

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Office of the District Attorney
Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit
Cherokee County, Georgia



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway
Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit, Cherokee County, Georgia*



It is an honor to present you with the 2023 Annual Report for the Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit, Cherokee County. Contained within these pages is a snapshot of what our incredible team of 71 dedicated staff members has accomplished in a year's time.

During the year, our office closed 1,639 cases and opened 1,485 new cases, for a closure rate of 110%. About 44% of the closed cases involved felony drug charges, and nearly 30% were cases handled by the Domestic Violence Unit and Special Victims Unit.

We presented 33 trials to Superior Court judges, and our victim advocates assisted 4,183 victims (12% of whom were children). We also presented 666 cases to the grand jury for indictment and filed 504 accusations.

Even as the Justice Center was bustling with activity in all four of the courtrooms, our staff stayed connected to our community through civic organizations and events, providing training to our law enforcement partners and other agencies, leading multi-disciplinary team organizations, and serving as representatives of Cherokee County throughout the state of Georgia and beyond.

In addition, during the year, we issued press releases to inform the public about major cases and other issues related to the Office of the District Attorney. We also maintained a website and social media presence, and we regularly reached out to residents through speaking engagements and community events to educate citizens about crime trends and the criminal justice system.

I'd also like to highlight senior staff members for their hard work and dedication, including Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper, Chief Investigator Brandon Owens, and Office Manager Lisa Williams; our employees of the year Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, Investigator Kyle Smith, Senior Secretary Mackenzie Lyvers; and our many other staff members who go above and beyond every day to serve the citizens of Cherokee County.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our work. I am proud to lead this team and honored to serve as Cherokee County's District Attorney.

– District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway

OFFICE OVERVIEW



Background

The Office of the District Attorney prosecutes felony crimes committed within the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit, which is located in Cherokee County, Georgia. Working in a team structure, staff members collaborate with law enforcement agencies and organizations that provide services to victims of crime.

By year-end 2023, our staff consisted of 71 employees, including 27 attorneys, 21 investigators, 10 victim advocates, 8 senior secretaries, an office manager, intelligence analyst, terminal agency coordinator, diversion coordinator, and public information officer.

In 2023, our office added a courthouse canine to provide support and comfort to crime victims.

Organizational Structure

Trial teams are staffed by prosecutors, investigators, victim advocates, and administrative staff, working together. General trial teams are assigned to each of the four Superior Court judges.

Our Domestic Violence Unit, Special Victims Unit, and Gang/Organized Crime Unit offer specialized prosecution for crimes that involve domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, criminal street gangs, and organized crime.

The Juvenile Court Division handles acts involving minors, including delinquent acts, children in need of services, and traffic offenses. An Appellate Court prosecutor handles appeal cases. Our office also offers Accountability Court and Pre-Trial Diversion.

Ten victim advocates ensure that victims are informed, present, and heard, and that the Georgia Crime Victim's Bill of Rights is followed.

Throughout the criminal justice process, these advocates communicate with victims to provide notification of court dates, obtain restitution information, assist in applying for crime victims' compensation, attend meetings with the prosecutor, and accompany victims to court. After a case closes, advocates keep victims informed of important events, such as release from custody, restitution payments, and violation of probation.

In 2023, advocates assisted 4,183 individuals in new and existing cases, including 2,441 new victims of violent and property crime. The District Attorney's Office received \$127,373 in federal grant funds to support this program.

OFFICE OVERVIEW

Highlights Through 2023

Susan K. Treadaway Sworn In as Cherokee County District Attorney

On June 1, 2023, Governor Brian P. Kemp swore in Susan K. Treadaway as District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit. District Attorney Treadaway has served the citizens of Georgia as a felony prosecutor for the past 20 years.



Senior staff gathered at the Capitol for the swearing in ceremony of District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway.

Parker Joins the Team

Our first canine staff member joined the team in 2023. Parker came to us from Tails of Hope, a nonprofit organization that provides training and support for service dogs.



Parker

Parker and his handler, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, of the Domestic Violence Unit, participate in regular training to ensure that Parker can provide best services for victims of crime who may experience anxiety and stress as they navigate through the criminal justice system.

Parker also provides comfort and support to staff members, law enforcement partners, courthouse colleagues, and other individuals he comes across in his travels through the Justice Center.

Staff Members Honored

In December, staff members were honored for outstanding work and exceptional service to Cherokee County.

Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis was selected as Prosecutor of the Year, Senior Secretary Mackenzie Lyvers was recognized as Team Member of the Year, and Investigator Kyle Smith was designated Investigator of the Year.

District Attorney Treadaway also recognized the Trial Team of the Year, honoring individuals who assisted with the prosecution of a multi-defendant murder case that ended with a guilty verdict in October 2023.



ANNUAL TRENDS

2023 Data and Analysis



Background

The following pages provide analysis of year-end statistics for 2023.

During the year, the District Attorney’s Office opened 1,485 cases and closed 1,639, for a closure rate of 110%. In 2023, the Judicial Council of Georgia recognized Cherokee County Superior, Juvenile, and Magistrate Courts for clearance rates exceeding 100%.

In 2023, our office closed 40 serious violent felony cases and opened an alarming 58 new serious violent felony cases, which is a 41% increase over the same types of cases opened in 2022.

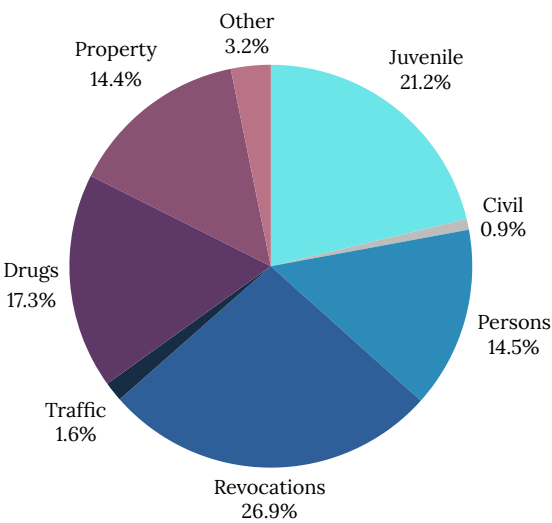
Origination of Felony Cases

Most new felony cases received by the District Attorney’s Office originated with criminal investigations conducted by the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office (1,199). A percentage breakdown by law enforcement agency is provided below.

- Cherokee Sheriff’s Office - 56%
- Woodstock Police - 16%
- Canton Police - 14%
- Holly Springs Police - 6%
- CMANS - 3%
- CCSD Police - 3%
- Other Agencies - 2%

Note: Ball Ground Police, Cherokee Marshal’s Office, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia State Patrol, and Reinhardt Public Safety are included in the “other agencies” category.

2023 Opened Cases by Type



Year-End Summary of Data

1,639 CASES CLOSED

The District Attorney’s Office opened 1,485 cases and closed 1,639 – a closure rate of 110%.

CLEARANCE RATE AWARD

The Judicial Council of Georgia recognized Cherokee County Courts for clearance rates exceeding 100%.

