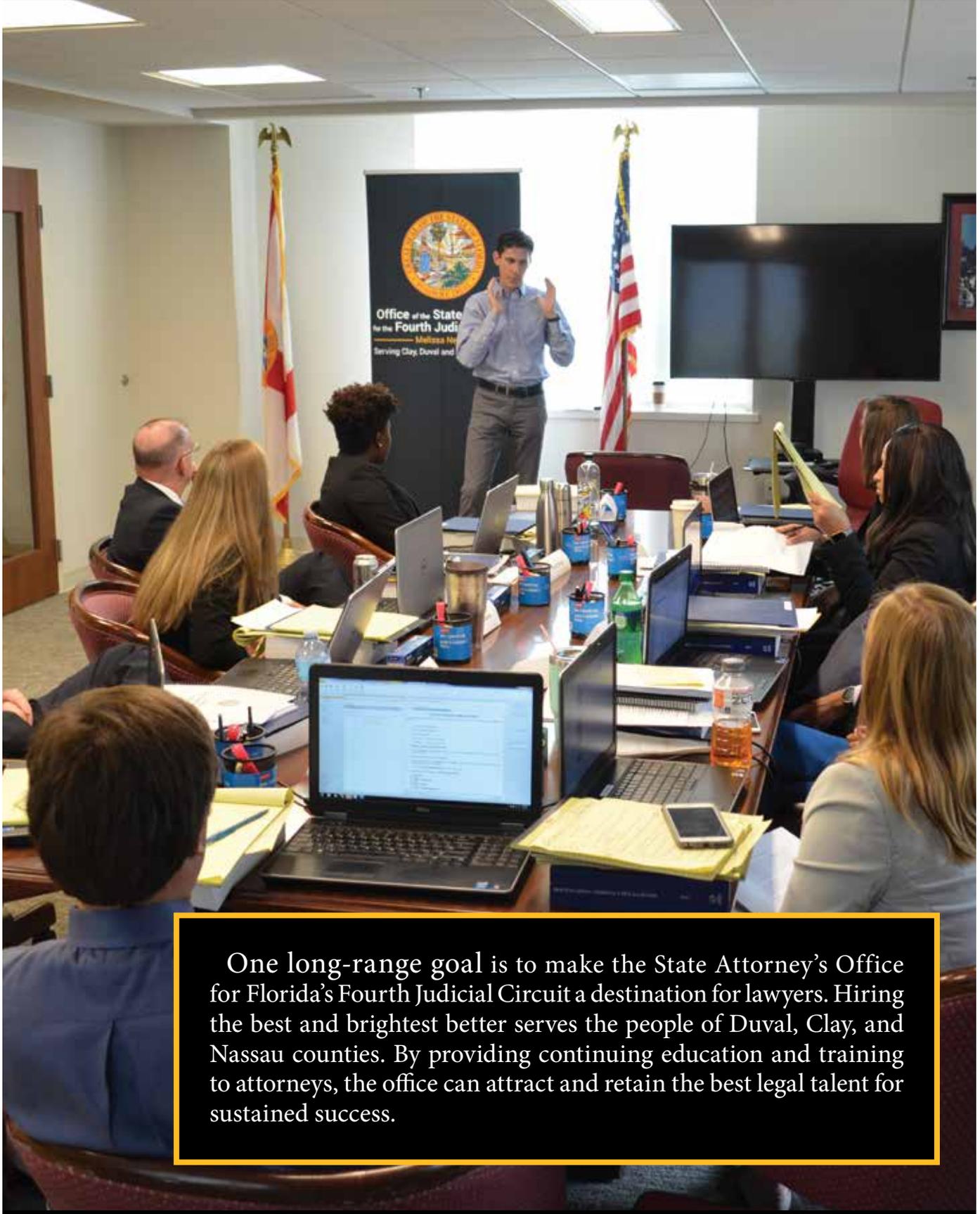
- Investigators and attorneys worked with law enforcement partners on multi-agency operations to curb the influx of human trafficking in areas of town.

- In November, leadership and investigators provided an all-day seminar on human trafficking to a consortium of security personnel at Columbia University attended by several New York-area colleges and universities.



Investigator Richard Trew and FDLE Special Agent Courtney Harrison are interviewed by "48 Hours" on human trafficking.

Attorney Recruitment



One long-range goal is to make the State Attorney's Office for Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit a destination for lawyers. Hiring the best and brightest better serves the people of Duval, Clay, and Nassau counties. By providing continuing education and training to attorneys, the office can attract and retain the best legal talent for sustained success.

Development and Training

Success Story: The Class of 2017



Recruiting efforts paid off in 2017, as the office welcomed 16 Assistant State Attorneys with a diverse set of educational and life experiences.

