



STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
FOR FLORIDA'S FOURTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

2024

Annual Report

2024

Annual Report

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MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

The end of 2024 marked both the conclusion of two terms and the beginning of my third term in office. There is no hard stop to the work we do as prosecutors. The days and weeks change, but our focus remains: pursue justice always.

I'm encouraged by our progress, and I have the utmost certainty that the next four years will prove to be just as successful in reducing violent crime and overdose rates. I look back at the past 8 years and know our hard work has paid off... and it doesn't stop now.

In 2024, Jacksonville reached a milestone. **Homicides declined more than 50%**. The astounding work of local law enforcement agencies paired with our Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC), Targeted Prosecution Division, and many more are the reason the Fourth Circuit is becoming a safer place to live every day.

Speaking of CGIC, it celebrated five years at the SAO4 and received more than 500 firearm and casing matches last year alone.

Within the same year, our victim services modernized and expanded. Our office now has the ability to text victims updates on their cases to keep them informed throughout the process. Though it may seem simple, the implementation and upkeep of these notifications are a significant lift. Thank you to all who worked on the project.

Our team also opened R.E.A.D. Rooms in Duval and Clay County — spaces for children visiting the office whether as victims, witnesses, or tagging along with family members.

Now, we look forward. We will continue the work we are doing every day for the people of the Fourth Circuit.

Melissa W. Nelson
State Attorney for Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit



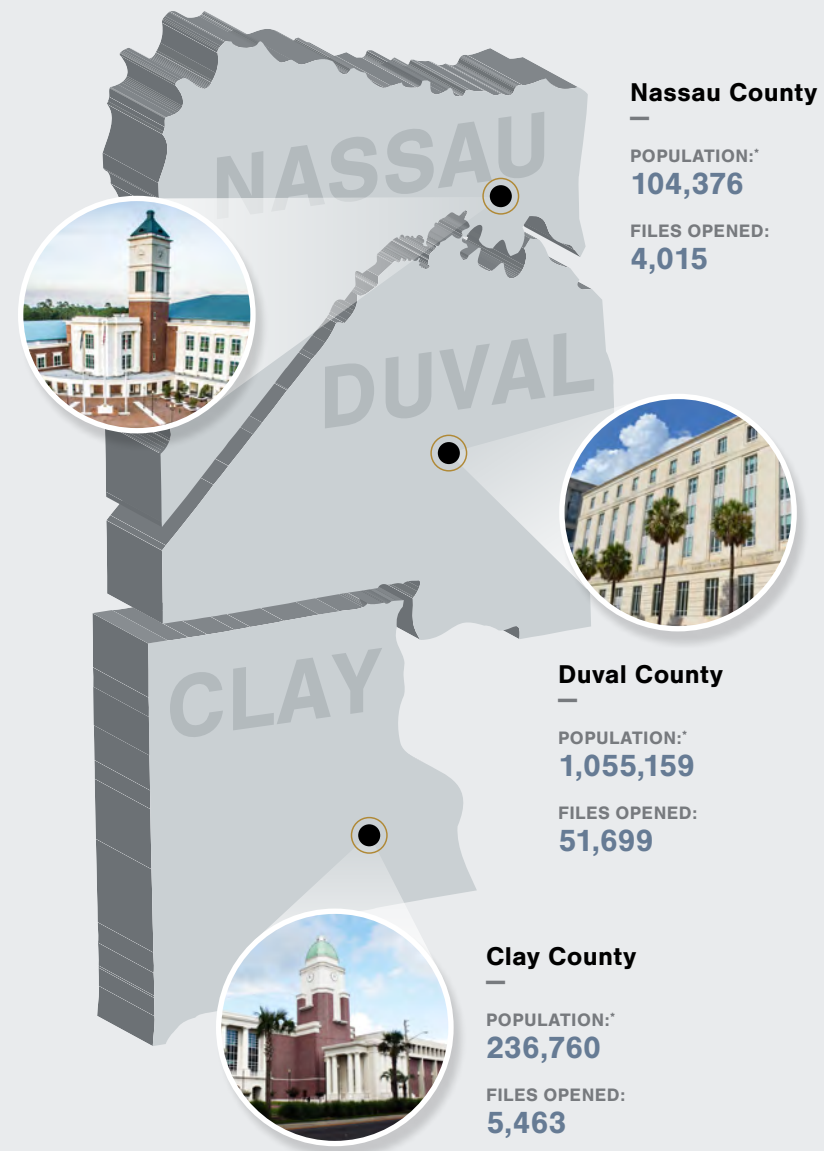
PURSUE JUSTICE ALWAYS

Our duty to the people of Northeast Florida comprises two main tenets. The first is to keep people safe by prosecuting criminal offenders. The second is to do justice.

State Attorney Melissa Nelson

STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR FLORIDA'S FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

2024 Office at a Glance



STATE ATTORNEY:
Melissa W. Nelson



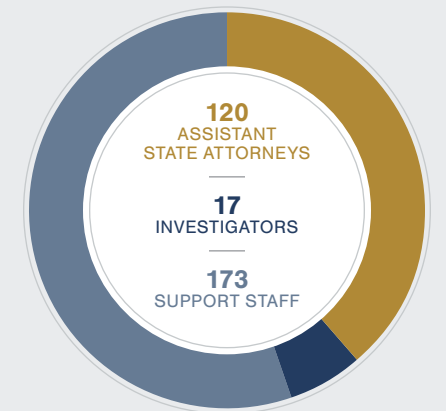
TOTAL POPULATION:
1,396,295



TOTAL FILES OPENED:
61,147



TOTAL EMPLOYEES:
310



NUMBER OF PUBLIC RECORDS
REQUESTS CLOSED:
2,378



BUDGET:
\$36.8 million



Tireless Efforts Lead To **MONUMENTAL DROP IN HOMICIDES & VIOLENT CRIMES**

In 2024, Jacksonville experienced a historic drop in violent crime, most notably homicides. Down over 50% from the year before, it's the first time the city has seen this low of numbers in decades. Beyond homicides, violent crime dropped substantially too.

2024 NUMBERS COMPARED TO 2023:

52%

DECREASE IN
MURDERS

33%

DECREASE IN
AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS

58%

DECREASE IN
ROBBERIES



*Jacksonville is becoming a safer place to live,
raise families, and grow businesses.*

Jacksonville had the steepest decline in homicides from 2023 to 2024 compared to more than two dozen major and mid-size cities across the United States.*

These declines reflect our unwavering focus on leveraging our tools to reduce violent crime and are a result of hard work by prosecutors and law enforcement. Last year, the office took a **RECORD NUMBER OF HOMICIDE CASES** to a jury trial and secured **GUILTY VERDICTS IN NEARLY EVERY CASE**.

Our prosecutors tried **166 FELONY TRIALS** and achieved a **90% CONVICTION RATE**.

MONUMENTAL DROP IN HOMICIDES & VIOLENT CRIMES (CONTINUED)

The following results capture the work of our Targeted Prosecution Division. Formed in 2017 by State Attorney Melissa Nelson, prosecutors focus on the criminal offenders who commit the majority of the local crime.

This downward trend would not be possible without the dedication of law enforcement and the Crime Gun Intelligence Center, housed at the State Attorney's Office. The historic reduction also reflects the commitment of every member of our office.



Success like this is not achieved in a vacuum — it takes much work by many. I am extremely proud of our prosecutors and team who work diligently each and every day to ensure true justice is served. Our community is safer because of their tireless efforts.

State Attorney Melissa Nelson

AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

When a person is murdered in the Fourth Circuit, an experienced prosecutor goes to the scene of the crime. Their work on the case begins right then and there. The prosecutor works with homicide detectives, conducts interviews, meets with a victim's family, and may get search or arrest warrants. From this first moment, the case is assigned to them and stays with them.

This unique assignment ensures a vertical investigation where prosecutors work hand-in-glove with law enforcement throughout the investigation and prosecution.



CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE CENTER (CGIC)

Targeting Trigger Pullers

2024 marked five years since the Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) was established. Housed on the first floor of the State Attorney's Office, it is a partnership with ATF, the SAO, JSO, FDLE, the US Attorney's Office, and the City of Jacksonville. It is one of **THE ONLY CGIC HOUSED IN A PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE IN THE COUNTRY** and focuses solely on dangerous and violent criminals.

IT'S GOAL: collect and analyze crime gun intelligence to solve and ultimately prevent crime.

The JSO detectives assigned to the CGIC are having a major impact on public safety. In 2024, CGIC detectives received more than 500 NIBIN hits. In the past 5 years, the total hits climbed into the thousands.

Jacksonville's homicide rate dropped by 52% from 122 to 59 in 2024, and CGIC undoubtedly played a large role in putting shooters behind bars.