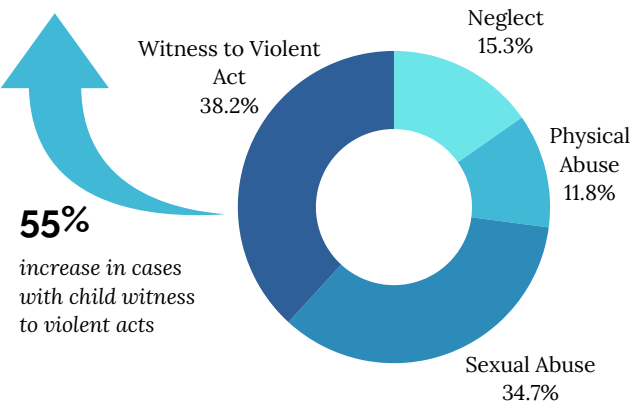
4,183 VICTIMS ASSISTED

In 2023, our victim advocates assisted 4,183 crime victims, 12% of whom were children.

33 SUPERIOR COURT TRIALS

In 12 months, our office presented 30 jury trials and 3 bench trials in Superior Court.

2023 Cases Involving Children Victimized by Crime

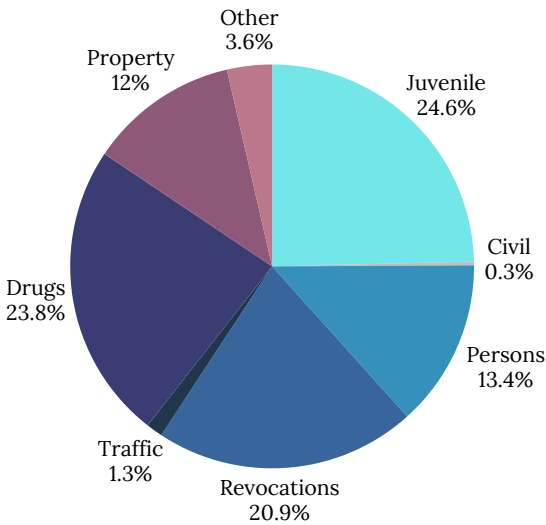


55%
increase in cases with child witness to violent acts

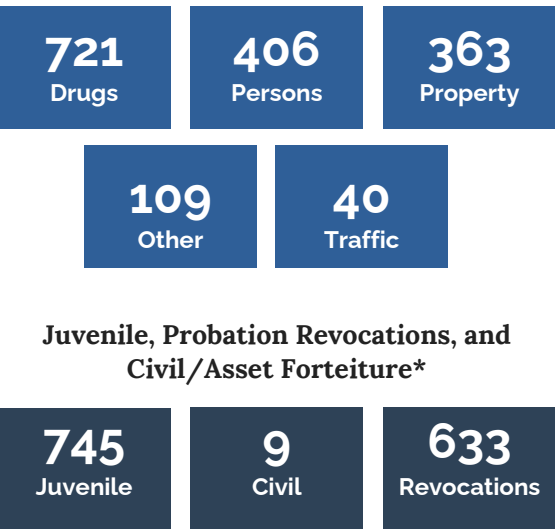
ANNUAL TRENDS

2023 Data and Analysis

2023 Closed Cases by Type



Total Closed Cases by Type



Juvenile, Probation Revocations, and Civil/Asset Forfeiture*



*Not included in total case counts; shared here for reference.

FIVE YEAR TRENDS

From 2019-2023



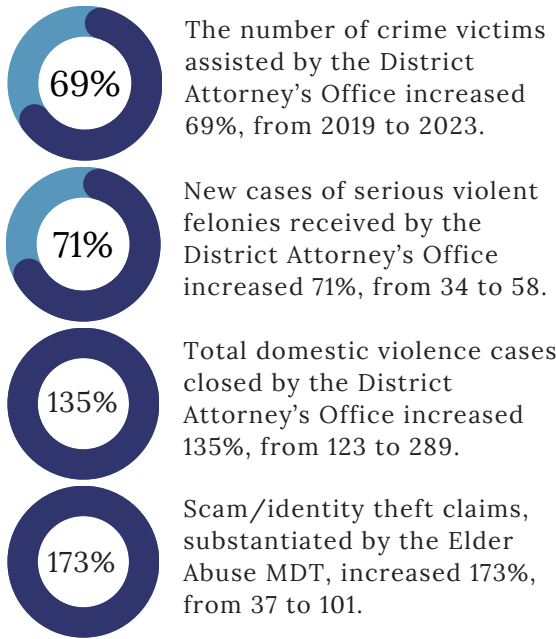
Background

An analysis of statistics over the past five years provides insight on how cases are moving through the criminal justice system.

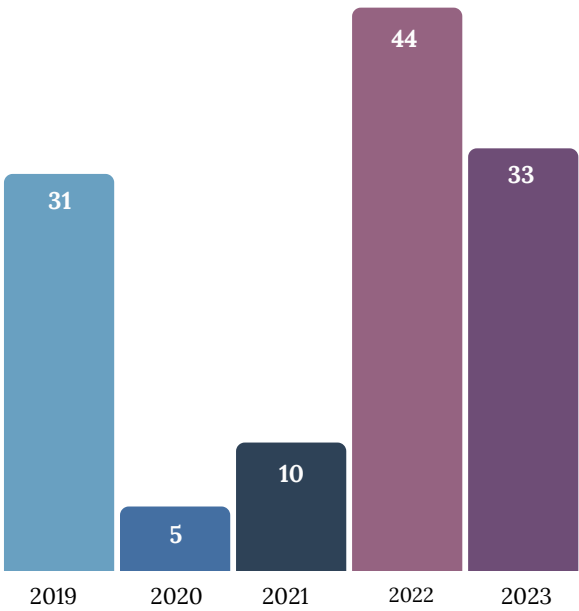
The Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit has effectively handled the backlog of cases incurred due to the pandemic shutdowns. In fact, during the last two years, the District Attorney's Office presented a total of 77 jury and bench trials to Superior Court.

Cases handled by our Office in 2023 exceeded pre-pandemic numbers, with the expectation of a continued increase in coming years.

