

DA NEWS

WINTER 2023



www.WestchesterDA.net

Achieving the balance of justice and public safety DA Rocah on criminal justice reforms, support for victims, crime prevention



The primary goal of the District Attorney's Office is to maintain public safety and support victims of crime.

As I kick off 2023, my third year as your District Attorney, I'm proud to highlight some of the ways we are working toward the fundamental pillars of public safety in tandem with the pursuit of a fair and equitable justice system that works for everyone, not just a few.

I am proud of all we have accomplished thus far, from prosecuting gun crimes and domestic violence cases to reducing recidivism by providing alternatives to incarceration and traditional prosecutions with innovative diversion programs. I look forward to continue serving as the county's chief law enforcement officer, protecting crime victims, fighting for equal justice, and keeping Westchester a safe place to live and work.

Miriam Rocah
Miriam Rocah, District Attorney

CRIMINAL JUSTICE **2022** AT A GLANCE

GUN CRIMES

469 ILLEGAL GUNS SEIZED

FIREARMS, SEMI- AND FULLY-AUTOMATIC RIFLES, SILENCER INCLUDING

92 GHOST GUNS

NEARLY **200** GUN-RELATED PROSECUTIONS

VICTIM SERVICES

MORE THAN

750 CRIME VICTIMS RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM OUR VICTIMS JUSTICE CENTER

CHARGED MORE THAN **2,100** DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

ECONOMIC CRIMES

PROSECUTED INDIVIDUALS & CORPORATIONS THAT STOLE MORE THAN

\$3.1 MILLION

IN CASES INCLUDING WAGE THEFT & LABOR FRAUD, EMPLOYEE EMBEZZLEMENT, INVESTMENT SCAMS, TAX FRAUD, IDENTITY THEFT AND SCAMS TARGETING SENIORS & IMMIGRANTS

\$970,000 RECOUPED FOR CRIME VICTIMS

REDUCING RECIDIVISM

210 PARTICIPANTS COMPLETED 'FRESH START' DIVERSION REHABILITATION FOR NON-VIOLENT, LOW-LEVEL OFFENDERS

60% GAINED EMPLOYMENT MOUNT VERNON EMERGING ADULT JUSTICE PART (FOR PARTICIPANTS 18-25)

FIGHTING HATE & BIAS

120 HATE & BIAS INVESTIGATIONS

PUBLIC INTEGRITY

RESPONDED TO **121** CIVILIAN COMPLAINTS

Gun Crimes source: Forensic Investigations Unit, Westchester County Police Department Detective Division
Fresh Start: Westchester's first pre-arraignment diversion program in partnership with the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, Westchester County Executive, Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health and Legal Aid Society of Westchester
Mount Vernon Emerging Adult Justice Part: Partnership with Westchester County District Attorney's Office, Mount Vernon City Court, Legal Aid Society, Youth Shelter of Westchester and the Office of Court Administration



Five Indicted in Countywide Theft of Catalytic Converters

A 24-count indictment charged five men in connection with the alleged countywide theft of 56 catalytic converters from Ford Econoline vans, Royal Coach Lines buses, and school buses in Briarcliff, Greenburgh, Peekskill, Pelham and Yonkers. At least 42 of the stolen catalytic converters were recovered in a Bronx scrap yard. The year-long investigation was initiated by the Westchester County District Attorney's Office with the Briarcliff Manor Police Department, the Greenburgh Police Department, the New Rochelle Police Department, and the Pelham Manor Police Department, with the assistance of eight additional law enforcement agencies.

