

Annual Report



2024

Orange County District Attorney
David M. Hoovler

1	A MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY DAVID M. HOOVLER
7	HOMICIDE CASES
11	SIGNIFICANT VIOLENT CRIME CASES
14	ROBBERY CASES
16	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES
18	CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN
23	SEX CASES
25	GUN CASES
30	NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT
46	ARSON CASES
50	BURGLARY CASES
54	RETAIL THEFT INITIATIVE
57	FRAUD AND WHITE-COLLAR CRIMES
60	DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED OR INTOXICATED
64	CASES INVOLVING ANIMALS
66	THE APPEALS BUREAU
69	COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
72	VETERANS ISSUES

TABLE OF

CONTENTS



A MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY DAVID M. HOOVLER

The Orange County District Attorney's Office ("OCDA") continued to have notable successes in 2024, including obtaining felony convictions in all nine County Court jury trials we conducted, as well as securing numerous felony convictions for homicides, violent crimes, child-sex crimes, arson, guns, and drugs. In 2024, the OCDA prioritized cases that directly endangered the safety and quality of life of Orange County residents particularly those involving narcotics, illegal firearms, and driving while intoxicated. In 2024 we expanded the staffing of the Orange County District Attorney's Office's Digital Forensic Unit "DFU", which continues to assist local police agencies by analyzing digital evidence from cellular telephones and computers, while working proactively to apprehend those distributing child pornography. We continued our work with the Orange County Joint White-Collar Crimes Task Force, and dedicated resources to fighting financial fraud. In September 2024, we partnered with the New York Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives to create The Hudson Valley Arson and Explosives Task Force. The recent fires in Los Angeles, and the state of emergency declared during the fires in southern Orange County in November 2024, including the tragic death of a firefighter, demonstrate the devastation fires can cause, and the need for such a task force. Successful arson criminal prosecutions deter future arsons. This report describes many of the cases that the OCDA successfully prosecuted in 2024. We have continued to provide unwavering support to local law enforcement agencies, including providing money to enhance police training and advocating for better pay for police and prosecutors. The OCDA understands that reducing crime is something that the entire community has a stake in and cannot be achieved solely by incarcerating offenders. We have continued to prioritize drug treatment and treatment courts. In 2024, our Community Affairs Unit made over five hundred (500) appearances at community events to distribute anti-crime messages and learn how we can be more responsive to the needs of our residents.

Murder Prosecutions

Notable homicides cases prosecuted in 2024 include: [People v. Enoch Lowe](#); [People v. Romaine McRae](#); and [People v. James Rich](#). Lowe was convicted after a jury trial of Murder in the First

Degree for hiring someone to kill his Wallkill neighbor and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, the maximum sentence under New York State law. McRae was convicted by a jury of all charges against him, including Murder in the Second Degree and Attempted Murder in the Second Degree, for a double shooting in the City of Newburgh that left one man dead and the other paralyzed. McRae was sentenced to forty-five (45) years to life in prison. Rich was convicted after a jury trial of all charges against him, including Murder in the Second Degree, for killing a 76-year-old man by impaling him in the head with a metal broomstick. Rich was sentenced to twenty-five (25) years to life in prison.

Narcotics Enforcement

Our 2024 initiative to proactively combat illicit narcotics included partnering with law enforcement agencies and using court-ordered eavesdropping warrants to disrupt and dismantle four major narcotics operations. Unsurprisingly, all of those investigations also involved the sale or possession of illegal firearms. Major narcotics investigations in 2024 included "Operation Hide in Plain Sight," a two-year investigation into cocaine trafficking commenced by the City of Middletown Police Department, who were aided by the Orange County Drug Task Force ("OCDTF"), which is run under the supervision of a Senior Criminal Investigator from OCDA and a Sergeant from the Sheriff's Office. Evidence from court-ordered eavesdropping warrants resulted in fifteen (15) defendants being charged, all of whom have pled guilty to felony charges. Another major investigation, "Operation Final Blow," which was initially commenced by the City of Port Jervis Police Department, which utilized court ordered eavesdropping warrants, resulted in seventeen (17) search warrants and the seizure of approximately two (2) kilograms of cocaine, 74 grams of heroin, 165 grams of fentanyl, 1,600 ecstasy pills, 235 pills containing oxycodone, seven (7) illegally possessed firearms and \$153,690. All twenty-six (26) defendants who were arrested pled guilty to felony charges. Another year-long investigation into cocaine trafficking in and around Chester, conducted by the New York State Police Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team (VGNET), aided by the OCDTF, the F.B.I. Safe Streets Task Force and the OCDA, utilized court ordered eavesdropping warrants to obtain search warrants for residences in the Village of Chester and the Bronx, resulting in the recovery of over one (1) kilogram of cocaine, approximately \$36,000 in United States currency and four (4) loaded handguns. All ten (10) defendants indicted in the case pled guilty to felony charges, including Chester resident Antonio Bucci, who pled guilty to Operating as a Major Trafficker. Bucci admitted being the director of a controlled substance organization that sold cocaine, whose sales exceeded \$75,000 in less than a year. "Operation Hot Lunch" was a six (6) month long investigation into firearms and narcotics trafficking conducted by the OCDTF, the Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, OCDA, the City of Middletown Police Department, New York State Police, and the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department. Twenty-five (25) people were charged with narcotics, firearms and conspiracy offenses, including Kirkland Salmon, who was alleged to be at the center of four different conspiracies to traffic narcotics and firearms. Salmon pled guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First Degree, and Conspiracy in the Second and Fourth Degrees. In addition to a prison sentence, Salmon also agreed to forfeit the food truck that he and his co-conspirators used to make gun and narcotics sales outside of the City of Newburgh Courthouse. So far nineteen (19) of the defendants charged have pled guilty and three (3) are wanted.

Even while the OCDA continues to work with our law enforcement partners to target large-scale narcotics traffickers, we are also leveraging the use of treatment courts to attempt to get assistance to those who need help in breaking their addiction to these lethal substances.

Illegal Gun Possession

In 2024, combating illegal weapons possession remained a major initiative. In 2023, we created a public service announcement “PSA” initiative designed to reinforce our ongoing commitment to aggressively prosecute the illegal possession and use of guns. The “Coming for You/Save a Life” public service initiative was designed to remind potential offenders of the severe consequences faced by those who put others at risk through illegal gun possession and related violence, and encourage community members to make our streets safer by anonymously reporting someone who is carrying an illegal firearm or involved in gun-related violence. To be clear, law enforcement’s pursuit of violent offenders does not - and will never - include the vast majority of gun owners who lawfully and safely possess legal firearms. Conversely, it is a fact that 98% of crimes related to illegal gun possession and handgun-related violence in Orange County are committed by less than 1% of the population. In 2024, we made good on our promise to “come for” offenders illegally possessing weapons. Examples include: Rudolph Davis, who was sentenced to thirteen (13) years in prison for Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, after a jury trial; Frank Baltimore, who was sentenced to thirteen (13) years in prison for Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree after a jury trial; and Dustin Showers, who was sentenced to nine (9) years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree.

Arson

Having previously been honored as Arson Prosecutor of the Year, I am aware that arson cases by their very nature involve the destruction of evidence, highly technical scientific proof, and expert testimony. In September 2024, we partnered with the New York Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives to create The Hudson Valley Arson and Explosives Task Force, a regional initiative designed to facilitate the criminal prosecution of fire, arson, and explosives cases and to assist our law enforcement and agency partners in their efforts to protect the safety of over 400,000 residents amid increased fire activity in Orange County and adjacent counties. One of the arson cases described in this report is People v. Tyler Williams. On the evening of December 20, 2023, Williams was issued traffic tickets by a New York State Trooper. Early the next morning Williams started a fire at the home of the Trooper’s father. On November 19, 2024, Williams pled guilty to Arson in the Second Degree and was subsequently sentenced to twenty (20) years in prison. After Williams pled, New York State Police Troop F Commander, Major Michael W. Sumnick said, “I want to thank District Attorney Hoovler and all of the agencies who were involved in bringing this case to a close. The public doesn't often get to see the work that goes on behind the scenes in a complex criminal investigation, and one of our best tools is the close working partnership between agencies. We have first-rate law enforcement here in Orange County and the experience and expertise is second to none. I

commend the outstanding efforts of the Warwick Police, Town of Goshen Police, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, my own State Police members, and our federal partners at the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. As members of law enforcement, we accept the dangers of our job and remain focused on making the safety of the public our top priority. But we do not expect that risk to follow us home, putting our member and family in danger - just for doing his job." As this case demonstrates, no one is immune from arson.

Crimes Involving Drinking and Driving

Prosecuting drunk drivers continued to be a high priority for the OCDA in 2024. The OCDA works closely with groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and STOP-DWI, not only to prosecute drunk drivers, but also to educate the public. Unfortunately, 2024 again showed how intoxicated drivers' selfish choices can result in death or serious injury to innocent people. In 2024, Nicholle Hoke was sentenced to four to twelve (4-12) years in prison for Aggravated Vehicular Homicide after killing one person and seriously injuring another by crashing her car while having blood alcohol content that was twice the legal limit. Defendant Yeraldo Roa was sentenced in Orange County Court to two and one-third to seven (2 1/3- 7) years in prison for Vehicular Manslaughter in the First Degree, for causing the death of an 11-year-old girl, who had been a passenger in a car which Roa drove across double-yellow lines into oncoming traffic while he was intoxicated. Defendant Chauncey Smith was sentenced to three to nine (3-9) years in prison for Aggravated Vehicular Assault for crashing his vehicle into another car while impaired by marijuana. A teenaged victim was paralyzed as a result of that crash. Our strict policy on DWI cases is designed to prevent further tragedies.

Protecting Children

Children are the most innocent victims and those who prey on them deserve harsh sentences. Examples of significant sentences for offenders targeting children in 2024 include: Jesus Torres, who pled to Rape in the First Degree where the victim was less than 13 years old, and who was sentenced to twenty (20) years in prison and twenty (20) years of post-release supervision; Craig Merlock, who pled to Predatory Sexual Assault Against a Child, where the victim was less than 13 years old, was sentenced to eighteen (18) years to life; and Justin Babb, who pled to Criminal Sexual Act in the First Degree, where the victim was less than 11 years of age, who was sentenced to eighteen (18) years in prison and ten (10) years of post-release supervision. All these defendants will be registered as sex offenders under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA).

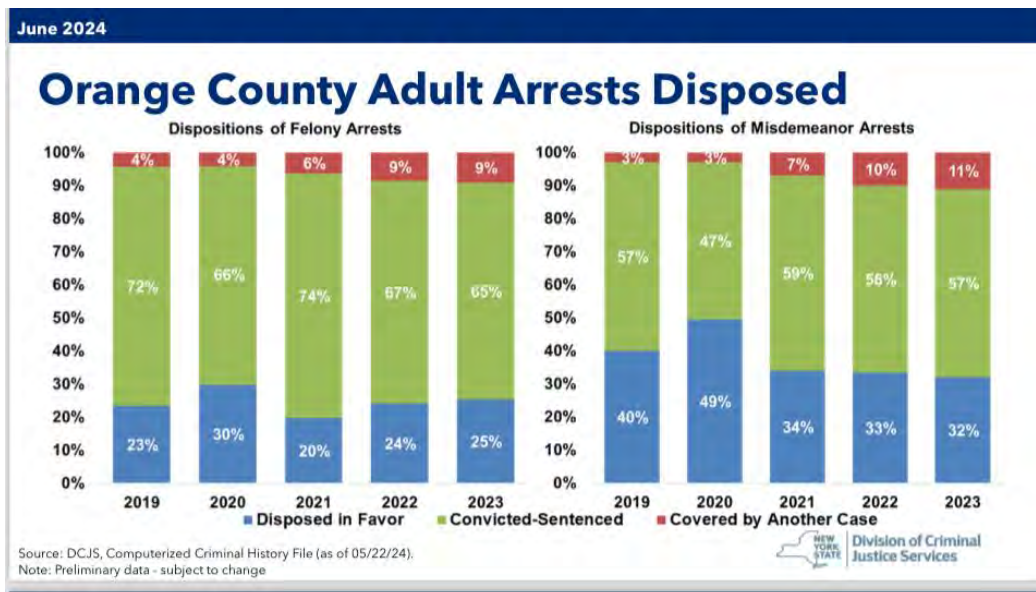
Community Affairs

In addition to investigating and prosecuting crimes in 2024, the OCDA continued to work with our community partners to prevent crime and make Orange County a better, safer place. This report

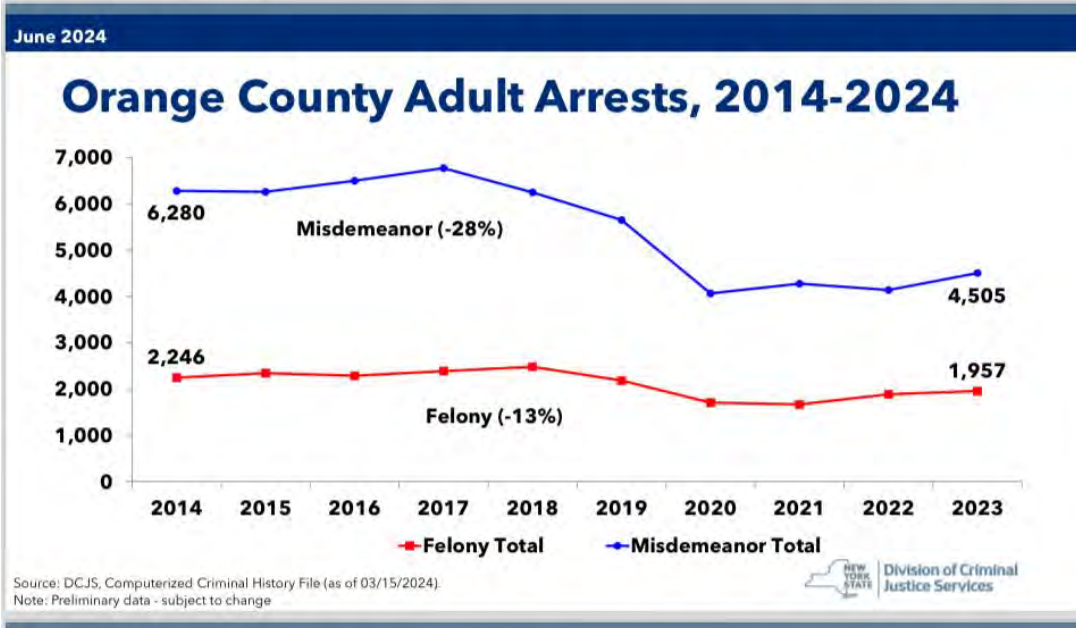
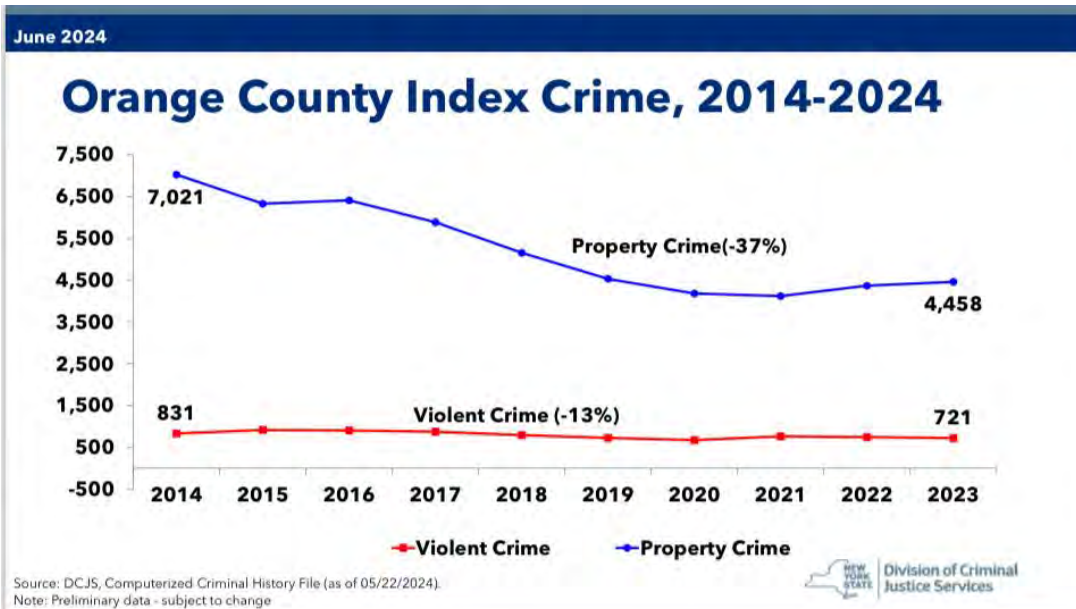
chronicles how our Community Affairs Unit engaged in a number of different events with diverse community groups. I am particularly proud of the work that the OCDA has done since teaming up with the Hudson Valley VA Healthcare System to form an Orange County Veterans Suicide Prevention Coalition. In 2024, we, along with our community partners, continued to sponsor programs designed to warn younger residents and others of the dangers associated with drugs, impaired driving, guns and other dangerous behavior. We have also worked to warn older residents how to avoid becoming the victims of fraud.

Building on our Successes in a Challenging Environment

Since 2014, when I first became District Attorney, new “bail reform” and “discovery reform” laws were enacted. One only has to look at the news to see how these have made the prosecution of offenders more challenging throughout New York State. I am proud that the policies and procedures that the OCDA implemented in anticipation of those reforms allowed us to consistently continue lower both violent and property crimes. Violent crime is down 13% and property crime is down 37% since I first took office in 2014. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) has recognized that, in Orange County, our arrest and conviction statistics have remained remarkably similar to our pre-COVID and pre-reform rates. This consistency stands in stark contrast to other New York counties, where rates have skyrocketed.



In 2024, I provided funding to police departments for equipment, and funded police training. I have continued to advocate for higher pay for police officers. In 2025, we will continue to build on our successes by partnering with our law enforcement partners to find new ways to aggressively combat crime and keep our residents safe. But we cannot do it alone. Whether it is supporting drug treatment courts and other programs to aid those addicted to narcotics or ensuring that veterans in distress receive the help they need, the community is best served when prosecutors and police partner with others in the community to keep Orange County safe from dangerous offenders, while assisting those who are the most vulnerable to criminal activity.



Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being Orange County's District Attorney.

DAVID M. HOOVLER

One of the foundations of our criminal justice system is the presumption of innocence. A criminal charge is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants, including the ones referenced in this report, are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State of New York's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



Taking another’s life is the most serious crime an offender can commit. Although no prosecution, however successful, can alleviate the pain and loss felt by the family and loved ones of homicide victims, the OCDA places all of its resources at the disposal of experienced prosecutors working on these most serious of cases, so justice can be done, safety to the community can be restored, and hopefully, there can be some measure of closure to those who have lost so much. The cases listed in this section involve allegations of intentional or reckless homicide. Deaths involving driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs are discussed in a different section in this report. In 2024, the Office obtained notable convictions and worked with police agencies on the following homicide cases:

PEOPLE V. ENOCH LOWE AND DAMANTE STANSBERRY - On July 18, 2024, Enoch Lowe, age 25, of Wallkill, was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole (Life in Prison), the maximum sentence permitted by law. On May 16, 2024, a jury convicted Lowe of crimes including Murder in the First Degree and Conspiracy in the Second Degree. At the trial, prosecutors argued that Lowe had hired Damante Stansberry, age 24, of Middletown, to kill Lowe’s neighbor, with whom Lowe had long-standing animosity. Evidence showed that Lowe promised Stansberry \$15,000 to commit the murder, acted as a lookout, and informed Stansberry when the victim was vulnerable to being attacked. On October 30, 2022, Stansberry came to the victim’s residence and fatally stabbed the man. On March 30, 2023, Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler represented the People in County Court when Stansberry pled guilty to Murder in the Second Degree. As part of the plea agreement, Stansberry testified for the prosecution at Lowe’s trial and on July 19, 2024, Stansberry was sentenced to eighteen years to life (18–Life) in prison. (The OCDA had recommended a sentence of twenty years to life (20–Life).) The investigation was conducted by the Town of Wallkill Police Department, assisted by the New York State Police, the FBI Safe Streets Task Force, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center, the United States Secret Service and the OCDA. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Wallkill Police Department, and all the law enforcement agencies involved in the arrest and investigation of Lowe and Stansberry. “The only sentence appropriate in this case is the one imposed, which ensures this Enoch Lowe will never again be able to hurt anyone in our community,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “I offer my condolences to the victim’s family and friends. I applaud the dogged efforts of the Town of Wallkill Police Department and all the

agencies that aided them.” District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Chief Assistant District Attorney Christopher Borek and Assistant District Attorney Bryan Conway who prosecuted the cases.