Trends, Changes, and Highlights Comparing 2019 to 2023



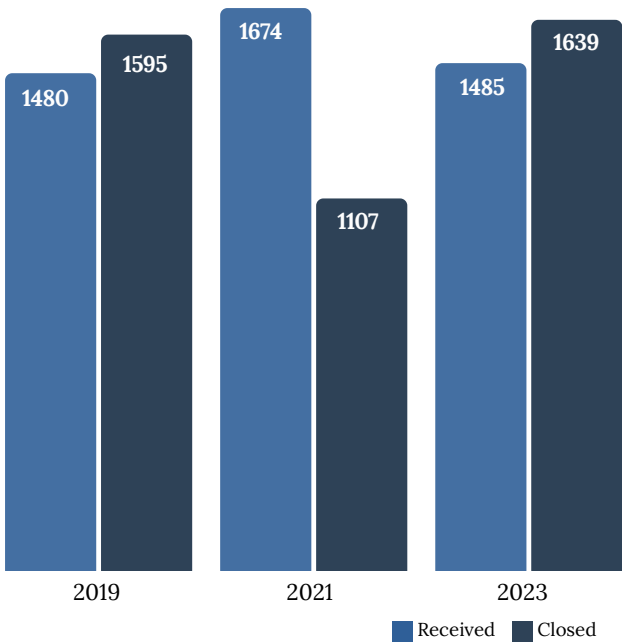
Superior Court Trials Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit



FIVE YEAR TRENDS

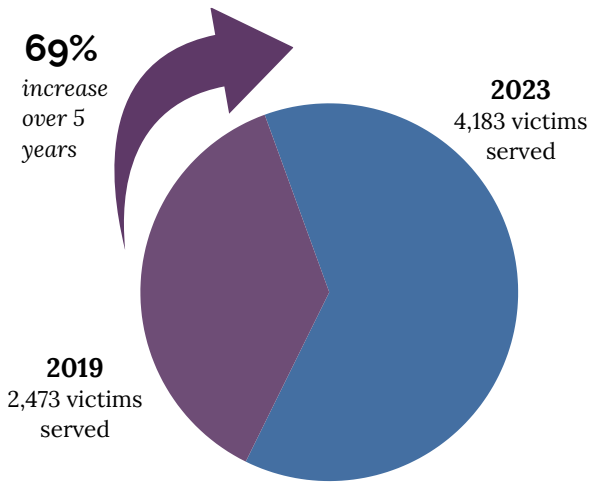
From 2019-2023

Prosecution of Felony Crimes



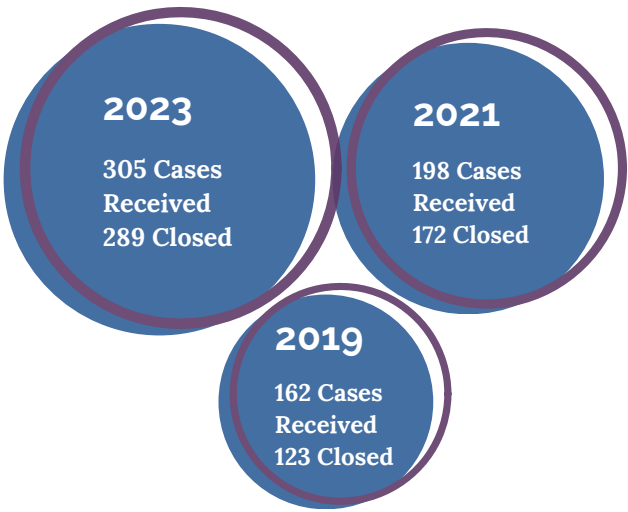
Victims of Crime

New and Continuing Cases, 2019-23



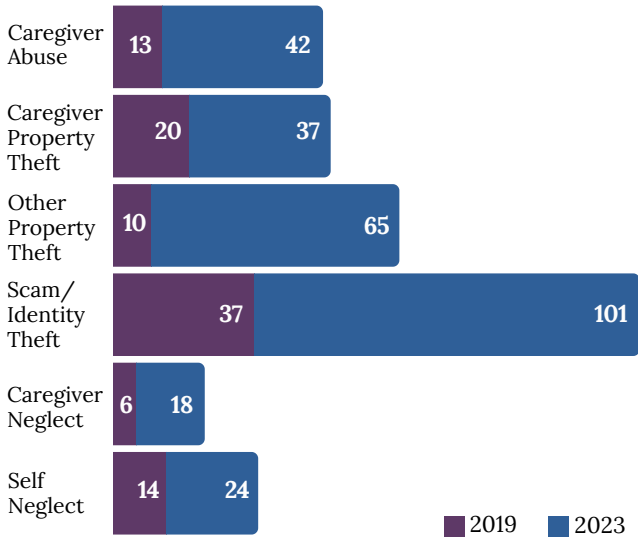
Domestic Violence Cases

Received and Closed, 2019-2023



Elder Abuse

Substantiated Claims Compiled by the Cherokee County Elder Abuse MDT



TRAINING

Building And Honing Skills



Background

The importance of professional development cannot be overstated. Training builds and hones skills, improves morale, and ensures that our office provides excellent service to the citizens of Cherokee County.

Investing in education and training for employees is a win-win. Highly trained staff become sought-after experts in their field, often serving as presenters at professional conferences, speaking on a myriad of issues at local, state, national, and even international functions. In the photo on the left, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Hines of the Special Victims Unit delivers training to local law enforcement officers.

Professional Development

The District Attorney’s Office is committed to providing training for our staff members.

In 2023, **prosecutors** attended many conferences, including the 2023 Retail Organized Crime Conference in Toronto, training provided by the Louisiana Bureau of Investigations Sex Crimes Unit, Retail Industry Leaders Association Asset Protection Conference, National District Attorneys Association 2023 Trial Advocacy Series, the GROC Retail Crime Conference, Georgia Gang Investigators Association Conference, Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia Juvenile Court and summer conference (as well as other PAC training), Georgia Commission on Family Violence Conference, Council of Accountability Court Judges conference, basic litigation at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, and other training. At many of these conferences, our prosecutors also served as presenters.

Investigators attended regularly scheduled in-service training to hone their skills. This training included content mandated by the state as well as additional training on crimes against children, evidence handling, an overview of county narcotics operations, and other important issues. In addition, investigators attended external training on investigating gang crimes, organized retail theft, child abuse, sexual assaults, human trafficking, computer forensics, and domestic violence.

Victim Advocates and other professional staff members attended in-service and external training related to Crime Victims Compensation and Restitution, Georgia Pardons and Paroles, ProntoTrak monitoring, victim services, domestic violence and child abuse, computer forensics, communications and crisis management, and other content.

TRAINING

Sharing Expertise With Other Agencies

Staff members represented Cherokee County at engagements throughout the year including: (1) Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr’s Anti-Gang Network meeting, (2) the 2023 Retail Organized Crime Conference in Toronto, where District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway was the keynote speaker, (3) law enforcement training hosted by the Special Victims Unit, including a presentation by Special Victims Unit Deputy Chief ADA Rachel Hines, (4) Georgia Retailers Organized Crime Alliance’s conference, during which our office was recognized for work on a major case,

(5) CCSD police training hosted by the Juvenile Division, (6) Distinguished Young Women of Georgia experienced a mock trial and presentations, (7) Woodstock Police & Fire Public Safety Academy invited District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway to present on the criminal justice system, (8) Georgia Commission on Family Violence annual conference included a presentation by the Domestic Violence Unit Deputy Chief ADA Rachel Ashe and Legal Program Director Tommie DeGonzague, of the Cherokee County Family Violence Center.



GANG/ORGANIZED CRIME

New Prosecution Unit Established in 2023



Background

The Georgia Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act was enacted in response to the clear and present danger that criminal gang members pose to citizens. With this in mind, District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway established the Gang/Organized Crime Unit in 2023. Multi-defendant gang cases require extensive investigation, effective prosecution, and often long jury trials. The prosecutors and investigators in the Gang Unit have the specialized training and experience to handle the intricacies of these cases.

