



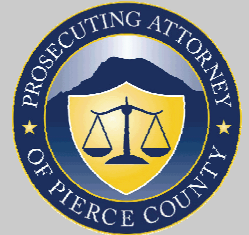
ON THE RECORD

NEWS from Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney Mark Lindquist

On The Record

March/April

2011



Gang cases a "victory for community"



Greg Greer, Lead Gang Unit Deputy Prosecutor

Just over a year ago, a crackdown by law enforcement resulted in the arrests of 36 alleged Hilltop Crip gang members for Conspiracy, Attempted Murder, Drive-by Shooting, Robbery and other crimes. After many long days in the courtroom and behind the scenes, Gang Unit prosecutors and support staff, working with Tacoma Police Detective **John Ringer**, convicted 34 defendants.

Twenty-five defendants plead guilty. Nine were convicted at trial. The combined total of prison sentences is 3,916 months, or 326 years. "The tremendous success of our gang prosecutions has reduced gang violence in our neighborhoods," said Prosecutor **Mark Lindquist**. "This victory for the community was due to effective collaboration between the Prosecutor's Office and law enforcement."

gang members. Legal Assistant **Theresa Brown** and **Danielle Crosswhite** support the Gang Unit prosecution team.

Gang Unit prosecutors **Greg Greer** and **Jared Ausserer** continue to prosecute gang crimes, including those committed by 19 alleged Eastside Lokotes Surenos gang members. Legal Assistant **Theresa Brown** and **Danielle Crosswhite** support the Gang Unit prosecution team.

Murder conviction in Craigslist homicide

Chief Criminal Deputy **Mary Robnett** and Deputy Prosecutor **Karen Watson** successfully prosecuted Kiyoshi Higashi for the murder of Edgewood resident James Sanders. On April 28, 2010, Higashi and three cohorts went to the victim's home on the pretense of buying a ring that Sanders had advertised on Craigslist. The group tied up and assaulted James and his wife Charlene and pistol-whipped their 14-year-old son. James Sanders was shot three times as he tried to protect his family.

Higashi testified during the trial, claiming he wasn't in the room when Sanders was shot. The jury returned with guilty verdicts on all counts in less than four hours. At the sentencing hearing, the remorseless murderer admitted to shooting James Sanders. Judge **Roseanne Buckner** sentenced Higashi to 124 years in prison.



Left to right, Monica Schmuck, Mary Robnett, Karen Watson and Wayne Smith.

Victim Advocate **Wayne Smith** and Legal Assistant **Monica Schmuck** provided support to the victim's family and behind the scenes. Higashi's co-defendants, Clabon Berniard and Joshua Reese are awaiting trial. Amanda Knight's case is currently in trial.

Jury convicts in Walmart murder



Deputy Prosecutors Jerry Costello and Dawn Farina with the victim's family after the guilty verdict.

On March 24, a jury convicted Odies Walker of Aggravated Murder in the First Degree and five other counts for the robbery and murder of armored car guard Kurt Husted in June 2009. Walker organized the crimes. He recruited Calvin Finley and Marshawn Turpin, who shot and robbed Husted at the Lakewood Walmart as he picked up the day's cash receipts. Walker drove the getaway vehicle.

Chief of Staff **Dawn Farina** and Deputy Prosecutor **Jerry Costello** prosecuted the case. Legal Assistant **Michelle Prichard** and Victim Advocate **Michelle Walker** were instrumental in supporting the prosecution and the victim's family through an almost two year long court process.

The case was investigated by the Lakewood Police Department, Homicide/Major Crimes Unit. Lakewood Forensics Detective **Bryan Johnson** did outstanding work constructing and distilling the surveillance video that captured the murder. Walker faces life in prison when sentenced on April 8.

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James Curtis honored by local bar association



Deputy Prosecutor Steve Merrival, at right, presents award to Deputy Prosecutor James Curtis.