PEOPLE V. ROMAINE McRAE AND DWAYNE HINES - On January 6, 2025, Romaine McRae, age 40, of Brooklyn, was sentenced to forty-five years to life (45-Life). On October 30, 2024, McRae was convicted after a jury trial of all charges against him, including Murder in the Second Degree, and Attempted Murder in the Second Degree. At the trial, prosecutors argued that McRae, and his co-defendant, Dwayne Hines, perpetrated a brazen double shooting and execution that occurred on Lander Street in the City of Newburgh at approximately 8:30 am on Monday, April 24, 2023. Two men at the location were shot, leaving one man dead and the other paralyzed. The investigation was led by the City of Newburgh Police Department Detective Bureau who worked with the OCDA, the New York State Police, the New York Police Department (“NYPD”) 67, 69 and 71 Precincts, and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center. The defendants were taken into custody without incident on July 12, 2023, in Brooklyn by the City of Newburgh Detective Bureau working with OCDA Investigators. Hines previously pled guilty to Murder in the Second Degree and Attempted Murder in the Second Degree and is pending sentence. District Attorney Hoovler thanked all of the law enforcement agencies involved in the extensive investigation into these crimes, and in particular, the work of the City of Newburgh Police Department which deserves extraordinary commendation. “This hard-won conviction brings to a close a case of inconceivable brutality that shattered the lives of the victims and the peace of our community” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “The dogged investigation by the City of Newburgh Police Department and their dedicated Detective Bureau identified and brought to justice two men who reigned unspeakable violence on our streets. My Office remains committed to the vigorous pursuit of violent criminals in order to protect and serve the citizens of Orange County.” District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Executive Assistant District Attorney Ryan Greenbaum and Assistant District Attorneys Emily Worden and Bryan Conway who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. JAMES RICH - On August 27, 2024, James Rich, age 36, of Newburgh, was sentenced to 25 Years to Life in Prison for killing a seventy-six (76) year-old man with a broomstick. On June 24, 2024, Rich was convicted after a jury trial in the Orange County Court of all charges against him, including the crimes of Murder in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Seventh Degree in connection with the stabbing death of the man in his Newburgh residence. On March 14, 2023, police responded to a call for assistance at a residence in the City of Newburgh. As a result of that call, Rich was arrested and charged with possessing cocaine. After being released from that arrest, Rich returned to the residence and attacked the victims who lived with Rich in the residence. During the attack, Rich impaled the victim in the head with a metal broomstick. Over the next twenty-four (24) hours, Rich was seen on surveillance video discarding bags of bloody clothing bearing the victim’s DNA. In the early morning hours of March 17, 2023, Rich was found by police hiding in a closet of a different apartment and the victim’s cell phone was recovered from the area where Rich was hiding. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department whose investigation led to the arrest of Rich. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police who assisted in the investigation. “The community will be safer during the decades that this defendant is in prison,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “The sheer brutality of this crime is staggering. The case was challenging from investigation through trial and the hard-won conviction is a testament to the dedicated work of the police and prosecutors who saw that justice was done. District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Assistant District Attorneys Tanja Beemer and Nicholas Mangold who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. KENOL BAPTISE - On April 17, 2024, Kenol Baptise, age 30, of Middletown, was arraigned in Orange County Court on an indictment charging two counts each of Murder in the First Degree and Murder in the Second Degree. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, on April 1, 2024, Baptise engaged in a physical confrontation with two men in a residence in the City of Middletown. It is alleged that during the confrontation; Baptise used a knife to stab both of the other men. One of the men walked out of the residence before collapsing. Baptise then left the residence and again attacked the man who collapsed outside, continuing to stab him. The City of Middletown Police immediately responded to the scene and located Baptise in a wooded area nearby. Both of the men died as a result of the injuries they sustained. District Attorney Hoover commended the City of Middletown Police for their quick response and for the investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.

PEOPLE V. TIMOTHY LEMPICKI – On June 24, 2024, Timothy Lempicki, age 37, of Washingtonville, was sentenced in Orange County Court to two to six (2-6) years in prison relative to his guilty plea to Manslaughter in the Second Degree and three (3) years in prison to be followed by two (2) years of post-release supervision relative to his guilty plea to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree in connection with the death of a man who was found dead as the result of a fatal overdose of the powerful narcotic fentanyl. At the time that he pled guilty, Lempicki admitted that on July 16, 2022, in the Village of Washingtonville, he had sold the fentanyl to the deceased man knowing, and consciously disregarding, a substantial and unjustifiable risk that the drug might kill the person he sold it to. An investigation was commenced by the Village of Washingtonville Police Department and the Town of New Windsor Police Department, who were aided by the OCDA and the Orange County Medical Examiner. District Attorney Hoover thanked the Village of Washingtonville Police Department and the Town of New Windsor Police Department for their investigation into the fatal overdose, and the Village of Washingtonville Police Department for their arrest of Lempicki. Since 2014, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office has been following the same protocols when assisting its law enforcement partners who are investigating fatal overdoses as they do in homicide cases. This includes drafting search warrants and other documents to ensure that the locations where the narcotics were sold and ingested, as well as locations where people succumbed to overdoses, can be processed as crime scenes and that all available potential evidence is preserved. In some situations, New York State law does not permit the filing of homicide charges against those who sold the narcotics which have resulted in death. In those cases where homicide charges can be filed, the charge is frequently the class C felony of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, or the E felony of Criminally Negligent Homicide, which are lower classes of felonies than the class B felony of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. Some states, including New Jersey, have enacted a strict liability standard to impose enhanced punishment on those who sell narcotics to someone who dies as a result. New York Law has no such strict liability standard. District Attorney David M. Hoover stated, “While my office has prioritized proactive investigations into narcotics trafficking, in my opinion, New York State laws are in some respects inadequate to address the harm caused by drug dealers. The Legislature in New York State would do well to examine statutes enacted in other jurisdictions to address the issue of those who kill by dealing narcotics.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. CAMERON WILLIAMS – On March 27, 2025, Cameron Williams, age 26, of New Windsor, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Manslaughter in the First Degree. Under the plea agreement announced on the record at the time that Williams pled guilty, it is expected that he will be sentenced to eighteen (18) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years post-release

supervision when he is sentenced on June 18, 2025. At the plea proceedings, Williams admitted that on October 13, 2024, he intended to cause his victim serious physical injury and thereby causing the victim's death by stabbing him multiple times with multiple knives. The investigation had revealed that Williams had retrieved several kitchen knives from a City of Newburgh residence immediately prior to repeatedly stabbing a man as he was laying on West Parmenter Street. "I commend the City of Newburgh Police for their quick response and for the investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. My office is dedicated to the pursuit of justice on behalf of the victim and our community," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly.



SIGNIFICANT VIOLENT CRIME CASES

Significant violent crime cases that did not include homicide charges in 2024 included:

PEOPLE V. JESUS BRAVO AND WILMER REYES-BRAN – On November 22, 2024, Jesus Bravo, age 26, of Newburgh, and Wilmer Reyes-Bran, age 24, of Newburgh, both pleaded guilty in Orange County Court to crimes involving a series of violent incidents in the City of Newburgh. Bravo pled guilty to Attempted Murder in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and two counts of Assault in the Second Degree relating to three incidents in 2023, that he committed with Reyes-Bran. Reyes-Bran pled guilty to Attempted Murder in the Second Degree, two counts of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and two counts of Assault in the Second Degree relating to the three incidents he committed with Bravo in 2023, and an additional incident he committed alone in 2024. On January 6, 2025, Bravo was sentenced to an aggregate term of nineteen (19) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. On April 2, 2025, Reyes-Bran was sentenced to an aggregate term of twenty-six (26) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. A long-term investigation into gang-related violence in and around the City of Newburgh was conducted by the Non-Fatal Shooting Task Force, which consists of members of the City of Newburgh Police Department, investigators and attorneys with the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, and analysts from the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center. The Task Force, which is funded through the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative, targets the drivers of gun crimes by enhancing cases even where victims and witnesses are uncooperative with law enforcement. On September 21, 2023, Bravo and Reyes-Bran approached a victim in the City of Newburgh and asked if he was in a known gang. Reyes-Bran pulled out a knife, which Bravo encouraged him to use. Reyes-Bran then stabbed the victim repeatedly in the arms, face and torso while Bravo punched and kicked the victim. On December 11, 2023, Bravo and Reyes-Bran followed two men in the City of Newburgh. Bravo fired a gun at one of the men. Bravo and Reyes-Bran approached the other man. Bravo pistol-whipped him while Reyes-Bran kicked the man. On December 30, 2023, Reyes-Bran handed Bravo a gun which Bravo fired at an SUV. When the police arrived, they found an SUV with eight (8) bullet holes, but no people were present. Police later learned that a victim went to the hospital with a gunshot wound to the back. On February 12, 2024, police executed a search warrant at Reyes-Bran’s residence and recovered a firearm without a serial number, and ammunition for the gun in Reyes-Bran’s pocket. Analysis linked the firearm to the December 2023 shootings. District

Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department, with the assistance of the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center, for their investigation and the arrest of Bravo and Reyes-Bran. "The pleas entered today mark an end to the reign of violence perpetrated by these two defendants," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "I commend the tireless work of the Non-Fatal Shooting Task Force, including the City of Newburgh Police, the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center and my staff. Violent crimes, and the violent criminals who perpetrate them, are stopped only by the painstaking efforts of law enforcement." The cases were prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Leah Canton, Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly and Assistant District Attorney Anthony Molina.

PEOPLE V. JOEL HOWELL - On April 16, 2024, Joel Howell, age 18, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to an aggregate term of five (5) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous pleas of guilty to Menacing a Police Officer and Robbery in the Second Degree. On October 16, 2023, the Port Jervis Police Department were called after a man, later identified as Howell, was seen running down the street with a "gun". When police arrived, a witness pointed Howell out. When a sergeant approached Howell in his police car, Howell pointed what appeared to be a firearm at him before running away. When Howell was apprehended, he had in his possession a BB gun that looked like a pistol. After Howell pled guilty in Orange County Court to Menacing a Police Officer, and was pending sentencing, he was again arrested by the Port Jervis Police Department for a November 7, 2023, robbery. On that date Howell approached a homeless man and displayed a BB gun that appeared to be a pistol. After displaying the "gun", Howell, aided by juveniles, stole items from the victim. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation and arrest of Howell. District Attorney David M. Hoovler said, "I commend the professionalism of the Port Jervis Police Officer for exhibiting restraint despite having what appeared to be a firearm pointed at him. Notwithstanding this defendant's age, his repeated conduct not only placed his victims in serious danger but also created a risk to himself." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Kelle Grimmer.

PEOPLE V. OWEN HORACE - On August 12, 2024, Owen Horace, 33, of Monticello, pled guilty to Burglary in the First Degree. On October 17, 2024, Horace was sentenced to twelve (12) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. On October 16, 2022, at approximately 3:30 a.m., Horace, and two other individuals, one of whom was armed with a handgun, entered a Town of Wawayanda home to steal money. While inside of the residence, one of the intruders pistol-whipped a victim, causing physical injury and causing the gun to discharge. After the gun went off, Horace and the others fled the scene of the crime. At the plea proceedings, Horace admitted to knowingly entering or remaining unlawfully in a dwelling with the intent to commit a crime, and that in effecting entry or while in the dwelling or in immediate flight therefrom, he or another participant in the crime caused physical injury to the victim. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and Horace's arrest. "The terrifyingly violent actions of this defendant merit the significant sentence that awaits him," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "I applaud the careful work by the law enforcement officers involved in the investigation of this case." The case was prosecuted by Chief Trial Assistant District Attorney Richard Moran.

PEOPLE V. JOSEPH LIGHTFOOT - On July 31, 2024, Joseph Lightfoot, 18, of Wallkill, was sentenced to seven and one half (7½) years in prison, to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision, for Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. At sentencing, the People recommended that Lightfoot be sentenced to ten (10) years in prison. On April 25, 2024, residents

in the Village of Walden were arguing with a relative about property they believed that the relative stole from their driveway. During the argument, Lightfoot, his girlfriend, and another man, exited a truck and fought with the male resident. During the altercation, Lightfoot took a loaded, unlicensed pistol out of his hoodie, aimed at the male resident and fired, striking his own girlfriend in the wrist and shattering the window of the vehicle. At the plea proceedings, Lightfoot admitted to illegally possessing the loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Village of Walden Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney David M. Hoovler said, "It is only through sheer luck that this offender's careless choices did not cause a fatal injury." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. RAUL PAZ - On May 21, 2024, Raul Paz, age 34, of Newburgh, was sentenced to eight (8) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his guilty plea to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. On May 14, 2023, as a man entered his City of Newburgh residence, Paz, who was waiting outside, pulled out a gun and fired at the man, nearly hit him. The incident was captured on a surveillance video. At the plea proceedings, Paz admitted to illegally possessing a loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Paz. "Dangerous weapons in the hands of dangerous offenders are a recipe for disaster," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "While thankfully no one was injured in this case, an irreversible outcome was perilously close to reality." The case was prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Leah Canton.

PEOPLE V. NAAJIB JACKSON AND WAYNE LEWIS – On February 5, 2024, Naajib Jackson, age 28, of Middletown, was sentenced to ten (10) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. Jackson was also sentenced to a concurrent term of eight (8) years in prison relating to his plea to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. On December 21, 2022, Jackson's co-defendant, Wayne Lewis, was seen on surveillance video in the area of Park Circle in the City of Middletown, handing a gun to Jackson who then shot another man in the leg. At the plea, Jackson admitted to possessing the loaded firearm which was used in the shooting. Lewis was sentenced to twelve years to life (12-Life) in prison. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Middletown Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Jackson. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center for their assistance with the investigation. "All too often, where we find drugs and drug dealers, we find the use of illegally possessed firearms," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. The case is being prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Michael Milza.



ROBBERY CASES

PEOPLE V. ZIQUAN GARFIELD JENKINS – On October 3, 2024, Ziquan Garfield Jenkins, age 22, of Newburgh, was sentenced in Orange County Court to a total of twenty-five (25) years in prison, and five (5) years post-release supervision. On March 18, 2024, Jenkins pleaded guilty to Robbery in the First Degree, and admitted that on September 2, 2023, he and others displayed handguns and forcibly stole money, an I-phone, and a gold chain and crucifix from a man on Benkard Avenue in the City of Newburgh. On March 18, 2024, Jenkins also pleaded guilty to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and admitted that on July 6, 2023, he possessed a loaded handgun on Broadway in the City of Newburgh, which he discharged at another person, who was not injured. Jenkins was sentenced to ten (10) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision for the crime of Robbery in the First Degree and was sentenced to fifteen (15) years in prison, and five (5) years post-release supervision, for the crime of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree for the July 6, 2023, incident in which he fired the pistol. The sentences were ordered to run consecutively for a total sentence of twenty-five (25) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision. On July 10, 2024, an arrest warrant was issued for Jenkins when he failed to appear for sentencing on the Robbery in the First Degree plea and the Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree plea. On July 26, 2024, Jenkins was arrested on those warrants and was again alleged to be in possession of a loaded firearm. A Grand Jury charged Jenkins with Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree for having possessed a loaded firearm on July 26, 2024, when he was arrested on the warrants. If convicted of those charges, Jenkins could be sentenced to an additional three and one half (3 1/2) years to fifteen years (15) in prison. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of Jenkins. The weapons possession case was prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Leah Canton, and the robbery case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Richard Giordano.

PEOPLE V. AGUIBOU KARAMBE – On August 6, 2024, Aguibou Karambe, 22, of Manhattan, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Attempted Robbery in the Second Degree. On October 16, 2024, Karambe was sentenced to five (5) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision. On February 28, 2023, Karambe, and three other masked men, entered the AT&T store in the Village of Monroe. While inside, one of the men grabbed the clerk by the neck and pushed him into the back office. One of the men said that he was armed with a gun

and held his hand in his jacket pocket. The men stole various electronics from the store and fled. Law enforcement located the men and the proceeds of the robbery in the City of Mount Vernon in Westchester County. At the plea proceedings, Karambe admitted to being involved in the robbery. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Monroe Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the City of Mount Vernon Police, the New York Police Department and the Westchester County Police for their assistance in apprehending the defendant. **"This brazen robbery was as dangerous as it was ill-conceived," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Thankfully, the rapid response of police and their careful investigation ensured that the perpetrators were promptly located and taken into custody."** The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. ANTHONY NAPOLI – On September 13, 2024, Anthony Napoli, age 36, of New Windsor, was convicted after a jury trial in the Orange County Court of Robbery in the Third Degree. On November 26, 2024, Napoli was sentenced to three to six (3-6) years in prison. Prosecutors at the trial argued that on February 24, 2024, at approximately 2:00 p.m., Napoli entered the Valero gas station in the Town of New Windsor wearing a ski mask. Napoli took a case of beer and attempted to flee without paying. When confronted by an employee, Napoli punched him repeatedly about the head and fled from the scene on a bike. Town of New Windsor Police executed a search warrant at Napoli's residence and recovered the clothing worn during the robbery. When Napoli was arrested, he was wearing the ski mask he wore during the commission of the robbery. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of New Windsor Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Napoli. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department and the Orange County Sheriff's Office for their assistance with the investigation. "The hard working and vulnerable retail professionals who are forced to encounter dangerous situations like what occurred in this case deserve all the available protections of the law," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Assistant District Attorney Michael Roche who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. DAVID JOHNSON – On May 7, 2024, David Johnson, 47, of Middletown, was sentenced to six (6) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision relative to his plea of guilty to Robbery in the Second Degree. On March 12, 2023, Johnson approached a man who was entering a grocery store in the City of Middletown and demanded money. After the man gave Johnson money, he walked away only for Johnson to pursue him. Johnson grabbed the man by the throat, knocked him to the ground and repeatedly punched the victim in the face until he was unconscious. Johnson took the man's wallet from his pocket and fled to a nearby apartment building. The police, having observed part of the incident on street camera, responded and located Johnson in a common area closet in the apartment. Johnson admitted to forcibly stealing the man's property and thereby causing the man to sustain physical injury. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Middletown Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Ryan Greenbaum.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Prosecuting cases where the defendant and the victim either are, or were formerly intimate partners, remained a high priority for OCDA in 2024. The Office continued its relationship with Fearless! Hudson Valley, Inc., formerly known as Safe Homes of Orange County, a not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to helping victims of domestic abuse and has supplied victim-advocate services to OCDA for many years. Most notably, those services include making a victim's advocate available to speak with victims of domestic violence as they go through the criminal justice system. At least one advocate is always available at OCDA to assist victims. Advocates work closely with the victims and assistant district attorneys, particularly when the victims must testify in a grand jury. Victims of intimate partner violence frequently are hesitant to report crimes and to follow through on prosecutions. Victims' degree of trust and cooperation has grown due to the close interaction between OCDA and Fearless!, resulting in victims being more likely to accept appropriate services and report instances of domestic violence, greatly lessening the chance that they will be victimized in the future. The OCDA will continue to support victims of domestic violence by aggressively prosecuting those responsible for these crimes. All victims of domestic violence are urged to seek out the support available to them by contacting law enforcement, the OCDA or organizations such as Fearless! Hudson Valley. These are some of the domestic violence cases that the OCDA handled in 2024:

PEOPLE V. CORNELIUS STUBBS – On October 29, 2024, Cornelius Stubbs, age 53, of Newburgh, was convicted by a jury in Orange County Court of Attempted Murder in the First Degree, for having attempted to cause the death of the mother of one of his children by commanding another man to kill her. At the trial, prosecutors argued that on October 2, 2011, Stubbs attempted to cause the death of the victim while she was in her City of Newburgh home by having another man enter her home to kill her. A court had previously issued an Order of Protection to protect the woman from Stubbs at the time he commanded the yet unidentified accomplice to kill her. The victim was shot four times during the attack. Stubbs was already serving a prison sentence for Murder in the First Degree, and other charges, with respect to other victims at the time of the trial. On September 20, 2022, Stubbs was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, plus an additional twenty-five (25) years to life sentence to run consecutively to the life in prison sentence following a jury trial in the Orange County Court when he was convicted of all

thirty-one (31) charges submitted to the jury against him. Those charges included Murder in the First Degree, stemming from the September 2019 shooting death of a twenty-one-year-old female college student inside her New Windsor residence. The deceased woman was in the apartment visiting her boyfriend, who is the brother of the mother of one of Stubbs' children. In that trial Stubbs was also convicted of crimes including two counts of Attempted Murder in the First Degree and Attempted Murder in the Second Degree for having broken into the brother's New Windsor apartment, shooting the brother, and fatally shooting his girlfriend. The brother was seriously injured in the attack. Stubbs was also convicted of ten counts of Criminal Contempt in the First Degree, Coercion in the First Degree, eight counts of Criminal Contempt in the Second Degree, three counts of Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree, and two counts of Harassment in the Second Degree, for having repeatedly threatened and harassed the mother of his child, as well as her brother. On February 10, 2025, Stubbs was sentenced to an additional twenty-five (25) years to life in state prison, which is to run consecutively to the prison terms that he is already serving. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant, as well the New York State Police, the Town of New Windsor Police Department, the Town of Newburgh Police Department, and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center who aided in the investigation. "This defendant tried to kill a woman and escape detection by commanding someone else to kill her," said District Attorney David M. Hoover. "That cowardly attempt was unsuccessful and the unflagging efforts of the police officers and prosecutors in this case enabled jurors to reach a just verdict. These cases highlight the destructive and irreversible consequences of domestic violence." District Attorney Hoover highly commended Senior Assistant District Attorney David Byrne and Assistant District Attorney Michael Roche who prosecuted the cases at both trials.

PEOPLE V. DONNIE SMITH – On April 30, 2024, Donnie Smith, age 32, of Newburgh, was arraigned on an indictment charging Attempted Murder in the First Degree, two counts of Attempted Murder in the Second Degree and two counts of Assault in the First Degree. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, on March 31, 2024, Smith violently attacked his mother in a residence in the City of Newburgh, by stabbing her repeatedly with a sharp object in the neck and back. As Smith was leaving the residence, he encountered his aunt who he stabbed repeatedly in the neck and back. After attacking both women, Smith fled and was located and arrested by members of the City of Newburgh Police Department later that night. As a result of the attack, Smith's mother is paralyzed and his aunt sustained serious and permanent injury. "The sheer brutality of the alleged acts in this case is terrifying," said District Attorney David M. Hoover. "The life-changing consequences for the victims in this case underscores the dangers of domestic violence. The City of Newburgh Police deserve praise for their rapid response and for the investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. I urge all victims of domestic violence to come forward and to know that there are resources and support available to them from my office and agencies such as Fearless! Hudson Valley." The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.



CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Children are, of course, the most innocent of victims, and can be traumatized further when testifying against those who abuse them, particularly when the abuser is someone they should be able to trust. Prosecutors are constantly weighing considerations of just punishment against protecting vulnerable witnesses. Significant cases in which children were victims in 2024 include:

PEOPLE V. JESUS TORRES – On January 26, 2024, Jesus Torres, age 33, of Goshen, was sentenced to twenty (20) years in prison and twenty (20) years of post-release supervision in connection to his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Rape in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Torres will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). At the time he pled guilty, it was anticipated that Torres would face up to fifteen (15) years in prison, but law enforcement investigation uncovered evidence that Torres had attempted to contact the victim of his crimes after the plea. The People proved at a hearing that Torres was in violation of his plea agreement with the Court and sought the enhanced sentence that was ultimately imposed. Torres had previously admitted in Court that, being eighteen (18) years or older, he engaged in sexual intercourse with another person who was less than thirteen (13) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney Hoovler also thanks the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their assistance with the case. “This defendant’s repulsive conduct was appropriately met with a lengthy prison sentence,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “My office worked to ensure that the defendant’s efforts to re-victimize the survivor in this case were punished with an enhanced sentence. I commend the survivor for coming forward and being heard despite being forced to live every day with the consequences of these barbaric acts. My office will continue to provide support for victims of sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell.