Harvard University, the University of South Carolina, the University of Florida, Florida A&M University – just some of the varied legal educations this class brings to the table.

The common theme? Each attorney is a great fit and arrived with the goal of making a difference in the Circuit and the local justice system.

We look forward to their future contributions and successes in the years ahead.

At left: Circuit Judge Angela Cox swears in new attorneys in the Class of 2017.



In January, the State Attorney's Office began to focus efforts on recruitment and better development of attorneys, a move that has already led to many positive changes. Among them:

- Leadership has expanded its recruiting efforts, visiting schools throughout the Southeast and Northeast to attract the best and brightest to Northeast Florida.
- Internally, attorneys, investigators, and staff have learned about initiatives and perspectives of prosecution and the criminal justice system beyond required educational courses. "Third Thursday" training sessions have explored topics such as implicit bias, the use of technology, social media use, and ethics.



Attorneys take part in a mentor/mentee pairing event.

• The vast experience in the office is also being shared. After months of development, a mentorship program was launched that pairs veteran attorneys with those who have been in the office less than a year. Forging such relationships will provide young attorneys educational opportunities from some of the most knowledgeable — the attorneys who they call colleagues.

Community Outreach and Engagement



Members of the office partnered with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office for a community walk during the summer.

A resident of the neighborhood discusses issues with Zone 5 Assistant Chief Deloris Patterson and State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

Success Story: Engaging Impacted Neighborhoods

The role of the State Attorney's Office is inherently reactive. It responds to crimes that inflict damage on the community, with the goal of reaching the fairest outcome in the name of justice. One priority for the office is to become more proactive.

An example of that was on display in August, when a contingent of attorneys, investigators and staff from the office joined Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Assistant Chief Deloris Patterson and officers for a walk through a neighborhood in Zone 5.

This proactive approach helps rebuild trust in the community and serves as an invaluable learning opportunity for the office. More walks are being planned for the year ahead – maybe in your neighborhood.



Visible and Responsive

Paying it Forward for Wounded Warrior Project

During the holiday season, the office partnered with Wounded Warrior Project to adopt a dozen families and host a party for them. For the past seven years, Investigator J.J. Thurne has helped organize this event with the nonprofit that assists veterans and their families. The 2017 gathering was a first, however, as veterans' families were invited to participate. Each adopted family received baskets filled with items purchased by different sections of the office and the community.



Investigators provided gifts for Leadry and Sarah Wilson.

Educating Seniors About Scams



Annual Senior Expo.

In May, attorneys and investigators participated in the annual citywide Senior Expo, with the goal of preventing seniors from becoming the victims of scams. Participants met one-on-one with attendees to share tips and educate them about the role of the office in the criminal justice system. The office created a flyer with reminders on the most common scams — those relating to home repair and sales through the mail, door-to-door, and the internet.

Promoting Sexual Assault Awareness

April is recognized nationally as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. While attorneys and investigators pursue justice for victims of these terrible crimes every day, they showed their support outside the courtroom as well.

The office won the Third Annual Sexual Assault Awareness Kickball Tournament, played among law enforcement organizations and community groups. The event raised money for the Women's Center of Jacksonville. Team SAO raised a third of what was collected and took home the trophy for winning the kickball tournament. The next week, members took part in Hubbard House's annual walk to raise awareness, and participated in Denim Day, a visible fashion statement about the misconceptions surrounding sexual assault.



Team SAO at the Sexual Assault Awareness Kickball event.

The Year That Was



The Year Ahead



The work for the people of the Fourth Judicial Circuit is never really complete — the talented attorneys, investigators, and staff of the State Attorney's Office continue to pursue justice and fairness for everyone in the community. There were many accomplishments and initiatives set forth in 2017 that will bear future successes — and even more will launch in 2018.



With great power comes great responsibility.

The Year Ahead - Identifying Areas of Need

— Tackling a Deadly Epidemic —

The opioid epidemic that has swept the nation in recent years did not leave Northeast Florida unscathed.

In Duval County, there were 201 overdose deaths in 2015 — a number that skyrocketed to 464 in 2016 and more than 500 in 2017. As the director for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in late 2017, the opioid epidemic — drugs that include heroin, prescription pain pills, and fentanyl — “clearly has a huge impact on our entire society.”

The State Attorney’s Office since mid-2017 has taken a proactive approach to investigating this growing community problem.

The office has dedicated investigators to handle overdose deaths in hopes to make viable, prosecutable cases against the dealers who are largely responsible for this crisis. And, in late 2017, a Memorandum of Agreement was drafted to further partner with law enforcement and create a task force that will have oversight on every drug overdose in Duval County.

The goal remains to hold drug dealers accountable for their actions, while users receive the help they need.



Connecting with Victims

The unfortunate reality of the criminal justice system is that virtually every case the State Attorney’s Office becomes involved with has a victim — someone who has been taken advantage of or harmed in some way.