500+
NIBIN HITS
RECEIVED
BY CGIC
IN 2024

WHAT IS NIBIN?

NIBIN stands for **National Integrated Ballistic Information Network**. Firearms recovered from crime scenes are examined, and the cartridge casing evidence is entered into the system. The evidence is then compared to other firearm evidence collected in jurisdictions across the country, ultimately leading to matches with suspects or connecting a single firearm to multiple crimes. The **Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS)** is the system within NIBIN that allows analysts to compare both types of ballistic evidence found at crime scenes.

CGIC: TARGETING TRIGGER PULLERS (CONTINUED)

How do they do it?

Every shell casing that comes into JSO is run through NIBIN and IBIS. CGIC prioritizes gun violence cases and quickly processes firearms to determine links within hours to days after a shooting. These links extend beyond matching firearms and casings to the shooters.

CGIC's working relationship with ATF provides an avenue to investigate the purchaser of a firearm and potentially trace the various hands a gun has been passed through. Even in cases where no one was struck by a bullet, CGIC detectives often find links to other cases, including aggravated batteries or homicides.



16-18
CGIC STAFF
MEMBERS

- 1 JSO Lieutenant
- 2 JSO Sergeants
- 10-12 JSO Detectives
- 1 JSO Crime Analyst
- 2 Data Entry Staff

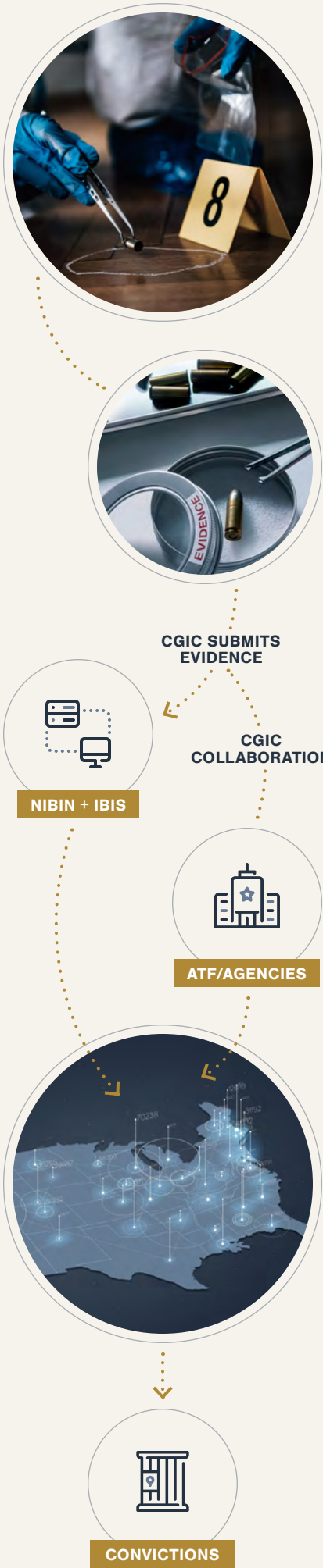


In 2019, ATF Acting Director Regina Lombardo (second from right) joined officials to learn more about the innovative center.

Cutting-Edge Technology & Aggressive Prosecution Impact Violent Crime

The SAO's Targeted Prosecution works in conjunction with law enforcement to identify the most violent offenders within our community and incapacitate them. Cutting-edge technology and aggressive prosecution have had an impact.

In 2019, the SAO created the reactive side of Targeted Prosecution staffed with trial lawyers who work in tandem with the JSO Violent Crime Unit. Their focus is to remove shooters from our community. At the same time, the Jacksonville CGIC opened in the State Attorney's Office. On a weekly basis, criminal intelligence is shared with prosecutors and our law enforcement partners. Through the work of the CGIC, violent gun crimes are linked through ballistic evidence at an expedited rate. Then through coordination with prosecutors, meaningful investigations are initiated, identifying prolific violent offenders and groups.



CGIC: From Unsolved Cases to Successful Convictions



Right:
Action
News Jax

NEW AT 5:00
NEW TECHNOLOGY LEADS TO ARREST
DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE
CBS 47
ACTION NEWS JAX
5:03 68°

Left: Jamin Tolliver's gun which was linked to three separate shootings through the use of NIBIN. [Jacksonville Sheriff's Office] Florida Times-Union

State of Florida v. Jamin Tolliver

In an early example of how CGIC works to solve crimes, the case against Jamin Tolliver comes to the forefront. Responsible for two murders and one attempted murder over about a two-week period at the beginning of 2019, it was CGIC that found the NIBIN link, which led to Tolliver's arrest and conviction.

Tolliver pleaded guilty to all charges in 2020.

State of Florida v. Leroy Hills

CGIC cases don't always involve a homicide, but the goal is to use this evidence to identify and prosecute a violent offender before he kills.

On May 20, 2021, officers arrested Leroy Hills after a car chase and crash. Multiple guns were recovered from the car. Utilizing CGIC's resources, detectives discovered the Glock pistol in the car was used in a shooting at a local motel days prior.

Hills was prosecuted for Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon.



John Emory Wilson was later apprehended in Norfolk, VA on charges in the Jacksonville homicide. [U.S. Marshals Service] Florida Times-Union

State of Florida v. John Wilson

In July of 2018, before CGIC was established, a Jacksonville murder went unsolved. Less than a year later, in April 2019, the murderer killed again. While the 2019 murder was under investigation, officers confiscated John Wilson's gun during a traffic stop and ran it through NIBIN. It matched both homicides.

The two homicides were linked by the same gun and other corroborating evidence.

John Wilson was sentenced to life in prison for First-Degree Murder.





IN THE COURTROOM

2024 Notable Cases

It was a record year in the Fourth Circuit inside and outside the courtroom. Our assistant state attorneys tried 211 cases — 38 of those being murder trials, opened 61,147 files, and achieved a record-setting conviction rate of 90% on felony cases and a near-perfect conviction rate on murder trials. From neighbor disputes to financial crimes, robberies, rapes, and murders, the office prosecutes cases of all kinds from misdemeanors to capital offenses. The following cases are a snapshot of the office's hard work.



Deputy Joshua Moyers with his mother, Brenda Moyers.

Judge sentences McDowell to death for murder of Deputy Joshua Moyers

After a month-long trial, a Nassau County jury recommended death for Patrick McDowell for the murder of 29-year-old Nassau County Deputy Joshua Moyers.

Moyers spent two years in the Nassau County Sheriff's Office Explorer program before joining the force in 2015. He was engaged to be married. He was a light in his community.

It was nearing midnight on Sept. 23, 2021, when Deputy Moyers was patrolling Nassau County. He saw Patrick McDowell at a gas station in a stolen van — his duty was to pull him over. This traffic stop would be his last act to protect his community. McDowell lured Moyers away from safety and provided a fake name. When Moyers asked him to step out of the van, McDowell grabbed his loaded gun and shot Moyers. And he shot him again before racing away. Moyers' last moments played out for the jury from his dash camera. Officers swarmed in to search for McDowell. It wouldn't be until Sept. 28 when they captured him with the collaboration and effort from numerous law enforcement agencies and JSO K9 Huk.

McDowell pleaded guilty to First-Degree Murder, Injuring a Police Dog, and eight counts of Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer.

During the penalty phase of the trial, Moyers' family took the stand to remark on all that was taken from them.

"He had been killed, and so were our dreams for the future. This would begin our nightmare," said Brenda Moyers. *"I didn't even know it was possible to feel so much grief as in that moment as my legs gave out underneath me,"* said Moyers' brother Jordan describing the moment he found out his brother was not going to survive.

The case was investigated by the Nassau County Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, Columbia County Sheriff's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, ATF Jacksonville, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, among many others. The case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant Mark Caliel and Assistant State Attorney Chris Huband.

It just ripped the guts out of our agency, out of our employees. The dispatchers who had to hear the cries for help on the radio, the deputies who responded, who tried to save Josh's life. That's something to live with forever.

Sheriff Bill Leeper



IN THE COURTROOM (CONTINUED)

Illegal immigrant sentenced to 20 years for deadly hit-and-run of Lester Bagalihog

It was a horrifying crime captured on camera. In broad daylight on May 25, 2023, 28-year-old Lester Bagalihog (*pictured*), known as Nico by his loved ones, was riding his motorcycle alongside a friend down Beach Boulevard in Jacksonville. They slowed down for a red light. Behind them, Edwin Rumaldo Almendares-Amaya — without a license and illegally in the U.S. — was driving a large SUV. At the red light, Amaya pressed on the gas and ran over Bagalihog. A dash camera ultimately helped Florida Highway Patrol catch Amaya, who pled guilty and was sentenced to 20 years in Florida State Prison.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney John Kalinowski and the Florida Highway Patrol.



