

2021

Annual Report

GREENE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JOSEPH STANZIONE ESQ.

MEET OUR STAFF



Joseph Stanzione

District Attorney

David Costanzo

Chief Assistant District Attorney

Denise Kerrigan

Assistant District Attorney

Danielle McIntosh

Assistant District Attorney

Clement Lalor

Assistant District Attorney

Jeffrey Low

Assistant District Attorney

Lorianne Holliday

Legal Secretary

Sheri Jourdin

Victim Advocate

Patricia Lasher

Paralegal

Kelly Kiley

Confidential Secretary

Gregory Sager

Criminal Investigator

Gregory Seeley

Criminal Investigator

2021 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GREENE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Mission Statement

The Greene County District Attorney's Office is committed to the prosecution of Criminal Offenses in a professional, efficient and ethical manner so as to enhance the safety and security of the citizens of Greene County.

I. Staff and Functions

Staff: 5 ADA's, 2 Investigator, 1 Victim Advocate/Legal Secretary, 1 Legal Secretary, 1 Paralegal & 1 Confidential Secretary.

Members of my office appear in the Greene County Court as well as the 15 justice Courts on a daily basis prosecuting Felonies, Misdemeanors, Violations and Traffic Offenses.

In 2021 the Village of Catskill Court closed, thereby moving all Catskill Village Cases to the Town of Catskill Court. There has been no decline in the number of criminal cases.

Court appearances involve participation in Identification hearings, Probable Cause hearings, Suppression hearings, Violation of Probation hearings, Felony trials, Misdemeanor trials, Sex Offender hearings and many other types of proceedings.

Members of my office continue to work closely with the **11 police agencies** that serve Greene County. They include **New York State Police, Greene County Sheriff's Office, Catskill Village Police Department, Athens Village Police Department, Cairo Police Department, Coxsackie Police Department, Durham Police Department, Hunter Police Department, Windham Police Department., Department of Environmental Conservation & Department of Environmental Protection.** My staff is available 24/7 to assist these agencies during their investigation of criminal activity in Greene County. We are also available 24/7 to take calls from law enforcement seeking input on such issues as: bail recommendations, research on legal questions, questions as to whether a search warrant is required, whether blood can be taken from an unconscious person under certain circumstances, whether evidence needs to be sent to a Lab for DNA or fingerprint processing, whether further investigation is required before an arrest should be made, etc.

This 24/7 availability of my staff involves calls from Law Enforcement between the hours of 12:00am – 5:00am wherein my staff members are awakened to review facts, research law, review criminal histories and make judgement calls as to what charges should be assessed, and what, if any bail is to be recommended.

My staff also conducts Grand Jury proceedings. In 2021 we were met with the challenge of finding a location where all 23 Grand Jurors could be socially distanced 6 feet apart. Grand Jury

is held on nearly a weekly basis at the Greene County Courthouse. These proceedings require meetings with witnesses of crimes, victims of crimes, investigators, expert witnesses; (such as computer crimes; social workers; accountants; scientist; physicians, forensic pathologist) and police officers for purposes of gaining a thorough knowledge of each case, and for preparing witnesses to testify

II. Successful Transition to Paperless Files

Over the past 2 years my office transitioned to “Paperless Files”.

Relying on Lap Tops my staff and I successfully manage our caseloads using electronic files. All police agencies continue to forward documents to my office electronically. As such, there is little time delay in receiving documents from Law Enforcement.

The end result is that service of discovery documents upon defense counsel is much quicker and easier, thereby eliminating age old claims of defense counsel that “Delays in providing Discovery Material create an unfairness to the defendants”.

III. NEW DISCOVERY LAWS TRAINING LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE OF ALL 1ST RESPONDERS

We continue to operate under the new “New York State Discovery & Bail Reform” laws. There has been much controversy over these laws across the state. These laws mandate that DA’s provide vast amounts of material to defense attorneys within a very short period of time (20/35 days). This change placed **tremendous demands on the manpower & resources of the District Attorney’s Office. Nonetheless, the State has failed to provide funding to District Attorney Offices to help keep up with these added demands.**

The issue of needed resources will be addressed by the legislature in Albany during the Spring 2022 session. We will soon see whether District Attorney Offices will receive the support of the Legislature.

Despite the new challenges of “Discovery Reform”, Greene County has kept up with all of the requirements of the new laws. Unlike other Counties we have not suffered “Case Dismissals” or “Assessed Penalties” for “failure to meet discovery deadlines”.

I attribute this success to the efficient work of our Law Enforcement Officers, 1st Responders and 911 personnel; as well as the hard work and dedication of my Assistant District Attorneys as well as my Support Staff.

IV. BAIL REFORM LAWS

Bail reform is another relatively new set of laws which continues to be controversial. Bail Reform became effective on 1/1/20 and was thereafter modified as of 4/1/20. Bail reform continues to be reviewed by our legislative body. The major issue in controversy includes “the extent of discretion our Judges should have in assessing Bail”.