DA Rocah said: "This case sends a clear message that Westchester County is cracking down on catalytic converter thefts, a nationwide scourge plaguing car owners with thousands of dollars in replacement costs and damages. I applaud the efforts taken by the criminal investigators in my Office and all of our law enforcement partners in continuing to protect Westchester residents and businesses from fraud and theft." **Auto Crimes Coordinator ADA Adrian Murphy**

Violent Hate Crime Offender Sentenced to 17.5 Years

Yonkers man Tammel Esco was sentenced to 17.5 years in state prison after pleading guilty to Assault in the First Degree as a Hate Crime for a violent March 2022 attack against a 67-year-old Yonkers woman, who is of Filipino descent. The defendant called the victim a racial slur, punched her more than 100 times after knocking her to the ground, and stomped and spit on her in the vestibule of the apartment building in which she and the defendant both lived. DA Rocah said: As Westchester DA, I remain unequivocally committed to seeking justice for victims of violent crime and fighting hate in all forms." **Hate Crimes Coordinator ADA Catalina Blanco Buitrago**

Trooper Arrested For Issuing False Tickets, Documents

New York State Police Trooper Edward Longo was charged in a 40-count complaint with issuing more than 30 falsified traffic tickets and supporting depositions to multiple individuals, who were never subjected to a traffic stop, including one person who died prior to the issuance of the tickets. In collaboration with the New York State Police, the Public Integrity and Law Enforcement Integrity Bureau conducted the investigation. **ADA Renee Hassel, Deputy Bureau Chief Jennifer Sculco**

Sex Offender Sentenced for Sharing Child Porn Online

Demetrious Kotopoulos, a previously-convicted sex offender, was sentenced on Jan. 31, 2023, to three to six years in prison for sharing child pornography on Discord, a social media platform. The Cyber Crimes Bureau and High Technology Crimes Squad conducted the investigation after receiving a referral from the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program. The Westchester County Department of Probation assisted with the arrest. **Cyber Crimes Deputy Bureau Chief Laura Forbes**

Man Who Forced Teen to Perform Sex Act Sentenced

Christopher Daqui was sentenced on Dec. 8, 2022, to nine years in state prison for forcing a 16-year-old to perform oral sex after brandishing what appeared to be a handgun in a secluded parking lot on South Highland Avenue in Ossining. The defendant will be required to register as a sex offender. **ADA Mollie O'Rourke**

Jail for Man Who Killed 12-Week-Old Puppy in Yonkers

Mount Vernon resident Thaddeus Jones was sentenced on Jan. 5, 2023, to 14 months in Westchester County Jail for throwing his friend's 12-week-old Pitbull puppy named "Lady" into oncoming traffic on Yonkers Avenue. The puppy was immediately struck by a car and killed. The defendant pleaded guilty to Aggravated Cruelty to Animals, which carries a two-year maximum jail sentence in the State of New York. **Animal Cruelty Coordinator ADA MaryAnn Liebowitz**

NYC Man Sentenced for Murder of Tarrytown Mother

Cynell Brown was sentenced to 25 years to life in state prison on Jan. 12, 2023 for the 2018 murder of Tarrytown mother Jessica Wiltse. The defendant used a .45 caliber semiautomatic pistol to shoot the 34-year-old victim two times in her Tarrytown home before discarding the gun in a garbage can at a nearby bus stop and fleeing to Manhattan. The successful prosecution was the result of a multi-agency pursuit and investigation led by the Tarrytown Police Department. Tarrytown Police Chief John Barbelet said: "Cynell Brown committed a vicious crime in our Village. Through the dedicated efforts of numerous law enforcement personnel, Mr. Brown was brought to justice and will now be held accountable for his actions." **Major Case Bureau Chief Nadine Nagler, Trials & Investigations Division Counsel John O'Rourke**





The **Westchester Misdemeanor Wellness Court (WMWC)**, which offers eligible individuals community-based mental health treatment and services as an alternative to conventional prosecution, launched on January 19. The voluntary program's treatment plans are tailored to each participant's needs, with the WMWC offering a range of mental health services that also include substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, education assistance and job training.

DA Rocah said: "I am grateful to the Courts and our partner advocates for heeding our call and helping us bring to Westchester County a misdemeanor mental health court. The WMWC will also be an effective early intervention tool, to help prevent some individuals from committing more serious or violent felony crimes in the future."

For details on WMWC's eligibility, visit: www.nycourts.gov/press



A law enforcement portal for the reporting of hate crimes and bias incidents in Westchester County is now live and operating.

