



Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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Media Advisory

19th Annual Outstanding Citizen Awards Ceremony

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is April 8 through 14. This year's theme "***Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims***," emphasizes the importance of inclusion in victim services. The focus will be on how to ensure every crime victim has access to services and support as well as how professionals, organizations, and communities can work together to reach all victims.

NCVRW is a time for communities across the country to bring attention to the devastating impact crime has on its victims. It is also a time to show appreciation for the brave victims and witnesses who face fear, shame, guilt and personal challenges to ensure justice is served.

In recognition of victims' rights week, District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert honored local victims and witnesses who overcame extraordinarily difficult circumstances in order to testify and participate in the criminal justice process, and those who went above and beyond to protect and help a victim in need. DA Schubert also recognized several individuals who contributed to public safety through outstanding service as a victim advocate and youth ambassador.

Outstanding Citizen Award Recipients

William Wicklund had been dating his girlfriend (T Doe) for a few weeks, after she had recently ended a tumultuous relationship with defendant Jay Strobel. On November 15, 2015, Mr. Wicklund was at his home with T Doe. Strobel snuck into the home, pointed a 9mm semi-automatic firearm at T Doe and told her she was going to "die tonight." T Doe became hysterical telling Strobel to put the gun down, but Strobel kept yelling and threatening to kill her. Mr. Wicklund thought Strobel was going to kill his girlfriend. Several times Mr. Wicklund tried to calm Strobel down and physically placed himself between Strobel and T Doe. At one point, Mr. Wicklund tackled Strobel who then hit him across the face with the gun. T Doe and Mr. Wicklund were able to make it outside where Strobel suddenly pointed the gun towards T Doe and fired a single gunshot before leaving the scene. From the moment Strobel pointed a gun at T Doe until he left, Mr. Wicklund placed his life at risk to protect his girlfriend. He had every opportunity to leave, but chose to stay with a gun at his head and after being seriously injured. He cooperated with law enforcement and testified live at the preliminary hearing and at trial. At sentencing, he courageously gave an emotional victim impact statement. Mr. Wicklund demonstrated unwavering courage and a commitment to ensure justice was served. On September 7, 2017, Strobel was convicted by a jury of two counts of assault with a semi-automatic firearm and making terrorist threats with the allegation that he personally used a firearm found true on all counts. On November 3, 2017, he was sentenced to 22 years, 4 months in state prison.

Sharon McIntyre is a firefighter with the Sacramento Fire Department. On April 7, 2016, she was off-duty driving on Interstate 80 when she came upon a collision scene. CHP Motor Officer Ericson attempted to conduct a welfare check on Austin Scott's vehicle, which was stopped in a center median of Interstate 80. When Officer Ericson pulled his motorcycle behind Scott's truck, Scott suddenly put the truck in reverse, hitting Officer Ericson's motorcycle and ejecting him. Scott then pulled forward, driving around the overturned motorcycle and running over Officer Ericson. Ms. McIntyre pulled over and found Officer Ericson on the ground in critical condition. She immediately took Officer Ericson's radio to put out her

location for assistance and began patient care. She continued tending to Officer Ericson while officers arrived to manage the scene, and waited for a helicopter to arrive. Ms. McIntyre went in the helicopter with Officer Ericson so she could continue care on flight until they arrived at UC Davis Medical Center. Fortunately, Officer Ericson survived his injuries. Ms. McIntyre's extraordinary sense of duty to get to the crash scene, followed by her immediate and continuous rendering of medical aid may very well have saved the life of Officer Ericson. On March 6, 2017, Scott was convicted by a jury of assault upon a peace officer, evading a police officer, felony hit and run causing serious permanent injury and two counts of vehicle theft. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on the charge of attempted murder. While awaiting retrial on the attempted murder count, Scott agreed to plead guilty. On June 2, 2017, he was sentenced to 15 years, 4 months in state prison.

Tessa was 14 years old in May 1997. At that time, she lived with her mother and her then 11-year-old sister. Early one morning that May, defendant Joseph Brian Cox entered their home and confronted the family at gunpoint, bound their hands and feet, and forcibly sexually assaulted Tessa. Tessa suspected Cox was the assailant because he was an acquaintance with similar eyes, hair and build. However, she could not positively identify him because he was wearing a mask. Initial DNA testing of items found at the scene did not yield significant results and the investigation stalled. From 2014 to 2016, several items were DNA tested by the District Attorney's Crime Lab and they were linked to Cox. Over the 20 years before Cox was identified and arrested, Tessa's credibility was challenged multiple times. Despite everything she had experienced from a very young age, Tessa maintained her courage, integrity and remained resolute to see justice was served. Tessa persevered and is an exemplary citizen, who continues to serve her community as a teacher. On March 15, 2017, Cox pled guilty to three counts of forcible digital penetration and two counts of forcible rape. On April 28, 2017, he was sentenced to 20 years in state prison.