Lester "Nico" Bagalihog

Now you rest Nico, and be at peace, be able to ride and watch over us. – A fellow Jacksonville biker during a vigil for Bagalihog

An expert in the field



More people are killed each year in traffic crashes than any type of homicide, yet they are some of the most difficult types of cases to handle. For the past eight years in Duval County, these cases have been solely in the hands of Assistant State Attorney John Kalinowski.

His experience with vehicular homicide cases, partnership with M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), and relationships with the Florida Highway Patrol, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and other law enforcement agencies make him an expert in this field. His team includes paralegals and victim advocates who specialize in traffic homicides, some of whom have lost loved ones in the same way. His expertise is well known, and he frequently trains and consults with local and statewide law enforcement agencies relating to traffic laws. Kalinowski also serves as the County Court Director. He joined the State Attorney's Office in 2001 and has prosecuted a wide variety of cases throughout the office.



TRAFFIC HOMICIDES IN JACKSONVILLE



Jeffrey Clayton pleads guilty to crimes against student

Former Douglas Anderson School of the Arts teacher Jeffrey Clayton is now serving a 10-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to two counts of Offenses Against Students by Authority Figures; Indecent, Lewd, or Lascivious Touching of Certain Minors; and Unlawful Use of Two-Way Communications Device. Once the victim — a current student — came forward,

a wave of abuse allegations about Clayton poured in from current and former female students at Douglas Anderson. The criminal case ended Clayton's more than 20-year tenure at Douglas Anderson.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney Anna Hixon.



Every woman's worst nightmare

A break in a case from the 90s led to the arrest of Calvin Dumas for multiple rapes, all with the same MO: holding single mothers at knifepoint and threatening to kill them if they reported him. Dumas was previously convicted of rape in 1973 and sentenced to 20 years in prison. When he was released, he began attacking women again. It's thanks to the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative and advancements in DNA testing that the rape kits traced back to Dumas.

In 2016, with SAKI funds, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement analyzed DNA from an assault victim in 1998 which had never been tested. It matched a profile from two other cases. We now know the same rapist committed all three attacks.

Familial DNA testing and hard work by detectives led police to identify Dumas as the rapist. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney Marleigh Gulliford and Cate Waugh, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.



Press Conference on Calvin Dumas

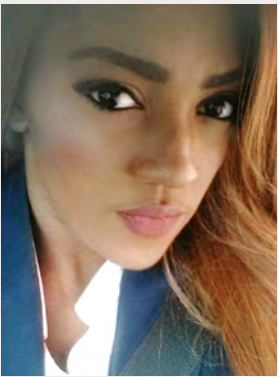


WHAT IS SAKI?

The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative was a federal grant program initiated in 2015 which distributed millions of dollars around the country to process sexual assault kits from cold cases or prior cases. The office received nearly \$10 million in funding over several years and fully cleared the backlog of untested rape kits by 2021.

HOW TO REPORT A SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, call 911 or Jacksonville's Rape Recovery Team at (904) 721-7273. They work 24/7 to direct you where to have a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam, how to report a crime, and more. Their services cover Duval, Nassau, and Baker counties. In Clay County, Quigley House has a 24/7 Crisis Helpline at (904)-284-0061.



Aisha Levy

Fishburne faces death for murder of Aisha Levy

On February 9, 2024, Aisha Levy's parents sat in the courtroom as the jury recommended death for the man who murdered their 25-year-old daughter. "May God have mercy on your soul," said the Honorable Tatiana Salvador.

Fishburne and Levy's boyfriend were best friends, and Fishburne was living with the couple. When her boyfriend went to work on December 20, 2019, Fishburne attacked and murdered Levy as she got out of the shower. Officers caught him right before he stepped on a bus headed to Indiana. This was just the beginning of the nearly five-year journey to justice.

"She didn't realize she was inviting a monster into her home," said the victim's father, Marlow Levy. "There's no time I think that will ever go by that she's not in our thoughts, and every time we see something beautiful and something that's amazing, we'll know that she's in that."

The case was prosecuted thanks to the teamwork by Assistant State Attorneys Joe Licandro, Alan Mizrahi, Jalisa Curtis-King, and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

JUDGE TATIANA SALVADOR

IN THE COURTROOM (CONTINUED)

This is like searching for a needle in a haystack... we did this for one reason: **A RELENTLESS SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH.**

State Attorney Melissa Nelson on the massive search effort in 2019



Photo: FBI Jacksonville



Susan Mauldin

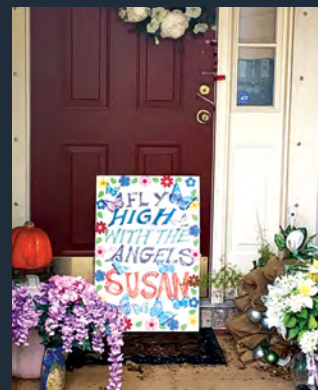
Jury finds Corey Binderim guilty of murdering Susan Mauldin

Her friends lined the pews of the courtroom as the Honorable Steven Whittington read the verdict: guilty of First-Degree Murder, Burglary, and Tampering with Evidence for the death of Susan Mauldin.

In 2019, Mauldin hired Corey Binderim to remodel her bathroom, paying him \$12,000 upfront. But after demolition, Binderim disappeared. Mauldin fired Binderim, demanded her money back, and if he did not return her money, she threatened to call the police and hire an attorney. Binderim was supposed to return her money on Oct. 23, 2019.

On Oct. 25, 2019, Mauldin was missing.

Evidence built a timeline proving Binderim — unable to pay Mauldin back and unwilling to go to jail — killed her and dumped her body in a landfill. Concluding a massive 9-day multi-agency landfill search, Mauldin's body was found in the demo bags Binderim purchased the day he took her life.



To know Sue was to love Sue.

Mauldin's friend Phyllis Yates

She was not just a victim. She was someone full of life with so much still ahead of her. There were plans left unfinished, things still were on her bucket list.

Mauldin's friend Christine Wright

The case was investigated by the Clay County Sheriff's Office and the FBI, with special recognition to Special Agents Lauren Regucci and William Logan for coordinating the landfill search. The case went to trial in 2024 and was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Pam Hazel, Ashley Terry, and Dan Skinner.

Giovanni Johnson found guilty of kidnapping, raping UNF student

Guilty as charged — convicted rapist Giovanni Johnson will now spend life in prison for the 2021 home invasion and rape of a University of North Florida student. The horrific crime occurred in broad daylight.

The victim was moving out of her college apartment on April 16, 2021. She took some of her belongings downstairs and noticed Johnson sitting nearby. When she went back to her apartment, Johnson had broken in. He attacked and raped her. When the victim's roommates returned home during the attack, Johnson fled from the apartment.

The next day, a Jacksonville Sheriff's officer was investigating a crash on Beach Boulevard and noticed a scooter matching the suspect's getaway vehicle. Because of the officer's due diligence, Johnson was caught. Teamwork by Assistant State Attorneys Terence Martin and Erin Wolfson culminated in his prosecution.

The jury found him guilty of Armed Burglary, Kidnapping with a Firearm, and two counts of Sexual Battery.



Pinkney Carter sentenced to death for 2002 triple-murder of ex-girlfriend, daughter, new boyfriend

Pinkney Carter was sent back to death row in 2024 after his penalty phase was retried by Assistant State Attorneys Bernie de la Rionda and Chris Huband. Carter was previously convicted in 2005 for three counts of First-Degree Murder and was sentenced to death. However, following a change in law relating to death penalty procedures, the penalty phase went back to court.

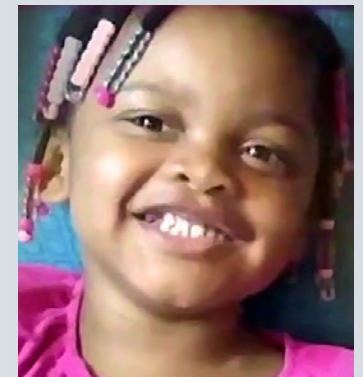
In the early morning hours of July 24, 2002, Carter drove to his ex-girlfriend Elizabeth Smith-Reed's Arlington home. He ambushed and shot her, along with her new boyfriend, Glen Pafford, and Smith-Reed's 16-year-old daughter, Courtney Smith. The victim's other children — ages 6, 8, and 14 — were in the home at the time. Smith-Reed's 14-year-old son held his sister in his arms until first responders arrived, but Courtney didn't survive. None of them did. Carter ran — fleeing the state, then the country, and came back into the United States under an alias and was finally captured in Kentucky in 2004.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Bernie De La Rionda and Chris Huband.

