

DA NEWS

SPRING 2023



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Message from District Attorney Rocah

As District Attorney, one of my chief responsibilities is to bring criminal charges against suspects in a court of law. It is also my duty to protect and support victims of crime, and I am proud to lead an Office that centers and prioritizes victims.

As April is Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month, as well as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we want to remind Westchester residents that our commitment to seeking justice for victims of crimes, including sex crimes and child abuse, remains unwavering.

In this issue, you can read how the Westchester DA's Office not only represents the People in important cases but how we serve our communities as well.

Miriam Rocah

66 Guns Removed at Buyback Event

Sixty six firearms—rifles, hand guns and shot guns—were turned in at the community gun buyback event co-hosted by the Westchester County District Attorney's Office on Saturday, April 22, 2023 held at the United Methodist Church in Peekskill. Participants surrendered gun—with no questions asked—in exchange for cash gift cards.



"As of today, 66 more guns are off our streets and out of potentially the wrong hands," DA Rocah said. "Gun buybacks are part of my broader gun safety goals intended to reduce gun-involved incidents, including gun suicides. I thank the United Methodist Church in Peekskill, the Peekskill NAACP, the Peekskill Police Department, and the City of Peekskill for their valuable partnership in assisting us in our goals to keep our communities safe and free of gun violence."



Northern County Offices Consolidate to New Northern Westchester Branch

With a goal toward efficiency and better-serving victims and witnesses in northern Westchester County, the DA's Office has consolidated the Yorktown and Mt. Kisco branch offices into the new Northern Westchester Branch located in Yorktown.

"This sensible consolidation will strengthen our presence in communities across this large geographic portion of the county, and offer greater resources for our partners in the local courts and police departments," DA Rocah said. "We will also provide better office efficiency for our staff who tirelessly serve the northern region of Westchester."

The new Northern Westchester Branch, located in the same building of the former Yorktown branch at 1940 Commerce Street in Yorktown Heights, will now have a larger staff of 12—eight ADAs and four support staff.

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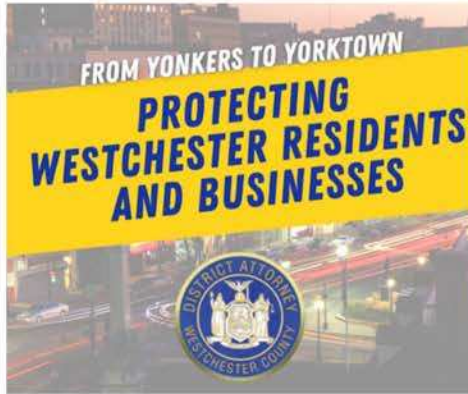
DA Cracks Down on Recent String of Robberies, Burglaries

The Westchester County DA's Office is prosecuting several defendants on felony charges in connection with several alleged home break-ins and retail thefts between January 1 and April 12, 2023.

"Ensuring residents feel safe at home or when doing business in Westchester is an important priority for the DA's Office," DA Rocah said.

From Yonkers to Yorktown, here are select cases of interest for charges brought against defendants arrested by the Westchester police departments:

Yonkers - Damien Anthony Arias, 25, charged for allegedly stealing more than \$18,000 in merchandise between 14 total thefts at Yonkers retailers. Bail set. In custody.



New Rochelle - A 32-year-old Suffolk man charged for allegedly robbing and assaulting an employee of a downtown store, robbing someone while fleeing on foot, and breaking into a home while homeowner and child were present. Remanded.

Sleepy Hollow and Dobbs Ferry - Two Queens men charged for allegedly stealing \$60,000 in cash and jewelry during home burglary; same two men and a third charged for another alleged home break-in stealing cash, jewelry handbags valued at \$25,000. Bail set.

Mount Vernon - Nathaniel Gordon, 65, indicted on three counts of burglary and grand larceny charges for alleged multiple home break-ins. Remanded.

Yorktown - Two NYC residents charged for allegedly stealing more than \$5,000 from Ulta in the Jefferson Valley Mall.