Pictured here is defendant Dante Woods (story below) and other gang members throwing up the Bloods gang sign in a music video.

Armed Robbery Linked to Bloods

On March 17, 2023, Dante Dashawn Woods, 22, entered a negotiated guilty plea to violation of the Gang Act, armed robbery, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony.



Dante Woods

Superior Court Judge David Cannon, Jr., sentenced Woods to 25 years with the first 12 years to serve in prison without parole. Woods is also banned from Cherokee County and forbidden to have contact with criminal street gang members or associates.



Jahlan Merritt

Woods' co-defendant, Jahlan Merritt, 22, in 2022 pled guilty for his part in this crime and was sentenced to 20 years with the first 10 years to serve in confinement without parole.

Charges stem from an armed robbery that occurred on December 5, 2019, in the Chattahoochee Technical College parking lot.

During the robbery, Woods pointed a firearm at the victim while Merritt took his wallet, iPhone, and a single AirPods. Merritt also used a mobile finance app to steal money from the victim's bank account by transferring funds to himself.

Later that day, Merritt and two other men committed a similar armed robbery in Cobb County, using the same weapon and vehicle. This second crime was significant because Merritt was wearing a red bandana. In the Bloods gang, a red bandana represents allegiance to the gang and is commonly carried or worn during the commission of criminal activity to give credit to the gang and to instill fear in the community. The State's evidence showed that Merritt earned the right to display the red bandana as a "flag" for

[Continued on next page]

GANG/ORGANIZED CRIME

Major Cases Closed in 2023

the Bloods in the second armed robbery based on his participation in the initial crime. The victims provided law enforcement with a description of the suspects and the firearm they used. Woodstock Police used an electronic receipt from the mobile finance app to identify Merritt then issued a BOLO to local agencies.

The defendants' cell phone provided key information in the prosecution of this case, including a conversation in which Woods and Merritt discussed committing "licks" and another conversation in which Merritt asked Woods about going on his "walk," which is a term used to describe initiation into a gang through the commission of criminal activity.



A Ring camera captured an image of defendant Quinn Dawson pointing a gun at a front door. Dawson later told law enforcement that if the homeowner had opened the door, he would have fired the gun if necessary.

String of Auto Break-Ins Lead to Prison for Gang Members

Seven gang members pled guilty to the Georgia Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act and the Georgia RICO Act. All were sentenced to prison, banned from Cherokee County, and forbidden to have contact with any criminal street gang members or associates.

Charges stem from break-ins of approximately 50 vehicles in the summer of 2019. On June 29, 2019, and July 1, 2019, members of the Nine Trey Gangsters, Bloods, and Goodfellas traveled to Cherokee County to steal money, firearms, and property from cars in the Canton Heights, Great Sky, River Brooke, River Green, and Sage Hill

neighborhoods. In total, the group stole five firearms, three automobiles, and personal items.

Law enforcement apprehended Tyjuan Shecorn Burch, Quinn Chajuan Dawson, Jacquez Daquan Ivey, Darell Marrion, and two juveniles when they returned to Cherokee County to continue their crime spree on July 1, 2019.

Johnmarvalious "Wicked" Givens, Quanjavis "Boochie" Jawayne Jones, and Detravious "Trey" Long were apprehended later after being identified by the District Attorney's Office.

The seven co-defendants entered negotiated guilty pleas, with hearings held on different dates over the course of two years, from February 2021 through March 2023. All were sentenced to serve time in prison.



Members of criminal street gangs came to Cherokee County in 2019 to break into cars. These seven individuals were arrested and prosecuted for their crimes [left to right]: Tyjuan Shecorn Burch, Quinn Chajuan Dawson, Jacquez Daquan Ivey, Quanjavis Jawayne Jones, Detravious Long, and Darell Marrion.

GANG/ORGANIZED CRIME

Major Cases Closed in 2023

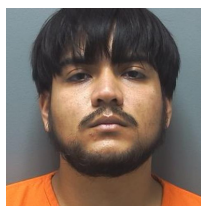
Jury Finds 7 Defendants Guilty in Hamilton Inn Gang Murder Trial

A Cherokee County jury found seven defendants guilty in a gang case involving murder, drugs, armed robbery, and racketeering. Nine other co-defendants pled guilty to their charges in separate proceedings.

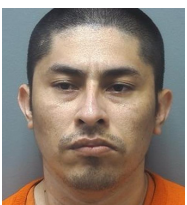
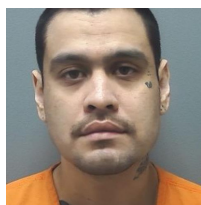
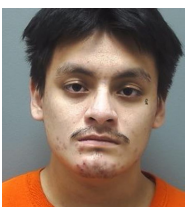
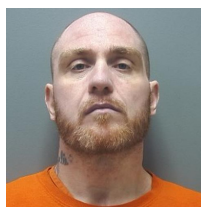
The Cherokee Sheriff's Office began investigating this case on June 26, 2020, after Jon-David Russel Johnson, 41, of Newnan, was murdered near the Hamilton Inn hotel on Wade Green Road in Acworth.

Detectives determined that multiple individuals were involved in the murder. Together, these individuals committed crimes to support a drug trafficking organization that used a prison broker system linked to drug cartels. The criminal enterprise was composed of associates from two street gangs: Sureños and Ghost Face Gangsters.

The trial took place September 27-October 13, 2023. After deliberating for four days, the jury found all defendants guilty. Kevin Saucedo was found guilty of felony murder.



Seven defendants were found guilty in a jury trial. They included, left to right from the top: Kevin Saucedo, Jeremiah Barber, Edgar Camacho-Cruz, Krystal Campbell, Francisco De La Cruz, Jose Jimenez, and Kevin Saucedo.



Convictions and sentences, as imposed by Chief Judge Ellen McElyea are as follows:

Kevin Saucedo, 25, Alpharetta, was convicted of felony murder (3 counts), violation of Gang Act (9 counts), criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, conspiracy to commit robbery, aggravated assault, possession of a firearm during commission of a felony, and violation of RICO Act. He was sentenced to life, plus 5 years in prison.

Jeremiah Glenn Barber, 42, Trion, incarcerated at time of crimes, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, conspiracy to commit robbery, and violation of the RICO Act. He was sentenced as a recidivist to 30 years, with the first 15 years in prison without parole eligibility and the remainder on probation.

Edgar Camacho-Cruz, 23, Lawrenceville, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, violation of Gang Act (2 counts), conspiracy to commit robbery, and violation of RICO Act. He must serve 20 years, with the first 8 years in prison and the remainder on probation.

Krystal Dianna Campbell, 34, Gordon County, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, conspiracy to commit robbery, and violation of RICO Act. She was sentenced to 30 years, with the first 10 years in prison and the remainder on probation.

Francisco Javier De La Cruz, 28, Roswell, incarcerated at the time of the crimes, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, violation of Gang Act (4 counts), conspiracy to commit robbery, and violation of RICO Act. He must serve 30 years, with the first 8 years in prison and the remainder on probation.