Although “Bail Reform” has restricted the types of offenses for which an individual may be committed to Jail, the number of those committed to our new jail has not seen much of a decrease. This is attributed in part to the fact that Greene County has recently seen an increase in the number of more violent offenses since bail reform.

In our Greene County Jail we currently house 4 persons for “Attempted Murder” (one having attempted to Murder 2 Police Officers) and 5 persons for “Murder”. Greene County has never in its history housed this many people at one time for Murder and Attempted Murder.

Trials will soon be scheduled, and my team and I are fully prepared to proceed with the prosecution of these cases.

V. EFFECT OF COVID-19

One of the many effects of **COVID-19** was that Courts closed for a period of time. This resulted in a backlog of cases in the Court System. Court rules were then modified to allow “Virtual Court Conferences” as well as “Virtual Pleads and Sentencings”.

Due to these modified rules we were able to alleviate much of the Court backlog, with the exception of those cases that require a trial.

VI. RAISE THE AGE

As of 10/1/19 both 16 & 17 year old persons who commit crimes are considered “**Adolescent Offenders**”. This means that most of these cases will be transferred to the “Family Court”, as opposed to a “Criminal Court”.

There are exceptions to this law. In cases where I believe the exception applies my office will make an application to keep the criminal offense in the criminal part of the court, now known as “Youth Court”, as opposed to the transfer of the case to the Family Court. The result is that the case will be prosecuted criminally, as opposed to being diverted to Family Court.

Over the past year there have been a number of cases in which “Adolescent” offenders were involved in “Gun Violence”, “Assaultive Behavior” and “Sex Offenses”. In each of these

cases my office opposed a transfer of the case to Family Court. For the most part the Courts have ruled in our favor, whereupon the cases were prosecuted in the Criminal Youth Court.

VII. RED FLAG LAW

Under the relatively new “Red Flag Law” certain qualified persons may bring to the attention of a Superior Court Judge his/her concern over a person possessing firearms of various sorts.

Those qualified persons include:

Police Officer

District Attorney

Family or Household Member

School Administrator

Although I am a strong advocate of the Second Amendment which recognizes the Right To Bear Arms, I also recognize the need to place a “Pause” on an individual’s right to possess a gun when that person is suffering some extreme emotional stress at a point in his/her life which causes him/her to be a danger to himself/herself or to someone else.

The Red Flag Law restricts one’s ability to possess a gun for a period of one year, unless the time period is extended by a Judge upon a showing of Clear and Convincing Evidence that the person is likely to engage in conduct that would result in serious harm to himself, herself or others.

A number of these cases have been brought to my office during the calendar year. In each of these cases the end results were deemed fair and appropriate by the Court, my Office and the Defense. In some cases the subject of the complaint actually consented to the issuance of an Order prohibiting him/her from possessing a gun for the year period.

VIII. DRUG OFFENSES

a. Drug Dealers

We continue to focus on identifying those responsible for the distribution of illegal drugs in our communities, as well as identifying those who are struggling with drug addiction.

My policy allows little tolerance for **drug dealers**. For this reason my office goal is to secure a conviction and State Prison sentence for those who deal drugs in our community.

b. Substance Abusers

Over the past few years we have learned that many people have become addicted to opioids as a result of work related and sports related injuries. Due to these injuries they were prescribed opioid medications which resulted in an addiction. Once the prescription medication was terminated, some of those who became addicted turned to the street to purchase illegal opioids (such as pills or heroin) to eliminate their pain and satisfy their addiction.

Within the past few years our local medical professionals recognized this problem and have taken extreme steps to protect their patients from becoming addicted. This includes prescribing a one week supply of opioids at a time as opposed to a month supply; or prescribing pain management where appropriate instead of medication.

With respect to individuals who are charged with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance my office goal is to get them into treatment and on the road of recovery.

Within the past couple years additional resources and programs have become available to those who struggle with addictions. We now have “Lead Court”, “Opioid Court” and additional Resources through “Greene County Mental Health”.

The legal system recognizes that more resources and a greater focus must be given to assist those suffering from addictions.

IX. Drug Court

Drug Court is a well-structured and vigorous program that entails “**Treatment**”, in conjunction with “**Probation Supervision**”, and with weekly meetings with our Drug Court Judge, **Honorable Charles Tailleir**.

Drug Court in Greene County is an alternative to incarceration for those defendants who are charged with crimes, have a non-violent criminal history, reside in Greene County, who are addicted either to substance(s) or alcohol, and demonstrate a desire to lead a sober lifestyle. They are, by and large, county residents who likely would not have been involved in our criminal justice system if they were sober. Our Drug Court provides an opportunity for defendants to achieve goals that they might have accomplished had they not suffered an addiction.

Time has proven that the success of Drug Court; namely, maintaining sobriety, not being rearrested and moving forward in life, far exceeds the success of those offenders who have not participated in Drug Court.

This success is undoubtedly due in part because the program holds participants accountable through an immense amount of oversight and structure within and outside of the Court.

Participants are required to be evaluated by state certified mental health professionals, as well as alcohol/substance abuse professionals, to sign necessary releases, and to comply with all recommendations of professionals in order to graduate from the program.