Read the full press release detailing charges against additional defendants for alleged robberies and burglaries at: bit.ly/wcdao-crackdown

25 Years to Life for Yonkers Man who Murdered Neighbor

Terrance Gonzalez was sentenced to 25 years to life in state prison on Feb. 16, 2023, for the 2020 murder of his neighbor, Lateef Butler. The defendant used a .38 caliber revolver to shoot the victim five times during a dispute outside their apartment building on Nepperhan Avenue in Yonkers. Following the incident, the Yonkers Police Department arrested the defendant in the Saw Mill River, by Stefanik Park in Yonkers, after he fled the shooting scene and led police on a foot chase. **Bureau Chief James Bavero, Senior Trial Counsel Brian Bendish**



Man Gets 15 Years in Prison For Brick, Hammer Attack

Yonkers resident Juan Rodriguez was sentenced to 15 years in state prison as a second violent felony offender on March 30, 2023. In March 2021, the defendant threw a brick at the back of the victim's head as he walked on a sidewalk on Riverdale Avenue in Yonkers, causing him to fall to the ground. The defendant struck the victim in the face multiple times with a hammer, stole \$30 from his hand, and fled the scene. **ADAs Elizabeth Marcus, Courtney Johnson**

Queens Man Charged with Illegally Practicing Dentistry

Cesar Masso was arrested by White Plains Public Safety on March 9, 2023, and charged with allegedly practicing dentistry without a license and providing dental services, including examinations, tooth extractions, anesthetics, pain management, X-rays, and cleanings to patients at a business he set up as East Post Dental at 169 Grand Street in White Plains. The DA's Office and White Plains police urge the public to assist law enforcement with any information about the defendant or possible victims. **Public Integrity and Law Enforcement Integrity Bureau**

Cold Case Closed: Prison for Angel Serbay's Murderer

Christopher Gonzalez was sentenced to 20 years to life in state prison on March 17, 2023, for strangling 25-year-old Yonkers resident Angel Serbay to death on September 3, 2005, and disposing of her body in a sheet on the shoulder of the Sprain Brook Parkway in Greenburgh, where she was discovered by a passerby. An investigation conducted by the NYS and NYPD forensically linked the victim's death to a 2000 Bronx cold case, and the defendant's DNA ultimately connected him to both murders. The defendant was located in Florida and extradited to the Bronx in December 2017. He was arrested on his charges in Westchester County in May 2019. **Major Case Bureau Chief Nadine Nagler, Bureau Chief James Bavero**

Hastings Man Indicted for Illegal Possession of Guns

A 113-count indictment charged Jianqiao Lu with allegedly illegally possessing 16 guns, including eight assault weapons, and 86 high-capacity magazines at his residence on Hastings-on-Hudson on Oct. 25, 2021. The Hastings-on-Hudson Police Department arrested the defendant. **ADA Catalina Blanco Buitrago**

LoHud. NY contractor accused of scamming workers. What's being done to prevent wage theft?

For this investigative piece, by reporter Eduardo Cuevas published on April 19th, LoHud/The Journal News sat down with DA Rocah and ADA Emily Rowe-Smith on how the Westchester County DA's Office is addressing wage theft in the Hudson Valley. Read the full story at bit.ly/lohud-wagetheft



Westchester DA Mimi Rocah creates new role to fight wage theft
Westchester District Attorney Mimi Rocah encourages residents to report wage theft on tip line. *Tania Savayan, Rockland/Westchester Journal News*



Senior Assistant District Attorney Emily Rowe-Smith, who serves as the wage theft coordinator in the prosecutor's office, speaks to the gathering at a meeting to discuss wage theft prevention and reporting at the Mamaroneck Library, Feb. 4, 2023. *Frank Beccera, Jr./The Journal News*

OpEd Rep. Tim Burchett Thinks There's No Way to Prevent Mass Shootings. He's Just Wrong.


