



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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It is that time of year when we are inundated with reflections for 2013. Yes, I have been doing the same thing, but before you jump to conclusions as to why I am both nostalgic and proud, it is not only because 2014 is right around the corner. My one-year anniversary date as your District Attorney happens to fall during this blessed season and the renewal of a New Year. This has been a year of challenges and accomplishments. The most satisfying accomplishment is to set a goal and reach it. I am going to share a few of these examples from this year.

Central to my core belief system is my responsibility to protect our most precious and vulnerable citizens. My first order of business was to establish the Crimes Against Children Division. Dedicating special prosecutors for sexual assault crimes against children is an outstanding practice and I sought to expand that to an entire unit of trained, experienced prosecutors who handle all crimes against children. The children and their parents or guardians work with the same prosecutor from the inception of the criminal case through the trial. A supervising deputy district attorney directs a child homicide prosecutor, two child sexual assault prosecutors, a prosecutor handling child neglect, drug endangered children, and physical abuse of children, and a prosecutor dedicated to teen online child exploitation, pornography, and unlawful sex with minors. I am deeply proud of my compassionate and tenacious prosecutors, victim advocates, criminal investigators, and our Child Forensic Interview Specialist. Because of this new model and their dedication, in 2013 the Crimes Against Children Division has obtained more than 2,000 years in state prison for defendants who have abused children. Eight defendants have received life sentences for their crimes. It should be noted that the restructuring of this teams was accomplished without hiring additional personnel.

Violence committed within the sanctity of intimate relationships, perpetrated behind closed doors, with the anticipation that the victim will not speak up is unacceptable. Domestic violence is a crime that impacts every community and every culture. I instituted the Enhanced Violence Against Women Prosecution Unit under our Special Crimes Division. From stalking to homicide, a special team of prosecutors use an aggregate approach to these crimes, which tend to overlap or progress with serious consequences.

Tulare County produces over five billion dollars in nut and fruit crops, livestock, and dairy annually. We are all connected to agriculture in some way, whether it is as a consumer or as one of the 60 percent of our residents who rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Along with uncompromisingly prosecuting criminals who prey on our most valuable assets, we proactively fight agricultural crime. Since August, with just a few exceptions, undercover surveillance with

specialized equipment has been deployed seven days a week, 24 hours a day and has resulted in several agricultural crime-related arrests.

Farmers and ranchers, due to the remote nature of their land, can leave their property and equipment vulnerable to thieves. The Owner Applied Number (OAN) program is administered by our office and is another example of our comprehensive plan to fight agricultural crime. We have marked over 1,700 pieces of farm equipment this year alone and our County OAN's account for nearly a third of the State's database.

Continuous improvement through training is key factor in successful crime fighting. Our Office hosted the California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force, Rural Crime School this year and we have a criminal investigator chairing the organizations curriculum committee. Our dedicated Rural Crimes Prosecutor and criminal investigators work closely with the fine team of agricultural crime detectives at the Tulare County Sheriff's Department (TCSO), and our local agencies to fight every aspect of agriculture crime in our community

As you may have noticed, in every example of our accomplishments this year, teamwork is a critical component in achieving our goals. This teamwork does not stop within our office, we continue to strengthen and grow our relationships with law enforcement leadership, non-profit organizations, business owners, and vested stakeholders in our community. In fact, I am very thankful for the continued support of Supervisors Pete Vander Poel, Allen Ishida, Mike Ennis, Steve Worthely, and Phil Cox. At every victim-centered event we host throughout the year, I am thankful to see familiar and stalwart members of the community, and I am delighted to meet new participants who have decided to share in our quest to support victims.

In a letter to his Attorney General, President George Washington reflected that the administration of justice was the "firmest pillar of good government." The Office of the District Attorney is a firm pillar and our symbol is a torch. We will continue to illuminate, enlighten, and guide our community to justice every single day.

I wish you a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and look forward to continuing to serve you in the new year.

Tim Ward
District Attorney