Three innocent victims were murdered and three children were left without a mother. Assistant State Attorneys Bernie de la Rionda



Couple sentenced for torture & murder of 5-year-old



Five-year-old Zykerria Robinson suffered months of torture at the hands of her mother's boyfriend before she died from the abuse on October 18, 2018. Her mother, Michelle Cannimore, pleaded guilty in 2019 to Aggravated Manslaughter of a Child for her role in her daughter's death. It wouldn't be until February 8, 2024 — nearly six years after her murder — that a jury would find Jonte Harris guilty of First-Degree Murder, Aggravated Manslaughter of a Child, and Aggravated Child Abuse.

Harris was Cannimore's boyfriend and was often left in charge of her children when she went to work. Cannimore knew Harris had been abusing Zykerria for months but did nothing to stop him. Around 4:30 a.m. on Oct. 18, 2018, Cannimore called 911 after Zykerria had been unresponsive for hours. She was rushed to the hospital, but the trauma the little girl endured took her life.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Lauren Anderson and Dan Skinner with the help of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Harris was sentenced to life in prison, and Cannimore to 30 years.

IN THE COURTROOM (CONTINUED)

Aggressive & innovative prosecutions against drug dealers prove successful

The office has been aggressively prosecuting drug dealers whose sales result in death since 2018 when the Florida Legislature changed the definition of homicide to include such crimes. Dealers sell deadly drugs like fentanyl to the community, and when someone dies from their supply, they keep selling. We continue to prosecute and secure convictions for these crimes.

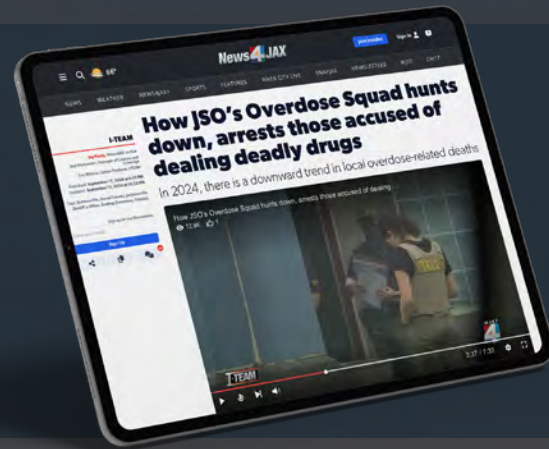
This innovative and aggressive approach and comprehensive understanding of this epidemic have been adopted across the country because it is a problem that knows no demographic or geographic boundaries, which we have witnessed in Jacksonville.

Reginald McKeiver's case was just that.

In 2024, a Duval County jury found him guilty of Murder by Unlawful Distribution and Sale, Manufacture, or Delivery of a Controlled Substance. The Honorable Anthony Salem sentenced him to life in prison. On Dec. 3, 2022, a 49-year-old mother returned from work to the hotel room she was living in with her teenage daughter. In the morning, her daughter tried to wake her up, but her mom didn't move. She had overdosed mere feet from her child on drugs she bought from Reginald McKeiver. The drugs were a fatal compound of fentanyl and an animal tranquilizer.



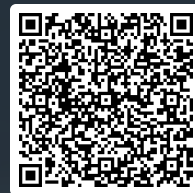
The case was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Joe Licandro (pictured above) and Carleshia Jimerson with help from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Overdose Squad.



JSO Overdose Squad

Fatal overdoses spiked in 2021 and have since been declining, yet the numbers remain in the hundreds in Duval County.

In 2019, The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office set up an Overdose Squad with the sole mission to take drug dealers off the streets. The Squad is comprised of detectives from narcotics and homicide divisions who work closely with the Fourth Circuit prosecutors to build their cases.



My message to the dealers would be: we are coming after you. We will find you. We will stop this.

— Assistant State Attorney Joe Licandro



On High Alert



The office's fentanyl awareness PSA, *On High Alert*, was nominated by the Jacksonville Film Festival for the Best of Jax category. Cinematographer Josh Hansbrough with Birdman Filmworks expertly told the stories of people affected by the opioid crisis. The piece that was nominated centered on Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Captain Eric Prosswimmer's heartfelt plea after losing a colleague to an overdose.



SCAN HERE
to watch "On High Alert"



Jury finds Burns guilty of murder-for-hire of his wife, Velvet Burns

A high-profile 2019 murder-for-hire case came to a close with a conviction and a life sentence for Jerry Burns, the husband of his victim, Velvet Burns. Prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Alan Mizrahi, Christina Stifler, and Brittany Johnson, the children of Velvet Burns felt a sense of closure after five years of waiting for the trial of their father.

In 2019, Burns plotted with his mistress to kill his wife. He went out of town the morning of the murder in an attempt to form an alibi, leaving the back door unlocked for his mistress and her on-and-off again boyfriend. They faked a break-in and murdered Velvet.

Velvet was more than a mother to her two children, Kayleen and Kolby; they saw her as their biggest supporter. *"Our last conversation was at 4:08 p.m. the day before she was taken,"* Kayleen said on the stand. *"She was the one who was always behind the camera and rarely in the photo. To know her was to love her, she was the most selfless person you'd ever meet. She was the heart of our family, and her absence has left a hole that can never be filled."*

Burns' mistress, Amanda Love, and her partner, Stephen Hand, previously pleaded guilty in 2019 and 2022 respectively.

Armstrong found guilty of murdering Tasheka Young, her unborn child

On July 17, 2024, Jacksonville saw justice for the beloved radio DJ, Tasheka Young, who was murdered by her boyfriend. Two years earlier, Bursey Armstrong Jr. broke into her apartment and shot Young twice while their two young children were home. Young was pregnant with their third child.

During the trial, Assistant State Attorneys Sheila Loizos and Carleshia Jimerson walked the jury through the evidence that showed their volatile relationship and what led to the moment Young's mother found her daughter's body.

A Duval County jury found him guilty of two counts of Second-Degree Murder for Young and her unborn child. The Honorable Tatiana Salvador sentenced Armstrong to life in prison.

Her family described it as a bittersweet moment and took the chance to remember Tasheka.



The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Whatever she could do for you, she would do it. If you were in need for something, Tasheka would give it to you. That was my baby.

Olivia Young, Tasheka's mother

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS



Leah Drake

Communications & Engagement Specialist

Leah Drake joined the State Attorney's Office as an Emmy-nominated and award-winning journalist, coming on board as the Communications and Engagement Specialist

in May 2023. She was a morning reporter and TV anchor for more than six years before she decided to turn off her alarm and move her storytelling skills to the public sector. Drake serves as a spokesperson for the office, utilizing her skills with video production, editing, and writing to feature the hard work of our attorneys, staff, and the many resources the office offers. Behind the scenes, she doubles as a legislative researcher and speech writer. Since she joined the office, Drake helped produce the office's novel fentanyl awareness PSA series, which earned a nomination for Best of Jax at the 2024 Jacksonville Film Festival.

Pam Hazel

Director, Clay County State Attorney's Office

Pam Hazel has led the Clay County office since February 2019. Officially titled Director of the Clay County office, Hazel supervises the Fourth Circuit's second-most populous county and still tries cases—in 2024, she led the prosecution of Corey Binderim, a death penalty case that was live-streamed by news outlets. Hazel joined the State Attorney's Office in 2001 after graduating from law school. She has tried more than 25 homicide cases to verdict, with the number always climbing. Pam received the State Attorney's Office's Distinguished Service Award in 2017.



Jay Plotkin

Homicide Division

Guess who's back... back again? Jay Plotkin returned to the State Attorney's Office. After spending the past 15 years in civil practice, he joined the Homicide Division and is a resource to all, providing

office-wide trainings, and as a mentor to our attorneys. Plotkin first joined the office in 1987. From 1993 until 2009, Plotkin served as the Director of the Juvenile Justice Division. In 1999, State Attorney Harry Shorstein promoted him to the Chief Assistant State Attorney, and he remained in that position until January 2009. He returned to the office in mid-2023 and has not wasted any time—Plotkin has tried seven homicide cases since returning.



TRAINING & EDUCATION



Empowering Our Team with Knowledge & Expertise

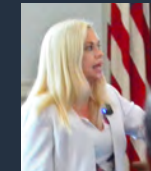
Over the past year, our prosecutors received training from experienced prosecutors leading our office & local law enforcement.

State Attorney Melissa Nelson on Opening Statements Featuring Joel Cooper

In a two-part special, State Attorney Melissa Nelson was joined by Assistant State Attorney Joel Cooper to share insights into how to **nail an opening statement**. In the second portion, State Attorney Nelson hosted a lunch-and-learn where she opened the floor to other experienced ASAs to discuss their techniques.



Diving into Digital Evidence



Some of this year's trainings focused on using and presenting digital evidence at trial. Division Chiefs from Targeted Prosecution led the trainings. Leah Owens (*pictured left*) shared her tried and true practices when working with digital evidence and phone companies. Lauren Anderson discussed navigating and presenting cell phone data. And Trey Atkinson and Christina Stifler (*pictured above*) talked about digital data and evidence beyond cell phones.