As prosecutors, we know there are practical, commonsense legislative solutions that have saved lives — especially red flag laws

March 30, 2023

By Mimi Rocah, district attorney of Westchester County, New York **and Berit Berger**, executive assistant district attorney with the Westchester County District Attorney's Office

On Monday, six people, three of them children who didn't live to see age 10, were murdered in Nashville at the hands of a shooter armed with assault-style weapons. This problem of mass shootings, including those that target children at schools, has caused some lawmakers to essentially throw up their hands in defeat. Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., who is either unable or unwilling to envision a legislative solution, asserted in an interview that Congress is "not gonna fix" the problem of school shootings and argued that the U.S. needs not gun control legislation but a "real revival."


But as prosecutors, we count strong gun laws among the

 **MSNBC**

REP. TIM BURCHETT THINKS THERE'S NO WAY TO PREVENT MASS SHOOTINGS. HE'S JUST WRONG.

Will this prevent all lives lost from gun violence? Of course not. But this approach will help stem the tide of horrific shootings, loss of life and the trauma our country is facing from them.

BY MIMI ROCAH AND BERIT BERGER



practical, commonsense legislative solutions that have saved lives. And key among these solutions are red flag laws.

The problem of mass shootings, including those that target children at schools, has caused some lawmakers to essentially throw up their hands in defeat.

The Nashville shooter was able to legally obtain seven weapons, three of which were used in the attack, which police say was "calculated and planned." Significantly, as in so many other mass shootings, early reporting indicates that the attacker exhibited troubling warning signs to family members. Nashville Police Chief John Drake has said the shooter's parents felt the 28-year-old "should not own weapons."

Read the full OpEd at bit.ly/RocahBergerOpEd



ADA Carolina Zicca visited Eastchester Middle School to speak with 8th graders about the role of a prosecutor and the work of the Westchester County District Attorney's Office on Mar. 31, 2023.



Deputy Chief Criminal Investigator Wade Hardy joined Mount Vernon High School for its 14th Annual Career Day Celebration on Feb. 17, 2023.



ADAs Nadine Nagler and John O'Rourke led a criminal justice presentation for fifth graders at Murray Avenue Elementary in Larchmont on Jan. 30, 2023.



DA Rocah and Executive ADA Berit Berger (right) headlined March's Scarsdale Forum Sunday Speaker Series at the Scarsdale Public Library on Mar. 12, 2023.

IN THE COMMUNITY



Members of the Westchester County District Attorney's Office at the Westchester Rockland Guardians Association's 60th Annual Scholarship Dinner Dance on Mar. 24, 2023, joining hundreds of guests to celebrate the organization's historic 60 years of service to community, mentorship to minority youth and law enforcement leadership in the region.



DA Rocah at Westchester Jewish Council's Yom Hashoah Commemoration for Holocaust Remembrance Day on Apr. 18, 2023 in White Plains.



(Left) DA Rocah with Yorktown Police Department Chief Robert Noble who was named President of the Westchester County Chiefs of Police Association at the Annual Officers Installation Dinner on Apr. 14, 2023 in Mamaroneck; (top) Deputy Chief Investigators Andrew Grascia (second from left, top row) and Wade Hardy (second from right, top row) with members of the Westchester Rockland Guardians Association.

Yonkers High School Students at the DA's Office

The DA's Office hosted eight Yonkers high school students for a three-day New York Civic Readiness program over winter break in February. During their time at the WCDAO, the students had the opportunity to work our White Plains Branch, and in our Special Prosecutions and Trials & Investigations divisions. They also attended presentations by DA Rocah, and our Hate Crimes and Conviction Review units.



Celebrating Success with Judge Rice's Opportunity Youth Part

DA Rocah and ADA Matthew Kukowski (far right) joined New Rochelle City Court Judge Jared Rice (far left) at an open house on March 9, 2023 for his Opportunity Youth Part (OYP), a community-based initiative providing mentorship and second-chance opportunities for justice-involved emerging adults aged 16-24. DA Rocah commended the participants (whose cases were handled by our New Rochelle branch) for successfully completing their customized programs and moving on to career and education paths. The DA's Office is proud to participate in the compassionate and life-changing OYP.