[Continued on next page]

GANG/ORGANIZED CRIME

Major Cases Closed in 2023

Jose Lara Jimenez, 33, incarcerated at the time of the crimes, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, violation of Gang Act (3 counts), conspiracy to commit robbery, and violation of RICO Act. He was sentenced as a recidivist to 50 years, with the first 20 years in prison without parole eligibility.

David Solano, 23, Roswell, was convicted of criminal attempt to commit armed robbery, violation of Gang Act (4 counts), conspiracy to commit robbery, and possession of a firearm

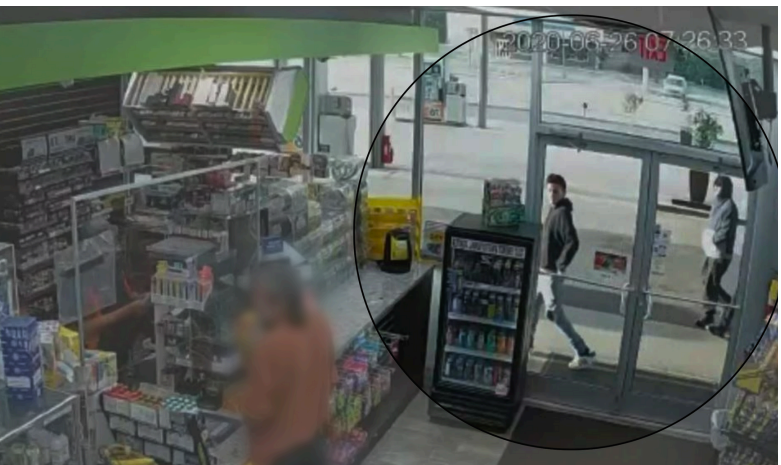
during the commission of a felony (2 counts). He must serve 35 years, with the first 20 years in prison and the remainder on probation.

Nine additional co-defendants who pled guilty to their charges included: Jordan Emilo Arias-Espinoza, Josue David Escobar, Jose Daniel Gasca-Solis, Jason Brian Graves, Kala Leeann Kenny aka Kala Leeann McClure, Shene Lucretia Kirk, Katelyn Nicole Middlebrooks, Eric Joseph Neal, and Gilbert Alexander Rodriguez.



The scheme that led to the murder of Jon-David "JD" Russel Johnson involved multiple gang members, some of whom were incarcerated at the time.

Pictured above (left to right): David Solano and Kevin Saucedo inside nearby gas stations on the day of the murder; Francisco Javier De La Cruz throwing up gang signs in an image found on a contraband cell phone inside prison; Edgar Camacho-Cruz holding handguns found on his personal cell phone. Image on right: defendants conducting surveillance at a gas station prior to the murder.



SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

Prosecuting Cases Involving Vulnerable Individuals



Background

The prosecution of felony crimes involving children, senior citizens, and other vulnerable individuals is handled by a team of prosecutors, investigators, and advocates in the Special Victims Unit.

These crimes pose unique challenges due to the dynamics of the victims who may be afraid, embarrassed, or unable to report crimes committed upon them.

In 2023, this Unit opened 200 new cases and closed 195, including 9 jury trials.

Focus of SVU: Children & Seniors

Child abuse occurs when children are subjected to physical or sexual abuse, are neglected by their caregivers, and/or witness a violent act. In 2023, more than one-third (35%) of all new cases of child abuse involved children who had been sexually abused. Sexual abuse of children may consist of sexual molestation, child pornography, sex trafficking, obscene internet contact with a child, and other crimes of a sexual nature.

Elder abuse, as well as crimes against other vulnerable adults, is most often perpetrated by family members or caregivers. This type of abuse can range from aggravated assault to fraud. Abuse may involve physical, sexual, or emotional crimes; in other cases, it may involve neglect, failure to provide essential care, or financial exploitation.

The Special Victims Unit serves a vital role in organizations that monitor and investigate crimes against children and elders/vulnerable adults.

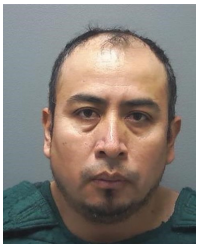
Members of this Unit lead and actively participate in these organizations:

- The Anna Crawford Children’s Center Child Advocacy Center MDT consists of members of the Special Victims Unit, law enforcement, child protective service workers, medical professionals, mental health professionals, and court appointed special advocates.
- The Cherokee County Child Fatality Review Board reviewed 11 child deaths through 2023.
- The Cherokee County Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) met monthly to review 411 reports of suspected abuse or neglect of elders/vulnerable adults in Cherokee County. This MDT determined that 268 of the reports were substantiated allegations and recommended 16 cases for criminal prosecution. Additional information on this MDT report can be found on page 9.

SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

Major Cases Closed in 2023

Luis Angeles Is Guilty of Rape and Other Charges



Luis Angeles

On February 3, 2023, a Cherokee County jury convicted Luis Angeles, 41, of Roswell, of rape, child molestation, and incest. Superior Court Judge Tony Baker sentenced Angeles to 50 years in prison followed by life on probation under sex offender special conditions.

Charges stem from a Woodstock Police investigation that began in September 2016. In two forensic interviews, the 12-year-old victim provided details of specific acts that Angeles committed in Woodstock when she was 8, 9, 10, and 11 years old.

Alexander Eppsteiner Admits to Aggravated Child Molestation



Alexander David Eppsteiner

During an April 20, 2023 hearing, Alexander David Eppsteiner, 27, of Acworth, entered a non-negotiated guilty plea to two counts of aggravated child molestation and two counts of child molestation.

Superior Court Judge Tony Baker sentenced Eppsteiner to serve 30 years in prison, followed by life on probation. He is also required to register as a sex offender.

Charges stem from a Cherokee Sheriff’s Office investigation that began in April 2021 after a 10-year-old told his parents that Eppsteiner had been abusing him since he was 7 years old. In a forensic interview, the child provided specific details including inappropriate touching, showing the child pornography, and oral and anal sodomy.

During the non-negotiated plea hearing, similar incidents involving Eppsteiner were used in aggravation of sentencing. These incidents included Eppsteiner taking a secret photo of a boy using a public restroom in Cherokee County, as well as engaging in sexual conversations with a child who lived in New York.

Jonathan Millwood Pleads Guilty to Aggravated Child Molestation



Jonathan Ricky Millwood

On November 28, 2023, Jonathan Ricky Millwood, 37, of Canton, pled guilty to aggravated sexual battery (2 counts), aggravated child molestation, and child molestation.

Superior Court Judge Shannon Wallace sentenced Millwood, as negotiated, to 20 years in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by life on probation subject to sex offender special conditions.

Charges stem from a Canton Police investigation of sexual abuse allegations that began in March 2023 after a girl under the age of 10 told her mother that Millwood had touched her inappropriately.

During forensic interviews, the child provided details of acts that included inappropriate touching and digital penetration. The child also underwent a Sexual Assault Nurse Exam (SANE), and the GBI Crime Lab confirmed that male DNA was present on the child.



To report suspected child abuse, call **Child Protective Services** at 855-422-4453. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT

Crimes Involving Families and Loved Ones



Background

In 2023, the Domestic Violence Unit opened 305 new cases and closed 289, including 7 jury trials.