First-Aid Refresh



Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Police Academy instructors provided our office with an interactive first-aid course to refresh our skills. They demonstrated how to properly use a tourniquet and an AED as well as other life-saving measures. Thank you, Officers Steven Beall and Matthew Williams, for the information.



Return of Plotkin: Closing Arguments

Since Jay Plotkin returned to his roots at the SAO4, attorneys have been leaning on his expertise. Plotkin has tried **more than 100 criminal cases** during his career and shares his knowledge with our attorneys. He hosted a two-part training on closing arguments delving into how to seal the deal before the jury.



TAKING ON SCHOOL THREATS

SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO THE KIDS

ZERO TOLERANCE — that's the message the office is delivering to youth across the Fourth Circuit. Teaming up with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Assistant State Attorney Kristen Liesch visited K-12 schools in Jacksonville to speak directly to students about the seriousness of school threats.

In the first half of the 2024-25 school year, **hundreds of threats** were written or called in and the office is currently handling **more than 90 cases** in Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties.

By video, the students hear from teens who have been arrested for making a school threat, and they learn about the severe consequences those teens faced from their actions.



State Attorney Melissa Nelson and Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters also teamed up for a joint message on social media to both parents and students — every threat is taken seriously.

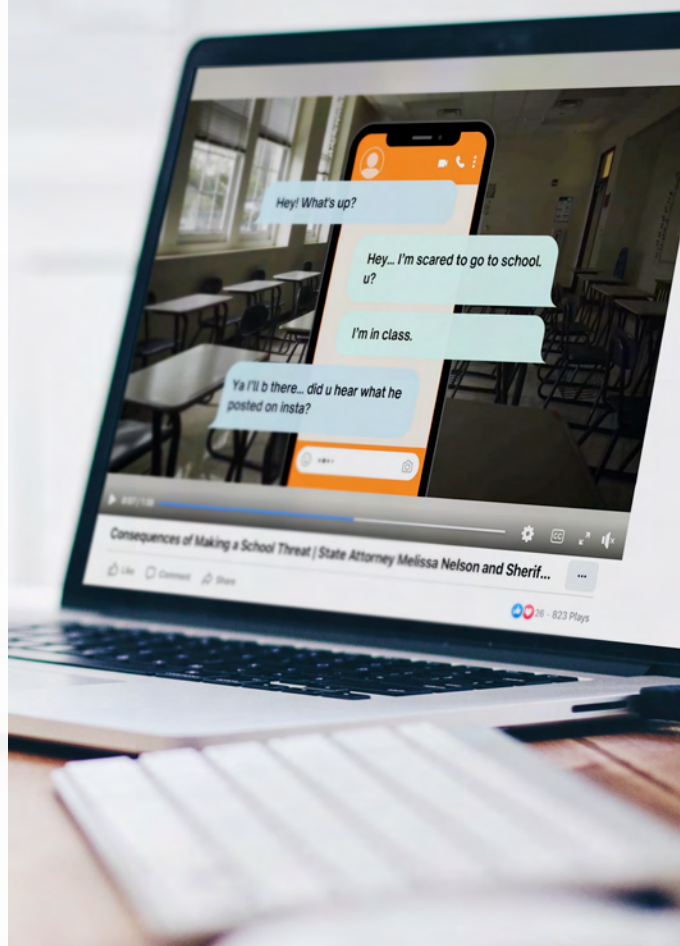
A verbal or written threat to kill is a felony crime. It's a crime that can change a child's life and future.

SCAN HERE
to watch "Consequences of
Making a School Threat"



You might think it's a joke. You might think it's just a prank, but it's not. Students and teachers across the country have been killed in school shootings. So if you make a threat to our schools, we will not give you the benefit of the doubt... it is a felony. Be a leader in your school, not the kid being led out in handcuffs.

Excerpt from State Attorney Melissa Nelson and Sheriff T.K. Waters' video message below.



INSIDE THE STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Milestones & Moments of the Year

In 2024, the State Attorney's Office marked a year of growth, recognition, and meaningful change. From celebrating the accomplishments of Marcus Isom Jr. and Octavius Holliday, who were honored for their leadership in justice and the community, to unveiling the transformative R.E.A.D. Rooms to support children during difficult times, we've seen significant strides in our mission. We also honored the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., reflecting on his impact in Jacksonville and the courthouse. The "Dog Days of Summer" brought our four-legged partners into the spotlight, showcasing their role in community service. Finally, we introduced a fresh new look for the SAO4 with a redesigned website and seal, making it easier to connect with the people we serve.



Marcus Isom Jr. & Octavius Holliday Recognized for Excellence in Justice & Community Leadership

The top two prosecutors in the state of Florida are in the Fourth Circuit: Assistant State Attorneys Marcus Isom Jr. (pictured left) and Octavius Holliday (right). The honor was bestowed on them by the Florida Bar after the duo swept the 2024 Government Lawyers Awards category.

Holliday, a director in the office's Special Prosecution and head of the Human Rights Division, was named the 2024 Claude Pepper Outstanding Government Lawyer. The statewide honor is given to a Florida attorney who has made "an extraordinary and exemplary contribution as a practicing government lawyer" with at least 10 years of government practice. The award is named in honor of Claude Pepper, a Florida attorney, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Representative.

Isom, a former attorney in Targeted Prosecution, was named The Florida Bar's

2024 Young Lawyers' Division Outstanding Government Lawyer. The award recognizes a young attorney who excels in the field and possesses a reputation for integrity, dedication to the community, and commitment to the success of young government lawyers.

"Octavius Holliday and Marcus Isom are leaders in our office, excellent prosecutors in the courtroom, and community-focused ambassadors outside of it," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson. "They are dedicated public servants who are extremely worthy of this prestigious recognition."

Holliday and Isom have combined decades of experience in public service, and both extend their services to the community through volunteer work. "It just doesn't stop at 5 o'clock. We have work to do outside of these walls," said Holliday.

Both men see their positions from a holistic approach. From courtroom to community, they seek to go beyond justice... they aim to improve the well-being of our community.

When I go to the podium, I don't just say 'I'm here for the State.' I like to say I represent the people of the State of Florida. When I'm coming to work in the morning, coming and going, going to the grocery store, people don't know who I am, but I think about those people and how what I do in the courtroom impacts them.

Former Assistant State Attorney
Marcus Isom Jr.



A NEW CHAPTER: *R.E.A.D. Rooms Open in Duval & Clay County!*

R.E.A.D. stands for Relax, Escape, and Dream. A visit to the State Attorney's Office isn't always easy – a child might be here as a victim, a witness, or accompanying a family member who is one of those two. The R.E.A.D. Room provides a safe distraction for children.

During 2024 Victims' Rights Week, the office officially unveiled our revamped R.E.A.D. Room on the first floor of the Duval County office.

The R.E.A.D. Room was created by the Hutton Family and Smart Justice Division Chief Coral Messina with

generous contributions from SAO employees and community members who believe in the mission and the office's victim-centered approach.

The revamped room inspired others. By October 2024, our caring staff and attorneys in the Clay County office (pictured left) donated supplies and decor to create their own cozy space. The office has plans to expand into our Nassau County office as well.



relax, escape, and dream

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 60 YEARS OF HISTORY AT SAO4



June 13, 2024, marked 60 years since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. testified in the then-federal courthouse, which is now home to the State Attorney's Office. The historic courtroom, located on the 5th floor and featured on the front cover, has been preserved, though it is now used for tours, training, and events. As we reflect and honor Dr. King's legacy, we acknowledge the profound impact his testimony had on the nation's Civil Rights movement.

The year was 1964. St. Augustine was celebrating its 400th anniversary, and the Civil Rights Movement was at a tipping point. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization created to coordinate protests across the South against segregation, was led by 35-year-old Dr. King. He brought the group to the oldest European city in the nation to gain support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Protests began in St. Augustine the summer prior, led by the local NAACP chapter. The KKK violently attacked demonstrators, and the activists were blamed for the brutality. As the locals struggled, they reached out to the SCLC for support.

Eventually, turmoil in St. Augustine brought Dr. King to Florida himself. He arrived on May 18, 1964. Before the end of the month, his hotel room was peppered with bullets. The violence only propelled the demonstrators to continue their peaceful protests. On June 11, Dr. King and others were arrested for requesting service at a segregated restaurant.

Officers took Dr. King to the St. Johns County Jail, but due to death threats, he was transported to the Duval County Jail. On June 13, he appeared before U.S. District Court Judge Bryan Simpson. After Dr. King's testimony, Judge Simpson ordered St. Augustine city officials to not interfere with marches and protests. Dr. King and SCLC leaders finally left St. Augustine on July 1. A mere day later, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law.