PEOPLE V. CRAIG MERLOCK – On August 14, 2024, Craig Merlock, age 45, of Goshen, was sentenced in Orange County Court to eighteen (18) years to life in prison relative to his previous guilty plea to Predatory Sexual Assault Against a Child. At the sentencing proceedings, the People recommended that he be sentenced to twenty-five (25) years to life in prison, which is the maximum sentence permitted by law. As part of the sentence, Merlock will also be registered as

a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). At the plea proceedings, Merlock admitted that on July 24, 2023, being eighteen (18) years old or more, he did engage in oral sexual conduct with an individual who was less than thirteen (13) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police and their Computer Crimes Unit for their investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their assistance with the investigation. "The admitted conduct of this defendant rightfully resulted in one of the strongest punishments available to the justice system," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "While nothing could ever restore to the victim what was lost by the defendant's actions, it is nonetheless important to the safety of our community that this offender is removed from society for as long as possible. I thank the dedicated investigators for their hard work which uncovered this defendant's crimes. My office, together with our law enforcement partners will never cease in our pursuit of sexual predators. We will continue to provide support for victims of sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell.

PEOPLE V. TREVON HUDSON – On February 20, 2024, Trevon Hudson, age 28, of Middletown, was sentenced in Orange County Court to fifteen (15) years in prison to be followed by ten (10) years of post-release supervision in relation to his previous plea of guilty to Criminal Sexual Act in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Hudson will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). The defendant previously admitted in Court that, being eighteen (18) years or older, he engaged in oral sexual conduct with a child who was less than thirteen (13) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. "This defendant's admitted conduct represents unspeakable abuse of an innocent child," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "I hope that the significant sentence imposed will provide a degree of closure to the victim and will ensure that this defendant is unable to harm others. My office, together with our law enforcement partners, will bring to bear all resources available to us in our pursuit of sexual predators. We will continue to provide support for victims of sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.

PEOPLE V. JUSTIN BABB – On December 4, 2024, Justin Babb, age 41, of New Hampton, was sentenced to eighteen (18) years in state prison, and ten (10) years post-release supervision, for having engaged in sexual conduct with a child. On May 23, 2024, Babb pled guilty in Orange County Court to Criminal Sexual Act in the First Degree. At the plea proceedings, Babb admitted that in August 2023, he engaged in anal sexual conduct with an individual who was less than eleven (11) years old. As part of the sentence, Babb will be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. "Children are the most innocent of victims and this defendant's unspeakable actions demanded a lengthy prison sentence," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "It is inconceivable that a child could be subjected to the horrific acts perpetrated by this offender. I am grateful for the untiring efforts of the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit and gratified that we were able to reach a disposition involving a lengthy state prison sentence for this offender, without having to put the survivor through the additional trauma of testifying. All child and sexual abuse victims deserve our support and compassion. The children in our community will be safer while this defendant remains incarcerated." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.

PEOPLE V. LIBORIO NIETO – On April 29, 2024, Liborio Nieto, age 28, of Middletown, was sentenced in Orange County Court to ten (10) years in prison to be followed by ten (10) years of post-release supervision as it relates to his previous plea of guilty to Rape in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Nieto will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). The defendant previously admitted in Court that, being eighteen (18) years or older, he engaged in sexual intercourse with a child who was less than thirteen years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their investigation and the arrest of Nieto. “The sexual abuse of a child is always an intolerable crime that deserves appropriate criminal consequences,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “The sentence imposed in this case will ensure this offender is unable to victimize another child. However, this heinous conduct has lifelong consequences for the innocent victim. As such, my office will always prioritize the pursuit of sexual predators while simultaneously supporting victims of sexual crimes.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.

PEOPLE V. ANTHONY VILLEGAS - On November 7, 2024, Anthony Villegas, age 49, of Monticello, was sentenced in Orange County Court to nine (9) years in prison, to be followed by ten (10) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Course of Sexual Conduct Against a Child in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Villegas will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). At the plea proceedings, Villegas admitted that between June 2010 and April 2011, being eighteen (18) years old or more, over a period of time not less than three months in duration, he did engage in two or more acts of sexual conduct which included at least one act of sexual intercourse with an individual who was less than thirteen (13) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. “We in law enforcement will always stand up for our youngest and most vulnerable victims,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Adults who choose to violate children for their own sexual gratification deserve lengthy prison sentences. These cases are challenging for the victims and for the law enforcement officers tasked with investigating the crimes. I reiterate our commitment to supporting victims of sexual assault and will continue to pursue accountability for these dangerous offenders.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell.

PEOPLE V. ALEJANDRO BENITEZ – On March 25, 2024, Alejandro Benitez, age 18, of New Windsor, was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison and twenty (20) years of post-release supervision in connection to his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Rape in the Second Degree. The sentence imposed was the maximum available sentence under the law. As part of the sentence, Benitez will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). Benitez admitted in Court that, being eighteen (18) years or older, he engaged in sexual intercourse with another person who was less than fifteen (15) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. “We owe an obligation to protect all children from sexual predators,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Cases like this one are both sensitive and challenging for police and prosecutors. My office will continue to provide support for victims of sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions. I commend the survivor for coming forward and being heard.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell.

PEOPLE V. ALLAN BRESSLER – On October 31, 2024, Allan Bressler, age 73, of Pine Bush, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Course of Sexual Conduct Against a Child in the First Degree. On February 20, 2025, Bressler was sentenced to eighteen (18) years in state prison, to be

followed by ten (10) years of post-release supervision. As part of the sentence, Bressler will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). At the time that he pleaded guilty, Bressler admitted that between March 1, 2008, and February 1, 2013, in the vicinity of his Pine Bush home, he engaged in two or more acts of sexual conduct, which included at least one act of oral sexual contact, with a child less than eleven years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Task Force and the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of Bressler. "I commend the Child Abuse Task Force for their work on this case, and other cases where the passage of time makes the investigation of sexual abuse against children more difficult," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Offenders who have engaged in the abuse of children should never be able to think that they have escaped punishment by the passage of time. Those who have survived sexual exploitation as children deserve every support we can offer. At age 73, this offender may, or may not, live long enough to complete his sentence, but the children of our community are safer every day that he remains incarcerated." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Jessica Dovico.

PEOPLE V. JAMES POSPISIL – On September 17, 2024, James Pospisil, age 45, of Port Jervis, was sentenced in Orange County Court to fifteen (15) years in prison to be followed by fifteen (15) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Attempted Rape in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Pospisil will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). At the plea proceedings, Pospisil admitted that between December 22, 2023, and January 2, 2024, he did attempt to engage in sexual intercourse with an individual who was less than eleven (11) years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their investigation which led to the arrest of the defendant. "The significant sentence imposed on this offender for his unspeakable actions will help to ensure he cannot harm another child," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "I commend the bravery of the survivor and hope the sentence will offer a degree of closure. My office, together with our law enforcement partners, will bring to bear all resources available to us in our pursuit of sexual predators. We will continue to provide support for victims of sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. EDUARDO MARTINEZ-ROJAS – On April 8, 2024, Eduardo Martinez-Rojas, age 30, of Highland Mills, was sentenced in Orange County Court to fifteen (15) years in prison, to be followed by ten (10) years of post-release supervision, as it relates to his previous plea of guilty to Course of Sexual Conduct Against a Child in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Martinez-Rojas will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). The defendant previously admitted in Court that, being eighteen (18) years or older, over a period of time not less than three months in duration, he did engage in two or more acts of sexual conduct, which included at least one act of sexual intercourse, oral sexual conduct, anal sexual conduct, or aggravated sexual conduct with a child who was less than thirteen years old. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Child Abuse Investigation Unit for their investigation and the arrest of Martinez-Rojas. "The acts perpetrated by this defendant against a child are truly unimaginable," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Cases like this one are challenging for both the law enforcement agencies tasked with the investigation and the members of my staff who prosecute the cases. But no one bears the burden for the defendant's conduct like the blameless victim. The only appropriate response to such admitted conduct is the significant prison sentence imposed. My office, together with our law enforcement partners, will never cease in our pursuit of sexual predators. We will continue to provide support for victims of

sexual assault and seek to hold offenders accountable for their actions.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Jessica Dovico.

*The District Attorney Office’s New Digital Forensics Unit (“DFU”) Aiding in
Child Pornography Investigations*

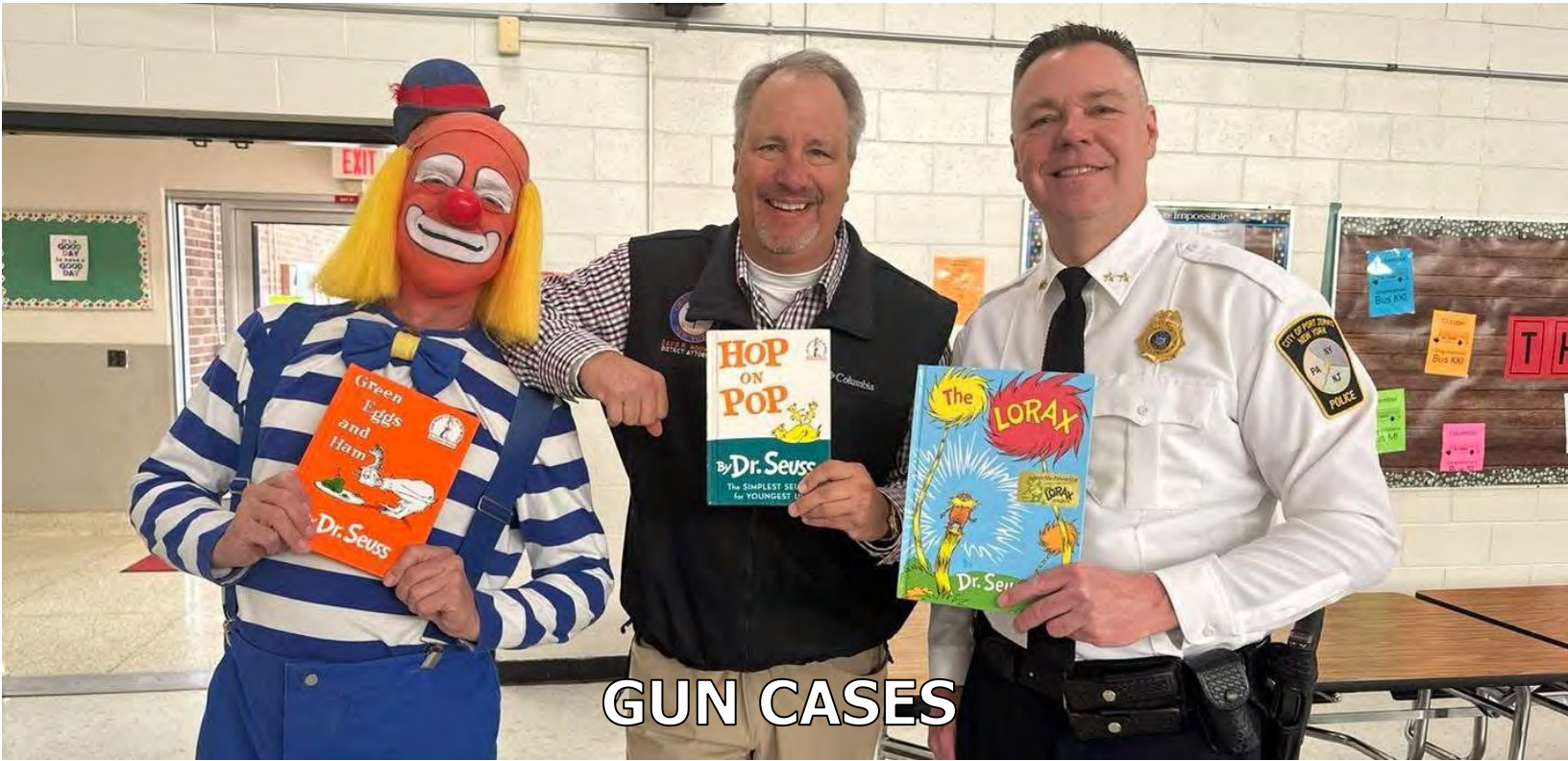
The OCDA Digital Forensics Unit (“DFU”), which was created in July 2023, is dedicated to searching for and analyzing digital evidence retrieved from devices such as cellular telephones, computers and vehicles that have been taken into evidence by police agencies throughout Orange County. The unit is patterned after similar units that exist in the Manhattan and Bronx County District Attorneys’ Offices. In addition to searching devices already in evidence, the unit’s staff use their extensive experience to aid other Orange County police agencies by assisting at crime scenes, conducting child exploitation investigations, and conducting specialized video DVR extractions. The DFU is led by a Senior Investigator and staffed by two additional full time District Attorney Investigators, who collectively have more than 80 years of law enforcement experience and 1500 hours of specialized training in digital forensics and child exploitation investigations. Significantly, the DFU has also registered as an affiliate of the New York State Internet Crimes against Children Task Force (ICAC). The DFU has entered into partnerships with ICAC, on a New York State and National level, to effectively investigate these horrendous crimes in Orange County and to assist local law enforcement partners with ICAC investigations within their jurisdictions.



PEOPLE V. JESSE BONIFACE – On December 16, 2024, Jesse Boniface, age 52, of Middletown, was sentenced in the Orange County Court to an aggregate sentence of twenty-five (25) years in prison to be followed by twenty (20) years of post-release supervision, which was the maximum sentence available, after having been previously convicted after jury trial of all charges against him, including the crime of Rape in the First Degree. Evidence at the trial proved that on November 17, 2023, in the Town of Crawford, Boniface engaged in sexual intercourse and oral sexual conduct by forcible compulsion with another person. The incident was promptly reported to the Town of Crawford Police Department who, after conducting an investigation, arrested Boniface. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Crawford Police Department whose investigation led to the arrest of Boniface. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police who assisted in the investigation and analysis of forensic evidence. “The only sentence appropriate in this case was the one imposed, which is the maximum available under the law,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “This defendant’s unspeakable conduct requires his separation from the rest of civilized society for the most amount of time possible. I praise the bravery of the victim in this case, who is forced to live every day with the awful consequences of this defendant’s actions. My office will continue to prioritize the prosecution of violent sexual offenders.” District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell and Assistant District Attorney Ralph Anthony who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. OBED ARELLANO-MENDEZ – On May 6, 2024, Obed Arellano-Mendez, age 37, of Newburgh, was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison and five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection to his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Rape in the First Degree. As part of the sentence, Arellano-Mendez will also be registered as a sex offender under the New York Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA). The defendant previously admitted that on or about October 29, 2023, in the City of Newburgh, he engaged in sexual intercourse with another person who was incapable of consent by reason of being physically helpless. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of Arellano-Mendez. “The heinous act of sexual assault against a helpless victim is a stark reminder of the pervasive threat of sexual violence in our society,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “We stand in solidarity with the survivor and vow to pursue justice with unwavering determination. I want to commend the diligent efforts of law enforcement in swiftly responding

to and investigating this crime. Their dedication and professionalism are instrumental in ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that our community remains safe.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Christine Maggiore.



In 2024, reducing illegal guns remained one of the OCDA's highest priorities. Handguns, when possessed by those who have no legal right to have them, create violent scenarios which plague our city streets. District Attorney Hoovler announced that in 2023, the office would continue to make the prosecution of illegal handgun and weapons possession a top priority. The office's gun prosecution initiative focuses on enhancing weapons possession cases by using all available technology, including fingerprints, DNA analysis, facial recognition technology, and ensuring that each seized firearm is entered into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). The NIBIN system is an automated ballistic imaging network administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, that uses markings on spent cartridges to track individual firearms. The use of NIBIN enhances not only individual firearms prosecutions, but also allows for the tracking of the origin of firearms and the investigation of that gun's prior use in Orange County, or elsewhere. "Gun violence in Orange County, and throughout New York State, continues at unacceptable levels, particularly in our cities," said District Attorney Hoovler. "Weapons possession cases are handled by senior members of my staff to ensure that we achieve maximum penalties for those who use or threaten the use of illegal weapons. It has been proven time and time again that there are only a small number of incorrigible offenders who account for the bulk of violent crimes. Lengthy incarceration of these crime drivers is crucial to the safety of our residents." The OCDA's past successes with the Gun Initiated Violence Elimination (GIVE) program, has been touted as a model for other jurisdictions in New York State to follow. Gun cases prosecuted in 2024 include:

PEOPLE V. RUDOLPH DAVIS – On October 17, 2024, Rudolph Davis, age 31, of Newburgh, was sentenced in Orange County Court to thirteen (13) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision after having been convicted in July of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, the sole charge against him, after a jury trial. On November 5, 2023, at approximately 1:05 a.m., members of the Town of Montgomery Police Department responded to a complaint for an individual menacing others with a gun in the Village of Maybrook. The responding officers located a van matching the description in the complaint driving away from the location. When the police stopped the vehicle, they found it to be operated by a woman, who was separately charged, while Davis was the front seat passenger. A search of the vehicle

resulted in the recovery of a loaded 9mm handgun in the center console. Davis was found to have additional rounds matching the gun in his pocket, which also matched rounds located at the scene of the original incident. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Montgomery Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Davis. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the New York State Police who assisted in the investigation. "Dangerous criminals who illegally possess and use dangerous firearms must be held accountable," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "All too frequently we see wanton violence committed with the use of illegally possessed guns. My office, together with our law enforcement partners, remain steadfast in our commitment to the pursuit of illegally possessed firearms and the offenders who wield them. Our community demands and deserves nothing less than this unwavering commitment." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly and Assistant District Attorney Anthony Molina.

PEOPLE V. FRANK BALTIMORE – On September 3, 2024, Frank Baltimore, age 36, of Newburgh, was sentenced to thirteen (13) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision following his conviction after a jury trial in the Orange County Court of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, the sole charge against him. The evidence showed that on July 11, 2023, at approximately 1:00 a.m., in the vicinity of Dubois Street in the City of Newburgh, Baltimore made threats to individuals in the area and then discharged a loaded 9mm handgun five (5) times in the direction of the individuals. The rounds struck a vehicle in the area and the individuals were unharmed. Surveillance video of the incident, as well as the collection of other physical evidence, led law enforcement to identify Baltimore as the perpetrator. He later told the police that the individual in the video was him, but claimed that the gun he used was a BB gun. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Baltimore. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Orange County Sheriff's Office who assisted by providing testimony at trial. "The lengthy sentence imposed in this case was appropriate for this dangerous offender, whose indiscriminate possession and use of a firearm was as dangerous as it was criminal," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "My office is committed to ensuring the safety of our communities by identifying and holding accountable those who illegally possess and use firearms. I commend the work of the City of Newburgh Police Department whose investigation led to the apprehension and conviction of this defendant." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly and Assistant District Attorney Amanda Arroyo.

PEOPLE V. DUSTIN SHOWERS – On April 23, 2024, Dustin Showers, age 34, of Montrose, Pennsylvania, was sentenced to nine (9) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. Showers pled guilty in 2022, failed to return to court for sentencing and a bench warrant was issued. He was eventually returned to court on the warrant in April 2024. At the sentencing proceedings, in light of the defendant's admitted conduct and failure to abide by the plea promises made to the court by absconding for a year and a half, the People recommended a fifteen (15) year sentence, which is the maximum sentence permitted. An investigation conducted by the City of Port Jervis Police Department, in conjunction with the Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff's Office, revealed that Showers was both making and selling to others untraceable AR-15 style ghost guns that bore no serial numbers. At the plea proceedings, Showers admitted that on September 2, 2021 at a location in the Town of Minisink, he illegally possessed a loaded assault weapon. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff's Office for their investigation which led to the arrest of Showers.

District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center for their assistance. "Untraceable ghost guns pose a significant danger in the hands of bad actors," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Where, as here, these guns are not only illegally possessed but also sold into the hands of others with unknown intentions, it is incumbent on law enforcement to disrupt their actions before tragedy strikes. To be clear, police and prosecutors respect and honor those who lawfully possess guns. On the other hand, those who subvert gun laws and put illegal weapons into the hands of other criminals without any regard must be held accountable. Offenders should also know that despite changes in bail laws in New York State, failing to return to court and to abide by promises made at the time of the plea will result in appropriately enhanced sentences." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Neal Eriksen.

PEOPLE V. ANTHONY SCARRY – On April 5, 2024, Anthony Scarry, age 22, of Walden, was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. On June 25, 2023, at approximately 5:55 a.m., law enforcement received a ShotSpotter notification of shots being fired in the area of Broadway and William Street in the City of Newburgh. When the police responded to the area, no one was present, although they recovered shell casings. Members of the City of Newburgh Police Department canvassed the area and recovered surveillance video showing Scarry and another individual at the location where the shots were fired. In the video, Scarry was seen running away with a gun in his hand. At the plea, Scarry admitted to possessing the loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Scarry. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police and the Village of Walden Police and the Orange County Probation Department for their assistance with the investigation. "The unchecked illegal possession and use of guns endangers innocent members of our community," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "My office, together with our law enforcement partners, will continue to stand up in the face of such violence. Even where there are no witnesses or other physical evidence, we will work to build cases with proof beyond a reasonable doubt to hold these offenders accountable. This case is yet another example of our commitment to taking violent criminals and the tools of their trade off of our streets." The case was prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Leah Canton.