When this happens, the system can seem complex and overwhelming, especially during such strenuous times. The State Attorney’s Office has advocates who help guide victims through the process, such as keeping them updated on schedules or assisting in seeking compensation. In 2018, the State Attorney’s Office is pledging to do an even better job.

Better communication. Better information. And overall, better service to the people who have been thrust into the criminal justice system, through no fault of their own.

Look for more as the year progresses, but take a few minutes to see the victim-related information currently available at sao4th.com/resources/for-the-public/information-for-victims.



Assistant State Attorney London Kite speaks at a City Hall event marking the start of Victims’ Rights Week in April.



Victim Advocate Carl Harms discusses domestic abuse homicide statistics during an event in October.

The Year Ahead - Identifying Areas of Need

Starting a Community Prosecution Strategy

The inherent role of a prosecutor is often reactive, taking place after a crime is committed. In 2018, the office will seek to shift from that dynamic with the introduction and rollout of a Community Prosecution strategy.

It is an innovative prosecution strategy that focuses on high-crime areas within the community and involves a long-term, proactive partnership among the State Attorney's Office, law enforcement, neighborhoods, and public and private organizations.

The authority of the prosecutor's office is used to solve problems, improve public safety, and enhance quality of life — community prosecutors are problem-solvers.

In addressing problems rather than dealing with only individual cases, the goal is to prevent the next crime. Prosecutors invite community stakeholders to express their safety concerns, identify neighborhood problems, brainstorm appropriate responses, and help the office establish priorities.

For community prosecutors, evaluating effectiveness cannot be solely decided upon a conviction rate. They evaluate their activities and impact on neighborhoods, continuously adapting to the community's needs.

These activities require an examination of outcomes, such as the reduction of crime or calls for service in a particular area, the perception of safety in the neighborhood, or the increase in community participation through neighborhood meetings, school presentations, or other opportunities to engage the residents in public safety.

Shining New Light on Cold Cases

There is never a feeling of complete closure when a loved one is lost to crime or irreparably harmed. The pain can partially be mitigated when those responsible for the crime are apprehended and justly prosecuted. However, there are many cases in which offenders elude law enforcement despite its best efforts in seeking justice.

In 2018, the State Attorney's Office will partner with organizations and law enforcement to provide additional resources for these elusive cases.

Project: Cold Case, a Jacksonville-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting awareness and information on cases across the country, will have space within the Duval County Office of the State Attorney. Prosecutors and investigators will review longstanding cases, and the office's website will expand to highlight cases throughout the year and moving forward.



COMMUNITY
PROSECUTION
In Partnership
for Safer
Neighborhoods

The Year Ahead - Identifying Areas of Need

Creating the Conviction Integrity Review

The State Attorney's Office has launched Florida's first Conviction Integrity Review effort.

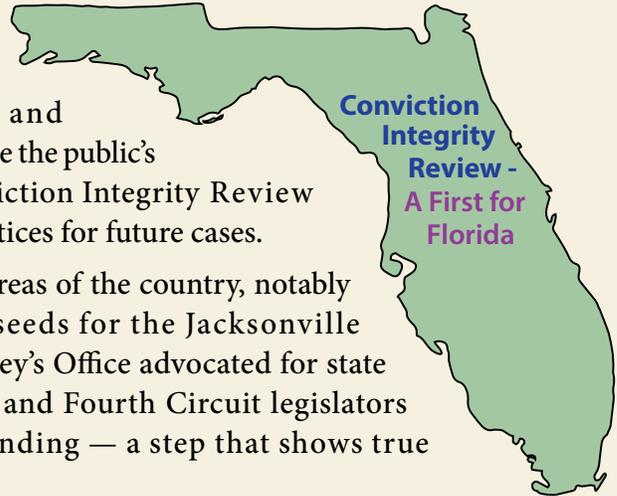
This initiative features a dedicated attorney who conducts fact-based reviews of past convictions when presented with plausible allegations of innocence.

It epitomizes our commitment to fairness and accountability, and is a step toward continuing to restore the public's trust in the office's work. Another benefit of Conviction Integrity Review will be the opportunities to improve office-wide practices for future cases.

Similar programs have been established in other areas of the country, notably Brooklyn, Denver, Texas, and California. The seeds for the Jacksonville office were planted in 2017, when the State Attorney's Office advocated for state funding to explore this endeavor. Gov. Rick Scott and Fourth Circuit legislators graciously responded by approving recurring funding — a step that shows true commitment to accountability and transparency.

After months of planning, in January the office announced Shelley Thibodeau — a well-respected Florida attorney whose work ethic and character are widely known throughout the Fourth Circuit — will lead this initiative.