Who was Judge Bryan Simpson?

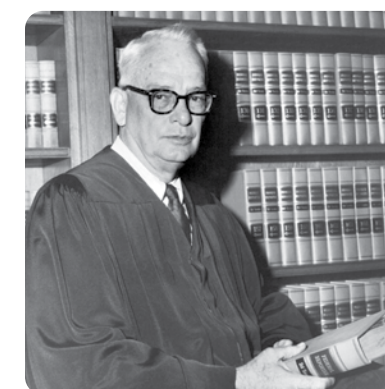
Now the namesake of the new Federal Courthouse in Jacksonville, Judge Simpson was a well-known judicial figure in the community. Simpson served during the 60s and proved to be an ally for local minority communities. Simpson's legal decisions during the civil rights demonstrations in St. Augustine led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In the 1966 book *Southern Justice*, the

author Leon Friedman states, *"There was one district court judge who excelled all others in his speed in enforcing the law and in his willingness to embark on new legal territory to protect Negro rights. He is Judge Bryan Simpson, Chief Judge of the United States Court for the Middle District of Florida."*

Judge Simpson served as a Federal Judge for 47 years on both the District

Court and the 5th and 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. He passed away in 1987 at age 84. His family continues to serve the Jacksonville community and graciously provided this photo of him.



William Kunstler concludes his section on St. Augustine in his book, *Deep In My Heart*, with the following:

A southern judge, Bryan Simpson, determined to follow the law as written, had, with one stroke of his pen, ended an era that had begun centuries before.





Dog Days OF Summer

Two legs or four, the SAO4 let in all breeds of visitors throughout the historic halls during the summer of 2024. These dogs are four paws in on helping the community, from searching schools for firearms to comforting victims or witnesses. Meet some of SAO4's most loyal companions.

Celebrating Bring Your Dog to Work Day

The office's annual dog parade had a great showing from young to old! Together, we raised more than \$1,400 and donated a car-full of pet supplies to No More Homeless Pets. Thank you to our Dog Day Committee who organized the event.

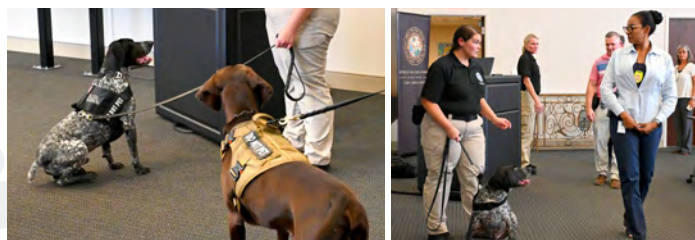


K9s Penny & Maverick Sniff Out Danger

From tracking firearms to fentanyl, Duval County Public School Police K9s Penny and Maverick provide an added layer of security for local students. The duo showed off for our summer interns. It's easy to see their temperament fits perfectly in the school system with thousands of children. But when it's go-time, **they're nose to the grindstone.**

TSA K9s Show Us How It's Done

TSA agents brought in the big dogs — the ones **responsible for our protection at Jacksonville International Airport.** Using a planted



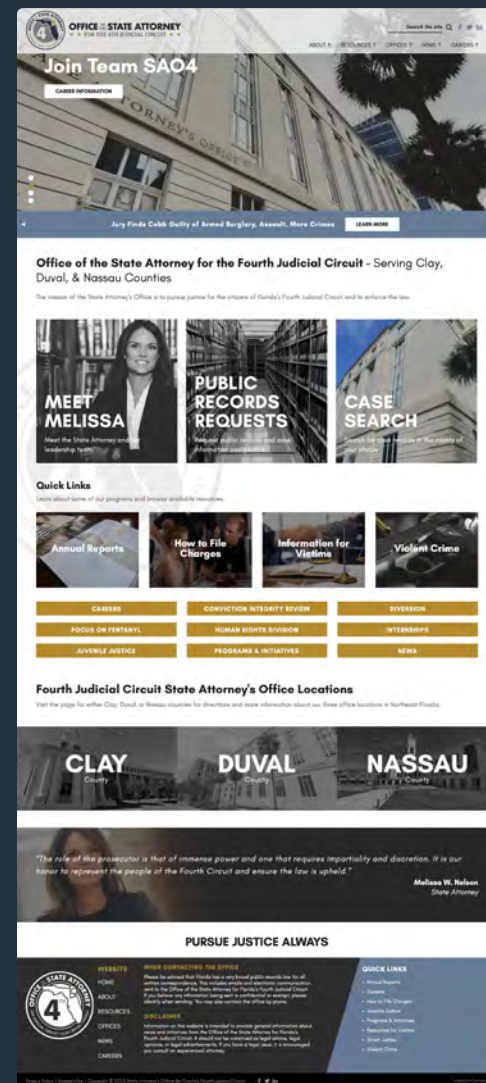
target, SAO4 staff walked past the dogs as if they were in the TSA line at the airport. The dogs immediately alerted to illegal items. They're talented working dogs with a strict 'do not pet' policy!

5th Floor's Resident Fluff

Twice a week, you'll see heads peering into Chief of Staff Lisa Page's office. **Mr. Kevin Bennett Jr.** takes his spot under the back table. Without a peep from him all day, you'd never know this English Cream Golden Retriever is putting in his 8 hours. He may not get much work done, but he's a natural-born morale booster.



OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY ★ ★ FOR THE 4TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ★ ★



A Bold New Look for the SAO4:

Honoring our Mission, Embracing Change

The office website and seal got a major overhaul in 2024. The SAO4 now has a new seal in blue, gold, and grey highlighting the three counties in our circuit. The website was a complete remodel; it is now easier to navigate for victims and the public. This years-long project was led by former Director of Community Impact Linzee Ott.

SAO4TH.COM



Community INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement has always been at the heart of the State Attorney's Office.

In 2024, our team took part in a variety of events that strengthened our connection with the public and reflect our dedication to justice, outreach, and support. From educational initiatives to volunteer efforts, here's a look at the ways we enjoyed engaging with and contributing to the communities we serve.



Clay Office Donates to Quigley House

Our prosecutors and staff in Clay County understand the urgent needs of domestic violence victims in the community. In February, they donated clothing, shoes, cleaning supplies, toys, and more to Quigley House, Clay's only domestic violence and sexual assault center.



Big Brothers Big Sisters Visit + Q&A

A. Philip Randolph High School's Big Brothers Big Sisters visited the historic Ed Austin Building to tour the office and participate in a Q&A session with attorneys, paralegals, and victim advocates.

Showing Support Through Denim Day



Staff donned their favorite pair of jeans for Denim Day on the last Wednesday of April — an international campaign to show support for survivors of sexual assault. We stand with victims and will pursue justice always.

Golf for Childrens' Gifts

The office was honored to take part in the Amelia National NCSC Charities, Inc. Golf Tournament which benefits the Shop with a Cop program to buy gifts for local children during the holidays.



JSO Police Academy Visit

The SAO welcome JSO's newest police recruits. The class of 28 met with some of the office's leaders to learn about how arrests and investigations turn into cases that go to trial and about our Smart Justice Initiatives.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (CONTINUED)

HONORING DEDICATION: SAO Team Members Awarded for Their Impact on Crime Victims' Rights

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the Jacksonville Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council recognized outstanding individuals and organizations who went

"above and beyond their daily responsibilities on behalf of crime victims and victims' rights."



County Court Director John Kalinowski was awarded the Criminal Justice Advocate, given to an individual who has demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to victims' rights. Kalinowski oversees the office's misdemeanor division and handles vehicular homicides. He has been with the office since August 2001.



Victim Advocate Karina Gasca was honored as Outstanding Victim Advocate. Gasca joined the office in 2021 following her longtime service to the U.S. Navy. In her role as victim advocate, she works in Targeted Prosecution assisting victims of violent crime.



Barbara Walker was honored as the 2023 Courageous Victim. Walker was introduced by **Assistant State Attorney Jaclyn Blair**, who prosecuted Walker's ex-husband in 2023. In 2022, Walker's then estranged husband brutally attacked her in their home, stabbing her numerous times while their children were home. Walker survived and testified against her husband, who was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to life in prison.

These awards are a testament to the individual and collective efforts of everyone at the State Attorney's Office in pursuing justice. We are honored to have these outstanding individuals representing the office.

State Attorney Melissa Nelson



Sexual Assault Awareness Month Press Conference

Former Special Victims Unit Director — now Chief Assistant Adair Newman spoke on behalf of the office for Sexual Assault Awareness Month at a televised press conference at City Hall. The office stands with survivors of sexual violence.

Mentor Pod Visit to Camp Blanding for Training & Collaboration

Camp Blanding hosted State Attorney Melissa Nelson, prosecutors, and staff to tour the facility, check out the obstacle course, and take part in a shooting simulator. The group also met with the Multi-Jurisdictional Counter Drug Task Force.