PEOPLE V. KEJOHNA KING – On April 26, 2024, Kejhona King, age 36, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. On July 2, 2024, King was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison, and five (5) years post-release supervision. On January 11, 2024, members of the City of Newburgh Police Department were dispatched for a report of a disturbance involving a firearm. When the police arrived on scene, they saw King flee, resulting in a foot pursuit. During the pursuit, King dropped a crossbody bag containing a loaded pistol. When the police recovered the bag, they located the firearm and additional ammunition. Even more ammunition was recovered from King's pocket when he was arrested. King later admitted to police that he was the individual who brandished the firearm that resulted in the initial call for service. At the plea proceedings, King admitted to illegally possessing the loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department whose investigation led to the arrest of King. "Yet again we see proactive policing taking an illegal gun and the offender who brandished it off our streets," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Law enforcement will not rest while illegally possessed firearms are in the hands of potentially dangerous criminals. I applaud the work of the City of Newburgh Police

Department and the prosecutors involved in ensuring that justice was done in this case.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. NATORE DENNIS – On May 13, 2024, Natore Dennis, age 28, of Newburgh, was sentenced to four (4) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. During the late evening of October 16, 2023, City of Newburgh Police Officers were dispatched to a residence in the City for a report of a man with a gun. After the police were allowed inside the residence, they found Dennis in the vicinity of three sleeping children. After Dennis was placed in custody for an outstanding arrest warrant, police recovered a loaded and illegally possessed revolver in a bag next to a mattress where the children had previously been. At the plea proceedings, Dennis admitted to illegally possessing the loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Dennis. “Illegally possessed firearms pose a danger to everyone, in particular innocent children,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “It was only through the committed work of law enforcement that this gun was recovered before it could cause irreversible harm. The prison sentence rightfully imposed on this defendant should stand as a warning that the illegal possession of guns in Orange County can and will result in incarceration.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Richard Giordano.

PEOPLE V. CHRISTIAN BROWN - On April 12, 2024, Christian Brown, 24, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to two counts of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. The pleas were entered in connection with Brown having possessed a handgun on two different dates in the City of Newburgh. On August 15, 2024, Brown was sentenced to a total of ten (10) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision. At the time that Brown pleaded guilty, he admitted that on July 6, 2023, he possessed a loaded handgun on Broadway in the City of Newburgh, which he discharged at another person, who was not injured. Brown also admitted that on October 21, 2023, he possessed a loaded pistol while outside the Lake Street Apartments in the City of Newburgh. Police officers from the City of Newburgh Police Department recovered a loaded 9 mm pistol from Brown when they arrested him on October 21, 2023. Testing of the expelled shell-casings showed that the gun which Brown fired on July 6, 2023, was not the same gun he was carrying on October 21, 2023. Under the plea agreement, the District Attorney’s Office recommended that Brown be sentenced to ten (10) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision for the illegal weapon possession occurring on July 6, 2023, and a consecutive sentence of eight (8) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision for the illegal weapon possession on October 21, 2023, for a total recommendation of eighteen (18) years in prison and five (5) years post-release supervision. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of Brown. “Removing illegally possessed handguns, and those who recklessly use them on our cities’ streets remains a major priority,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “While I fully support the right of law-abiding citizens to legally obtain firearms, those who illegally possess pistols, and particularly those who use those weapons on others will face severe consequences in Orange County. Those who live, work, and visit our cities have the right to do so free of the wanton violence that invariably stems from illegally possessed handguns.” The case was prosecuted by Executive Assistant District Attorney Leah Canton.

PEOPLE V. ISRAEL BROWN – On November 6, 2024, Israel Brown, age 23, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. On February 24, 2025, the District Attorney’s Office recommended that Brown be

sentenced to seven (7) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. The Court sentenced Brown to five and one half (5.5) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. On June 25, 2023, at approximately 2:55 am, members of the City of Newburgh Police Department were dispatched to a location for a report of a burglary in progress. When they arrived at the location, the officers observed Brown and nearby a book bag which Brown denied was his. Inside of the bag was a loaded .380 pistol with a defaced serial number. Later, DNA analysis of swabs taken from the firearm matched the defendant. At the plea proceedings, Brown admitted to attempting to possess the loaded firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. "Proactive policing prevents unnecessary violence before it occurs," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "We cannot and will not tolerate the illegal possession of firearms, particularly those that are defaced and often used during the commission of other crimes. We have been clear to those who illegally possess and use firearms: we are coming for you, you will face felony charges and you will serve prison time. I commend the dedicated work of law enforcement to support our mission and whose work helps to make our communities safer." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Peter Fernandez.

PEOPLE V. STEVEN BOSTIC – On April 22, 2024, Steven Bostic, 41, of Middletown, was sentenced in Orange County Court to an aggregate term of ten (10) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous guilty pleas to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, in the evening of April 30, 2023, City of Newburgh Police Officers responded to a domestic incident at a residence in the City. Upon arriving, the police officers heard yelling within the residence. A man they later learned was Bostic initially refused to allow the police to enter but then relented. The officers observed a female with visible injuries and three young children, one of whom led the police to the defendant's bed where the officers recovered a loaded revolver under a blanket. DNA analysis later linked Bostic to the gun. While the charges on that case were pending, on June 21, 2023, members of the City of Newburgh Police Department observed Bostic engaging in a hand-to-hand narcotics transaction on City Terrace. Police later recovered quantities of cocaine and fentanyl packaged for sale from the defendant's fanny pack. At the plea proceeding, Bostic admitted to possessing both the loaded firearm as well as cocaine with the intent to sell it. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigations which led to the arrest of Bostic. "Far too often where we find illegally possessed firearms, we find drugs and drug dealers," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "In this case, it was particularly egregious that the gun illegally possessed by the defendant was kept in close proximity to innocent children. My office continues to focus on the prosecution of cases involving illegal guns and drugs and the corresponding harms that flow from both." The cases were prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Michael Purcell and Alexis Gregory.



OCDA participated in long-term narcotics enforcement actions in 2024 to disrupt the flow of drugs into the County. The Office continued to work with law enforcement agencies, including the Orange County Drug Task Force, to prosecute those responsible for the spread of deadly drugs in our communities. These complicated enforcement operations, which use court-ordered eavesdropping warrants, are necessary to successfully prosecute higher level dealers who insulate themselves from street sales and undercover police officers. Narcotics cases prosecuted in 2024 include:

“Operation Final Blow”

PEOPLE V. JOSEPH BRUNO – On December 23, 2024, Joseph Bruno, 46, of Port Jervis, was sentenced in Orange County Court to six to eighteen (6-18) years in prison relative to his previous guilty plea to Conspiracy in the Second Degree and ten (10) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous guilty plea to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. The sentences were ordered to run concurrently for an aggregate term of ten to eighteen (10-18) years in state prison and five (5) years of post-release supervision. As part of his plea, Bruno agreed to forfeit \$55,364 and three vehicles as fruits of his crimes. Bruno was arrested as a result of an over four-month-long investigation designed to disrupt major narcotics trafficking in the City of Port Jervis and surrounding areas, including Pike County, Pennsylvania. The investigation, dubbed “Operation Final Blow,” was initially started by the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Drug Task Force, the New York State Police Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team, the Pike County Criminal Investigations Division of the Pike County District Attorney’s Office, and the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, and included the use of court ordered eavesdropping warrants, as well as the execution of seventeen search warrants. Other law enforcement agencies who provided crucial aid in the investigation included the Town of Deerpark Police Department, the City of Middletown Police Department, the Town of Wallkill Police Department, the Pennsylvania State Police, the New Jersey State Police, the Sullivan County Sheriff’s Office, the Sussex County

Guns, Gang and Narcotics Task Force, and the Sussex County Prosecutor’s Office. Federal agencies who aided in the operation included Homeland Security Investigations (“HSI”), the FBI’s Safe Streets Task Force and the United States Marshall’s Service Fugitive Task Force. Search warrants executed during the investigation resulted in the seizure of approximately two kilograms of cocaine, 74 grams of heroin, 165 grams of fentanyl, 1,600 ecstasy pills and 235 pills containing oxycodone, as well as seven illegally possessed firearms and \$153,690. Eleven automobiles, four motorcycles and two ATVs were also taken into evidence. District Attorney Hoovler thanked all the state, local and federal law enforcement officials who aided in the investigation and eventual apprehension of Bruno. “Law enforcement remains focused on identifying and arresting large scale narcotics dealers in Orange County,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Operation Final Blow helped to disrupt the flow of narcotics being trafficked in the western part of Orange County by bringing the higher-level dealers, including this defendant, to justice. I applaud the cooperation amongst the varied law enforcement agencies who conducted a careful investigation that led to the conviction of this defendant. My office will continue to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of drug dealers who peddle their poison in Orange County.”

PEOPLE V. ANDREW MITCHELL, A/K/A “LOC” – On December 20, 2024, Andrew Mitchell, a/k/a “Loc,” age 49, of Chester, was sentenced in Orange County Court to thirteen (13) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous guilty plea to Operating as a Major Trafficker. As part of the disposition, Mitchell forfeited two luxury vehicles as proceeds or instrumentalities of his crimes. Mitchell was arrested as a result of the investigation, dubbed “Operation Final Blow.” “The only way to disrupt high-level narcotics trafficking is through painstaking long-term investigations by law enforcement,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “My office, time and again, reaffirms our focus on the investigation and prosecution of high-ranking drug dealers who spread their poison in Orange County. Operation Final Blow helped to disrupt the flow of narcotics being trafficked in the western part of Orange County by bringing the higher-level dealers, including this defendant, to justice. I commend the cooperation amongst the varied law enforcement agencies who conducted a careful investigation that led to the conviction of this defendant.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.

“Operation Off the Brick”

PEOPLE V. ANTONIO PEREZ-MOLINA – On March 29, 2024, Antonio Perez-Molina, 42, of Otisville, was sentenced in Orange County Court to sixteen (16) years to life in prison relative to his previous guilty plea to Operating as a Major Trafficker. The plea was entered after a jury trial in the matter had commenced. The charges against Perez-Molina and numerous other co-defendants stemmed from a long-term drug sale and possession operation. On August 18, 2021, the New York State Police Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team (VGNET), in conjunction with the Connecticut State Police, the Connecticut State’s Attorney Office, and the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, conducted an enforcement action, dubbed “Operation Off the Brick,” involving the trafficking of cocaine in Orange County and Connecticut. Search warrants were executed at several locations: the Village of Otisville, the City of Middletown, the Town of Blooming Grove, and the Ulster County Hamlet of Kerhonksen. In addition, the Connecticut State Police executed search warrants on August 5, 2021, and August 18, 2021. During the execution of the search warrants, police seized over 1,100 grams of cocaine, three loaded handguns, one

shotgun, and approximately \$70,000 in United States currency. At the plea proceedings, Perez-Molina admitted that he acted as a director of a controlled substance organization during a period of twelve months or less, during which period such controlled substance organization sold cocaine, and the proceeds collected or due from such sale or sales had a total aggregate value of seventy-five thousand dollars or more. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police VGNET; the Connecticut State Police Statewide Narcotics Task Force, Northwest Field Office; the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office; the City of Waterbury Police Department Vice and Intelligence Unit; and the City of Waterbury Police Department Gangs Task Force, for their assistance in the investigation of the case. "The significant sentence imposed today underscores the deadly toll of drugs in our communities, which is driven by the greed of major drug traffickers," said District Attorney Hoovler. "Upending major narcotics operations is a keystone priority of my office. Our results speak for themselves on these matters. We have dedicated countless time and resources to these cases, and we are ready, willing and able to try these matters to verdict when necessary." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory and Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly.

"Operation Hot Lunch"

PEOPLE V. KIRKLAND SALMON - On October 1, 2024, Kirkland Salmon, age 42, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First Degree, and Conspiracy in the Second and Fourth Degrees. Under the plea agreement announced on the record at the time that Salmon pled guilty, the People recommended that he be sentenced to twelve (12) years in prison, to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. As part of the disposition, Salmon also agreed to forfeit a vehicle and a food truck as proceeds or instrumentalities of his crimes. The case was the result of the coordinated efforts of numerous law enforcement agencies who conducted an enforcement action after a long-term investigation into firearm and narcotics trafficking in Orange County. The operation, code named "Hot Lunch", resulted in the arrests of twenty-six (26) people charged with narcotics, firearm and conspiracy offenses. A six (6) month long intensive investigation into illegal firearms and narcotics trafficking in Orange County was conducted by the Orange County Drug Task Force (OCDTF), the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, together with the Orange County District Attorney's Office, the City of Middletown Police Department, New York State Police, the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department, and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, the investigation revealed that Kirkland Salmon was at the center of four different conspiracies to traffic narcotics and firearms through Orange County. Salmon was supplied with quantities of cocaine by two different narcotics suppliers, Owen Beckford a/k/a Marvin Ottley and Joshua Arnold, to distribute from his food truck parked in the City of Newburgh. Salmon was also supplied with firearms to resell in Orange County by Andre Smith. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement learned of Beckford's and Arnold's narcotics distribution organizations, both of which distributed cocaine in the City of Newburgh and elsewhere in Orange County. During the investigation, law enforcement recovered twenty-four (24) firearms and one (1) kilogram of cocaine. On the day of the enforcement action on May 21, 2024, police additionally recovered over eleven (11) kilograms of cocaine, approximately ninety (90) grams of fentanyl, seven (7) guns, high-capacity magazines, numerous rounds of ammunition, approximately \$45,000 of US currency, scales and packaging materials used in

narcotics trafficking and ten (10) vehicles that were instrumentalities of the crimes charged. Additionally, law enforcement seized one food truck. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the agencies involved in the investigation, as well as the following agencies who assisted in the enforcement action on May 21, 2024: the City of Newburgh Police Department; the Town of Newburgh Police Department; the Town of Woodbury Police Department; the Town of Montgomery Police Department; the Town of Wallkill Police Department; and the Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson Police Department. "The spread of illegal narcotics and firearms poses a real and present danger to our community," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "In order to disrupt the types of conspiracies seen in this case, it requires the kind of dedicated, long-term investigations that are possible only through coordinated operations between law enforcement and prosecutors. My office, time and again, has reaffirmed our commitment to keeping our streets safe from the scourge of drugs and the corresponding violence often found in the wake. Together with our law enforcement partners, we will utilize every resource available to seek out drug and gun dealers and bring them to justice." "The significant plea entered by this defendant represents the culmination of the coordinated efforts of law enforcement. The drugs and illegal guns at the center of this case wreak havoc and devastation in our communities. The Orange County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to investigating these crimes so that the offenders can be held to account for their actions," said Orange County Sheriff Paul Arteta. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Alexis Gregory and Amanda M. Bettinelli.

PEOPLE V. OWEN BECKFORD, A/K/A MARVIN OTTLEY – On November 14, 2024, Owen Beckford, a/k/a Marvin Ottley, age 53, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Operating as a Major Trafficker and Conspiracy in the Second Degree. Under the plea agreement announced on the record at the time that Beckford pled guilty, the People recommended that he be sentenced to fifteen (15) years in prison on the A-I felony charge of Operating as a Major Trafficker, and a concurrent sentence of four to twelve (4-12) years in prison, on the charge of Conspiracy in the Second Degree. The case was the result of the coordinated efforts of numerous law enforcement agencies who conducted an enforcement action after a long-term investigation into firearm and narcotics trafficking in Orange County. The operation, code named "Hot Lunch", resulted in the arrests of twenty-six (26) people charged with narcotics, firearm and conspiracy offenses, and is believed to be the largest narcotics and gun trafficking case in the history of Orange County. A six (6) month long intensive investigation into illegal firearms and narcotics trafficking in Orange County was conducted by the Orange County Drug Task Force (OCDTF), the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, together with the Orange County District Attorney's Office, the City of Middletown Police Department, New York State Police, the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department, and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, the investigation revealed that Kirkland Salmon was at the center of four different conspiracies to traffic narcotics and firearms through Orange County. Salmon was supplied with quantities of cocaine by two different narcotics suppliers, Owen Beckford a/k/a Marvin Ottley and Joshua Arnold, to distribute from his food truck parked in the City of Newburgh. Salmon was also supplied with firearms to resell in Orange County by Andre Smith. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement learned of Beckford's and Arnold's narcotics distribution organizations, both of which distributed cocaine in the City of Newburgh and elsewhere in Orange County. During the investigation, law enforcement recovered twenty-four (24) firearms and one (1) kilogram of cocaine. On the day of the enforcement action on May 21, 2024, police additionally recovered over eleven (11) kilograms of cocaine, approximately ninety (90) grams of fentanyl, seven (7) guns, high-capacity magazines, numerous rounds of ammunition, approximately \$45,000 of US currency, scales and packaging materials used in narcotics trafficking and ten (10) vehicles that were instrumentalities

of the crimes charged. Additionally, law enforcement seized one food truck. At the plea proceedings, Beckford admitted to operating as a major trafficker, by acting as a “profiteer”, and possessing within six months or less, cocaine having an aggregate value of \$75,000 or more, and also to participating in a conspiracy to distribute narcotics. Police recovered 9.5 kilograms of cocaine from the City of Newburgh apartment that Beckford was using to store his narcotics during the period of the investigation. Beckford’s plea was the sixteenth time that a defendant had pled guilty to Operating as a Major Trafficker since District Attorney Hoovler took office. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the agencies involved in the investigation, as well as the following agencies who assisted in the enforcement action on May 21, 2024: City of Newburgh Police Department; Town of Newburgh Police Department; Town of Woodbury Police Department; Town of Montgomery Police Department; Town of Wallkill Police Department; and the Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson Police Department. “Disrupting large scale narcotics and illegal gun enterprises, such as those targeted in Operation Hot Lunch, is the only way to protect our communities from the devastation caused by narcotics and illegal firearms,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “And, it is only through the coordinated efforts of different law enforcement agencies that these enterprises can effectively be stopped. I am grateful to all the local, state and federal law enforcement officers who worked on this case and who risk their lives every day to keep us safe. My office, time and again, has reaffirmed our commitment to keeping our streets safe from the scourge of drugs and the corresponding violence often found in the wake. Together with our law enforcement partners, we will utilize every resource available to seek out drug and gun dealers and bring them to justice.” The cases are being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory and Assistant District Attorney Amanda M. Bettinelli.

PEOPLE V. RUSSELL KNIGHT – On November 6, 2024, Russell Knight, age 46, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Conspiracy in the Second Degree and Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. Under the plea agreement announced on the record at the time that Knight pled guilty, the People recommended that he be sentenced to an aggregate sentence of five to ten (5-10) years in prison, to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision when he is sentenced. The case was the result of the coordinated efforts of numerous law enforcement agencies who conducted an enforcement action after a long-term investigation into firearm and narcotics trafficking in Orange County. The operation, code named “Hot Lunch”, resulted in the arrests of twenty-six (26) people charged with narcotics, firearm and conspiracy offenses. A six (6) month long intensive investigation into illegal firearms and narcotics trafficking in Orange County was conducted by the Orange County Drug Task Force (OCDTF), the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, together with the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, the City of Middletown Police Department, New York State Police, the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department, and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center. As alleged in documents filed and statements made in court, the investigation revealed that Kirkland Salmon was at the center of four different conspiracies to traffic narcotics and firearms through Orange County. Salmon was supplied with quantities of cocaine by two different narcotics suppliers, Owen Beckford a/k/a Marvin Ottley and Joshua Arnold, to distribute from his food truck parked in the City of Newburgh. Salmon was also supplied with firearms to resell in Orange County by Andre Smith. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement learned of Beckford’s and Arnold’s narcotics distribution organizations, both of which distributed cocaine in the City of Newburgh and elsewhere in Orange County. During the investigation, law enforcement recovered twenty-four (24) firearms and one (1) kilogram of cocaine. On the day of the enforcement action on May 21, 2024, police additionally recovered over eleven (11) kilograms of cocaine, approximately ninety (90) grams of fentanyl, seven (7) guns, high-capacity magazines, numerous rounds of ammunition, approximately \$45,000 of US currency, scales and

packaging materials used in narcotics trafficking and ten (10) vehicles that were instrumentalities of the crimes charged. Additionally, law enforcement seized one food truck. At the plea proceedings, Knight admitted to participating in Beckford's conspiracy to distribute narcotics, as well as selling cocaine to another individual. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the agencies involved in the investigation, as well as the following agencies who assisted in the enforcement action on May 21, 2024: City of Newburgh Police Department; Town of Newburgh Police Department; Town of Woodbury Police Department; Town of Montgomery Police Department; Town of Wallkill Police Department; and the Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson Police Department. "To disrupt high-level narcotics distribution networks, law enforcement must conduct intensive and dedicated investigations," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "These investigations are possible only through coordinated operations between law enforcement and prosecutors. My office, time and again, has reaffirmed our commitment to keeping our streets safe from the scourge of drugs and the corresponding violence often found in the wake. Together with our law enforcement partners, we will utilize every resource available to seek out drug and gun dealers and bring them to justice." The cases are being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory and Assistant District Attorney Amanda M. Bettinelli.

VGNET Wire Investigation

PEOPLE V. ANTONIO BUCCI – On November 13, 2024, Antonio Bucci, age 29, of Chester, was sentenced in Orange County Court to nine (9) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his guilty plea to Operating as a Major Trafficker. The New York State Police Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team (VGNET), together with the Orange County Drug Task Force, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Safe Streets Task Force and the Orange County District Attorney's Office engaged in a year-long investigation into cocaine trafficking in and around Chester. As part of the investigation, the District Attorney's Office applied for permission to use and was granted court-ordered eavesdropping warrants in the case. Subsequent search warrants were executed at residences in the Village of Chester and the Bronx which resulted in the recovery of over one (1) kilogram of cocaine, approximately \$36,000 in United States currency and four loaded handguns. As alleged in charging documents filed in the Court, Bucci acted as a director of a controlled substance organization that sold cocaine and such sales exceeded \$75,000 over a period of less than a year. Tyler and Lester Zaborski were alleged to have participated in a conspiracy to provide cocaine to be distributed in Orange County. Baltimore was alleged to also participate in the conspiracy to distribute cocaine and was in possession of loaded firearms during the execution of the search warrants. At the plea proceedings, Bucci admitted that he acted as a director of a controlled substance organization during any period of twelve months or less, during which period such controlled substance organization did sell one or more controlled substances, to wit: cocaine, and the proceeds collected or due from such sale or sales had a total aggregate value of seventy-five thousand dollars or more. "Our community will be safer for the lengthy time this drug dealer will be behind bars," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "This case is yet another example of the benefits of cooperation and coordination amongst law enforcement professionals keen to disrupt the flow of narcotics into and around Orange County. My Office will continue to devote the necessary resources to ensure these cases deliver justice." The cases are being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Janine Kovacs, who also aided in the investigation.