Developed by the District Attorney's Office, the Westchester County Department of Public Safety's Real Time Crime Center and the Westchester County Department of Information Technology over the last year, with support from law enforcement leaders like the Westchester County Police Chiefs Association, the online information-sharing portal will allow for swifter, more comprehensive and proactive investigations and prosecutions of hate crimes and bias cases.

Westchester County Chiefs of Police Association President Robert Noble said: "The participation of law enforcement agencies can increase the likelihood that this portal will provide the maximum benefit for crime analysis, and even crime prevention, in Westchester County."

To date, nearly 80 percent of local and state law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction in Westchester County have registered for the portal. Departments can enroll for portal registration by contacting the Westchester County Department of Public Safety.

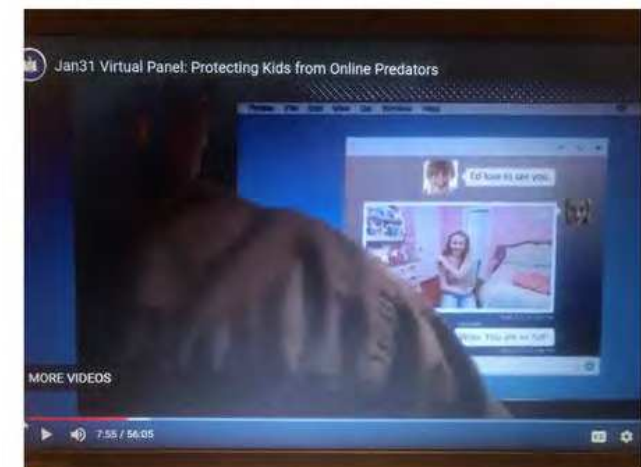


On January 31, the DA's Office, My Sisters' Place and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York hosted a **virtual panel on the dangers of online predators and sex traffickers who target and groom minors**. The webinar focused on common warning signs, intervention, and safety and prevention strategies for parents, and featured panelists:

- District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah, Westchester County
- Cristina Tanzola, Director of the Human Trafficking Program, My Sisters' Place
- Marcia Cohen, Senior Trial Counsel & Project Safe Childhood Coordinator, U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York
- Laura Forbes, Cyber Crimes Deputy Bureau Chief, Westchester District Attorney's Office
- David Ryan, Retired Chief of Police, Pound Ridge Police Department

DA Rocah said: "Every day young people face dangers through their use of the internet and social media platforms. Though not new, these online threats of sex trafficking and sextortion are rampant and pervasive. Partnering with advocates and law enforcement, we are doing our part to educate and empower parents to help protect their families."

A recording of the webinar and bi-lingual presentation slides can be viewed at www.westchesterda.net.



A screen shot of an online predator at work

February 4, 2023

IN THE COMMUNITY



DA Rocah joined U.S. Second Circuit Judge Joseph Bianco, Pace University and Youth Bureaus throughout Westchester County for "Justice for All: Crime, the Constitution and the Courts" program for nearly 100 high school students on Nov. 10, 2022 in White Plains.



Deputy Chief Criminal Investigator Wade Hardy and ADA Kevin Jones led panels on the role of the DA's Office in the criminal justice system during a workshop series hosted by the African American Men of Westchester at Sarah Lawrence College on Nov. 17, 2022.



ADA Catalina Blanco Buitrago led "upstander" presentations on hate crimes and bias incidents prevention at Yorktown Central School District on Dec. 2, 2022 to middle school students and to middle and high school students at Iona Prep in New Rochelle on Dec. 5, 2022.



Mount Vernon Bureau Chief Christine Cervasio (6th from left) was among several guest speakers for Career Day on Nov. 28, 2022 at Pennington School in Mount Vernon; she spoke with 7th and 8th graders about what it's like to be a prosecutor.



After serving five years as the Westchester representative for the National Black Prosecutors Association-NY Chapter, Executive ADA Lila Kirton (center) passed on the torch to ADA Davida Hawkes (right), who was sworn in at the 2022-2023 Executive Board Induction Ceremony Dec. 6, 2022. We are proud to support the mission of NBPA, the only professional membership organization dedicated to the advancement of black prosecutors, like our own Ayanna Walthall Murphy (left) of our Yorktown branch.