SAO4 Prosecutors Tour Naval Base & Ship

Naval Station Mayport and USS Cooperstown hosted a group of prosecutors to tour the base and ship as a part of SAO4's mentorship program. These trips into the community provide insight into what makes the Fourth Circuit special.



MHOP Community Service Award & Graduation

Jacksonville City Council President Ron Salem awarded the Melody Starr Anne Bishop Community Service Award to the Mental Health Offender Program (MHOP).



The SAO4 is proud to be a part of the effort along with the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Sulzbacher, the Public Defender's Office, and the Fourth Circuit judiciary to improve lives by addressing underlying mental health issues.

Fifteen people graduated from MHOP in 2024. During the ceremony, each graduate was presented with official paperwork announcing their dropped misdemeanor charges. It was the 6th MHOP graduation since the program began in February 2021.



INVOLVEMENT



Middle School Visit to Courthouse

Students from Kernan Middle School stopped by the Duval County Courthouse to learn about careers in criminal justice. Thank you to our prosecutors who are educating and inspiring the next generation!



SAO Supports Nassau County School Supplies Drive

Our office is proud to take part in Nassau County Sheriff's Office's school supplies drive! SAO's victim advocate Renae Lewin (left) met with Sheriff Bill Leeper and Nassau County Sheriff's Office victim advocate Tasha Addison (right) to deliver two large boxes of school supplies for local students.



Angel Tree Brings Holiday Joy to Domestic Violence Survivors

In collaboration with Micah's Place, Victim Advocate Renae Lewin set up an Angel Tree and the elves got to work. The entire Nassau County office fulfilled the wishes of those who were displaced over the holidays due to domestic violence.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
(CONTINUED)



JBA Chili Cook Off

Our prosecutors were serving more than justice for the annual Jacksonville Bar Young Lawyers Section Chili Cookoff at Riverside Arts Market. Special thank you to Jax Pickleball Store for sponsoring our team. Rumor is we didn't win... *but we'll investigate further.*



SAO4 Assists JSO's Teen Police Academy with Mock Trial Experience

Assistant state attorneys met with JSO's Teen Police Academy to talk about their roles as prosecutors and get the students involved in a mini mock trial based on the plot of *The Lion King*.



Project: Cold Case

SAO4 Victim Advocates Connect with Project Cold Case

Victim advocates met with Project Cold Case founder Ryan Backmann to tour their office and learn about how the organization is bridging the gap for victims and survivors when their cases go cold.



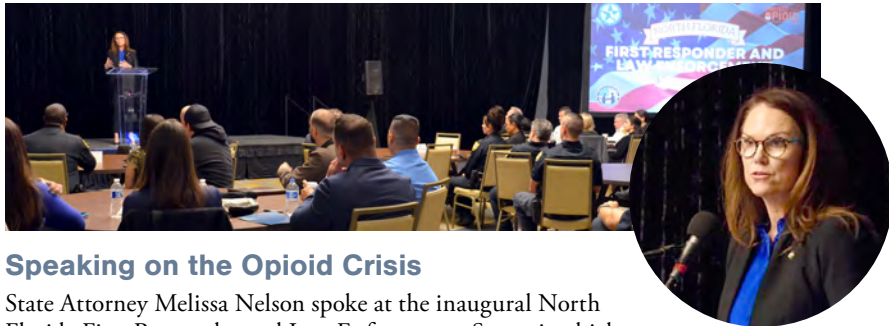
Clay County Staff Tours Seamark Ranch to Explore Collaborative Support for Kids

Staff and attorneys with the Clay County office toured Seamark Ranch in Green Cove Springs and met with leadership to discuss how we can work together to help kids in need of services. From on-site housing, school, farming, equine therapy, sports, and more, the organization aids child victims who are high risk.



WJC Kickball Tournament

Kicking off Sexual Assault Awareness Month alongside community partners, the office played in the Women's Center of Jacksonville annual kickball competition. While the law is reason free from passion, kickball is passion free from law.



Speaking on the Opioid Crisis

State Attorney Melissa Nelson spoke at the inaugural North Florida First Responder and Law Enforcement Summit which brought together local, state, and federal agencies to share information, best practices, and innovative methods to fight the opioid epidemic.

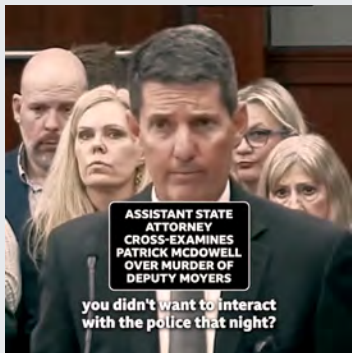


SAO4 PROSECUTORS
in the Media Spotlight



WJCT Radio

In February, Assistant State Attorney and Homicide Director Dan Skinner (*above left*) spoke with WJCT radio station about the death penalty and the laws that impact those cases in Florida. During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Chief Assistant Adair Newman (*above right*) spoke on WJCT about victim-focused standards in the prosecution of sexual assaults and the misconceptions about SVU cases.



BBC Documentary

Chief Assistant Mark Caliel (*above*) and Circuit Court Director Chris Huband sat down with BBC filmmakers after the death penalty phase of Patrick McDowell's case. The jury recommended death for McDowell for the murder of Nassau County Deputy Joshua Moyers. Over six weeks, crews interviewed friends of Moyers, prosecutors, deputies, and more. The docu-series called *Life and Death Row* airs in 2025.



Law & Crime Network

Assistant State Attorney Pam Hazel was interviewed by Law & Crime Network about the extensive investigation and trial of Corey Binderim, a local contractor who murdered an elderly client, Susan Mauldin. The jury found him guilty, and he was sentenced to life in prison.

HONORING OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT



2023 OLEO AWARDS

We were honored to once again recognize exemplary service from our law enforcement partners in Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties at our annual Daniel E. Watts Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer (OLEO) awards in April. Partner agencies from across Northeast Florida were recognized for their work.



The Fourth Circuit Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer awards ceremony is an annual event hosted by the State Attorney's Office, sponsored by Stellar, to recognize exceptional public safety efforts at the local, state, and federal levels.

**Bravery Award**

CCSO Charles Smith

Citizen/Volunteer PartnershipJSO Russell Williams
Lauren Hutton**Civilian Public Safety Award**

JSO Christi Allen

K-9 Valor AwardFHP Christopher Karpinski /
K9 Sumi**Lifesaving Award**JSO Christal Gause
JSO Walter Umland**Medal of Valor**JSO Senad Ahmetovic
JSO Justin Cotton
Border Patrol Kerry Redmond
FHP Sergey Morozov**Meritorious Service**

JSO Steve Rudlaff

Investigative ExcellenceJSO Timothy Davis
JSO Jay Bump
JSO Nick Theilacker
JSO Cory Brown
JSO Robert Rebeor
USCBP David Broussard
JSO Abby Stoklosa
JSO Undercover Detective
—
NCSO Ryan Goethe
—
FHP Justin Bowen
—
JSO Abby Stoklosa
JSO Undercover Detective
JSO James Carpenter
JSO Shawn Burns
JSO Frank Canaday
JSO Donald Maynard
JSO Forrest Whitehead
JSO James Tutwiler



2023 SAO4 EMPLOYEE AWARDS

Each year, the office gathers to celebrate its own and recognize significant achievements throughout the past year. Employees were applauded for both their contributions to the office and to the community, as well as for milestone anniversaries with the office.

Presented by State Attorney Melissa Nelson:

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
Avinash Namilla

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
Miriam Nelson
Angela Judah

STATE ATTORNEY'S AWARD
Christina Stifler

MISSION VISION VALUES AWARD
Kristen Liesch

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR
Corie Posey

TRIAL ADVOCACY
Crystal Ganpath-Freed

SILENT SUPERSTARS
David Chapman
Cindy Cribbs
Leah Drake
Linzee Ott
Lisa Page

The following were chosen by the awards committee:

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT
Lauren Anderson

LEADERSHIP
Lisa Foreman
Heather Lind

OUTSTANDING TEAM MEMBERS
Karina Gasca
Beth Ann Works

OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATION
Charlie Welch

OUTSTANDING TRIAL SUPPORT
Robbie Zukauskas



Commitment,
Honor & Service





2023 SAO4 AWARDS FOR YEARS OF SERVICE



35 YEARS

Barbara Jo Chessman-Foote
Dori Ann Stone



A Shout Out for Our Employees' Accomplishments



25 YEARS

Angela Judah
Matthew O'Keefe

20 YEARS

Patricia Hamilton
Brian Hughes
Theresa Simak

15 YEARS

Rachel Algee
Phil Bavington
Erin Wolfson

10 YEARS

Lauren Anderson
LaTasha Campbell
Jessica Hensley
Chris Huband
Katelyn Johnston
Heather Lind
Tom L. Mangan, V
Tiffany Mitchell
Hector Murcia-Bustos
Kierra Steele
Vanessa Wheeler-Sanchez

5 YEARS

Ashley Bartuccelli
Lori Carr
Alexandra Fischer
Marcus L. Isom, Jr.
Brittany Johnson
Jareh Kelly
Kristin Knecht
Catie Messinger
Shelley Thibodeau
Samantha Youel



Homicide Directors Alan Mizrahi & Dan Skinner

National Award for Outstanding Advocacy Honorees

Homicide Directors Alan Mizrahi (left) and Dan Skinner (right) were honored for their Outstanding Advocacy in Capital and Complex Homicide Cases for 2023-24. They prosecute the Fourth Circuit's most violent criminals and bring justice for victim's families. The national award was given by the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation.



