

December 5, 2017

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890

For Immediate Release

[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315  
*En Español* [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

## Board of Supervisors Honor Deputy DAs and an Investigator for Excellence

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors honored six prosecutors and an investigator in her office with proclamations recognizing their outstanding contributions to public safety over the past year. The awards were given at this morning's board meeting. The prosecutors were selected for these awards by the San Diego Deputy District Attorneys Association after they were nominated by their peers for their extraordinary work.

**“I'm honored to work lead such outstanding Deputy District Attorneys and investigators, who seek justice every day on behalf of crime victims in San Diego County,” DA Summer Stephan said. “They truly represent the dedication and quality of our entire prosecutorial team.”**

The Board of Supervisors honored the following DA staffers:

### **Deputy District Attorney Jessica Paugh**

Jessica Paugh prosecuted a domestic violence murder case in which Mary, a single mother of six was shot and killed by her husband, who she had planned to divorce. He carefully planned her murder, test firing the firearm, hiding it, and turning her family against her by telling them of her online affair. On New Year's Eve, he shot Mary in front of their 8-year-old daughter.

### **Deputy District Attorney Benjamin Barlow**

Ben Barlow is regularly assigned to handle the worst of the worst. Some of this year's caseload included a defendant who attacked his girlfriend with a tire iron, a defendant who strangled a victim and threatened to kill her if she called police and a defendant who stabbed his wife multiple times and left her for dead. When the defendant realized the woman's 12-year-old daughter saw what he did, he chased her down and stabbed her repeatedly as well. Both mother and daughter survived and testified at the trial.

### **Deputy District Attorney Julie Lynn**

Julie Lynn has developed a reputation for her incredible dedication to victims, public safety, and families. In one case in particular, she prosecuted a defendant who would meet young women, marry them, beat them, and then molest their daughters. In some cases he would molest his own daughters. This cycle went on for more than 20 years, until one of his

daughters found the courage to report him after learning about inappropriate touching in her elementary school health class. Leading up to trial, Deputy DA Lynn spent hours with the mothers, daughters and granddaughters, to help them testify.

### **District Attorney Investigator David Soliven**

David Soliven was instrumental in the murder prosecution of Destin Withers and Brian Baldino. His years of hard work on this case led to a first-degree murder conviction against Withers. In Baldino's case, a jury hung 10 to 2 for guilty earlier this year. However, Baldino chose not to face a second jury trial and pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter. The defendants in this case gunned down the victim in February 2008 at a bar in Lakeside. The case went unsolved for years because the only description of the suspects was two white males with shaved heads in a black Camaro or Mustang. There were no ID witnesses who stepped forward because Withers had ties to the Hells Angels biker gang and was known for beating and robbing drugs users and dealers.

A break came in 2012, when Withers was charged with an unrelated murder. DA Investigator Soliven conducted numerous follow-up interviews, including tracking down and interviewing out-of-state witnesses. Some of the witnesses had long criminal histories and a fear of Withers. In the end, Soliven was able to get terrified witnesses to speak with law enforcement. His exceptional people skills kept these very difficult witnesses cooperative through a process that took several years and through period rife with outside threats.

### **Deputy District Attorney David Williams, III**

David Williams prosecuted a cold case homicide that left Marine combat veteran, Lindell Mitchell, dead on Christmas Eve in 1991 at the hands of Kimberly Andrews and her uncle, John Noble. After more than 20 years cold, the case was resurrected in 2012. DNA testing linked a hat found at the scene to one of Kimberly Andrews' uncles, suggesting Andrews had indeed made good on her threats to kill Mitchell. Kimberly Andrews was located in Louisiana and brought back to San Diego for prosecution.

Following Kimberly Andrews' conviction, follow-up investigation helped develop evidence that one of Andrews' uncles, John Wesley Noble, was the killer. Noble's trial began in late 2016 and featured the testimony of his already convicted niece. Andrews testified that her uncles became angry after hearing her story about an argument earlier in the evening at a gathering with Mitchell and his friends. Noble pleaded guilty to second-degree murder.

### **Deputy District Attorney Melissa Vasel**

Melissa Vasel has prosecuted more than 90 jury trials in 13 years, developing a consistent track record of obtaining justice for crime victims in San Diego County. No matter the assignment, Vasel has prosecuted case after case with no signs of slowing down. When she first began her career in the DA's Office, she quickly established herself as a trial force, amassing 27 misdemeanor trials in El Cajon in just one year. In two and a half years in the Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking division, she prosecuted 11 felony jury trials. While she was in the South Bay Gang Unit, she tried eight felony jury trials in two years. In the Superior Court division, one of the biggest in the office, she carried 45 felony jury trials to verdict. In this past year alone, she's tried and won three back-to-back homicide cases.

**Deputy District Attorney Nicole Rooney**

Many prosecutors would consider convictions in four homicides a good career, but for Nicole Rooney, she obtained four convictions in the first nine months of the year. The cases included:

- A defendant who was high on drugs and driving 60 to 70 miles per hour before crashing into a vehicle stopped at a red light. The 9-year-old girl inside the stopped car was killed and several others were seriously injured.
- A defendant with a history of beating his girlfriend and who eventually beat her to death in January 2016.
- A defendant convicted of assault on a child causing death after shaking her 9-month-old son to death.
- A defendant who was convicted of double murder for shooting and killing her husband and 14-year-old daughter.

###