“Operation Hide in Plain Sight”

PEOPLE V. ANGELICA “JELLY” RODRIGUEZ - On February 27, 2024, Angelica “Jelly” Rodriguez, age 40, of Middletown, was sentenced to an aggregate term of ten (10) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years post-release supervision relative to her previous guilty plea to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and Conspiracy in the Second and Fourth Degrees. On January 4, 2024, Michael Rodriguez, age 49, of Yonkers, was sentenced to an aggregate term of ten (10) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years post-release supervision relative to his previous guilty plea to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and Conspiracy in the Second Degree. (It is not believed that Angelica Rodriguez and Michael Rodriguez are related.) The City of Middletown Police Department engaged in a two-year long investigation into cocaine trafficking in and around the City of Middletown allegedly committed by Angelica Rodriguez. The City of Middletown Police Department were later aided in the investigation by the Orange County Drug Task Force. That Task Force is run under the supervision of a Senior Criminal Investigator from the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and a Senior Investigator from the Orange County Sheriff’s Office. In addition to personnel from those agencies, the Drug Task Force is composed of police officers from other Orange County police departments. Currently the Town of Montgomery Police Department, the Wallkill Police Department, and the Highlands Police Department have committed to assigning police officers to work on the Task Force. After conventional investigative means failed to reveal evidence showing the entire extent of the narcotics conspiracy surrounding Angelica Rodriguez, the District Attorney’s Office applied for permission to use court-ordered eavesdropping warrants in the investigation. During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that the same suppliers of cocaine who were providing Angelica Rodriguez and her co-conspirators with cocaine to sell, were also supplying narcotics to those in the City of Port Jervis. The City of Port Jervis was also active in the investigation. Michael Rodriguez is accused of supplying cocaine to narcotics dealers in the City of Middletown and the City of Port Jervis and possessing two illegal handguns. On July 26, 2023, a search warrant was executed at Michael Rodriguez’s Yonkers residence, which resulted in the seizure of 1516 grams (over 1.5 kilograms) of cocaine, \$165,509 in United States currency, scales, a money counter, an unlicensed Ruger .380 caliber pistol, an unlicensed Bond Arms .357 caliber handgun, a vacuum sealer, digital scales and jewelry estimated to have a value of approximately \$50,000. It is alleged that Michael Rodriguez regularly supplied cocaine to Angelica Rodriguez, who would sell it in and around Middletown, and Taino Lopez who would sell it in and around Port Jervis. “The flow of large quantities of narcotics into our communities must be interrupted by identifying traffickers through long-term and dedicated law enforcement investigations,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “In this case, as is true in many cooperative investigations, the hard work of police, including the City of Middletown Police Department together with the Orange County Drug Task Force, the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office and the New York State Police resulted in the arrest, conviction and incarceration of major drug dealers. My office joins our law enforcement partners in the ongoing battle against narcotics and will utilize all resources available to us to bring drug dealers to justice.” The cases were prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory, who also aided in the investigation.

PEOPLE V. TAINO LOPEZ - On July 26, 2024, Taino Lopez, age 26, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to seven to fourteen (7-14) years in state prison in connection with the “Operation Hide in Plain

Sight” narcotics investigation, which was conducted by the City of Middletown Police Department and the Orange County Drug Task Force. On January 4, 2024, Lopez had pled guilty to Conspiracy in Second Degree and admitted that he participated in a conspiracy with Angelica “Jelly” Rodriguez and Michael Rodriguez to commit the Class A felonies of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. (It is not believed that Angelica Rodriguez and Michael Rodriguez are related.) The City of Middletown Police Department engaged in a two-year long investigation into cocaine trafficking in and around the City of Middletown allegedly committed by Angelica Rodriguez, a/k/a “Jelly,” age 39, of Otisville. The City of Middletown Police Department were later aided in the investigation by the Orange County Drug Task Force. That Task Force is run under the supervision of a Senior Criminal Investigator from the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and a Senior Investigator from the Orange County Sheriff’s Office. In addition to personnel from those agencies, the Drug Task Force is composed of police officers from other Orange County police departments. Currently the Town of Montgomery Police Department, the Wallkill Police Department, and the Highlands Police Department have committed to assigning police officers to work on the Task Force. After conventional investigative means failed to reveal evidence showing the entire extent of the narcotics conspiracy surrounding Angelica Rodriguez, the District Attorney’s Office applied for permission to use court-ordered eavesdropping warrants in the investigation. During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that the same suppliers of cocaine who were providing Angelica Rodriguez and her co-conspirators with cocaine to sell, were also supplying narcotics to those in the City of Port Jervis. The City of Port Jervis was also active in the investigation. Michael Rodriguez is accused of supplying cocaine to narcotics dealers in the City of Middletown and the City of Port Jervis and possessing two illegal handguns. On July 26, 2023, a search warrant was executed at Michael Rodriguez’s Yonkers residence, which resulted in the seizure of 1,516 grams (over 1.5 kilograms) of cocaine, \$165,509 in United States currency, scales, a money counter, an unlicensed Ruger .380 caliber pistol, an unlicensed Bond Arms .357 caliber handgun, a vacuum sealer, digital scales and jewelry estimated to have a value of approximately \$50,000. It is alleged that Michael Rodriguez regularly supplied cocaine to Angelica Rodriguez, who would sell it in and around Middletown, and Taino Lopez who would sell it in and around Port Jervis. “The flow of large quantities of narcotics into our communities must be interrupted by identifying traffickers through long-term and dedicated law enforcement investigations,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “In this case, as is true in many cooperative investigations, the hard work of police, including the City of Middletown Police Department together with the Orange County Drug Task Force, the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office and the New York State Police resulted in the arrest, conviction and incarceration of major drug dealers. My office joins our law enforcement partners in the ongoing battle against narcotics and will utilize all resources available to us to bring drug dealers to justice.” The cases were prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory, who also aided in the investigation. On July 26, 2024, Taino Lopez, age 26, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to seven to fourteen (7-14) years in state prison in connection with the “Operation Hide in Plain Sight” narcotics investigation, which was conducted by the City of Middletown Police Department and the Orange County Drug Task Force. On January 4, 2024, Lopez had pled guilty to Conspiracy in Second Degree, and admitted that he participated in a conspiracy with Angelica “Jelly” Rodriguez and Michael Rodriguez to commit the Class A felonies of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.

PEOPLE V. MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ – On Thursday, January 4, 2024, Michael Rodriguez, age 49, of Yonkers, the former Director of “Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence”, an Anti-Violence Program

That Works to Promote Safer Streets was sentenced before the Honorable Craig Stephen Brown in the Orange County Court to an aggregate term of ten (10) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previously entered guilty pleas to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and Conspiracy in the Second Degree. Rodriguez was the Director of Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.), which is a prominent anti-violence program that receives government money and works in the Bronx to promote safer streets. Rodriguez also previously agreed to forfeit a car and \$165,000 as ill-gotten proceeds of his crimes. The City of Middletown Police Department engaged in a two-year long investigation into cocaine trafficking in and around the City of Middletown allegedly committed by Angelica Rodriguez, a/k/a "Jelly," age 39, of Otisville. The City of Middletown Police Department were later aided in the investigation by the Orange County Drug Task Force. That Task Force is run under the supervision of a Senior Criminal Investigator from the Orange County District Attorney's Office and a Senior Investigator from the Orange County Sheriff's Office. In addition to personnel from those agencies, the Drug Task Force is composed of police officers from other Orange County police departments. Currently the Town of Montgomery Police Department, the Wallkill Police Department, and the Highlands Police Department have committed to assigning police officers to work on the Task Force. After conventional investigative means failed to reveal evidence showing the entire extent of the narcotics conspiracy surrounding Angelica Rodriguez, the District Attorney's Office applied for permission to use court-ordered eavesdropping warrants in the investigation. During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that the same suppliers of cocaine who were providing Angelica Rodriguez and her co-conspirators with cocaine to sell, were also supplying narcotics to those in the City of Port Jervis. The City of Port Jervis was also active in the investigation. Michael Rodriguez was accused of supplying cocaine to narcotics dealers in the City of Middletown and the City of Port Jervis and possessing two illegal handguns. On July 26, 2023, a search warrant was executed at Michael Rodriguez's Yonkers residence, which resulted in the seizure of 1516 grams (over 1.5 kilograms) of cocaine, \$165,509 in United States currency, scales, a money counter, an unlicensed Ruger .380 caliber pistol, an unlicensed Bond Arms .357 caliber handgun, a vacuum sealer, digital scales and jewelry estimated to have a value of approximately \$50,000. At the plea proceedings, Michael Rodriguez admitted to entering into a conspiracy with Angelica Rodriguez and Taino Lopez and supplying them cocaine to resell. "The significant sentence imposed in this case is justified based on the appalling conduct of a person who claimed to advocate for reduction in gun violence," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "This defendant had no qualms endangering vulnerable members of our community to benefit himself. I hope that the sentence will be a deterrent to those considering any similar conduct. I commend the City of Middletown Police Department for their investigation and for working with the Orange County Drug Task Force, and other law enforcement agencies such as the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the New York State Police. My office will continue to pursue drug dealers and utilize all resources available to us to bring them to justice." The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory, who also aided in the investigation.

PEOPLE V. ANGEL RODRIGUEZ – On April 15, 2024, Angel Rodriguez, age 42, of Middletown, was sentenced in Orange County Court to a total of six and one-half (6½) years in prison, and three (3) years post-release supervision, in connection with drug and conspiracy charges arising from an investigation conducted by the City of Middletown Police Department, who were assisted by the Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County District Attorney's Office. That two-year long investigation involved cocaine trafficking in and around the City of Middletown allegedly committed by Angelica Rodriguez, a/k/a "Jelly," age 39, of Otisville. (Angelica Rodriguez is believed to have one parent in common with Angel Rodriguez). The City of Middletown Police

Department were later aided in the investigation by the Orange County Drug Task Force. That Task Force is run under the supervision of a Senior Criminal Investigator from the Orange County District Attorney's Office and a Senior Investigator from the Orange County Sheriff's Office. In addition to personnel from those agencies, the Drug Task Force is composed of police officers from other Orange County police departments. Currently the Town of Montgomery Police Department, the Wallkill Police Department, and the Town of Woodbury Police Department have committed to assigning police officers to work on the Task Force. The City of Middletown Police Department and Orange County Drug Task Force were also assisted by the City of Port Jervis Police Department and the New York State Police. After conventional investigative means failed to reveal evidence showing the entire extent of the narcotics conspiracy surrounding Angelica Rodriguez, the District Attorney's Office applied for permission to use court-ordered eavesdropping warrants in the investigation. During the course of the investigation, it was discovered that Angel Rodriguez was being supplied with cocaine by Angelica Rodriguez. The investigation culminated in multiple search warrants being executed in Orange County and Yonkers, New York. On July 26, 2023, a search warrant was executed at one co-conspirator's Yonkers residence, which resulted in the seizure of 1516 grams (over 1.5 kilograms) of cocaine, \$165,509 in United States currency, scales, a money counter, an unlicensed Ruger .380 caliber pistol, an unlicensed Bond Arms .357 caliber handgun, a vacuum sealer, digital scales and jewelry estimated to have a value of approximately \$50,000. On January 30, 2024, Angel Rodriguez pled guilty to Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, and admitted to having conspired with Angelica Rodriguez, and others to sell narcotics in City of Middletown. Specifically, Angel Rodriguez admitted obtaining cocaine from Angelica Rodriguez for purposes of reselling the cocaine to others. Due to current bail laws, Angel Rodriguez was not incarcerated and was at liberty while the Conspiracy case was being litigated. On October 25, 2023, Angel Rodriguez sold cocaine to an undercover police officer and was arrested by the City of Middletown Police Department on November 16, 2023. On January 30, 2024, Angel Rodriguez pled guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree, in connection with selling cocaine to the undercover police officer on October 25, 2023. Angel Rodriguez was sentenced to five (5) years in prison, and three (3) years post-release supervision on his plea to Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, and a consecutive sentence of one and one-half (1½) years in prison and three (3) years post-release supervision, for a total sentence of six and one-half (6½) years in prison, and three (3) years post-release supervision. "This defendant refused to stop selling narcotics even after he was indicted for his involvement in a high-level narcotics conspiracy." said District Attorney David M. Hoover. "He is therefore deserving of this enhanced sentence. I commend the City of Middletown Police Department for their investigation and for working with the Orange County Drug Task Force, and other law enforcement agencies such as the City of Port Jervis Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the New York State Police." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory, who also aided in the investigation.

Other Narcotics Cases

PEOPLE V. FRANK WILSON - On Wednesday, April 10, 2024, Frank Wilson, 43, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. On September 3, 2024, Wilson was sentenced to six (6) years in prison to be followed by a period of post-release supervision. On March 3, 2023 an undercover officer with the City of Middletown Police Department met with Wilson and negotiated to purchase a quantity of crack-cocaine. After

the undercover officer gave Wilson money, he gave the officer the agreed upon drugs, which were subsequently analyzed at the crime laboratory which confirmed the presence of cocaine. At the plea proceedings Wilson admitted to knowingly and unlawfully selling the narcotics. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Middletown Police for their investigation and the arrest of Wilson. "Narcotics traffickers deal in death and drive the proliferation of dangerous substances in our backyards," said District Attorney David. M. Hoover. The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexandra Pietropaolo.

PEOPLE V. RAY DEGRAFFENRIED – On April 10, 2024, Ray Degraffenried, 36, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. On July 19, 2024 Degraffenried was sentenced to six (6) years in prison to be followed by a period of post-release supervision, consecutive to a three (3) year sentence on a separate charge for Contempt in the First Degree, for a total of nine (9) years in prison. On October 4, 2023, members of the Town of Newburgh Police Department executed a judicially authorized search warrant at a residence in the Town of Newburgh. During the execution of the warrant, law enforcement recovered approximately twenty-nine (29) grams of cocaine, as well as digital scales and packaging material used in narcotics trafficking. Degraffenried made admissions to the police that the drugs were his. At the plea proceedings, Degraffenried admitted to possessing the cocaine with the intent to sell it. District Attorney Hoover thanked the Town of Newburgh Police for their investigation and the arrest of Degraffenried. District Attorney David. M. Hoover said, "The proactive approach to drug investigations by law enforcement serves two important purposes: to interrupt the flow of drugs into our communities and to identify, arrest and, where appropriate, incarcerate those responsible. My office will continue to lead by example and dedicate the necessary resources to hold drug dealers accountable for their crimes." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexandra Pietropaolo

PEOPLE V. RAHYIM WOODSON – On October 15, 2024, Rahyim Woodson, 39, of Orange, New Jersey, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. The plea constitutes Woodson's second felony drug conviction. On December 3, 2024, Woodson was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision. The charges against Woodson stemmed from a long-term investigation into the possession and sale of narcotics in and around the City of Middletown. Evidence in the case showed that Woodson sold quantities of narcotics to undercover police officers in the City of Middletown six (6) times in the summer of 2022. The narcotics were tested at a forensic laboratory which confirmed the presence of cocaine and/or fentanyl or heroin. At the plea proceedings, Woodson admitted to knowingly and unlawfully selling a narcotic drug. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Middletown Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Woodson. "Long-term drug investigations uncover the significant traffickers who fuel the drug trade in our communities," said District Attorney Hoover. "Recidivist offenders pose the greatest risk of causing death and their operations must be dismantled by arrest, prosecution and incarceration. We will continue to partner with law enforcement agencies whose dedicated investigators represent the thin line between these criminals and a safe neighborhood. Drug dealers should be forewarned that Orange County will not tolerate their dangerous actions." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Janine Kovacs.

PEOPLE V. WAYNE BATTLES – On October 1, 2024, Wayne Battles, age 44, of Middletown, was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. Evidence showed that in July 2020

Battles met with an undercover police officer and exchanged quantities of crack cocaine in exchange for money. Members of the New York State Police later stopped a vehicle Battles was driving in October 2020 and he was found to have approximately twenty-seven (27) grams of cocaine on his person. At the plea proceedings, Battles admitted to knowingly possessing cocaine with the intent to sell it. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Battles. "Law enforcement will pursue drug dealers using all available resources," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Where long-term drug investigations uncover evidence of drug crimes, my office will ensure that these offenders face appropriate justice. Let me be crystal clear to those considering possessing or selling narcotics in Orange County: you will be caught, and you will face severe punishment. I praise the dangerous work performed by the police officers responsible for this, and other narcotics investigations. Together, we are ensuring that our communities are safe from the scourge of dangerous drugs." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Richard Giordano.

PEOPLE V. RAKEEM WHATLEY - On February 25, 2024, Rakeem Whatley, age 48, of Port Jervis, was sentenced in Orange County Court to six and one half (6.5) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous pleas of guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Firearm. An investigation into the sale of narcotics in and around Port Jervis led to the execution of a judicially authorized search warrant at a residence in the City of Port Jervis on October 12, 2023. While executing the warrant, police officers with the City of Port Jervis Police Department found Whatley in the process of cooking crack-cocaine. Also recovered during the warrant execution was a large quantity of cocaine, scales used in narcotics trafficking, as well as thousands of dollars in United States Currency. In a dresser, police recovered an operable and illegally possessed 9mm handgun. At the plea proceedings, Whatley admitted possessing the cocaine with the intent to sell it and also to illegally possessing the firearm. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation and arrest of Whatley. "This defendant was caught in the act of preparing drugs that he intended to peddle in our community," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Drugs have a pernicious effect, and it takes the coordinated efforts of law enforcement to proactively identify and build cases against those responsible for their sale. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to see these investigations through and to hold accountable those who seek to spread dangerous drugs on our streets." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Roche.

PEOPLE V. TARRELL HICKS AND MITCHELL HICKS – On July 24, 2024, Tarrell Hicks, age 33, of New York City, was sentenced to ten (10) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with the sale of narcotics in Middletown. On April 3, 2024, Tarrell Hicks pled guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. The City of Middletown Police Department began an investigation into narcotics sales by Hicks and his brother, Mitchell Hicks. As part of the investigation, undercover officers made controlled buys of cocaine from both Hicks brothers on dates in the Fall of 2023. When Tyrell Hicks was arrested in December 2023, officers recovered a quantity of narcotics from his person. At the plea proceedings, Tyrell Hicks admitted to acting individually and in concert with his brother to sell a half-ounce or more of cocaine in November 2023. Mitchell Hicks pled guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree on February 8, 2024, and failed to return to court for sentencing. The District Attorney's Office is seeking the public's assistance in finding Mitchell Hicks. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Middletown Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendants. "This decade long sentence is a testament to our relentless pursuit of those who seek to poison our communities with illicit drugs," said District Attorney David M.

Hoovler. "We simply will not tolerate the exploitation of our neighborhoods for profit, and we will hold accountable all who choose to engage in such reprehensible behavior. I commend the City of Middletown Police Department for their unwavering dedication to protecting our community and their collaboration with my office has been instrumental in the ongoing efforts to dismantle drug dealing networks in Orange County." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.

PEOPLE V. DIVINE WILLIAMS - On April 19, 2024, Divine Williams, age 37, of Newburgh, was sentenced to eight (8) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. The conviction is Williams' fifth felony drug conviction. On at least two dates in March of 2021, Williams sold substances later confirmed to be heroin to an undercover officer with the New York State Police. At the plea proceedings, Williams admitted to possessing heroin with the intent to sell it. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Williams. "Recidivist drug dealers who persist in their deadly actions must face significant incarceration in order to ensure the safety of our communities," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "The battle against the surge of drugs on our streets starts and ends with proactive policing, coupled with prosecutors who are ready, willing and able to prove offenders' guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The prison sentence imposed in this case will ensure this narcotics trafficker is unable to continue to spread his poison in our County." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.

PEOPLE V. TYRONE HODGE – On May 1, 2024, Tyrone Hodge, age 62, of New Windsor, was sentenced to six (6) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. As part of the sentence, Hodge agreed to forfeit over \$67,000 and a Honda Pilot as instrumentalities or proceeds of a crime. On August 30, 2023, members of the New York State Police executed a judicially authorized search warrant at a residence in the Town of New Windsor. During the warrant execution, police recovered 815 grams of cocaine and over 143 grams of crack-cocaine, as well as scales and materials used to package narcotics. Also recovered was \$67,407 in United States currency Hodge agreed to forfeit. At the plea proceedings, Hodge admitted to possessing in excess of four ounces of cocaine. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Hodge. "Today's sentencing underscores the serious consequences awaiting those who choose to traffic drugs and jeopardize the safety of our communities," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "With this significant prison sentence imposed, justice has been served, and a clear message sent: drug crimes will be met with swift and decisive action by law enforcement and the justice system. My office, together with our law enforcement partners, will continue to work tirelessly to ensure our communities are safe and free from the grip of drug-related crime." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Janine Kovacs.

PEOPLE V. RONALD LEMPKA AND KEANU ALICEA – On November 7, 2024, Ronald Lempka, 24, of Middletown, was sentenced in Orange County Court to eight (8) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. On September 18, 2024, his co-defendant, Keanu Alicea, was sentenced to five (5) years in prison following his guilty plea to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree on June 24, 2024. A months-long undercover investigation into the trafficking of cocaine in and around the Town of Wallkill via Montague, New Jersey resulted in the execution of judicially authorized search warrants at residences and vehicles

in Wallkill and Montague. During the course of the investigation and the execution of the search warrants, law enforcement recovered approximately 150 grams of cocaine, over \$28,000 in United States currency, and a defaced handgun. At the plea proceedings, the defendants admitted to selling one half ounce or more of cocaine. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Drug Task Force, and the Orange County Sheriff's Office for their investigation which led to the arrests of Lempka and Alicea. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police Violent Gangs and Narcotics Enforcement Team (VGNET); Sussex NJ Guns, Gangs and Narcotics Task Force; Town of Wallkill Police Department; City of Middletown Police Department; and the Hudson Valley Crime Analysis Center for their assistance during the investigation. "The lengthy sentences imposed in this case are what awaits drug dealers who choose to sell their poison in Orange County," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "My office will continue to dedicate resources to the types of long-term narcotics investigations that result in arrests and convictions such as seen in this case. We must continue to counter the deadly spread of drugs in our communities. We remain steadfast in our dedication to identify drug dealers and hold them accountable to the fullest extent of the law." The cases were prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.