People of all ages are affected by domestic violence. Cases often involve the cycle of violence, fluctuating from a calm period to tension building to a violent episode. Many victims express love for their abusers and may even overlook the danger. An increasing number of domestic violence incidents involve aggravated assault - strangulation.

Highly trained professionals in the Domestic Violence unit are experienced with the unique challenges inherent in crimes involving families and loved ones.

Jury Convicts Sean Glover of Aggravated Assault Strangulation



Sean David Glover

On March 23, 2023, a Cherokee County jury found Air Force Staff Sgt. Sean David Glover, 42, guilty of aggravated assault strangulation.

Glover had been on trial for charges of rape, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, and battery. Following the jury verdict, Superior Court Judge Ellen Mcelyea sentenced Glover on March 31, 2023, to 20 years with the first 15 years to serve in confinement in the state prison system.

Glover told police that his girlfriend had been “acting weird” and he was concerned that she may have been communicating with her ex. While she was asleep, Glover unlocked her cell phone to read her texts.

He then became angry and woke her. During a physical altercation, Glover applied pressure to her neck and caused her to black out. Her injuries included a broken wrist, contusions on her nose, and red marks on her neck. A sexual assault nurse examiner noted bruising behind both of her ears and petechia in various locations, both of which are signs of severe asphyxiation.

Christopher Roberts Pleads Guilty to Family Violence Charges



Christopher George Roberts

Christopher George Roberts’ case was brought to a jury trial in June 2023. On the third day of his trial, Roberts, 52, pled guilty to terroristic threats, family violence aggravated assault, and theft by taking. Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr.

[Continued on next page]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT

Major Cases Closed in 2023

sentenced Roberts on June 20, 2023, to 30 years, with the first 15 years in prison. Roberts was prosecuted as a recidivist offender, rendering him ineligible for parole. Judge Cannon also banished Roberts from Cherokee, Forsyth, and Dawson counties.

Canton Police became aware of Roberts in April 2020, while responding to a report of a stolen truck. Officers learned that the truck was stolen from Roberts’ roommate and that he had made threats to his girlfriend and ex-wife.

After the truck was located in Gainesville, the Forsyth County Sheriff’s Office apprehended Roberts, who returned to Cherokee County to face charges. During a bond hearing, the two women testified on his behalf, blaming his behaviors on drug abuse. He was released on bond, placed on an ankle monitor, and ordered to avoid drugs and alcohol.

Five months later, Roberts assaulted his girlfriend and threatened to kill her. He grabbed her by the throat and applied pressure until she lost consciousness. When she woke up, he said, “I just put you to sleep” and “I could have killed you right then.” He threatened her with a knife and left the home with her phone, wallet, and car.

Roberts then cut off his ankle monitor, fled the state of Georgia, and abandoned his girlfriend’s car in South Carolina. He was eventually apprehended in Virginia after stealing another vehicle and fleeing from law enforcement in that state.

Jury Convicts Gregory Coggins of Aggravated Assault



Gregory Coggins

A Cherokee County jury convicted Gregory Bryan Coggins, 38, of family violence aggravated assault, family violence battery, and cruelty to children in the third degree, following a trial that ended on August 23, 2023.

Superior Court Judge Shannon Wallace sentenced Coggins on October 31, 2023, to serve 20 years with the first 10 years in prison and the remainder on probation.

On February 16, 2023, Cherokee Sheriff’s Office first became aware of domestic violence allegations involving Coggins, after responding to a request for a welfare check at a home that Coggins shared with his pregnant girlfriend and their infant child.

Several days prior, Coggins had become violently angry and physically assaulted his girlfriend. During the assault, he grabbed her by the throat and strangled her. She was unable to recall all the details of the attack. Following the attack, she had a large bruise covering much of her chest, as well as other bruises on her arms, neck, and back.

During the three-day trial, jurors listened to testimony from eight witnesses and viewed 41 pieces of evidence before convicting Coggins.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE typically follows a pattern, with tension building, followed by violence, a calm period, and then cycling back to tension building. As time passes, the violent episodes often get more serious and may lead to a lethal act such as strangulation.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703. In case of emergency, call 911.

DRUG CRIMES

Trafficking, Distribution, and Possession



Background

In 2023, nearly 24% of all cases closed by the District Attorney’s Office included felony drug charges, specifically possession, distribution, or trafficking of drugs.

Overall, our office received 504 felony drug cases and closed 721 through guilty pleas and trials, for a closure rate of 144%.

Fentanyl remains a serious problem in our community and across the country. Just 2 mg of fentanyl (as shown here) can be fatal. A 2023 case highlighted below involved fentanyl overdose that resulted in death. The defendant pled guilty to involuntary manslaughter.

Man Pleads Guilty to Supplying Friend with Deadly Dose of Drugs



Michael D. Waters

On August 7, 2023, Michael Dalton Waters, 23, entered a non-negotiated guilty plea to involuntary manslaughter and distribution of controlled substances.

Charges stem from a May 2021 overdose fatality investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office and Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad.

On the evening of May 23, 2021, Waters crushed a pill into powder form and gave it to 20-year-old Talley Power and her 19-year-old friend. Waters told the two women that he was giving them Percocet. At the end of the evening, the friends went back to Power’s home. The following

morning, Power was found unresponsive and later pronounced deceased. GBI’s Division of Forensic Sciences determined that the cause of death was toxic effects of fentanyl and tramadol. A toxicology screen of her blood found 14 micrograms of fentanyl and .21 micrograms of tramadol.

Drugs distributed on the street are typically non-pharmaceutical grade and may contain substances other than that in which the user intended for introduction into the body, including fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.

At the conclusion of the non-negotiated plea hearing, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker ordered the defendant to serve a 40-year sentence with the first 8 years in prison.

DRUG CRIMES

Major Cases Closed in 2023

Edward Ball Guilty of Manufacturing and Trafficking Heroin



Edward Ball

A Cherokee County jury convicted Edward “Jay” Lionel Ball, 40, of distribution of meth, distribution of heroin, trafficking heroin, manufacturing heroin, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr. sentenced Ball on March 9, 2023, to 60 years with 45 years in prison. Since he was sentenced as a recidivist, he will not be eligible for parole.

Charges stem from a Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) investigation during which agents observed Ball supplying a known drug dealer with meth and heroin in Woodstock.

On June 27, 2019, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant of Ball’s home, where they discovered nearly a pound of heroin in a baking dish on the stove. The search was resumed with hazmat gear due to the dangerous level of heroin in the air. The heroin in the home totaled more than 245 grams. In addition, CMANS agents found meth, scales and baggies used for distribution, handguns, and ammunition.



While executing a search warrant of Edward Ball’s home, CMANS discovered nearly a pound of heroin in a baking dish. Due to hazardous conditions, agents completed the search warrant wearing hazmat gear.

James Aldred IV Admits to Manufacturing Meth



James Aldred

On August 17, 2023, James Aaron Aldred IV, 36, of Canton, pled guilty to manufacturing, trafficking, and selling methamphetamine. He was sentenced to 45 years, with 25 years to serve in prison.