Congratulations to Deputy Prosecutor **James Curtis**, who was honored at the Tacoma Pierce County Bar Association's Lincoln Day Banquet on February 11. Curtis was given an award for "persevering in the face of adversity in becoming an attorney." Deputy Prosecutor **Steve Merrival**, a previous recipient, presented the award.

Curtis grew up on the south side of Chicago and his family moved to the Hilltop area of Tacoma in 1987. Initially he struggled in school, in part because of his need to work at one or more part-time jobs, which interfered with his studies. Curtis was accepted into the University of Washington, but lack of money required him to continue to work outside of school and he withdrew from college. However, he did not quit and remained true to the inspiration of his mother, who was the sole provider for five children.

Curtis continued to work at several part-time jobs. After he was wrongfully discharged from his job as a janitor, he represented himself in the mediation hearing and proved that the termination was wrong. He then decided to become a lawyer.

Curtis eventually returned to UW, earning undergraduate and law degrees. After law school he was hired as a litigation associate at the Seattle firm of K&L Gates. But the Stadium High School graduate longed to return to Pierce County and serve the community. In 2007 he joined the Prosecutor's Office. Curtis believes that his "background and life experiences allow him to serve as a role model for youth growing up in underserved communities." He coaches youth football and soccer and implemented an educational enhancement program for underachieving students at Tacoma Community College. Curtis currently prosecutes felony drug cases.

Tribute to Terry Dacca

The Prosecutor's Office lost a dear friend and cherished colleague of 28 years, **Terry Dacca**. Terry devoted her life's work to the criminal justice system. She passed away on February 16 after an illness.

In 1975, fresh out of the University of California at Davis, she worked in the Watts area of Los Angeles as a Pre-Trial Services Officer for U.S. Probation. Terry and husband **Frank Dacca**, a Pierce County District Court Judge, moved to the Tacoma area in the late 70's. She got her start in the office in the El Cid Diversion Program, where she worked for five years before becoming a State Probation Officer. Terry returned to the office as a victim advocate in 1987. For more than 10 years she served in the Homicide Unit, providing information and emotional support to victims' family members while expertly guiding them through the criminal justice process.



Terry was known for going the extra mile for victims. In a letter of appreciation, one woman who lost her son and daughter-in-law in a vehicular homicide wrote, "Thank you for all the emotional support as well as information...you made me feel like I really mattered."

In a performance evaluation, a senior deputy prosecutor praised Terry for the vital role she played. "Terry has become an invaluable member of our homicide prosecution team. Victims come in contact with the criminal justice system, which is confusing at best, at a time when they are injured, vulnerable and angry. Terry projects a calming presence that gives victims a rock to cling to in stormy times"

Terry's outstanding interpersonal and leadership skills led to her becoming the office's first Human Resources Manager in 2001. Three years later she was promoted to Administrative Manager and given responsibility for overseeing all support staff and directing a multi-million dollar budget. Her integrity, professionalism and humor made her a highly effective and well-liked manager and colleague.

A pioneer in victim advocacy, Terry was instrumental in developing the office's Victim-Witness Assistance program into one of the largest in the state. Although cut short, Terry's life had a tremendous impact in the community and on the lives of the people she touched. We will miss her dearly.

PA CASE FILES

VERONICA WITTEN, 38, was found guilty of attempted murder, burglary and violation of a protection order. Witten went to her ex-husband's home and shot him through a glass door. She tried to shoot him again but he wrestled the gun away and she fled. Witten was sentenced to 41 years in prison. DPA **Sabrina Ahrens** prosecuted the case.

MICHAEL CARLSON, 54, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the murder of his wife, Laura. Carlson shot the victim multiple times and set their house on fire in a failed murder-suicide attempt. DPAs **Scott Peters** and **John Sheeran** prosecuted Carlson.