Victim Advocate Arielle Holder

FBI Citizen's Academy Graduate

Victim Advocate Arielle Holder successfully graduated the FBI Citizen's Academy, a six-week program where community leaders are given the opportunity to go behind the scenes of local FBI operations and experience case-studies and demonstrations led by Special Agents.



EMPLOYEES' ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONTINUED)

Blair



Assistant
State Attorney
Jaclyn Blair

Board Certified & Chairwoman



In 2024, Assistant State Attorney Jaclyn Blair received her board certification in Criminal Trial Law from The Florida Bar. She joins an elite group of attorneys in the office who are also board-certified, which requires a rigorous application process and strict qualifications to be considered, including having to have completed at least 20 jury trials. In the same year, Blair was elected Chairwoman of the Public Service Grant Council for the City of Jacksonville, a council she was appointed to more than four years ago.

Posey



Assistant
State Attorney
Corie Posey

Leadership Academy
Class Member



The Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism at The Florida Bar selected ASA Corie Posey as a member of the 2024-25 Leadership Academy Class. The program fosters leadership skills in young lawyers through trainings, events, and networking.

Messina

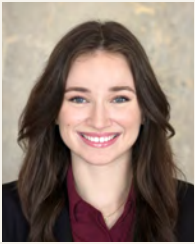


Smart Justice
Division
Chief Coral
Messina

Leadership Jacksonville
Class of 2025



Smart Justice Division Chief Coral Messina was selected as a member of the Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2025. Coral is one of 57 chosen to participate in this esteemed program which brings together diverse community leaders to connect and develop further education.



Pajcic & Brown

Assistant State
Attorneys Daley Pajcic
& Elizabeth Brown

Leadership Jacksonville Next
Generation 2024

Leadership Jacksonville's Next Generation 2024 selected ASAs Daley Pajcic and Elizabeth Brown to take part in the summer program bringing together 30-40 young professionals. The program allows the members to network and learn more about local community issues.



Chief Assistant
Adair Newman
First Female Chief Assistant
at State Attorney's Office

When Adair Newman started at the State Attorney's Office in 2001, there were not a lot of women in higher supervisory roles. Fast forward 20 years and women prosecutors now outnumber men by just under a 3:1 ratio in the office. Female division chiefs outpace their male counterparts by more than double. And, for the first time, the office has a female chief assistant — Adair Newman. Her career began in County Court and she was quickly promoted to the Circuit Court line under a new division chief: Mark Caliel, who was also named chief assistant in January 2024. "Our careers have crossed many times," she said noting she tried her first felony case with Caliel. In the new role, Newman oversees County Court, the Special Victims Unit, the Juvenile Division, and Nassau County.

Newman

Photo credit: Brendan Rivers / WJCT News / WJCT News



A Shout Out for Our
2024 SAO4 Promotions



Stephen Siegel
First Assistant



Mark Caliel
Chief Assistant



Adair Newman
Chief Assistant



Robin Waters
Director of Investigations



Lauren Anderson
Division Chief,
Targeted Prosecution



Trey Atkinson
Division Chief,
Targeted Prosecution



Jaclyn Blair
Division Chief,
County Court



Khary Gaynor
Director,
Special Victims Unit



Marleigh Gulliford
Division Chief,
Special Victims Unit



Octavius Holliday
Director,
Special Prosecution



Chris Huband
Director,
Circuit Court



Joe Licandro
Director,
Special Prosecution



Tom Mangan
Deputy Director,
Nassau County



Brooke Milo
Division Chief,
County Court



Leah Owens
Division Chief,
Targeted Prosecution



Ashley Terry
Deputy Director,
Clay County



ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY CLASS OF 2024

The office welcomed new Assistant State Attorneys in September. They were sworn into the Florida Bar during a ceremony by the Honorable Chief Judge Lance Day, and State Attorney Melissa Nelson delivered their Oath of Attorney.



Honoring Three-Year Commitments

In a special ceremony, State Attorney Melissa Nelson acknowledged the prosecutors who honored their commitment of service to the office. Nelson thanked them for their hard work, demonstrated their success to the incoming class of ASAs, and rewarded them with an exclusive challenge coin commemorating three years of service to the SAO4.



AJ
Appiah



Carolyn
Auchter



Katherina
Brown



Daniel
Cardenas



Crystal
Ganpath-Freed



Carleshia
Jimerson



JJ
Netter



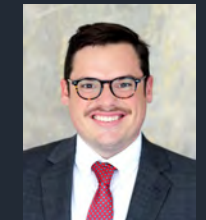
Corie
Posey



Giovanna
Rivera



Christina
Roldan



Lee
Wingard



Hosting Interns with Tours, Q&A, and Competitions



The office hosted interns all year. They attended a meet-and-greet with State Attorney Melissa Nelson, toured law enforcement agencies across the Fourth Circuit, had a Q & A session with JSO's K9 Unit, and competed in an opening statement competition.



State Attorney Melissa Nelson



DEDICATION to Leadership, Advocacy & Justice



Tapped by Florida Supreme Court

In 2022, State Attorney Melissa Nelson was appointed to serve on the Judicial Circuit Assessment Committee to oversee research and discussion on whether Florida's 20 judicial circuits should consolidate to better serve the constituents. At the end of 2023, and in a unanimous vote by the 14-person committee after months of meetings, public hearings, and surveys that generated more than 7,000 responses, the committee recommended not to consolidate. The Florida Supreme Court concurred.

In the News

State Attorney Melissa Nelson sat down with local reporters (*pictured above*) to discuss her upcoming third term, the drastic drop in Jacksonville's murder rate, and how the court is addressing gun violence cases.

National Prosecutorial Panel

State Attorney Melissa Nelson traveled to Washington D.C. to the Conservative Political Action Conference where she was invited to speak on the Prosecutorial Advisory Panel. On a national level, she highlighted the office's achievements in fighting violent crime, dismantling criminal enterprises, and pursuing justice for all victims of crime.

American College of Trial Lawyers Regional Meet-Up

State Attorney Melissa Nelson is a proud member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, an invitation-only fellowship of exceptional trial lawyers. The Jacksonville fellows include several former assistant state attorneys and judges.



From left to right – Top row: Alan Chipperfield, Edward McCarthy, Graham Allen, Robert McKenzie, David Barksdale, Angelo Patacca, Patricia Crauwels, Daniel Iracki, Rufus Pennington, Chris Hazelip, Hank Cox, Buddy Schulz; Bottom row: Dana Bradford, Bob Parrish, the Honorable Chuck Arnold, Melissa Nelson, John DeVault, Michael Tanner



2024 by the Numbers

To benefit our community, these key programs and initiatives were priorities in 2024.



Juvenile Civil Citations

This program allows youth with no previous criminal history to avoid a criminal record. Instead of an arrest, law enforcement officers can issue a civil citation.

Savings:

\$4+ million¹

Civil citations issued to eligible youth:²

- **79% – SAO4**
- **62% – Florida Average**

Juvenile civil citations issued:

855



Smart Justice Initiatives

These diversion programs, including our Restitution Enforcement Program, give offenders the opportunity to pay restitution to victims.

Collected for the State of Florida in restitution that goes to victims:

\$2+ million

1. The cost to arrest a juvenile is \$5000. The cost to issue a Civil Citation is \$386, saving \$4614 for each juvenile issued a civil citation and not arrested. Florida DJJ Civil Citation Initiative, www.floridajudicialcircuit.com/sites/default/files/ckfinder/files/STIAC%20Civil%20CitationWebinar.pdf, September 22, 2014, pg. 27; Florida DJJ Roadmap to System Excellence, www.scribd.com/document/162251091/Florida-Department-of-Juvenile-Justice-Roadmap-to-System-Excellence, August 1, 2013, pg. 32.

2. Prearrest Delinquency Citation Dashboard (state.fl.us)



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