Charges stem from an investigation that started in January 2023 when the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) became aware of a multi-state drug trafficking organization. During the investigation, CMANS agents observed as Aldred conducted large drug transactions in a Kroger parking lot in Canton.

While executing a search warrant of Aldred’s home, agents found more than 12 pounds of meth. Agents also found a meth conversion lab, where four pitchers were filled with nearly 10 pounds of liquid meth in the process of being converted into a solid substance for sale. CMANS determined that Aldred worked at the direction of a drug cartel headed by a federal inmate. Aldred would purchase and sell illegal narcotics, handling 12-25 kilos of meth at a time.



Inside James Aldred’s home, CMANS found four one-gallon pitchers with 156 ounces of liquid meth in the process of being converted into a solid substance. Agents also found multiple bags of meth weighing more than 12 pounds.

DOG FIGHTING

And Aggravated Animal Cruelty



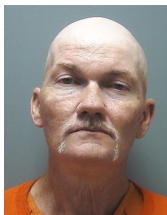
Background

Georgia law states that aggravated animal cruelty can be charged when someone maliciously causes death or harms an animal, or seriously disfigures an animal.

Dog fighting is also prohibited by law in Georgia. Besides harming innocent animals, dog fighting is often linked to other serious crimes, such as drug sales, gang activity, and even domestic violence. The Georgia RICO Statute now includes dog fighting as a predicate act.

In 2023, our office worked with the Cherokee Marshal's Office to prosecute a dog fighting case in our county.

Jury Convicts Randall Thaxton of Dog Fighting and Animal Cruelty



On December 8, 2023, a jury found Randall Larry Thaxton, 59, guilty of 9 counts of dog fighting and an additional 7 counts of cruelty to animals.

Charges stem from an investigation involving multiple Georgia counties. In November, 2022, the Paulding County Sheriff's Office found evidence linking Thaxton to a man under investigation for dog fighting in Dallas, Georgia. On November 29, 2022, the Cherokee County Marshal's Office followed up by conducting a welfare check on Thaxton's Union Hill Road property.

After observing the dogs on the property, animal control officers advised Thaxton of several code violations, including tethering animals, providing

adequate water and shelter, and providing veterinary care and rabies inoculation. Thaxton agreed to a reinspection date of December 14, 2022, to come into compliance with all violations.

While onsite for the welfare check, the Marshal's Office also found signs that Thaxton was involved in dog fighting.

Officers noticed that eight dogs were tethered outside with heavy logging chains commonly used by dog fighters. The dogs were chained close to each other but just out of reach, a tactic that serves to build dog aggression. These signs of dog fighting, along with additional investigation, led to the Marshal's Office obtaining a search warrant.

On December 6, 2022, the Cherokee Sheriff's Office SWAT team and the Cherokee County Marshal's Office arrived at Thaxton's property to execute a search warrant. Inside the home, they

[Continued on next page]

DOG FIGHTING

Case Closed in 2023

found items associated with dog fighting, including: a break stick (used to pry open jaws of a dog during a fight); documents linking Thaxton's dogs to other known dog fighters; a journal with workout regimens to prepare dogs for fighting; a catalog to order training equipment, steroids, staples and medical supplies for treating wounds; contracts for the sale of specific dogs to known dog fighters; and a dog fighting creed pledging allegiance to the dog fighting community.

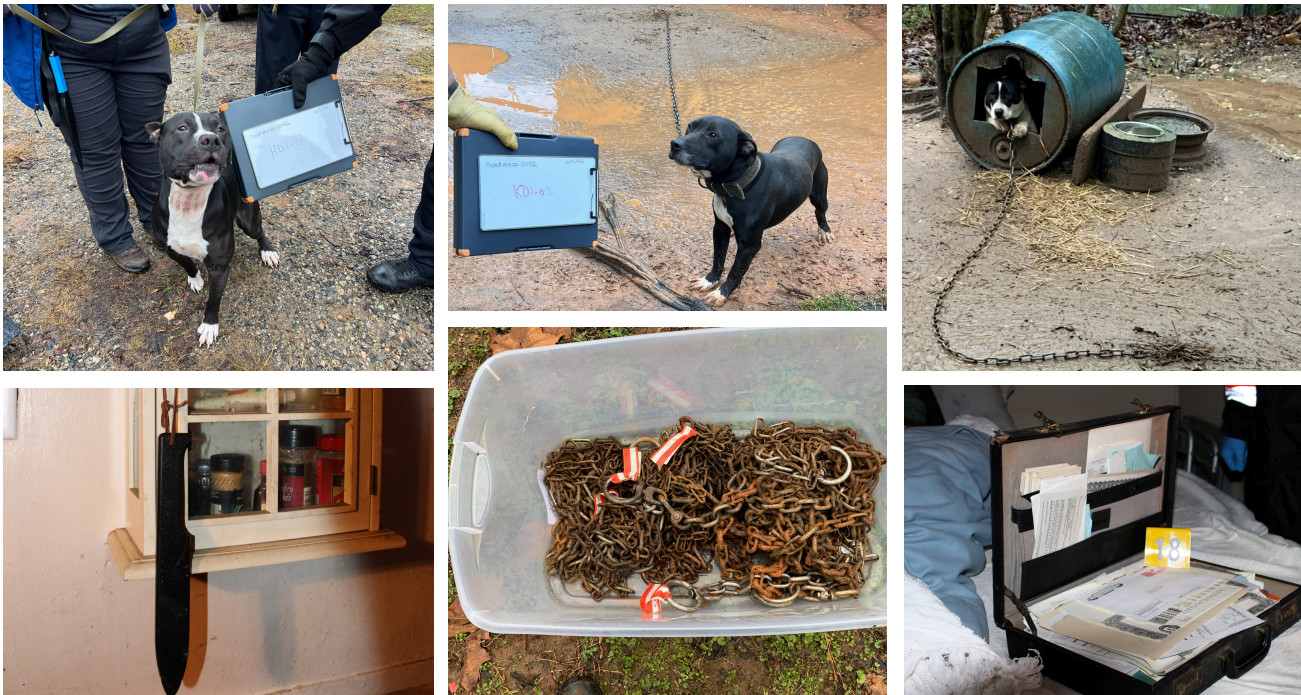
The same day, a veterinarian examined the dogs and found that they had skin infections, rashes around their necks, and swollen paw pads. One dog also had a growth hanging from his stomach. The Cherokee County Animal Shelter took custody of the dogs, one of whom was pregnant.

Thaxton was arrested on December 6, 2022, and charged with dog fighting and cruelty to animals. Dog fighting is illegal in all 50 states and the

District of Columbia. It is prevalent in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Dog fighting dogs may be housed on rural properties or hidden in basements, and fights are held outdoors, in barns, abandoned buildings, and other locations.

At the trial, the State called 11 witnesses to testify and presented more than 300 exhibits, including photos, physical evidence found in Thaxton's home, heavy logging chains, and the thick collars the dogs were wearing. After deliberating for about three hours, the jury found Thaxton guilty of 16 counts.