JUAN RECINOS, 32, was convicted for the attempted murder of his estranged wife and her boyfriend. While driving on SR 161, Recinos spotted the victims, rammed them and shot at their car as they sped away. A high speed chase ended in a collision with a third vehicle, resulting in serious injuries. Recinos faces up to 39 years in prison. DPA **Tim Lewis** prosecuted the case.

Community Involvement



Asst. Chief Criminal Deputy **Phil Sorensen** in action on the dodge ball court.

On March 11, attorneys dodged balls for charity in a spirited match that pitted prosecutors against defense attorneys. "The Untouchables" prevailed over "Team Defense", whose motto is "fighting those who fight crime." The event raised \$2,600 for [Lawyers Helping Hungry Children](#) and [Prison Pet Partnership Program](#) (PPPP). Deputy Prosecutors **Jared Ausserer**, **Angelica McGaha**, **Kevin McCann** and **Jason Ruyf**, along with defense attorney **Mike Stewart** and Assistant Attorney General **Julian Bray**, were instrumental in organizing and promoting the event. Staff and volunteers



from PPPP were on hand with several canine companions, including the very handsome **Quinlan**, pictured at right with PPPP staffer **Mollyrose Sommer** and **Prosecutor Lindquist**.

In related news, Victim-Witness Program Manager **Michelle Walker** recently submitted applications for a service dog to PPPP and [Canine Companions for Independence](#). Both organizations provide highly trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities and to health care, education and assistance facilities. A "court house" dog would be used to help comfort victims and witnesses during the court process.



Legal Assistant **Sylvia Roufs** coordinated this year's Daffodil Days fundraiser for the [American Cancer Society](#). Employees raised \$1,100 for vital cancer programs.

Pierce County employees contributed more than \$112,000 to the [United Way of Pierce County](#) during the annual giving campaign. Human Resources & Communications Manager **Becky Stover** coordinated the campaign. Her dog *Girlly Girl*, pictured at right, helped with advertising.



Walk a Mile in Her Shoes 2011 is coming up on April 29. The annual fundraising event is sponsored by the [Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County](#). The "Heels of Justice" team from the Prosecutor's Office will be making the one mile trek through downtown Tacoma to raise money and awareness for sexual assault services. Go to our [Heels of Justice](#) team page to support this worthwhile endeavor. Pictured at left are Superior Court Judge **Ed Murphy** and Juvenile Division Chief Deputy **Fred Wist** kicking up their heels last year.

Civil Division Deputy Prosecutor **Ron Williams**, pictured at right, was recently selected president of the Board of Directors for the [University Place Volunteer Center](#). UPVC is a clearinghouse for non-profit agencies in U.P. The organization coordinates with local non-profits to recruit volunteers and hosts food drives and a Thanksgiving dinner. It also has a strong connection with Curtis High School, where students have an annual requirement to contribute volunteer hours to the community.



Speaking Engagements

Mark Lindquist enjoys attending and speaking at community events. If you would like to invite Mark or a representative from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office to speak to your group, please [contact us](#).

PA CASE FILES

THOMAS BIENVILLE, 40, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder for the death of his mother, **Lurinda Hughes**. The victim's body was found hidden in the crawlspace under her house, where Bienville also lived. This was his third strike; he was sentenced to life in prison. SAU Team Chief **Grant Blinn** and DPA **Jennifer Sievers** prosecuted Bienville.

D.W., 15, and a cohort robbed two teens at gunpoint, taking one victim's jacket and cell phone. The juvenile respondent pointed the gun at the victim and pulled the trigger, but it failed to fire. **D.W.** was sentenced to 129 weeks. DPA **Alicia Burton** prosecuted the case.

JEFFREY POWELL, 39, pleaded guilty to seven counts for a series of fraudulent purchases made at Lowe's stores. Powell posed as an employee of local construction companies in order to charge items that he later sold to a third party. Total loss to all Pierce County Lowe's was more than \$30K. DPA **April McComb** prosecuted Powell, who was sentenced to five years in prison.