PEOPLE V. RALPH MANN – On January 4, 2024, Ralph Mann, age 37, of Barryville, was sentenced in Orange County Court to four (4) years in prison to be followed by two (2) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. Those charges were filed in connection with the death of a man who was found dead in the City of Port Jervis on May 11, 2022. An autopsy revealed that the man had died due to a fatal overdose of the powerful narcotic fentanyl. An investigation into the circumstances under which the man died was conducted by City of Port Jervis Police Department, who were aided by the Orange County District Attorney's Office and the Orange County Medical Examiner. During the course of the investigation, law enforcement discovered communications between the decedent and the defendant where the defendant agreed to sell the decedent the narcotics which ultimately caused his death. The defendant later admitted to police that he had, in fact, sold the narcotics to the decedent. Because of the facts and circumstances of this case, the most serious charges that were supported under the law were those charges to which the defendant ultimately pled guilty. The Orange County District Attorney's Office follows the same protocols when assisting its law enforcement partners who are investigating fatal overdoses as they do in homicide cases. This includes drafting search warrants and other documents to ensure that the locations where the narcotics were sold and ingested, as well as locations where people succumbed to overdoses, can be processed as crime scenes and that all available potential evidence is preserved. Often, New York State law does not permit the filing of homicide charges against those who sold the narcotics which have resulted in death. In limited situations, some homicide charges can be filed, but those typically include the class C felony of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, or the class E felony of Criminally Negligent Homicide, which are lower classes of felonies than the class B felony of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. Some states, including New Jersey, have laws which enact a strict liability standard, and impose enhanced punishment on those who sell narcotics to someone who dies as a result. New York Law imposes no such strict liability standard on those who sell drugs which result in fatal overdoses. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation and arrest of Mann. "We will do everything in our power to hold drug dealers accountable for the death and destruction they wreak," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Fentanyl has flooded our communities and far too often led to needless deaths. While law enforcement and prosecutors are doing everything that we can to stem the tide of the fentanyl crisis, we have increasingly seen the inadequacies in New York State laws relative to the harm

and death that drug traffickers cause when they sell these lethal substances. I urge lawmakers in Albany to consider adopting statutes such as those enacted in other jurisdictions to address the issue of those who kill others by dealing them drugs. Having such tools available to prosecutors would allow a more proportional response to the harms we see play out every day.” The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Janine Kovacs.

PEOPLE V. MARCUS HENDERSON – On July 22, 2024, Marcus Henderson, age 27, of Port Jervis, was sentenced in Orange County Court to four (4) years in prison to be followed by two (2) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. The Court directed that sentence to run consecutive to a sentence of one (1) to three (3) years in prison imposed on a conviction for Driving While Ability Impaired by Drugs. An investigation into the sale of narcotics in and around Port Jervis led to the execution of a judicially authorized search warrant at a residence in the City of Port Jervis on February 29, 2024. While executing the warrant, police officers with the City of Port Jervis Police Department recovered a quantity of cocaine from Henderson, and scales used in narcotics trafficking, packaging materials and US currency from the residence. At the plea proceedings, Henderson admitted possessing the cocaine with the intent to sell it. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation and arrest of Henderson. “The proactive efforts of dedicated law enforcement served to disrupt the actions of a drug dealer in this case,” said District Attorney David M. Hoover. “The deadly effect of drugs in our communities must be addressed by the coordinated efforts of law enforcement. My office will continue to dedicate resources and work with our law enforcement partners to seek out, identify, and prosecute those responsible for spreading poison in our streets.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.

PEOPLE V. JULIO LEWIS – On September 3, 2024, Julio Lewis, age 34, of Schenectady, was sentenced to eight (8) years in prison to be followed by three (3) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. On January 8, 2024, members of the New York State Police stopped Lewis’s car on the New York State Thruway for various traffic violations. During the traffic stop, Troopers observed in plain view on the floor of the vehicle approximately 186 grams of cocaine. Lewis admitted to the police that the drugs were his. At the plea proceedings, Lewis admitted possessing over one-half ounce of cocaine. District Attorney Hoover thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Lewis. “It is through proactive policing and the dedication of career prosecutors that we are able to disrupt the flow of dangerous narcotics into Orange County,” said District Attorney David M. Hoover. “Let this case, like the many others that have come before, stand as a warning to drug dealers: your criminal business is not welcome here and you will be held accountable for your actions. We will continue to focus on dismantling the narcotics trade that endangers our community.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Richard Giordano.

PEOPLE V. NICOY MURRAY – On February 22, 2024, Nicoy Murray, age 34, of Decatur, Georgia, was sentenced to five (5) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree. On September 26, 2023, New York State Police Troopers stopped a vehicle being operated by Murray on Interstate 84 in the Town of Newburgh for various violations of the Vehicle and Traffic Law. It was subsequently determined that Murray’s license was suspended and the vehicle was impounded. During a routine inventory search of the vehicle after it was impounded, a kilogram of cocaine was recovered. At the plea

proceedings on November 15, 2023, Murray admitted to possessing in excess of four ounces of cocaine. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Murray. "The disruption of the flow of narcotics into our communities starts with proactive policing," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "It is important to identify, arrest, prosecute and incarcerate the drivers of the narcotics trade. The prison sentence imposed in this case will both take a narcotics trafficker off the street and stand as a warning to those who are considering engaging in similar behavior." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory.



ARSON CASES

Arson cases by their very nature involve the destruction of evidence, highly technical scientific proof, and expert testimony. District Attorney Hoovler was previously recognized as statewide Arson Prosecutor of the Year when he was an Orange County Assistant District Attorney and is aware of the resources that need to be devoted to these cases. The District Attorney's Office previously paid for the purchase and training of an arson dog. In 2024 the office continued to prosecute significant arson cases and partnered with the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to spearhead the creation of a regional Arson Task Force. Significant Arson cases handled by the District Attorney's Office in 2024 included:

PEOPLE V. TYLER WILLIAMS – On November 19, 2024, Tyler Williams, age 26, of Middletown, pled guilty to Arson in the Second Degree. On February 4, 2025, Williams was sentenced by the Honorable Craig Stephen Brown in Orange County Court to twenty (20) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision. On the evening of December 20, 2023, Williams was pulled over in Middletown by a New York State Trooper and issued traffic tickets. Early the next morning, a fire was started at the home of the Trooper's father in Warwick. At the scene of the fire, the Town of Warwick Police Department was assisted by the Orange County Fire Investigation Unit as well as the Orange County Sheriff's Department. During an investigation that spanned almost five months, a team of investigators and prosecutors, comprised of members of the Town of Warwick Police Department, the New York State Police Major Crimes Unit and the Orange County District Attorney's Office worked tirelessly to solve the case. After the execution of over twenty judicially authorized search warrants, largely focused on digital forensics, as well as numerous subpoenas, Tyler Williams was arrested and charged for having set the fire. The investigation revealed that in the hours after being issued the traffic tickets by the Trooper and before setting the fire, the defendant utilized various search websites in an effort to learn the address of the Trooper. At the plea proceedings, Williams admitted to intentionally starting the fire at the house when he knew or should have known that people were in the home. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the joint efforts of the Town of Warwick Police Department, the New York State Police, the Town of Goshen Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives as well as the members of the District Attorney's Office which resulted in the defendant's arrest. "Every

day in America, police officers write countless traffic tickets, and it does not result in those drivers setting fire to those officers' homes in retribution," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "The admitted conduct in this case stands as amongst the most egregious I have ever seen exhibited towards a police officer in my career. The twenty-year sentence that we will recommend be imposed on this dangerous offender reflects the seriousness of these crimes and our commitment to holding the defendant accountable. I applaud the painstaking work of the investigators who ensured that this defendant was brought to justice. Law enforcement represents the backbone of the safety of our community, and they must be protected for doing the dangerous work that they do every day." New York State Police Troop F Commander, Major Michael W. Sumnick stated, "I want to thank District Attorney Hoovler and all of the agencies who were involved in bringing this case to a close. The public doesn't often get to see the work that goes on behind the scenes in a complex criminal investigation, and one of our best tools is the close working partnership between agencies. We have first-rate law enforcement here in Orange County and the experience and expertise is second to none. I commend the outstanding efforts of the Warwick Police, Town of Goshen Police, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, my own State Police members, and our federal partners at the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. As members of law enforcement, we accept the dangers of our job and remain focused on making the safety of the public our top priority. But we do not expect that risk to follow us home, putting our member and family in danger - just for doing his job." "This incident struck at the heart of every law enforcement officer and their families," said Town of Warwick Police Chief John Rader. "We are out there every day serving and protecting our communities and it is beyond comprehension that our lives and the lives of our families could be targeted for doing our job. The fact that we are sitting here today at this press conference is a testament to the professionalism of the first arriving Town of Warwick police officers at the scene of the early morning fire; the dedication and tenacity of the Town of Warwick Police Detectives and the NY State BCI Investigators that were assigned to this case; the assistance of the Town of Goshen Police Department, Orange County Sheriff's Office, the FBI and the ATF; and the cooperation of the Orange County District Attorney's Office." The case was prosecuted by District Attorney David Hoovler, Chief Trial Assistant District Attorney Richard Moran and Assistant District Attorney Amanda M. Bettinelli.

PEOPLE V. DAWN HULSE - On November 14, 2024, Dawn Hulse, age 53, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to nine (9) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with her previous guilty plea to Arson in the Second Degree. On January 25, 2022 Hulse lit several fires in the first-floor apartment of a two-family house in the City of Port Jervis after having turned off the smoke detector at the fuse box in the basement and barricaded the door to the apartment. Upstairs residents of the apartment heard an explosion, which was a result of bug spray Hulse had placed in her oven and turned on. At the plea, Hulse admitted to starting a fire at the residence while knowing there was a person inside. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Hulse. "Arson is an insidious crime that is, by its nature, particularly challenging to investigate," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "These crimes pose substantial risks to life and property and the offenders who commit these crimes must be held accountable for their dangerous actions. I commend the work of the City of Port Jervis Police Department whose investigation led to the arrest and successful prosecution of this defendant. My office continues to focus on arson crimes and will utilize all available expertise and resources to prosecute these cases." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Jessica Dovico.

PEOPLE V. STEVE BREWER - On February 14, 2024, Steve Brewer, age 39, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to two (2) to six (6) years in prison and ordered to pay \$7,199.20 in restitution relative to his previous plea of guilty to Arson in the Third Degree. Brewer was released without bail after his arrest as the charges he faced were not bail eligible. In 2019, "bail reform" legislation was enacted in New York State that severely limits the courts' ability to set bail for most offenses, including serious charges such as those in this case. Brewer subsequently fled to the state of Ohio, avoided apprehension for two years and had to be extradited in order to answer the charges. Evidence showed that on April 18, 2021, members of the Port Jervis Police Department responded to a fire in the area of Riverside Park. Brewer was seen near a garbage can that was separately on fire. He later spoke to the police and initially said that two teenagers were responsible for the fires. Brewer then admitted that he set the fires himself. The damaged property included a cargo container used to store bikes, helmets and other items belonging to the Port Jervis Youth Program. At the plea proceedings, Brewer admitted to intentionally damaging the cargo container by starting a fire. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department for their investigation and arrest of Brewer. "This defendant's actions constitute vandalism at its worst and most dangerous," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "The fires the defendant set caused thousands of dollars of damage to property used for children in the community. Again, we see the real ramifications of bail reform play out with a needlessly protracted and costly process to locate and return a defendant intent on avoiding apprehension. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the bail reform laws, my office will continue to see that justice is ultimately done in cases such as this one." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Roche.

PEOPLE V. HUI ZHANG – On December 10, 2024, Hui Zhang, age 53, of Middletown, pled guilty in Orange County Court before the Honorable Craig Stephen Brown to Arson in the Third Degree and Bail Jumping in the Second Degree. On February 10, 2025, Zhang was sentenced in Orange County Court to two (2) to six (6) years in prison relative to his pleas of guilty to Arson in the Third Degree and Bail Jumping in the Second Degree. The District Attorney's Office had recommended that he be sentenced to two to six (2-6) years in prison on the Arson charge and one to three (1-3) years in prison on the Bail Jumping charge with those sentences to be served consecutively. Evidence showed that on September 30, 2021, at approximately 3:30 a.m., a structure fire was discovered at a building with a detached garage in the City of Port Jervis. A subsequent investigation discovered that there were at least three (3) points of origin of the fire and indicated that the fire was intentionally set. Zhang, who owned the building which was under renovation at the time of the fire, made admissions to the police that he had insurance policies on the building and had intentionally lit the fire. After being charged in 2021, Zhang failed to appear in Port Jervis City Court and a warrant was issued. He was later located in New Jersey and returned to authorities in Orange County pursuant to a Governor's Warrant. At the plea proceedings, Zhang admitted to intentionally damaging the building by starting a fire and also to failing to appear in court as directed after having been previously released. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police Department and the Orange County Fire Investigation Unit whose investigation led to the arrest of Zhang. "Arson is an inherently dangerous crime, which poses grave risks to people and property," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Thankfully, this defendant's greedy actions did not result in any injuries. The careful investigation conducted by law enforcement ensured that this offender not only would be held accountable for his crimes but would be returned to the jurisdiction to face justice." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. EUGENE ANDERSON – On October 3, 2024, Eugene Anderson, 30, of Newburgh, was arrested and charged with Arson in the Fourth Degree and Criminal Mischief in the Second Degree for allegedly setting a fire at the St. George Episcopal Church in the City of Newburgh. As the charges were not bail eligible under bail reform laws passed in 2019, Anderson was released and directed to appear in court at a later date. On April 23, 2025, following a grand jury investigation, Anderson was arraigned on an Indictment charging him with Criminal Mischief in the Second Degree and Arson in the Fourth Degree. As alleged in charges filed in court, on September 16, 2024, at approximately 6:00 p.m., Anderson started a fire at the church by flicking a lit cigarette toward the church’s exterior. The resulting fire caused approximately \$7,000 in damage. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which resulted in the arrest of Anderson. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Orange County Fire Investigation Unit and the Orange County District Attorney Investigators who assisted in the investigation. “By today’s arrest, law enforcement has identified the alleged perpetrator of the intentional fire set at this historic church,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Arson is often a challenging crime to investigate, and I praise the work of the police and investigators which resulted in this arrest. My office has a track record of success in pursuing arson cases, and we will seek justice in this case on behalf of the community.” The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Amanda Bettinelli.



Prosecuting residential burglaries remains one of the top priorities of the District Attorney’s Office. A stranger breaking into one’s home is every homeowner’s nightmare and acts of violence like those deserve a strong commitment from law enforcement. DNA technology has evolved to the point where we can often solve burglary cases based upon the presence of biological material that a perpetrator left behind at the crime scene. Technology, coupled with good police work, can bring perpetrators to justice, and can bring relief to many victims and communities. “People deserve to feel safe in their homes, and the harm done by residential burglaries extends far beyond the loss of property,” said District Attorney Hoover. “Those who commit residential burglaries deserve lengthy incarceration.” Some of the burglary cases prosecuted by the OCDA in 2024 included:

PEOPLE V. ANGEL LAHOZ —On March 15, 2024, Angel Lahoz, age 36, of Newburgh, was sentenced in the Orange County Court to twelve (12) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision after having been previously convicted after a jury trial of Burglary in the Second Degree and Criminal Mischief in the Fourth Degree. Evidence showed that on January 2, 2023, a City of Newburgh resident was home alone when she heard noises coming from her living room. She saw a man in her living room going through her purse. As the man walked through the house, the victim saw that the man was the defendant, a relative of hers. Lahoz grabbed a machete and then approached the victim and threw her to the floor. Lahoz returned to the living room and dropped the weapon which allowed the victim to call the police. The victim’s husband and brother arrived and took Lahoz outside, where the police took him into custody. It was later determined that Lahoz had entered the home by breaking a bedroom window. District Attorney Hoover thanked the City of Newburgh Police for their investigation and the arrest of Lahoz. “Breaking into someone’s home to commit a crime is a violent and terrifying offense,” said District Attorney David M. Hoover. “While no one was injured as a result of the defendant’s actions, I hope that the sentence imposed will offer the victims a degree of closure. I commend the work of the police and prosecutors who handled this case and made sure a frequent recidivist was held responsible for his criminal behavior. My office will always prioritize the prosecution of violent felonies and those offenders who drive crime in our communities.” District Attorney Hoover highly commended Executive Assistant District Attorney Michael Milza and Assistant District Attorney Aragon Vicenty who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. JULIAN SANTIAGO CORTES CAMELO – On November 13, 2024, Julian Santiago Cortes Camelo, age 24, of Queens, was sentenced in Orange County Court to four (4) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Burglary in the Second Degree. Evidence showed that on February 2, 2024, Camelo, together with two co-defendants who have previously pled guilty and are awaiting sentence, broke into a residence in the Town of New Windsor. As police arrived at the residence, the defendants fled but were located nearby. Additionally, proceeds from the burglary were recovered from where the defendants discarded them as they fled. At the plea proceedings, Camelo admitted to unlawfully entering the home with the intent to commit a crime within. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of New Windsor Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of the defendants. "People deserve to feel safe and secure in their own homes," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Residential burglaries, and the inherent danger they create, are naturally violent crimes. But for the immediate response from law enforcement, these perpetrators might still be victimizing others. The prosecution of violent felonies remains a bedrock priority of my office, and we are dedicated to holding offenders such as these accountable for their crimes." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly.

PEOPLE V. EMMANUEL GATES – On April 2, 2024, Emmanuel Gates, age 25, of Poughkeepsie, was sentenced to an aggregate term of thirteen (13) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty pleas in Orange County Court to Burglary in the First Degree and Attempted Burglary in the Second Degree. Evidence showed that on August 4, 2023, at approximately 11:00 p.m., Gates was observed on surveillance video entering into the attached garage of a home in the Town of New Windsor. Inside, Gates proceeded to steal the victim's motor vehicle, which was found days later in the City of Newburgh. When Gates was taken into police custody on a later date, he was found to have the keys to the car on his person. It was also shown that on August 13, 2023, at approximately 10:15 p.m., one of Gates's co-defendants knocked at the door of a residence in the City of Newburgh. Once the victim opened the door, the co-defendant signaled Gates and two other co-defendants to enter. Inside, the four defendants took property from the victim and two, including Gates, were armed with knives. During the altercation inside the residence, Gates slashed the face of the victim with a knife. During the plea proceedings, Gates admitted to entering or remaining in the residence with the intent to commit a crime and during the crime he, or another participant in the crime, used or threatened the use of a sharp instrument. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of New Windsor Police Department and City of Newburgh Police Department for their investigations which led to the arrest of Gates. "This defendant felt entitled to others' property with impunity and sought to take it by any violent means necessary," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "However, the dedication of the law enforcement agencies and officers involved in these cases saw to it that the defendant's reign of criminality was brought to an end. The lengthy sentences imposed are well warranted by way of the defendant's violent crimes. I commend the hard work by the police and prosecutors assigned to these cases that ensured justice was delivered on behalf of the victims." The cases were prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly and Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. JESSE FRANK - on May 7, 2024, Jesse Frank, age 38, of Unionville, was sentenced in Orange County Court to eight (8) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision relative to his previous plea of guilty to Burglary in the First Degree. Evidence showed that on May 10, 2023, at approximately noon, Frank kicked down the door of a tenant in a home in the Village of Unionville while holding a knife. Once inside, Frank threatened to kill the occupant and struck the victim near the eye with the knife. During the struggle, the victim sustained a

broken orbital bone and a cut to the hand before being able to run out of the bedroom and flagging down a passing motorist who called 911. After Frank was taken into custody, he admitted the incident to the police and said that he was attempting to take the victim's eye out. At the plea proceedings, Frank admitted to illegally entering the bedroom with an intent to commit a crime therein and to injuring the victim while inside. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. "Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "This offender's violent actions violated the sanctity of the victim's home and were rightfully met with the significant prison sentence imposed. While the victim in this case thankfully did not suffer permanent injuries, we as a community will stand up in the face of such egregious conduct. The prosecution of violent felonies has been and will remain a top priority of my office." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Christopher Kelly.

PEOPLE V. OSCAR CASTILLO - On Monday, November 18, 2024, Oscar Castillo, age 37, of Yonkers, was sentenced to nine (9) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his 2023 guilty plea in Orange County Court to Burglary in the Second Degree. After Castillo pled guilty in February 2023 he failed to appear for sentencing and a warrant was issued. He was subsequently returned on the warrant in 2024 before being sentenced. On November 18, 2017, at about 8:00 p.m., two men forced entry into the rear door of a home on Cardinal Drive in the Village of Washingtonville. The homeowner confronted the perpetrators inside his home, and told police that they wore masks, carried a shotgun, and yelled "FBI" to him. The homeowner got into a physical altercation with the perpetrators and was injured during the burglary. Washingtonville Police processed the crime scene and collected evidence, which was submitted to the New York State Police Forensic Investigation Center for analysis. DNA found on some of that evidence was then entered into the Combined DNA Index System, where it was matched to Castillo, who had previously been required to submit a DNA sample to the New York State DNA Databank. Village of Washingtonville Police arrested Castillo on Friday, July 2, 2021, in Westchester County, with the assistance of New York State Parole. At the plea proceedings, Castillo admitted to unlawfully entering the residence with the intent to commit a crime therein. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Washingtonville Police Department, the New York State Police, the State Police Forensic Investigation Center, and New York State Parole for their assistance in the investigation of the case and in the arrest. "Despite this defendant's efforts to escape responsibility for his crimes, an appropriate prison sentence ultimately was imposed," said District Attorney Hoovler. "Thankfully, through careful police investigation and the use of DNA technology, this violent offender was located and held accountable for his actions. Criminals should know that law enforcement will not rest in their pursuit of justice and the prosecutors in my office remain steadfast in their commitment to victims of violent crime." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Peter Fernandez and Christine Maggiore.