National Child Abuse Prevention Month

In honor of #WearBlueDay2023 in New York State and National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, our Special Prosecutions Division proudly wore blue on April 3, 2023, to support survivors of child abuse and raise awareness for prevention programs and resources promoting health and safety for all children.

DA's Office Announces New Northern Westchester Branch

Continued from Page 1

The Northern Westchester Branch will serve the City of Peekskill, Towns of Bedford, Cortlandt, Lewisboro, Mount Pleasant, New Castle, North Salem, Ossining, Pound Ridge, Somers, Yorktown, and the Villages of Briarcliff Manor, Buchanan, Croton-on-Hudson, Mount Kisco, Ossining and Pleasantville.

The Northern Westchester Branch, which is the largest geographically and covers the Office's largest number of separate jurisdictions, is led by Branch Chief Stephen Ronco and Deputy Bureau Chief Philip Mellea.



LOOK FOR US AT THE 2023 'SALUTE TO SENIORS' EVENTS

MAY 10 @ RIDGE ROAD PARK, HARTSDALE * MAY 17 @ CROTON POINT PARK * MAY 24 @ GLEN ISLAND, NEW ROCHELLE



BE A SMART SENIOR

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COMMON SCAMS TARGETING SENIORS

SCAM ALERT

Beware of any unknown person asking for money or wiring of cash with a sense of urgency and secrecy, requesting personal and financial information over the phone, or asking you to purchase a gift card to pay a debt or fee.

Avoid unsolicited offers of help and money.

Never share personal information like date of birth, social security number, bank account information, PIN, passwords, credit card information with unknown persons or companies.

Be wary of door-to-door sales and solicitations.

Pause before acting immediately and always consult someone you trust.

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP & TO REPORT SCAMS

DA's Office Elder Abuse Bureau
(914)995-3000

Report a crime or leave a tip
(914)995-TIPS (8477)

GRANDPARENT SCAMS

Urgent calls asking for help from a person pretending to be a family member (or their lawyer) who is overseas, out of state, incarcerated or needing to be bailed out, or in an accident

Make every attempt to find out where the family member is and whether the emergency is real before sending any money.

IRS/GOVERNMENT IMPOSTER SCAMS

Someone claiming to be an employee of the IRS demands immediate payment over the phone

The IRS will never call requesting payment. They mail bills for any taxes owed. They'll never ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone or ask anyone to repurpose a gift card.

LOTTERY & SWEEPSTAKES SCAMS

Unsolicited letter, email or call claiming you've won the lottery, a prize or trip, or can share an inheritance

Do not send money or provide personal information such as your address, date of birth, bank account information or social security number to anyone asking for help obtaining a prize or inheritance.

CHARITABLE DONATION SCAMS

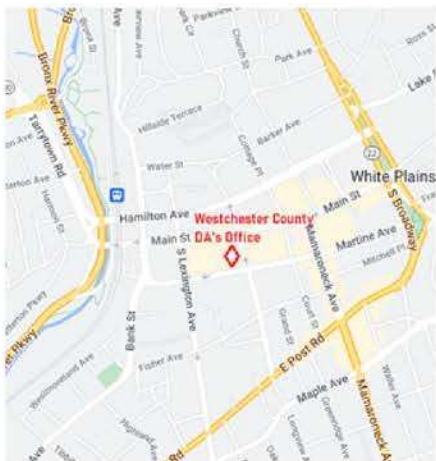
Unsolicited letter, email or call from a charity asking you for a donation

Take no action until you can verify the legitimacy of the organization with a charity registry number.

CONTRACTOR SCAMS

A salesperson or contractor knocks on your door

Ask for identification and a consumer protection number.