IN THE COMMUNITY



The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Pi Iota Omega Chapter invited Senior Criminal Investigator Latheia Smith (top left) and ADA Nicole Gamble to speak at their continuing Elder Scam Protection Forum in White Plains on Nov. 17, 2022. ADA Gamble returned for the Jan. 19, 2023 session on ways our office works year-round throughout Westchester to keep the public informed of scams targeting seniors.



Senior Criminal Investigator Michael Occhicone, representing the Westchester County Detectives Association, presented Police Officer Cristal Alcantara the Gary Stymiloski Best All-Around Recruit Award at the Westchester County Police Academy's Basic Recruit School Graduation on Dec. 9, 2022.



Criminal Investigator Roger Bock led a presentation on current auto crime statistics and pattern thefts, including the national rise of catalytic converter thefts, at the Jan. 19, 2023 meeting of the Westchester Detectives Association in Eastchester.



DA Rocah joined law enforcement leaders (Dr. Matthew Miraglia, retired Detective of Scarsdale Police Department, left, and Yorktown Police Chief Robert Noble, right) for the "Keeping Our Communities Safe" symposium on Jan. 12, 2023 at SUNY Purchase where panelists discussed the combined countywide preparation, management, planning and response to potential active shooter incidents.

New Hires

The DA's Office kicked off the new year swearing-in four new Assistant District Attorneys on January 10. They recently completed an intensive six-week training program and were assigned to one of our eight branch offices.



(left to right): Deputy Division Chief Shameika Mathurin, ADA Vivenne Brown, ADA John Doran, DA Rocah, ADA Victoria Hill, ADA Andre Ingenito, Criminal Courts & Training Division Chief Anthony Molea.

Annual Winter Coat Drive



The Westchester County District Attorney's Office supported the Westchester Women's Bar Association (WWBA) and the Westchester County Bar Association Labor and Employment Committee during their 2nd Annual Coat Drive, which aids local charities like Lifting up Westchester and Grasslands Homeless Shelter. Special thanks to WWBA President ADA Elizabeth Marcus for organizing and collecting the multiple loads of generously-donated coats and hats for those in need this winter.

(left to right): ADA Leigh Wellington, ADA Stefanie Olivieri, ADA Catalina Blanco Buitrago, WWBA President ADA Elizabeth Marcus, ADA Michelle Calvi

Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention

Our Special Prosecutions Division proudly wore blue in support of the national campaign to raise awareness of human trafficking, honoring brave survivors and recognizing the work of our advocacy partners in Westchester County during National Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Month in January.



DA Urges Possible Victims of New Rochelle Man Charged with Felony Sex Offenses Involving Children to Come Forward

The DA's Office is urging anyone who may have been victimized or may have information about possible victims of a New Rochelle man charged with multiple felony sex offenses involving children to contact our Special Prosecutions Division or police.

"We recognize the great difficulty for survivors to come forward, but stand ready to provide support for victims as our investigation continues," DA Rocah said.

The defendant, Jason Ricketts, 22, was arrested by the Westchester County District Attorney's Office and arraigned in New Rochelle City Court on Feb. 2, 2023. He is currently being held on bail.



**CONTACT US
CONTÁCTENOS**

**SPECIAL PROSECUTIONS DIVISION
(914)995-3000**



**Witnessed or experienced what you believe to be a hate crime?
Has your employer paid you?
Need to report a scam?**

You can file a complaint or share a tip confidentially
by using the complaint form at www.WestchesterDA.net
or by calling the 24-hour tips line

(914)995-TIPS (8477)



The Westchester County District Attorney's Office

111 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 995-3414

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 9AM - 5PM

The public can file a complaint directly with our office
by filling out a complaint form online

<https://www.westchesterda.net>

or by calling

(914) 995-TIPS (8477)

Language assistance is available.