PEOPLE V. DAVID MEAD - On March 5, 2024, David Mead, age 32, of Middletown, was sentenced to an aggregate term of three to six (3-6) years in prison in connection with his previous guilty pleas in Orange County Court to Burglary in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree. After Mead pled guilty in November 2023, he was subsequently re-arrested three times while he was pending sentence. Mead admitted that he had violated the conditions of his plea and was subject to the enhanced sentence imposed. Evidence showed that in the early morning hours on October 20, 2023, Mead broke a window at a bar in the Village of Montgomery and entered in search of money. Later that same day, Mead broke into a vehicle in the Town of Wawayanda and stole credit cards from within that he later attempted to use. Two days later, in the Town of New Windsor, Mead broke into another vehicle and stole tools. A day

after that, Mead broke into another car in the Town of Newburgh and stole a gym bag. When Mead was arrested on October 24, 2023, members of the Town of Newburgh Police Department recovered from Mead's vehicle property he stole from the incident in New Windsor. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Village of Montgomery Police Department, Town of New Windsor Police Department, Town of Newburgh Police Department and the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Mead. "Break-ins can not only result in costly damage or loss of property, but constitute an inexcusable invasion of privacy," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "It required the cooperative involvement of all of the police agencies in this case to ensure that the defendant was held to account for his string of crimes across Orange County. My office reiterates our dedication to the protection of innocent victims and we will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to seek justice in cases like this one." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Amanda Arroyo.

PEOPLE V. TALMADGE LEONARD – On March 6, 2024, Talmadge Leonard, age 28, of Port Jervis, was sentenced to seven (7) years in prison to be followed by five (5) years of post-release supervision in connection with his previous guilty plea in Orange County Court to Burglary in the Second Degree. Evidence showed that just after 3:00 a.m. on April 16, 2023, Leonard, together with another individual, broke into a home in the Town of Deerpark while wearing masks and gloves. The occupants awoke to observe Leonard brandish what appeared to be a firearm and the other individual display a knife. Leonard and the other individual demanded money and marijuana from the homeowners, which they proceeded to steal before fleeing the home. One occupant recognized Leonard's voice, which led authorities to develop Leonard as a suspect. Leonard later told police that he had entered the home. At the plea proceedings, Leonard admitted to entering the victims' dwelling with an intent to commit a crime therein. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the City of Port Jervis Police, Town of Deerpark Police and the New York State Police for their investigation which led to the arrest of Leonard. "It is every resident's worst nightmare to have a perpetrator violate the sanctity of their home," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "This defendant's violent and terrifying conduct justly resulted in his conviction and the significant prison sentence imposed. My office works closely with our law enforcement partners to identify and hold responsible drivers of violent crime. Thankfully, the victims in this case were not hurt and I hope that the prison sentence imposed in this case will offer the victims a degree of closure." The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Kelle Grimmer.



RETAIL THEFT INITIATIVE

In October 2023, Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced, together with the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) and the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA), and in conjunction with the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, the National Store Walk Month initiative. This initiative intends to address the urgent issue of retail crime and habitual theft, and its rippling effects on our communities, signifying a pioneering step in facilitating crucial dialogue and cooperation between local law enforcement and community retailers. District Attorney Hoovler designated Investigator Darrin Fulton and Assistant District Attorney Daniel Steyskal to lead Orange County's participation, working hand-in-hand with community retailers, exchanging valuable insights, fostering a mutual understanding, and collaboratively developing retail crime mitigation strategies. OCDA's commitment to prosecuting these types of cases is ongoing. This unprecedented partnership is designed to provide a robust understanding of the challenges at hand, thereby enabling a unified and potent response. Retail theft collectively costs communities billions annually, undermining local economies and threatening the viability of storefronts in neighborhoods across the country. Equally concerning, in recent years organized and habitual theft has become more brazen and violent, raising safety concerns for employees and customers alike—disrupting lives, jeopardizing livelihoods, and undermining the vitality of communities and neighborhood shopping districts. As part of this initiative, District Attorney Hoovler reaffirmed a commitment to protecting the local community, combating crime, and creating a more prosperous Orange County. "New data from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reveals that a majority of small retailers have encountered theft-related issues, with over 50% indicating an exacerbation of retail theft in the past year," said Heather Bell-Meyer, President, and CEO of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. "This surge in retail theft has broader consequences, as it necessitates increased prices for consumers to compensate for the losses. Almost half, or 46%, of small retailers have found it necessary to raise their prices due to incidents of shoplifting. In total, nearly 37% of small businesses report experiencing shoplifting or theft in the previous year, with 14% enduring such incidents on a monthly or more frequent basis. Additionally, approximately one-third of these businesses note a 34% spike in shoplifting or theft during the holiday season. I commend our District Attorney for proactively collaborating with law enforcement and the business community to address this growing issue of

crime within our county,” said Bell-Meyer. Below are examples of the types of cases developed because of the initiative:

PEOPLE V. JOHNATHAN ARNOLD – On November 14, 2024, Johnathan Arnold, age 31, of Newburgh, was sentenced in Orange County Court to two (2) to four (4) years in prison, the maximum sentence available under the law, after having been convicted following a jury trial of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, the sole count against him. The conviction was Arnold’s fourth (4th) felony conviction. Evidence at the trial showed that on November 12, 2023 at approximately 8:40 p.m., Arnold entered Kohl’s department store in the Town of Newburgh. Once inside, Arnold went to the men’s athletic department, selected numerous items whose value was approximately \$1,600 and concealed the items in a black bag. Arnold then left the store, passing all points of sale without paying, got into a vehicle and fled. Employees from the store gave law enforcement a description of the car, which the police located with Arnold and the stolen merchandise inside. Before being apprehended, Arnold had taken steps to change his clothing that he had worn during commission of the crime in an effort to avoid detection. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Orange County Sheriff’s Office for their assistance during the investigation. “Unrepentant recidivists are the primary drivers of crime and incarceration is the appropriate sanction,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Shoplifting is far from a victimless crime. Retail theft results not only in untold losses to businesses but creates difficult and often dangerous situations for workers and shoppers. My office has committed to working with our partners in the retail industry, including the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, to enhance the ability to prevent retail crime where possible and to hold accountable those who commit these offenses. We will continue to pursue all avenues of disrupting such criminal behavior, particularly by prosecuting and, where appropriate, seeking incarceration for repeat offenders.” District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Assistant District Attorney Emily Worden who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. JOSHUA CLAYBORNE – On February 7, 2024, Joshua Clayborne, 35, of Newburgh, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree. On April 19, 2024, Clayborne was sentenced to one and one half to three (1½-3) years in prison. Evidence showed that on May 30, 2023, Clayborne entered the Target store in the Town of Monroe. Inside, a loss prevention officer, who was familiar with Clayborne, observed him take numerous items and place them in his cart. The loss prevention officer called the police who responded and also observed Clayborne place items in his cart. The police then saw Clayborne leave the store without paying for the items, which had a total value in excess of \$2,000. At the plea proceedings, Clayborne admitted to taking the items and that he had no permission or authority to take them. He further admitted that he was previously convicted of Grand Larceny. The conviction is Clayborne’s twenty-eighth (28th) criminal conviction and his third (3rd) felony conviction. The plea comes after the District Attorney’s Office recently reiterated its commitment to fighting retail theft. In November 2023, the District Attorney’s Office announced its participation in a retail theft initiative working hand-in-hand with community retailers, exchanging valuable insights, fostering a mutual understanding, and collaboratively developing retail crime mitigation strategies. Retail theft collectively costs communities billions annually, undermining local economies and threatening the viability of storefronts in neighborhoods across the country. Equally concerning, in recent years organized and habitual theft has become more brazen and violent, raising safety concerns for employees and customers alike—disrupting lives, jeopardizing livelihoods, and undermining the vitality of communities and neighborhood shopping districts. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. “It is only

through proactive cooperation amongst law enforcement, retailers and the community that we can effectively tackle retail crime,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Let the expected prison sentence in this case underscore the focus that my Office has on the spread of retail crime and the recidivists who drive it. I commend the work of the police and prosecutors in this case that ensured this defendant was held accountable for his actions.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alexandra Pietropaolo.

PEOPLE V. CAROL NTULI - On September 27, 2024, Carol Ntuli, age 39, of Manhattan, was sentenced to three to six (3-6) years in prison in connection with her previous guilty plea on July 23, 2024, to Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the First Degree. Evidence showed that on two dates in March 2024, Ntuli made purchases at stores in the Town of Wallkill and a store in the Town of New Windsor using counterfeit US currency. When Ntuli was arrested the following week, she was wearing the same clothes she was seen wearing when she passed the counterfeit bills. When questioned by police, Ntuli admitted to possessing and passing the counterfeit bills at the stores. At the plea proceedings, Ntuli admitted to knowingly possessing forged money with the intent to defraud. The plea is Ntuli’s fifth felony conviction. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Wallkill Police Department and the Town of New Windsor Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Ntuli. “Incarceration is appropriate for serial recidivists whose criminal behavior is not stopped by increasing punishment,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “Counterfeit currency is not a victimless crime. Indeed, retail establishments lose untold amounts through various fraudulent schemes and those who seek to perpetrate these crimes must be held accountable. I commend the cooperative efforts of the police agencies involved in investigating these crimes which resulted in this defendant’s arrest and conviction.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Peter Fernandez.



FRAUD AND WHITE-COLLAR CRIMES

In 2023, Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler and Sheriff Paul Arteta announced the creation of a countywide Joint White-Collar Crimes Task Force, which focuses on enhancing the investigation and prosecution of public corruption and financial crimes. The Task Force's mandate includes the investigation of residential contractor fraud; crimes involving public integrity, public corruption, and ethics violations; embezzlement and other complex theft cases, crimes against revenue; wage theft and labor law violations. The Task Force operates out of the Orange County Emergency Services Center in Goshen and seeks aid in its cases from the Hudson Valley Crimes Analysis Center, which is located in the same facility. The Task Force is led by the District Attorney's Office with designated Assistant District Attorneys, who screen, and monitor cases accepted for investigation and prosecution. Cases investigated and prosecuted by the Task Force in 2024 include:

PEOPLE V. ANTHONY DUBUISSON - On January 8, 2024, Anthony Dubuisson, 27, of Newburgh was sentenced in Orange County Court to three and one third to ten (3 1/3 – 10) years in prison in connection with a wide-ranging fraud scheme that spanned from March 2021 through April 2022, and which resulted in a total loss of in excess of \$250,000 to local businesses. As detailed in the indictment and in statements made in court, from March 2021 through April 2022, the defendant and his accomplices engaged in a scheme of depositing altered and/or fraudulent checks, belonging to Ironworkers Local 417, and other area businesses, as well as individuals, into various bank accounts, and then withdrawing cash from those fraudulent deposits from multiple banks. The defendants, acting in concert with each other, created fake business accounts to facilitate the check deposits. The total amount of forged and altered checks from the Ironworkers Local 417 is in excess of \$190,000 and the total amount of checks deposited from all victims is in excess of \$250,000. The investigation was led by the Town of Newburgh Police Department and assisted by the Town of New Windsor Police Department, Dutchess County Sheriff's Office, Orange County District Attorney's Office Investigators, Orange County Sheriff's Office, and the NYS Department of Financial Services. "Complex fraud cases often victimize unwitting individuals and entities," said District Attorney Hoovler. "Specialized and experienced investigators are needed to uncover schemes such as the one at the heart of this case. My office will continue to dedicate resources to these investigations so that we can hold accountable those responsible. I commend the collaborative work amongst our law enforcement partners that

helped to see this complicated case through to a just conclusion.” Assistant District Attorney Alexis Gregory and Chief Trial Assistant District Attorney Richard Moran prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. LYNN T. SIMPSON - On November 1, 2024, Lynn T. Simpson, age 43, of Wallkill, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Grand Larceny in the Third Degree in connection with the theft of \$17,947 from the Parade Fund of the Washington Heights Fire Company in Wallkill. At the time that she pled guilty, Simpson admitted to embezzling the funds while acting as the Financial Secretary of the Fire Company, and co-chair of the parade committee. As part of the plea agreement, Simpson was ordered to repay all of the stolen funds. The Washington Heights Fire Company was scheduled to host a parade on September 23, 2023, that was to include the participation of thirty-five other fire companies. As a result of the embezzlement by Simpson the parade had to be cancelled eleven days prior to the event. An investigation by the New York State Police revealed that between August 29, 2022, and September 8, 2023, Simpson was a member of the Washington Heights Volunteer Fire Company located at 10 Ohio Place in Middletown, New York. Simpson was previously trained as an exterior firefighter and had also been with active fire police. In her role as the fire company financial secretary, Simpson had access to the fire company’s bank accounts and ultimately stole approximately \$17,947 in cash. Simpson stole the funds from the fire company’s parade bank account by utilizing a debit card to make 83 unauthorized ATM cash withdrawals. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of Simpson. “Firefighters, both volunteer and paid, bravely place their lives on the line to protect our lives and property, and the community shows their appreciation by supporting local volunteers and attending parades,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “This defendant’s actions in stealing money from a volunteer fire company is reprehensible and unfair not only to the brave men and women who unselfishly serve as firefighters, but also to the community who were robbed of an opportunity to show their appreciation. Volunteer fire departments in Orange County have long stood as a rallying point of community pride. I thank the New York State Police for their investigation into the theft of these funds, and my office will continue to prosecute those who steal from volunteer and charitable organizations.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Amanda M. Bettinelli.

PEOPLE V. SHIRLEY BOWENS – On February 27, 2024, Shirley Bowens, age 50, of Wallkill, was sentenced in Orange County Court to two to six (2-6) years in prison relative to her previous plea of guilty to Grand Larceny in the Third Degree. Evidence showed that for approximately two (2) years between 2019 and 2021, Bowens submitted fraudulent bills to her insurance company that misrepresented that she and members of her family had been hospitalized and received various treatments. In fact, no such hospitalizations or treatments occurred. Through this scheme, Bowens, who had prior experience in medical billing, stole approximately \$90,000 from her insurance company. At the plea proceedings, Bowens admitted to stealing the money. The investigation into Bowens’s actions was conducted by the New York State Department of Financial Services, a member of the Orange County White Collar Crime Task Force. The multi-agency Task Force, which includes investigators from the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, the New York State Department of Financial Services, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance and several other local police agencies including the Town of Newburgh Police Department, the Village of Warwick Police Department, the Village of Goshen Police Department, the Town of Crawford Police Department, and the Town of Woodbury Police Department, was created in March 2023 to focus on enhancing the investigation and prosecution of public corruption and financial crimes. The Task Force’s mandate includes the investigation of residential contractor fraud; crimes involving public integrity, public corruption, and ethics violations; embezzlement and other complex theft cases, crimes against revenue; wage theft and

labor law violations. "This defendant egregiously sought to enrich herself by making false insurance claims," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "While the defendant might have hoped for easy money, instead the dedicated investigators who are part of the Orange County White Collar Crime Task Force identified her criminal actions and ensured that she was held accountable. The Task Force will continue to dedicate the time, personnel, and resources necessary to uncover frauds such as this one." The case was prosecuted by Chief Trial Assistant District Attorney Richard Moran.



DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED OR INTOXICATED

Prosecuting drunk drivers continues to be a high priority for the OCDA. The OCDA works closely with groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and STOP-DWI, not only to prosecute drunk drivers, but also to educate the public on the dangers of such actions. The District Attorney has a strict policy in dealing with first offenders, as well as repeat offenders. As part of the District Attorney's policies, first-time offenders are mandated to be evaluated by an OASAS certified alcohol and substance-abuse provider to determine if the offender has alcohol or other substance abuse issues, and where the assessment indicates that the offender would benefit from a treatment program, to successfully complete an alcohol or substance-abuse treatment program. Offenders are also mandated to complete the Drinking Driver Program and attend the Victim Impact Panel. Unfortunately, the lethal consequences of driving while impaired are tragically represented in some of the cases involving impaired driving prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office in 2024, which include:

PEOPLE V. NICHOLLE HOKE - On July 23, 2024, Nicholle Hoke, age 45, of Shawnee, Oklahoma, was sentenced in Orange County Court to four to twelve (4-12) years in prison upon her previous plea of guilty to Aggravated Vehicular Homicide. On June 24, 2023, at approximately 10:00 p.m., Hoke crashed her vehicle into another vehicle on Route 9W in the Town of Newburgh. As a result, one passenger in the other vehicle was killed and another suffered serious physical injury. Hoke told police that she was driving to her hotel from a bar in New Paltz where she was drinking. A warrant was signed for blood drawn from Hoke at St. Luke's hospital, which revealed her blood alcohol content was twice the legal limit at 0.16%. At the plea proceedings, Hoke admitted that she engaged in reckless driving and caused the death of one person and the serious physical injury of another while having over a 0.08% blood alcohol content. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Hoke. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police for their assistance in the investigation. "In a moment, the defendant's callous actions stole the life of one innocent person, and forever changed the life of another," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "The significant sentence imposed in this case should stand as a warning to those who might consider making the same criminal choices this defendant made. Incidents such as this one are not accidents, they are serious crimes and perpetrators must be held accountable. My office will

continue to seek significant sentences in drunk driving cases, particularly ones that result in injury or death to others.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Tanja Beemer.

PEOPLE V. YERALDO ROA – On December 20, 2024, Yeraldo Roa, 36, of Port Jervis, was sentenced in Orange County Court to two and one-third to seven (2 1/3- 7) years in prison based on previous guilty plea to Vehicular Manslaughter in the First Degree. At the time he pled guilty, Roa admitted that he was intoxicated when he caused the death of an 11-year-old girl, who had been a passenger in a car which Roa drove across double-yellow lines into oncoming traffic. Roa admitted that on September 23, 2023, at about 8:30 PM, he had a blood alcohol content of .20% by weight of alcohol, more than twice the concentration which constitutes the crime of Driving While Intoxicated, and that he drove his car across the double-yellow lines on Route 6, in the Town of Woodbury, striking three oncoming vehicles before crashing head-on into a fourth vehicle. Roa and his 11-year-old passenger were transported to Garnet Health Medical Center, where the girl was pronounced dead. Occupants of the other vehicles were treated for injuries at St. Luke’s Hospital. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. District Attorney Hoovler particularly thanked the Collision Reconstruction Unit of the New York State Police for their investigation and their assistance in the prosecution of Roa. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Town of Woodbury EMS and Hatzolah Ambulance Corp. for providing emergency treatment and transport to victims of the collision. “Intoxicated driving deaths are as senseless as they are preventable,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “While this defendant no doubt did not intend to kill his young passenger, he nonetheless made a conscious decision to drive knowing that he was severely intoxicated and knowing that it would put the lives of people he knew, and the lives of people he didn’t know, at risk. Unfortunately, that consequential decision resulted in cutting far too short the life of the faultless victim. Intoxicated driving is never okay, and we will continue to pursue those who choose to get behind the wheel of a vehicle in such a condition.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. CHAUNCEY SMITH – On July 16, 2024, Chauncey Smith, 23, of Pine Bush, was sentenced to three to nine (3-9) years in prison upon his previous plea of guilty in Orange County Court to Aggravated Vehicular Assault for crashing his vehicle into another car while impaired by marijuana. The teenaged victim, who was paralyzed as a result of the crash, spoke at Smith’s sentencing about the impact the defendant’s crimes had on his life. Evidence showed that on August 14, 2023, Smith was operating a motor vehicle westbound on State Route 17K in the Town of Newburgh. Smith’s vehicle crossed over the double yellow line separating oncoming traffic and he collided head-on into a vehicle that was travelling eastbound. As a result, a fifteen-year-old inside the other vehicle sustained injuries which resulted in the child being rendered paralyzed. Another occupant of the victims’ vehicle sustained serious physical injury. Smith admitted to the police that he had smoked marijuana, and a subsequent analysis of his blood confirmed the presence of marijuana. At the plea proceedings, Smith admitted to recklessly driving his vehicle while impaired by the consumption of marijuana and that he caused serious physical injury to two people. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Newburgh Police Department for their investigation which led to the arrest of Smith. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the New York State Police for their assistance in the investigation. “The lives of the innocent victims in this case were unfairly altered as a result of the defendant’s selfish actions,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “This case highlights the devastating consequences of drug-impaired driving. I cannot stress enough that drugs and alcohol are dangerous and deadly companions to driving. My office will continue to vigorously pursue justice for victims of vehicular

crimes, and such behavior will not be tolerated in our community.” The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Julie Mohl.

PEOPLE V. MICHAEL FALKENA - On November 7, 2024, Michael Falkena, 42, of Sparrowbush, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Vehicular Assault in the First Degree. On February 5, 2025, Falkena was sentenced to three to six (3-6) years in prison. Evidence showed that on December 28, 2023, members of the Town of Warwick Police Department responded to a multiple car crash on County Highway 1. At the scene, police observed multiple cars with damage and found the defendant’s vehicle in the middle of the road across both lanes of travel. The officers observed the tell-tale signs of intoxication while talking to Falkena, who later admitted to blacking out during the collision. Witnesses indicated that Falkena had driven into the opposite lane of travel and struck other vehicles. One of the occupants of a car that was struck had to be taken to a hospital where she had surgery to address internal injuries. An analysis of Falkena’s blood showed that his blood alcohol content was 0.20%, which is two and a half times the legal limit. At the plea proceedings Falkena admitted to operating a motor vehicle with having a blood alcohol content in excess of the legal limit and thereby causing another person serious physical injury. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Warwick Police Department whose investigation led to the arrest of Falkena. “Combining excessive alcohol intake with driving is a recipe for disaster,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “This defendant’s selfish choices resulted in serious and protracted injury to an innocent individual. Drunk drivers put us all at risk through their careless decisions. Incidents such as this one are not accidents, they are serious crimes and perpetrators need to be held accountable. I hope that this case serves as a warning to those inclined to make the same senseless choice made by the defendant in this case. My office will continue to prioritize the prosecution of drunk and drugged drivers, particularly in those cases that result in injury.” The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Peter Fernandez.

