

DA NEWS

SUMMER 2022



www.WestchesterDA.net



Our Guiding Principles: Safety, Accountability, Integrity and Justice

The Westchester County District Attorney's Office – with more than 120 Assistant District Attorneys, 34 investigators, and about 90 support personnel – is the largest local prosecutorial agency in New York State north of New York City.

Partnering with the 41 police departments across Westchester County, the Westchester Department of Public Safety and New York State Police, the office also works closely with other state and federal agencies on a daily and ongoing basis to keep Westchester safe.

Guided by the pillars of public safety, accountability, integrity and justice, the office prioritizes protecting those who are most vulnerable while ensuring those who inflict harm are brought to justice. In her second year in office, DA Mimi Rocah has reaffirmed her commitment to getting illegal guns off our streets, using the full force of the office to seek justice for victims of crimes and continuing to build greater trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve.

Message from DA Mimi Rocah

Welcome to the Summer 2022 Edition of our quarterly newsletter where we highlight some of our work fighting on behalf of victims and keeping our neighborhoods safe.

During these challenging years of the pandemic, we have seen a rise in crimes across the country. However, here in Westchester County violent crime remains down from previous years.

The work of our office does not begin or end in a court room. We value our partnerships in the community and with local law enforcement. Developing this trust ensures greater public safety.

Have a safe summer and thank you for reading.

Mimi Rocah



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Notable Cases P2
- In the Community P3
- Announcements P5
- Office Highlights P6

Clockwise: AK-47 and ammunition seized in Yonkers; Special Prosecutions Deputy Division Chief Michelle Lopez with Peekskill Police Chief Leo Dylewski and DA Rocah on sentencing announcement of former Peekskill cop who sexually abused a woman; 100+ firearms seized after a six-month multi-agency investigation into ghost guns & firearms in Westchester & Putnam counties; Local Criminal Court & Training Division staff on Wear Blue Day in support of April's National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

NOTABLE CASES IN 2022

Police Accountability and Justice for Victims Peekskill Police Chief: "He Got What He Deserved"

Former Peekskill Police Officer Michael Agovino was sentenced on June 23 to seven years in state prison for sexually abusing a woman while he was on duty between 2019 and 2020. Prosecutors recommended 15 years.

"Michael Agovino egregiously violated the trust of the Peekskill community, grossly abused his position of authority as a police officer, and violated his oath of office," DA Rocah said. "While we are disappointed that the Court's sentence did not meet our recommendation, Michael Agovino is going to prison."

We recognize an extremely brave victim who fought to hold her abuser accountable by coming forward, the Peekskill Police Department who worked in partnership with this office on behalf of the victim, and our remarkable team of prosecutors, investigators and victim aides who worked tirelessly during the past two-and-a-half years to ensure that this victim was supported, and the defendant brought to justice. **Special Prosecutions Deputy Division Chief Michelle Lopez and Public Integrity & Law Enforcement Integrity Deputy Bureau Chief Jennifer Sculco**



(L-R) Chief Investigator Dan McKenna, Special Prosecutions Deputy Division Chief Michelle Lopez, Peekskill Police Chief Leo Dylewski, DA Rocah, Public Integrity & Law Enforcement Integrity Deputy Bureau Chief Jennifer Sculco and Deputy Chief Investigator Wade Hardy at June 23 press conference.

Protecting Access to Reproductive Healthcare

After a three-day trial, a jury found three men guilty of criminal trespass when they prevented patients from receiving access to medical care at All Women's Medical in White Plains. "The District Attorney's Office will vigorously prosecute any criminal acts that interfere with an individual's constitutional right to freely access healthcare," DA Rocah said. **Assistant DA Celia Curtis**

Somers Wrong-Way Drunk Driver Sentenced to Prison

Jaime Paucar, 52, was sentenced to 8 1/3 to 25 years in state prison for a wrong-way, head-on collision he caused on I-287 while intoxicated, which resulted in the death of an Ardsley man and a teenager. This reckless incident could have been prevented and we mourn with the families of the victims whose loved ones were tragically taken. **Division Chief Christine O'Connor and Bureau Chief Jonathan Strongin**

Bronx Woman, Accomplice Indicted in 2012 Cold Case

Bronx resident Wanda Veguilla and Yonkers resident John Torres were indicted for charges in connection with the 2012 murder of 26-year-old Pamela Graddick. The Yonkers Police Department assisted in our investigation. **Cold Case Bureau Chief Laura Murphy**