She will work with attorneys, the public, and other parties to review cases and prioritize investigations.



New Faces for Clay County



Chief Assistant State Attorney L.E. Hutton and Senior Division Chief Cyrus Zomorodian.

"I am looking forward to helping build something special in the Clay County community."

- Cyrus Zomorodian

Changes are in motion for the Clay County office in 2018.

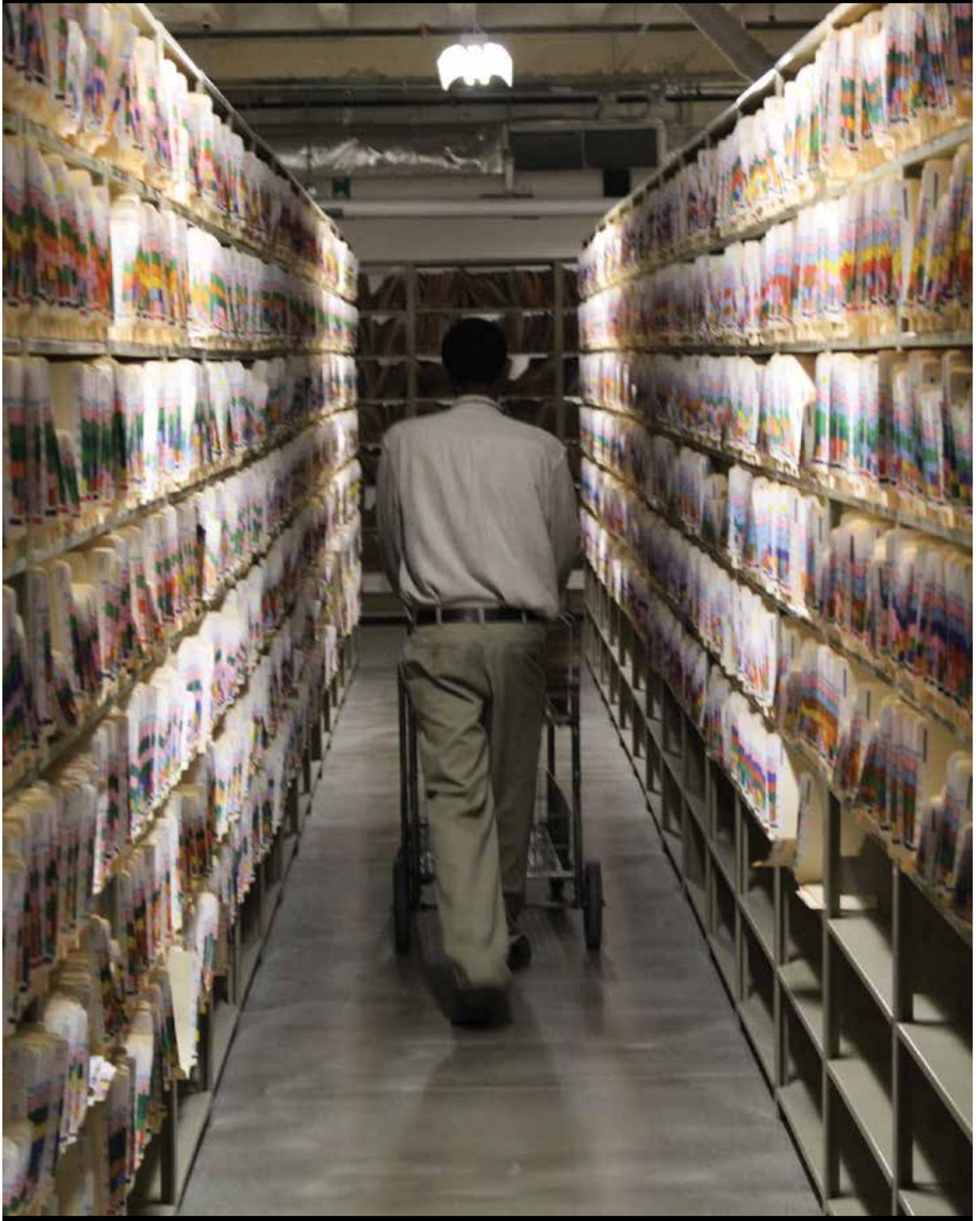
With the retirement of Director Sean Daly, the office will be led by Senior Division Chief Cyrus Zomorodian, a veteran prosecutor with almost 17 years of experience in the Fourth Judicial Circuit.

As director, Zomorodian has a goal to become embedded in the Clay County community both civically and professionally.

Joining him is Division Chief Teresa Simak, the office's former Special Assault Division Chief who has been extremely active in the community throughout her career. She will continue that engagement in Clay County.

Both will have a positive impact on the office and the community in their new roles.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.



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Call one of the above locations
or visit www.sao4th.com for public records
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