PEOPLE V. MICHAEL SUTHERLAND – On May 13, 2024, Michael Sutherland, age 61, of Tuxedo, was convicted following a four-day jury trial in the Warwick Town Court of Driving While Intoxicated. On July 9, 2024, Sutherland was sentenced to three (3) years’ probation and a \$1,500 fine. The District Attorney’s Office had recommended that a jail sentence be included as part of the sentence. Evidence at the trial showed that in the early morning hours of September 26, 2022, Sutherland was observed by members of the Town of Warwick Police Department moving unsafely from his lane of travel. After pulling the defendant over, the officers noticed the tell-tale signs of intoxication and Sutherland admitted to drinking. The defendant subsequently failed all three field sobriety tests he was asked to perform. After being arrested, Sutherland submitted to a chemical test to determine his blood alcohol content which revealed it was over the legal limit at 0.11%. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Warwick Police for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. “We all deserve to travel our shared roadways free of intoxicated drivers,” said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “This defendant decided to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while intoxicated, instead of calling for a taxi or arranging for a safe alternative. By doing so, this defendant chose to place his interests before those of society, and I am grateful that the jury in this case held him responsible for his actions. I commend the dedicated work of the Town of Warwick Police who patrol our streets to make sure that they are safe for us all. My office will continue to prioritize intoxicated and impaired driving cases.” District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Assistant District Attorneys Anthony Molina and Kevin Sharp who prosecuted the case.

PEOPLE V. MATTHEW LABAR – On January 12, 2024, Matthew Labar, 42, of Goshen, pled guilty in Orange County Court to Operating a Motor Vehicle While Under the Influence of Alcohol (DWI)

as a felony. On August 2, 2024, Labar was sentenced to six (6) months of weekend incarceration, five years of probation, 240 hours of community service and was ordered to have an ignition interlock device installed on his car to prevent him from driving while intoxicated. Evidence proved that on July 29, 2023, at approximately 4:15 pm, Labar was seen stumbling on Main Street in Warwick. The Village of Warwick Mayor, Michael Newhard, saw Labar and attempted to help him. When Labar got into his vehicle, the Mayor took his keys. Labar then used a spare set of keys, started the vehicle and started to drive while the Mayor was hanging out of the window. Labar proceeded to strike numerous parked cars in the parking lot where he was driving. A passing United States Park Police officer observed what was happening and subdued Labar until Warwick Police Officers could respond and take Labar into custody. A subsequent chemical test revealed that Labar's blood alcohol content was 0.33%, over four (4) times the legal limit. Mayor Newhard suffered minor injuries as a result. "I commend Mayor Newhard for his selfless and quick-thinking actions that likely prevented what could have been a terrible tragedy," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Drunk drivers put us all at risk through their careless decisions. Incidents such as this one are not accidents, they are serious crimes and perpetrators need to be held accountable. I hope that this case serves as a warning to those inclined to make the same senseless choice made by the defendant in this case. My office will continue to prioritize the prosecution of drunk and drugged drivers, particularly repeated offenders." "Mayor Newhard put his personal safety aside to try and stop someone who was clearly impaired from driving that afternoon," said Town of Warwick Police Chief John Rader. "We appreciate his efforts as well as the efforts to prosecute this case." The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Nicholas Mangold.

PEOPLE V. JAMES CASSIDY - On September 12, 2024, James Cassidy, age 51, of Blooming Grove, was sentenced in Orange County Court to an aggregate term of one and one half to four and one half (1½ - 4½) years in prison relative to his conviction following a six-day bench trial of all charges against him including Driving While Intoxicated as a Class "D" Felony and Aggravated Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle in the First Degree. On July 12, 2023, at approximately 6:00 p.m., a Deputy Sheriff with the Orange County Sheriff's Office was seeking to serve civil paperwork at the Clover Stables horse farm in the Town of New Windsor. After being unable to locate the individual to serve the civil paperwork, the Deputy started to leave the property when she encountered Cassidy who was driving up the driveway. After a brief conversation, Cassidy displayed the tell-tale signs of intoxication. Cassidy admitted to the Deputy that he had been drinking and that he was coming from Montgomery and had been on the road leading to the farm. Cassidy failed several field sobriety tests and subsequently refused to submit to a breath test. It was later learned that Cassidy had a revoked license and had previous convictions for Driving While Intoxicated. District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Orange County Sheriff's Office for their investigation and the arrest of the defendant. "The selfish decisions by drunk drivers imperil all of us who share our County's roadways," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "This repeat offender has shown no ability to curb his criminal actions despite increasing penalties. As such, the prison sentence imposed by the Court was appropriate and just. I commend the dedicated work of the members of the Orange County Sheriff's Office who patrol our streets to make sure that they are safe for us all. My office will continue to seek justice in intoxicated and impaired driving cases." District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Assistant District Attorney Emily Worden who prosecuted the case.



CASES INVOLVING ANIMALS

In 2024 the OCDA continued its commitment to hold those who abuse animals accountable by working with local humane societies, the Hudson Valley Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and local law enforcement agencies, on animal abuse cases. Examples of the types of cases involving animals that the OCDA handled in 2024 include:

PEOPLE V. FREDERICK BOURGALT – On April 7, 2025, Frederick Bourgault, age 27, of Canada, was convicted after a trial of all charges contained in an indictment that charged him with two felonies in connection with the beating death of a racehorse on July 17, 2023, at the Pine Bush Training Facility in the Town of Crawford. Bourgault was convicted of the top charge of Criminal Mischief in the Second Degree for having “damaged” a racehorse named “Finish Line,” that had an estimated value of at least five thousand dollars. Evidence at the trial proved that Bourgault struck the horse with a hard object causing a linear depressed skull fracture, which resulted in the horse having to be euthanized. Bourgault was also convicted of the crime of Interference with or Injury to Certain Domestic Animals, a felony under the New York State Agriculture and Markets Act, for willfully and unjustifiably injuring or destroying a racehorse. The New York State Police, aided by the Orange County District Attorney’s Office and New York State Gaming Commission, were engaged in an investigation into the death of the horse. The investigation included having the horse’s remains exhumed and examined by experts at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. The New York State Gaming Commission provided expert witnesses and assisted in coordinating the arrest of Bourgault by the New York State Police. The case was presented to an Orange County Grand Jury, which charged Bourgault with the two felonies prior to him being arrested. Bourgault, a Canadian national, was arraigned in Orange County Court before County Court Judge Richard Guertin. Neither of the felonies with which Bourgault had been charged are eligible for bail to be set based upon New York’s recent bail reform legislation. The District Attorney’s Office will be recommending that Bourgault be sentenced to a term in a state prison. District Attorney Hoover thanked the New York State Police for their investigation and the arrest of Bourgault, and the New York State Gaming Commission for their assistance and support of the arrest and prosecution.

"As a society we cannot tolerate the mistreatment of horses or other animals, who cannot protect themselves," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "Animal abuse cases are a high priority in my office, and we will continue to work with the New York State Police, and other law enforcement partners, to protect animals from abuse. We will use all of the legal resources available to us to conduct these investigations and prosecutions and bring these offenders to justice." "The New York State Gaming Commission is proud to partner with the Orange County District Attorney and the New York State Police in holding Mr. Bourgault accountable for his actions," said Sarah Klein, Director of the Gaming Commission's Division of Horse Racing. "It's through these combined regulatory, veterinary, investigative and prosecutorial efforts that we're able to protect horses and get bad actors out of New York State. We look forward to our continued partnership." The case is being prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Christopher P. Borek.



The Appeals Bureau handles all matters pending in the New York State appellate courts, including the New York Court of Appeals; the Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Second Department; and the Supreme Court, Appellate Term for the Ninth and Tenth Judicial Districts. ADAs assigned to the Appeals Bureau respond to federal habeas corpus challenges filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York that involve cases prosecuted by OCDA, as well as related appeals to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the United States Supreme Court. Bureau attorneys also provide legal assistance to other OCDA attorneys in both the Orange County Court and in various local criminal courts, provide assistance with the drafting of search warrants, and provide legal advice and training to members of the District Attorney's staff and to various police agencies in Orange County. Assistants assigned to the Appeals Bureau also continued to assist with the investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty complaints brought under the Agriculture and Markets Law, and with environmental crimes committed in violation of the Environmental Conservation Law. Finally, the Appeals Bureau Chief is designated as the OCDA's Records Access Officer, and, together with other attorneys, is responsible for responses to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests and to third-party subpoenas that are served on the District Attorney's Office. Appeals Assistants also represent the District Attorney's Office as members of the District Attorney's Association of the State of New York's Legislative and Best Practices Committees. Appeals Assistants also participate with the Appeals Committee and the FOIL Sub-Committee.

In 2024, the Appeals Assistants handled 463 assignments, including 33 state court appeals and 1 response to a federal habeas corpus petition, 210 motion responses in the trial and state appellate courts, and 178 responses to FOIL requests and third-party subpoenas. As part of the District Attorney's Rebound Program, the office also responded to applications in which members of the public sought to have their older convictions sealed. The number of completed assignments represented a 13% increase over the total number of assignments that were completed in the previous year, and a 24% increase in the number of responses to FOIL requests. During 2024, the Appellate Division issued 23 decisions involving convictions obtained by the Orange County District Attorney's Office. Of those decisions, the Appellate Division affirmed the judgments in 18 cases, modified, and as modified, affirmed the convictions in an additional 3 cases, while reversing just two convictions, the Appellate Term for the Ninth and Tenth Judicial District affirmed three

convictions involving appeals from the local criminal courts, while reversing just one conviction. The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York denied petitions for federal writs of habeas corpus in three cases where defendants, following the conclusion of their direct appeals in the state appellate courts or the denial of post-judgment relief, challenged their state court convictions on federal constitutional grounds. Significant appellate cases handled in 2024 include:

PEOPLE V MICHAEL ROBINSON - Following a jury trial in the Orange County Court, defendant was convicted of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and Resisting Arrest. The charges arise from a car stop in the City of Newburgh during the investigation of an armed robbery. The police recovered a loaded handgun that was found under the front seat where defendant was sitting. Following the stop, the driver and a second passenger were placed under arrest, while defendant attempted to flee before he was taken into custody. The Court sentenced defendant as a second violent felony offender to a sentence of twelve years imprisonment and a five-year period of post-release supervision and to a one-year term of incarceration on the misdemeanor. On appeal, the Appellate Division affirmed defendant's conviction and sentence.

PEOPLE V YON R. WOODSON RENNER - Defendant was charged with Criminal Trespass in the Second Degree and Criminal Contempt in the Second Degree after she entered the home of her estranged husband in violation of an order of protection. Following a jury trial, defendant was convicted in absentia of both charges after defendant was warned of her right to be present and refused to exit her cell or appear virtually and was sentenced to six months incarceration in the Orange County Jail. On appeal, the Appellate Term affirmed her conviction, holding that the trial court did not improvidently exercise its discretion in trying defendant in absentia.

PEOPLE V GARFIELD BENTLEY - Defendant was charged with Burglary in the Second Degree and related crimes after he harassed and stalked a former girlfriend after she ended the relationship and later ambushed her and poured a mixture of motor oil and liquor in her hair and then held her against her will in the vestibule of her apartment building. Following a jury trial, defendant was convicted of Burglary in the Second Degree, Burglary in the Third Degree, Criminal Contempt in the First Degree (three counts), Criminal Contempt in the Second Degree, Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation, Stalking in the Third Degree, and Falsely Reporting an Incident in the Third Degree. Defendant was sentenced as a second felony offender to a determinate term of imprisonment of nine years and a five-year period of post-release supervision on the second-degree burglary charge and to concurrent terms of incarceration on the remaining counts. On appeal, the Appellate Division affirmed defendant's convictions and sentences. The United States District Court denied defendant's petition for a writ of habeas corpus in which he sought to attack his conviction on federal constitutional grounds.

PEOPLE V LARRY GANTT - Shortly after 2:30 a.m., members of the City of Newburgh Police Department responded to a call about a fight at a local bar and encountered a crowd of more than 60 persons who were in the street and who were engaged in a large-scale melee. When a police officer attempted to subdue defendant after he was observed attacking another person, defendant struggled with the officer and stabbed the officer in the back of the officer's neck and in his arm, narrowly missing the officer's jugular vein and carotid artery. Following a jury trial defendant was convicted of Attempted Assault in the First Degree, Attempted Aggravated Assault on a Police Officer, Assault in the Second Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third Degree and was sentenced as a second violent felony offender to an aggregate concurrent sentence of fifteen years and a five-year period of post-release supervision. Following the

conclusion of his state appeal, defendant commenced a federal habeas corpus challenge to his conviction on federal constitutional grounds. The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York denied the habeas corpus petition.

PEOPLE V DUAN JONES - On June 3, 2017, defendant was arrested during the execution of a search warrant at his girlfriend's apartment in the City of Middletown. During the execution of the search warrant, the police recovered a .9mm Taurus handgun, a .9mm Hi-point handgun, and a .380 ACP Taurus handgun, along with magazines, and ammunition, 547 glassine envelopes that contained heroin, and a total of \$6,752.00 in United States currency. Defendant pleaded guilty to Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and was sentenced as a violent felony offender to a determinate term of imprisonment of eight years and a five-year period of post-release supervision. Incident to his plea agreement, the defendant executed a forfeiture agreement for the monies that were recovered from inside the apartment and that were on his person. The Appellate Division affirmed defendant's conviction and sentence, and the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York denied his petition for a writ of habeas corpus in which he challenged his state court conviction on federal constitutional grounds.



Since taking office in 2014, District Attorney Hoovler and the OCDA has adopted the nationally recognized best practice of “community prosecution,” in which prosecutorial responses are tailored to the needs of each specific community. Reaching out to community members to find out how the District Attorney’s Office can be more responsive to their needs has been an important initiative of the OCDA since 2014 when District Attorney Hoovler created the Community Affairs Unit. One of the hallmarks of the OCDA’s community prosecution model is to prevent crime, in addition to prosecuting it. In 2024, the Unit continued to build upon community relations, in person, and virtually, by making appearances at meetings, schools, and community events, including presentations to educate the community regarding the office’s events and new initiatives. In 2024, Unit members participated in the following events:

ANNUAL YOUTH FISHING DERBY - Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, announced the winners of the fourth District Attorney’s Office Youth Fishing Derby. The Derby ran from April 1, 2024, through September 2, 2024, and was open to children between the ages of four and eighteen who are children or grandchildren of Orange County residents. The Youth Fishing Derby named, “Get Hooked on Fishing Not Drugs,” is part of District Attorney Hoovler’s community outreach program. This derby was started during COVID-19 to try to keep children interested in life and away from drugs and gang activity. This is still the Derby’s main goal. Participation in fishing is very popular and can be enjoyed at almost any age with friends and family, creating lasting bonds. Several U.S. presidents were accomplished fishermen and used fishing to relax from the stress and responsibilities of their office. The Orange County District Attorney’s Office Youth Fishing Derby encourages the youth of Orange County to participate in an exciting outdoor sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. Any entry sent into the Derby had an equal chance to win a prize for the young angler whether the fish was big or small.

CAREER WEEK AT WASHINGTONVILLE SCHOOLS - On May 28, 2024, Orange County Assistant District Attorney Amanda Arroyo participated in Career Week at Little Britain Elementary School in the Washingtonville School District. In speaking with the children in Mr. Grodin’s fourth grade class, ADA Arroyo discussed the process of becoming a lawyer, different levels of crime and how the District Attorney’s Office works together with the police to collect and evaluate evidence that is later presented in court. ADA Arroyo’s participation represents an extension of the efforts of

the District Attorney's Office Community Affairs Unit, who work daily with community partners to discover the underlying issues that cause crime in our communities, and to seek out creative solutions to those issues.

EDUCATOR ROUNDTABLE - On March 6, 2024 Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoover participated in a roundtable discussion with local school superintendents and administrative staff. At the meeting, important issues were discussed, including disorderly spectators at sporting events, social media concerns, threats by students, bullying, immigration issues and vaping and marijuana use. During the course of the roundtable, participants engaged in an exchange of ideas and information so that local school districts can be best prepared to anticipate and respond to common safety issues and concerns.

IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS INITIATIVE - Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoover announced an immigrant affairs virtual workshop to discuss rights available to everyone in our community. The workshop took place on January 31, 2024, at 6:00 pm, and was accessible via Zoom. "Every crime victim deserves to have their voice heard," said District Attorney Hoover. "My office will work with crime victims who should know that reporting a crime will come without fear of repercussions. It is our responsibility to stand up for crime victims and this important workshop will help spread the word about the rights afforded to those who live amongst us."

KICKBALL AT MONTGOMERY ELEMENTARY - On Tuesday, June 11, 2024, members of the Orange County District Attorney's Office, including attorneys and investigators participated in an annual event at Montgomery Elementary School pitting fifth graders against District Attorney staff and members of the Village of Montgomery Police Department in a game of kickball. The fun event supports and highlights the importance of D.A.R.E. (drug abuse resistance education) in our schools. "D.A.R.E. is so important to help steer our children away from the dangers of drug use and abuse," said District Attorney Hoover. "This annual event gives us an opportunity not only to support such an important part of school curriculum, but to see and be seen by impressionable youngsters. I thank our law enforcement partners for participating and congratulate the students for their successes in the classroom and on the ballfield."

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AGAINST CRIME - Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoover announced that on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, he, and members of his staff appeared at the twelve (12) National Night Out Against Crime events being held in Orange County, as part of the District Attorney's community prosecution initiative. District Attorney Hoover personally appeared at multiple venues. At each of the locations, the District Attorney's Office had a table staffed by Assistant District Attorneys that displayed literature publicizing District Attorney Hoover's community prosecution program. The staff also offered free items designed to provide the public with information that might be valuable in crime prevention. District Attorney Hoover regularly appears at National Night Out venues in the County. Events will be held in the City of Newburgh, City of Middletown, City of Port Jervis, Town of Wallkill, Town of Mount Hope, Town of Crawford, Town of Newburgh, Town of New Windsor, Town of Goshen, Village of Highland Falls, Village of Walden and Village of Warwick.

"National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our community safer," said District Attorney Hoover. "National Night Out epitomizes the philosophy behind my community prosecution initiatives, which advocate for police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our community safer. My Special Projects and Community Affairs Bureau, which we created in 2014, has worked with community leaders and agencies, and appeared at countless public

events. Together, we communicate with the public to identify the issues that lead to crime in our communities, and to come up with solutions to those issues, so that we might prevent crime in the first place. National Night Out is just part of our community prosecution efforts, but an important one that helps to maintain the sense of community between law enforcement and the public.”

SUBSTANCE USE SUMMIT - Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced that on September 27, 2024, there was the second annual Substance Use Summit addressing the hidden risks of legal substances. The event was also sponsored by the Orange County Department of Mental Health, the Alcohol & Drug Awareness Council of Orange County and SUNY Orange. Topics that were covered at the summit include risk reduction strategies for young people regarding alcohol and cannabis; prevention and addressing the risk of addiction to cannabis, alcohol and tobacco; and early intervention by recognizing and treating substance use disorder. The event is intended to instruct professionals in social work, substance abuse prevention and mental health as well as educational leaders. The keynote speaker at the summit was Dr. Diana Martinez with the Opioid Response Network. Dr. Martinez is a psychiatrist who researches the neuroscience of drug use and addiction (and a mom with two sons). She talks to organizations and high schools about how science can be used to discuss drugs and safety, including the risk of accidents, overdose, and assault. Dr. Martinez also discusses the role of self-medication in teenagers and new ways to approach drug use at school. “I am glad to again co-sponsor this important event to address the practical risks we see in otherwise legal substances,” said District Attorney Hoovler. “As a community, we need to coordinate the efforts of mental health professionals, doctors, educational leaders, law enforcement and the public to address concerns amongst our youth. Our collective efforts to address substance abuse issues begins with awareness.”



VETERANS ISSUES

In 2024, OCDA maintained and strengthened our partnership with the Hudson Valley VA Healthcare System as part of the joint Orange County Veterans Suicide Prevention Coalition. The alarming number of suicides amongst veterans is unacceptable, and the partnership aims to connect with the community and our veterans to educate and prevent these tragic situations.

The Coalition, with senior staff from OCDA, attended numerous community events in 2024 to spread the word and educate the public about this important issue, including:

OSBORN FITZSIMMONS AMERICAN LEGION POST 521 CAR SHOW – Sunday July 14, 2024.

ORANGE COUNTY FIREWORKS SHOW, FREEDOM FEST - July 19, 2024.

NEW YORK AIR SHOW AT ORANGE COUNTY AIRPORT – Saturday August 10, and Sunday August 11, 2024.

GENERAL MONTGOMERY DAY - Saturday September 7th, 2024.

WASHINGTONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT 1ST ANNUAL CAR, BIKE AND TRUCK SHOW - Sunday September 8th, 2024.

HEROES, COWBOYS & COMPANIONS COWBOY ROPING EVENT - Saturday September 21st, 2024.

Additionally, OCDA, as part of the Orange County Veteran Suicide Prevention Coalition, worked with Orange County Clerk Kelly Eskew to have the Mobile DMV Unit hand out Veteran Crisis Fliers to the public during stops all over Orange County to help prevent veteran suicide. This important outreach started in September, which is National Suicide Prevention Month. The hope is to reach even more people with their message by teaming up with the Mobile DMV Unit while they conduct Department of Motor Vehicle transactions with the public all over Orange County.

As part of the ongoing outreach to local veterans, OCDA also organized a fly-fishing trip for veterans in June. OCDA provided the camping equipment needed to make the meal and beverages. ShopRite of Chester provided all the food and additional beverages. All veterans who participated agreed it was a great day out and learned a lot about fly fishing.

The residents of Orange County have responded with overwhelming support for the veterans outreach efforts of OCDA. Orange County has the highest percentage of veterans in the Mid-Hudson region. Many businesses have already shown support for service members and veterans by giving veterans discounts. Many Orange County businesses and organizations also have relatives or friends currently serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, which is another reason for the outstanding support given to the Coalition. Government offices and law enforcement agencies have also been essential partners. Firearms dealers have been crucial partners in the distribution of gun locks to veterans wanting this resource.

OCDA continues to be an active participant in the Veteran's Treatment Court in the Orange County Court. The Court is designed to provide resources and treatment to veterans who may have committed felony offenses, particularly those who committed offences due to substance abuse or mental health issues.