G-Shine Blood Gang & Co Sentenced to State Prison

The successful prosecution of five G-Shine Bloods gang members and associates for conspiracy to murder an eyewitness was a result of a joint investigation between our Office and the Westchester County Department of Corrections' Major Case Squad, with assistance from the Westchester County Department of Public Safety, the Ossining Police Department, the Mount Vernon Police Department and the Yonkers Police Department. DA Rocah said: "Protecting witnesses and their safety is absolutely critical to a well-functioning justice system. This case demonstrates how law enforcement works together to protect witnesses and ensure their safety." **Trials & Investigations Division**

IN THE COMMUNITY



As Keynote Speaker for Law Day in May, DA Rocah joined the White Plains Youth Bureau's Youth Court at Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University where many of our local youth are empowered to be future leaders and torchbearers for progress and change.



Criminal Investigators & DA Rocah put on their running shoes for the annual Law Enforcement Torch Run on a rainy May morning in support of the Special Olympics.



Members of the DA's office donated dresses to support Madrina's Closet Prom Dress Giveaway organized by Yonkers Women in Law Enforcement & the Yonkers Police Athletic League.



In honor of Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month in April, DA Rocah & our Special Prosecutions Division team joined Yo Digo No Mas / I Say No More to Sexual Violence rally in Yonkers.



IN THE COMMUNITY



Domestic Violence Aide Karen Simmons (left) from our Special Prosecutions Division at the 54th Annual Salute to Seniors in May, providing valuable resources, knowledge and guidance to senior residents.



Our Criminal Investigators welcomed Michael Garcia (second from right), one of 76 graduates of the Westchester County Police Department's Police Academy's Class of 2022. DA Rocah was a speaker at the commencement ceremony on May 27.



Senior ADA Nicole Gamble (third from left) visits Mr. Browne's, Ms. Grant's & Mr. Marolla's classes at Mount Vernon High School on Career Day before the end of the school year.



ADA Davida Hawkes spoke to the White Plains Public Safety Explorer Program youth participants in February on her experiences working in law enforcement.



DA Rocah and Deputy Chief Investigator Wade Hardy (3rd from left) join the Rockland Westchester Guardians Association, friends and colleagues for the return of the Westchester County African American Heritage Day Celebration at Kensico Dam on June 26.



Our officewide Wear Orange tradition on June 3 in support of National Gun Violence Awareness Day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



VIRTUAL FORUM AND Q&A FORO VIRTUAL - PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS

Gun Safety in Our Community

Seguridad con las Armas de Fuego en nuestra Comunidad

MONDAY, JULY 18 LUNES, 18 DE JULIO
4:00PM

Register now Regístrate ahora: bit.ly/DAGunSafety



Hear from District Attorney Mimi Rocah, members of the DA's Office, and gun sense advocacy group Moms Demand Action about New York's recently-expanded Red Flag laws, Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), the Safe Storage Program, ghost guns and the latest on federal and state gun legislation.

Registration is required. Questions can be submitted by July 15 to media@westchesterda.net.

Vehicle Theft and Break-In Prevention Tips

July is National Vehicle Theft Prevention Month and we advise the public to be vigilant in preventing vehicle thefts and break-ins.

In 2020 alone, more than three quarters of a million motor vehicles were stolen in the United States, costing vehicle owners more than \$7 billion. A motor vehicle was stolen every 39 seconds.

Take action with these safety reminders.



Safety Tips



NATIONAL VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION MONTH

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>1
Lock your car and close all windows, even in your own driveway.</p> | <p>2
Don't leave keys in the car. Hide all valuables.</p> | <p>3
Never leave your car while it's still running.</p> | <p>4
Beware when purchasing vehicles from social media sites.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|

Our **2021 Annual Report** is now available at bit.ly/wcdao21AnnualReport

2022 Promotions

Janelle Armentano was promoted to Domestic Violence Deputy Bureau Chief.

James Bavero was promoted to Violent Criminal Enterprise Bureau Chief.

Christine Cervasio was named Mount Vernon Bureau Chief.

Laura Forbes was promoted to Cyber Crimes Deputy Bureau Chief.

Raffaelina Gianfrancesco was promoted to Appeals Bureau Chief.