In emergencies, please call 911

Branch Offices

Greenburgh

188 Tarrytown Rd.
White Plains, NY 10607
(914) 995-4075

Mount Vernon

City Court Bldg. Roosevelt Sq.
Mount Vernon, NY 10550
(914) 813-5025

New Rochelle

475 North Ave., 2nd Fl.
New Rochelle, NY 10801
(914) 813-5800

Northern Westchester

25 Moore Ave.
Mount Kisco, NY 10549
(914) 864-7122

Rye

3010 Westchester Ave. Suite 205
Purchase, NY 10577
(914) 813-7257

White Plains

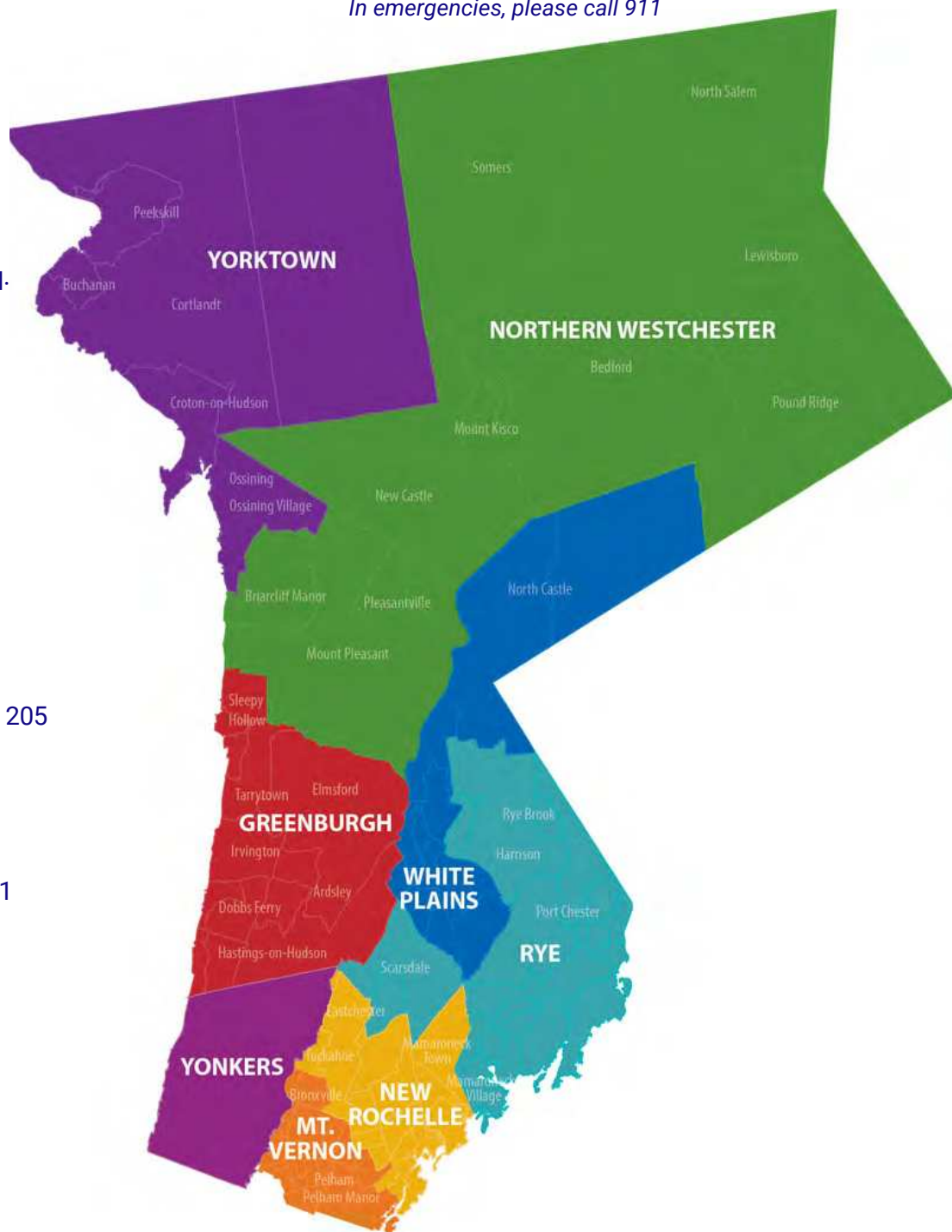
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