Jose Ramirez was driving on Broadway when he saw 69-year-old Ms. Brandow walking while pulling her suitcase, and juggling other personal property. Feeling sorry for her, Mr. Ramirez stopped to see if Ms. Brandow wanted help. After picking up food and a drink to bring back to her, he gave her some money. He apologized he couldn't do more for her and told her he would be back the next day to take her to a homeless shelter. When Mr. Ramirez returned the next morning on August 2, 2016, he found Ms. Brandow dead. He called 911, waited for emergency responders and cooperated with officers. Mr. Ramirez gave a statement and provided a DNA sample and fingernail scrapings for any trace evidence. An autopsy revealed the victim suffered injuries including contusions and fractures all over her head and body, and bruising on her lungs from blunt force trauma. The cause of her death was blunt force head trauma and asphyxiation. The case was unsolved until a friend of defendant Benjamin Brownlee told officers that Brownlee confessed to her that he committed a murder. Mr. Brownlee then confessed to homicide Detective Eddie Macauley. No one was able to locate any of the victim's family. Without family members to attend court hearings on the victim's behalf, Mr. Ramirez took it upon himself to be that person and that presence - a silent reminder this homeless victim would not be forgotten. Mr. Ramirez waited patiently outside in the hallway, on each occasion and once trial commenced, both before and after he was called as a witness. After reading a Sacramento Bee article, the victim's daughter called the court after learning of her mother's death. The family was able to be present for closing arguments, the verdict and sentencing. Having been homeless himself in the past, Mr. Ramirez had a heart for the victim's plight and put his empathy into extraordinary action when he helped the victim the day he met her, when he returned to offer her further support and throughout the court proceedings which spanned one year. On August 1, 2017, Brownlee was convicted by a jury of murder with the special circumstance the murder was committed while engaged in the commission of robbery. He was also convicted of robbery. On September 1, 2017, he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Tonya Rufus was at home on December 15, 2015. She was in her room with her sister when she heard her mother yell for help from the living room. Ms. Rufus went into the living room and saw her stepfather, defendant Michael Roberts, stabbing her mother as she was on the ground defenseless. When Roberts ignored Ms. Rufus' screams for him to stop, she grabbed a baseball bat. Roberts stopped his attack and

looked toward Ms. Rufus while still holding the knife in his hand. Ms. Rufus then took a swing at Roberts, but he caught the bat mid-swing with his hand. When Roberts started back towards Ms. Rufus' mother, Ms. Rufus blocked Roberts' way with her own body. Unarmed, Ms. Rufus stood chest to chest with Roberts, preventing him from further attacking her mother. Roberts has a long criminal history of domestic violence against Ms. Rufus' mother, who suffered 8-10 stab wounds all over her body including lacerations to her liver, diaphragm, thorax and arm. Roberts stated several times to Ms. Rufus' mother during this domestic violence assault that he was going to kill her and she was going to die. Ms. Rufus exemplified extraordinary bravery in confronting the 6'1" 245 lbs. Roberts, who was armed with a large knife and intent on using it. Ms. Rufus' quick and unrelenting action to intervene and physically stand up to Roberts very likely saved her mother's life. On January 24, 2018, Roberts pled no contest to attempted murder and admitted two prior strike convictions for voluntary manslaughter and assault with a deadly weapon. On March 2, 2018, he was sentenced to 25 years to life in state prison.

Beacon of Hope Award Recipients

Dana Burns and Michelle Husbands are victim advocates with the District Attorney's Office. Recently, they left their families, friends and co-workers to travel to Las Vegas and assist victims of the horrific mass shooting. During the week they were there, they provided information on housing/tenants' rights, driver's license replacement, employment legal assistance, and immediate financial services. They also listened to victims and their families about the tragedy and its aftermath. Dana and Michelle came away from this experience with lasting memories stating, "People all week cared for and about each other. People were grateful and kind. People worked really hard – from people who provided us food as we worked, victim advocates from other counties we shared this experience with, to the local first responders, to the volunteer professionals and hired experts who carried out their jobs with grace. There was hope in the resilience of victims. There was pain, there was laughter. We were all in this life together."

Outstanding Commendation Award Recipient

Shaelyn Crichton is a 14-year-old Sacramento teenager, who three years ago survived an attempted murder and serious injuries at the hands of her father. Shaelyn never saw herself as a victim, instead her strong faith has allowed her to thrive and give back to her community. She believes this near tragedy happened so she would better understand emotions felt by other victims. Shaelyn chooses to share her story with others—students at school, youth at her church, college students—in an effort to provide encouragement and motivation to overcome obstacles as well as help others understand what it is like to be a victim of abuse. She plans to take her story to Eastern Europe, and looks forward to providing children who have been abandoned and abused with hope and healing. In the future, Shaelyn dreams of writing a book for kids who are victims of crime to encourage them in their healing.