



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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North Dakota, Iowa, Canada, New Mexico and China are just a few of the places staffers who joined us in 2016 are from.

It's always interesting to hear their stories that start in different parts of our state, or on the other side of the country, or even the globe, and end up at 221 South Mooney Blvd. as part of the District Attorney's Office.

Many young prosecutors report they are drawn here by the affordable housing (in comparison to Southern California or the Bay Area), the small town atmosphere, the magnificent national parks just a short drive away, and the excellent reputation this office maintains in California.

My own journey to our courthouse began in Tennessee and North Carolina. I joined the Army in 1989, I was excited to be stationed in California, until I realized Fort Irwin (Barstow) is not the California I saw on postcards or television. I went to law school in Orange County and was drawn to Central California for the kayaking opportunities provided by the Kern and Kings rivers. Like many Tulare County transplants, this is where I found not only my career, but my spouse. My roots may be newer than some people, but they are now very deep.

As I mentioned, we have one staff member who joined us just last week from New Mexico. This member likes the outdoors, too. He is dedicated to children and helping them through the difficult court process. He has only been here a few days and I can safely say he is the most popular member of the Office of the District Attorney. He is not a prosecutor and he is not an investigator.

His name is Fortune and he is a Golden Retriever/Labrador Retriever mix, which is now referred to by the AKC as a "Great American Breed" and indeed he is a great American. His primary responsibility is to offer comfort to children when they are interviewed by our personnel and he may even attend court proceedings with the child.

The idea of "comfort" is not often found in the judicial system. Children who have been hurt, traumatized and affected by crime in a number of different ways will find comfort in having to re-tell the event with the gentle companionship of a well-trained dog.

Numerous studies have proved the positive impact of victim's interaction with Facility Dogs through decreased anxiety and fears connected with the legal process.

After becoming Tulare County's District Attorney, I created a specific team of prosecutors and investigators within our office to handle crimes against children. In doing so, we made a commitment to our most vulnerable victims. Fortune will be a valuable member of that team. Though we anticipate Fortune working primarily with child victims, it is easy to foresee opportunities where, when working with some of our vulnerable adult population, he will represent the office well.

Fortune was fully trained and socialized by Assistance Dogs of the West based out of Santa Fe, N.M. I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to express what a pleasure it has been working with their staff through this lengthy, but rewarding process. I'm especially honored that Assistance Dogs of the West utilized military veterans in their training programs. Fortune is named after Army Sgt. Maurice K. Fortune who was killed in Iraq in 2004.

So no matter where we start out in life, we are your prosecutors, professional staff, criminal investigators ... and dog. We are proud to serve you and wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

Tim Ward
Tulare County District Attorney