



WINTER 2019 NEWSLETTER



Marsy's Law

As a prosecutor and the chief law enforcement officer of Montgomery County, my job is to seek justice—to follow the evidence wherever it leads and to whomever it leads, then file criminal charges appropriately. That, of course, begins the defendant's interactions with the legal system. But beyond defendants is another group who are just as intricately involved in nearly every criminal proceeding, at each stage of a criminal investigation and prosecution. The victims. Victims are involved with the labyrinth court system, typically without their own counsel to guide them. They are not involved by choice, but instead are thrust into it by circumstance. Our office is fortunate to have a dedicated Victim Witness Unit staffed by caring people who work with victims, their families and witnesses. But that is not always the case across Pennsylvania's 67 counties. We have the opportunity to fix that. Marsy's Law is named for Marsy Nicholas, who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend in 1983. A week after her death, Marsy's mother and brother ran into the accused murderer in a grocery store. The family had no idea that he was out on bail. The main thrust and provisions of Marsy's Law are aimed at keeping the victim and their family informed of their rights, available services, court dates and proceedings and developments in the criminal case. Marsy's Law still has a long path to travel before it's added to the Commonwealth's Constitution. While the Pennsylvania Senate and House unanimously passed Marsy's Law in June of 2018, the measure must also pass during the 2019 legislative session and then be approved by voters before it becomes an amendment to the Commonwealth's Constitution. I believe providing victims constitutional protection is the way to guarantee their equal and protected voice throughout the process. Victims deserve Marsy's Law and the protections it provides.

12th Annual SPCA Holiday Drive

This holiday season, the District Attorney's Office hosted a drive for the Montgomery County SPCA for donations of animal food, toys, blankets, treats and other needed items. The drive was spearheaded by Assistant District Attorneys, who handle animal cruelty cases for the DA's Office. Unfortunately, each year we prosecute animal cruelty cases and this drive was a way to support the organization's work with animals.



2018 James P. Fox “Trial Lawyer of the Year”

I was honored to be awarded the 2018 James P. Fox “Trial Lawyer of the Year” by the Trial Lawyers Section of the Montgomery Bar Association. The award recognizes proficiency in the courtroom and a dedication to promoting a positive image for attorneys through professional demeanor, service and integrity. In addition, the award seeks to acknowledge an attorney who has created a reputation among their peers as a daunting adversary, while remaining a respected colleague.

Crimes Against Children

Our Detective Bureau has Major Crimes Detectives, who along with the Pennsylvania Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force work to protect children from internet predators by aggressively and proactively investigating internet crimes that exploit children. In the recent months, individuals have been arrested and charged with felony counts of distributing and possessing child pornography.



Election Day Team

A cornerstone of our democracy is a fair election, and every citizen has the right to cast their ballot unimpeded. As such, I put in place an election day team, head by First Assistant Edward McCann, working with a team of Assistant District Attorneys and local law enforcement, to handle any complaints and ensure that all Montgomery County citizens are able to vote without being subject to intimidation, threats or other abuse of the electoral system.



Drug Take Back Collects Record 9,000 Pounds of Medicine

More than 9,000 pounds of unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medicines were collected on the recent Drug Take Back Day. Turning in these over the counter and prescription drugs makes homes a safer place. Since the Take Back program began in 2010, more than 60,000 pounds of medicines have been collected and safely disposed of. Unwanted medications can be dropped off to be destroyed throughout the year at more than 50 permanent prescription drug disposal boxes throughout the County, a list of which can be found online: <https://www.montcopa.org/1766/Prescription-Drug-Disposal-Program>



Illegal Opioid Prescriptions

Four Montgomery County doctors were arrested for various criminal offenses as part of an ongoing, multi-jurisdictional effort to investigate and prosecute physicians who are engaged in illegal activities related to overprescribing of medications to patients. While the vast majority of physicians are concerned about their patients’ health and follow the law in prescribing methods, these doctors did not. The misuse and abuse of opioid prescriptions are major factors in the pathway toward addiction to heroin, and consequently, the horrendous death toll arising from opioids, heroin, fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances across our county, our state and the nation.