Diego Hernandez was promoted to Trials and Investigations Division Co-Chief, making him the first Hispanic man in a division chief position at the Westchester County DA's office.

Owein Levin was promoted to Child Abuse Bureau Deputy Bureau Chief.

Phil Mellea was named New Rochelle Branch Chief.

William Milaccio was promoted to Appeals & Special Litigation Deputy Division Chief.

Joseph Servino was promoted to Felony General Crimes Bureau Chief.

Latheia Smith was promoted to Senior Criminal Investigator, making her the first woman, and also the first Black woman, in this role in the history of the Westchester County DA's office.

Jonathan Strongin was promoted to Vehicular Crimes Bureau Chief.

John Thomas was promoted to Pleadings Bureau Chief.

ADA Murphy Prestigious Morgenthau Award Recipient



Cold Case Bureau Chief Laura Murphy received the prestigious Morgenthau Award from the District Attorneys Association of New York (DAASNY) on Jan. 27. The Morgenthau Award, established in 2009, honors one ADA from each of the four regions of New York State whose professional accomplishments, honesty, integrity and commitment to the fair and ethical administration of justice exemplifies the high standards Robert M. Morgenthau demonstrated during his tenure as New York County District Attorney. Murphy said: "Working for the Westchester County District Attorney's Office for the last 34 years has been the greatest job... I want to thank my Office for nominating me...and DAASNY for selecting me because there are so many deserving prosecutors out there who dedicate their time to the jobs that we do."

ADAs Marcus, Oziemblewski Named Women's Bar Officers

Our office was proud to celebrate in June our ADA Elizabeth Marcus (4th from right) being named the youngest President of the Westchester Women's Bar Association and ADA Jill Oziemblewski (far left) on being named Corresponding Secretary.



Photo courtesy Alison Sheehy



Special Prosecutions Division Chief Frederic Green gives a training presentation "Behind Closed Doors" at the annual convention of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York.



Undefeated: Our softball team, WCDA/The Brazen Fox (nod to our sponsor), remains victorious at 11-0!



Our Interns

Led by ADA Jackie Halper, Director of Development and Training, our internship programs offer students opportunities to assist ADAs in case preparations for hearings and trials, observe court proceedings and more.

This year's **High School Mentorship Program** consisted of two, week-long sessions during the spring with a total of 13 students from Rye Country Day, School of the Holy Child in Rye, The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, New Rochelle High School, Hendrick Hudson High School in Montrose, Riverside High School, Rye High School, White Plains High School, Edgemont High School, Briarcliff High School and Scarsdale High School.

In May, the office hosted five seniors from Byram Hills High School in Armonk, Fox Lane High School in Bedford and Horace Greely High School in Chappaqua for a five-week rotation through our Trials & Investigations and Special Prosecutions Divisions, and our White Plains Branch.

This summer we are hosting 16 college and 26 law school interns.



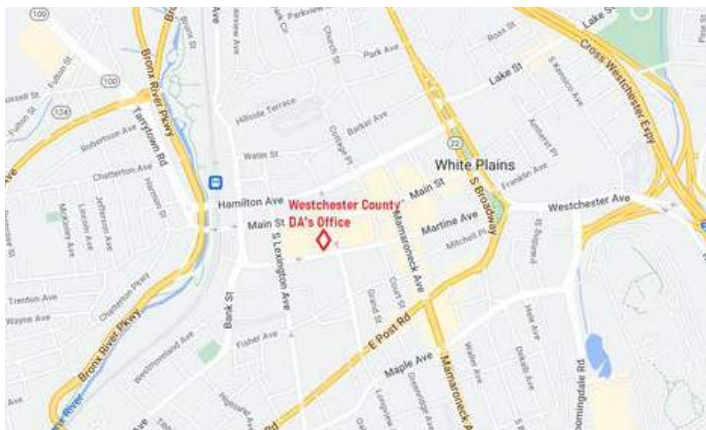
The Westchester County District Attorney's Office

is available to assist the people of Westchester County on criminal matters related to domestic violence, child and elder abuse, sexual assault, drugs and gang activity, environmental crimes, wage theft, automobile thefts, scams and more.

The public can file a complaint directly with our office by calling

(914) 995-TIPS (8477)

In emergencies, please call 911.



Main Office

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

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

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

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

Yonkers

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

Yorktown

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