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

1940 Commerce St.
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
(914) 862-5140

Rye

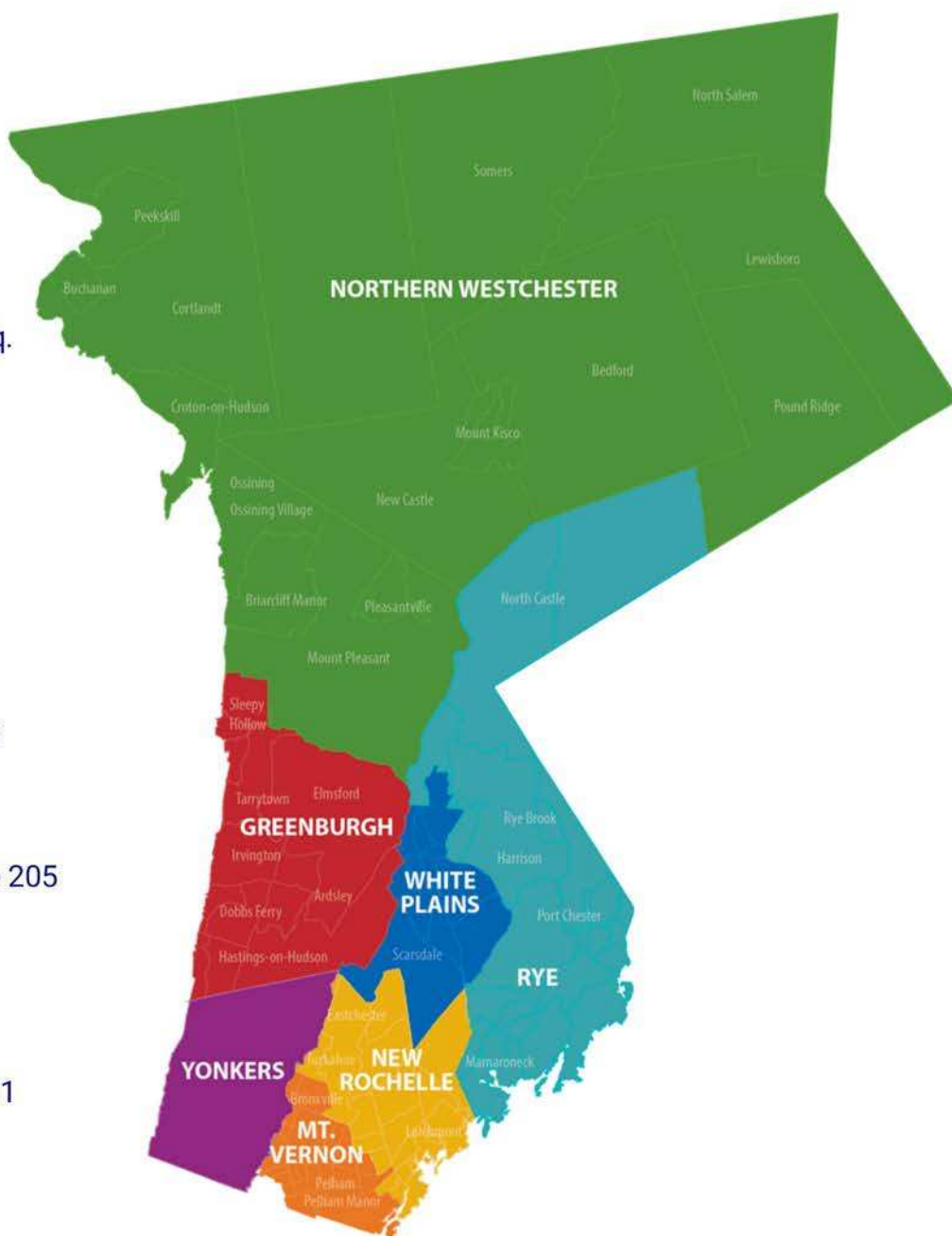
3010 Westchester Ave. Suite 205
Purchase, NY 10577
(914) 813-7257

White Plains

77 South Lexington Ave.
White Plains, New York 10601
(914) 422-6265

Yonkers

104 South Broadway
Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 231-2700



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