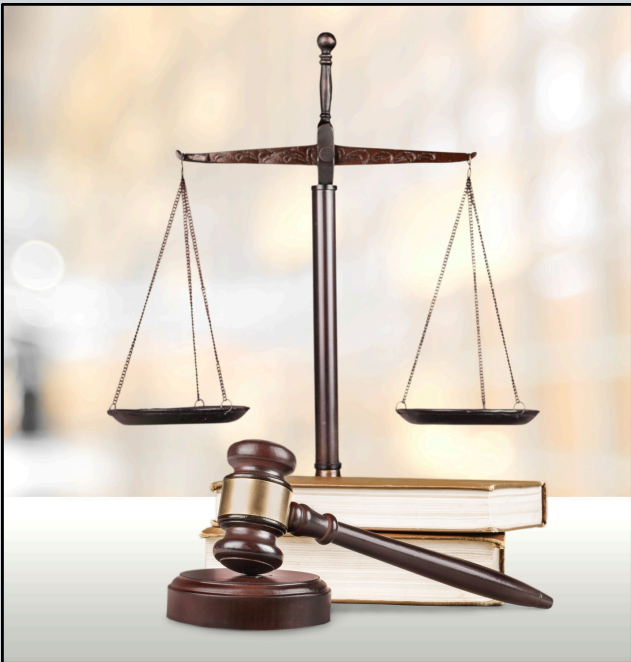
Superior Court Judge Tony Baker sentenced Thaxton to 20 years with five years to serve in prison. He must pay a fine and complete 360 hours of community service. He is also forbidden to own, possess, or breed dogs, and he may have no contact with dog fighters, individuals who attend dog fights, or individuals who participate in any capacity in dog fighting.



[Left to Right] Dogs rescued from Thaxton's property include Bird Dog (pictured on previous page), Roscoe, King Kong, and CB. Law enforcement found evidence of dog fighting to include a break stick, heavy chains to tether the dogs, and a briefcase containing documents proving Thaxton's association with dog fighting.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Accountability Court & Pre-Trial Diversion



Background

The role of the District Attorney’s Office extends beyond prosecuting cases in Superior Court.

We also participate in Accountability Court programs that provide certain defendants the opportunity to receive treatment for addictions and/or mental health, with the goal to address issues that may be leading to criminal activity.

A Pre-Trial Diversion program offers rehabilitation for first-time offenders who meet specific requirements to participate in the program.

Accountability Court

Carefully screened offenders have the opportunity to overcome substance abuse and/or mental health issues through Accountability Court programs, which take a minimum of 18 months and require intensive court supervision. In 2023:

- **Drug Accountability Court** – 39 felony offenders were accepted and 18 graduated.
- **Treatment Accountability Court** – 9 felony offenders were accepted and 3 graduated.
- **Veterans Treatment Court** – 12 felony offenders were accepted into the program and 3 graduated.

Pre-Trial Diversion

This program offers first-time offenders the opportunity to rehabilitate while deterring future criminal conduct. Eligible low-risk, non-violent offenders are presented with an alternative to the traditional criminal justice system. By statute,

individuals may participate as long as their offense does not require a mandatory minimum sentence of incarceration or imprisonment that cannot be suspended, probated, or deferred. Policies and procedures established by the District Attorney determine which of these cases are admitted.

Since August 2017, a total of 582 individuals have participated in the program, with 126 people entering in 2023. In total, the program has generated \$233,580 in administrative fees, including \$50,220 in 2023, which has been added to the Cherokee County general fund.

Pre-Trial Diversion Participants



JUVENILE DIVISION

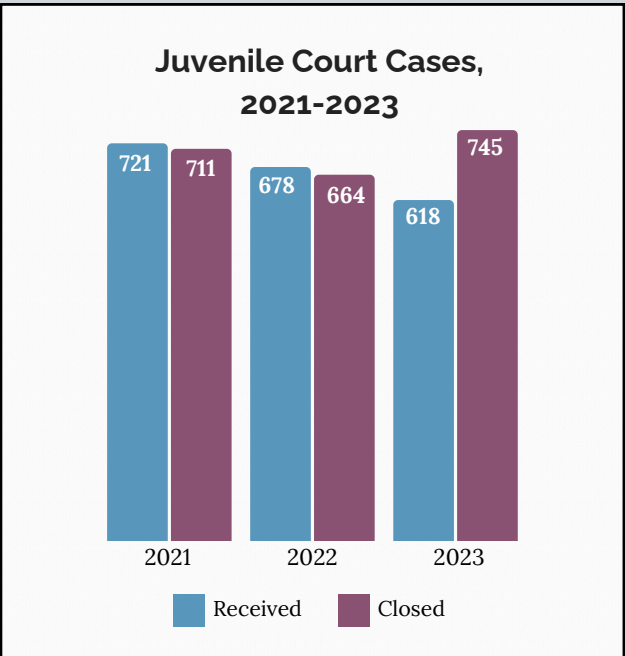
Prosecution of Juvenile Offenders

Background

The Juvenile Division of the District Attorney’s Office works closely with Cherokee County Juvenile Court, Cherokee County School District, law enforcement agencies, and other organizations. In 2023, this Division received 619 cases and closed 783.

Juvenile Court is handled differently than the criminal process for adults. Juvenile offenses fall into one of three categories:

- Delinquent acts
- Children in need of services (CHINS)
- Traffic offenses



Facts About Juvenile Court

A delinquent act is an offense committed by a child under 17 years old that would be deemed a criminal offense if it were committed by an adult. CHINS offenses are attributed to children due to their age, such as truancy, ungovernable child, runaway, curfew violations, or underage possession of alcohol.

State law requires that all juvenile delinquent and CHINS offenses be dismissed or petitioned within 30 days of the complaint being filed, unless the child is detained. When a child is detained, the petition must be filed within 72 hours and the trial set within 10 days. The statute does allow for time limits to be extended upon good cause and by order of the Court.

The juvenile prosecution team has only weeks to gather and analyze discovery, request additional investigation, interview witnesses and victims,

and determine appropriate charges. Juvenile prosecutors must be familiar with many areas of prosecution such as sexual offenses, electronic crimes, drug offenses, and gang offenses.

The goal of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation. Disposition of cases relies heavily upon services within the community and behavioral health evaluations to determine appropriate services. More serious cases may require removing juveniles from their home and placing them in a juvenile detention center.

A Drug Treatment Program for Juvenile Court uses judicial and community-based interventions to provide comprehensive response to young people in need of substance abuse treatment and behavioral interventions. The program offers an educational track and a drug court track. In the four years since this program has been established, 85 juveniles have participated, including 23 in 2023.

COMMITTED TO SERVING

Our Community and Beyond

The Office of the District Attorney is committed to serving the citizens of Cherokee County and beyond. Staff members prosecute felony crimes, assist crime victims, collaborate with other organizations involved in the criminal justice system, provide training to our partners, educate citizens about crime trends, and take part in community events.





District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway
Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit
Cherokee County, Georgia

The Office of the District Attorney is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and working with our partner agencies to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.