Participants are also required to attend at least 3 'self-help' meetings, typically AA, each week, and to call a 1-800 number every morning to see if they have been randomly chosen to subject themselves to an observed alcohol/drug test that day.

Participants are required to appear in County Court regularly during their time in Drug Court (Drug Court has 3 phases, the program lasts between 12 to 18 months). In phase 1 the participant appears in Court every week. Phase 2, every two weeks. Phase 3, every month. Participants in phase 3 are required to complete 25 hours of community service prior to graduation.

All participants in Drug Court are supervised by our County's Department of Probation, where they are subjected to random home visits, random searches of their person and belongings, and random drug and alcohol screens in addition to those conducted at their treatment facility.

Drug Users Who Re-Offend While in Drug Court

Those participants who fail to comply with the requirements above are sanctioned by the Drug Court Team. The Team is composed of the County Court Judge, an Assistant District Attorney, the state's Drug Court Coordinator, an Assistant Public Defender, a Probation Officer, a Greene County mental health counselor, and a State certified counselor from Twin Counties. This team meets every week to discuss the progress of every drug court candidate, and discusses the range of sanctions most appropriate for a violation of the Drug Court Rules. Sanctions are swift, and graduate in range from a verbal reprimand, to writing essays, to performing community service, and to serving jail time.

In the occasional case in which a participant fails out of Treatment Court he/she is exposed to being sentenced up to the maximum jail time allowed for the offense he/she plead to. If sentenced to State Prison, their sentence usually includes "**Shock Incarceration**". This means that the prison sentence includes a vigorous physical regimen together with a program of intense substance abuse counseling. Success of this rigorous program could result in an early release to parole supervision.

Fortunately, most participants do graduate and participate in a commencement ceremony, which is held at the County Courthouse. The graduates are recognized and lauded by the Judge and Team before the community at large, friends, and family for their achievement and progress.

Many a graduate have referenced in their commencement speech how thankful they are that they were arrested and given the opportunity of Treatment Court, and how different their life is now as a result. The presence of many post-graduates and community leaders in the audience at our commencement reflects the strength of Greene County's Drug Treatment Court Program.

In light of the challenges created by the Covid pandemic, which has its impact on the most vulnerable, we are pleased to report that not one of our Drug Court participants fell back into a cycle of addiction.

X. Drug Investigations

My office continues to be directly involved in "undercover drug buys" through the use of various "Confidential Informants". This process has resulted in arrests of numerous drug dealers, most of which resulted in significant drug prosecutions and sentences.

The investigator in my office continues to devote extensive amounts of time and effort to the investigation and prosecution of illegal drug cases. His work entails working in the field with the Greene County Sheriff's Office, New York State Police, & local police agencies. This includes setting up and completing "Controlled Buys" of drugs, completing paperwork, writing and executing Search Warrants, etc.

In early 2021 my Investigator along with other Law Enforcement agencies began an investigation into a large drug dealing operation in Greene County, resulting in the arrest and prosecution of 7 people.

One person has been sent to State Prison, 2 have plead to the charges and will be sent to prison, and trials are to be scheduled for the remaining persons charged.

It should be noted that "Drug Dealers" do not have 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM hours, This means that in addition to working in the office, my investigator is in the field working on drug cases during weekends, late night hours & early morning hours. In addition, he is out executing Search Warrants when the need arises, which is at all hours of the day & night.

Our progress would not be possible without the extensive time and effort that our own investigator devotes to these cases.

It has been said that due to our intense focus on drug investigations Greene County does not suffer a high degree of gang violence, or violent crime in general as seen in our adjoining counties.

My office is committed to fight the war on drugs, and I will continue to devote my office resources to prosecuting drug dealers in order to keep drugs off our streets and away from our schools. At the same time I will continue to work to identify "**drug users**" so that we can get

these individuals into appropriate treatment programs with a goal of having them once again become productive members of society.

XI. Violent Crimes

It is my policy to take a tough stance against “Violent Criminal Behavior”. When criminals display violence against citizens of our communities I believe it is necessary to remove these criminals from society in order to protect the citizens of Greene County.

My office also takes a tough stance against those who commit crimes against animals. Studies have shown that those who display violence against animals will eventually commit violent acts against human beings. None the less, we have recently prosecuted cases in which animals that have been loyal and loving to their owners have been the recipients of violent acts by their owner without just cause.

Over the past year my office has seen an increased number of crimes that occur within a family unit. This includes Assaultive and Sexual offenses against children. Members of my staff work with members of the Child Advocacy Center on nearly a weekly basis gathering evidence of such crimes in order to end victimization of innocent children.

My staff and I will continue to zealously prosecute and seek harsh Prison sentences for Violent Felony Offenders.

XII. Weekly Meetings

I continue to hold weekly staff meetings. These weekly meetings continue to be of tremendous value as our panel of attorneys review complex criminal cases. Our collaborative efforts continue to result in powerful strategies for the prosecution of such criminal cases.

During the first quarter of the 2021 year 50% of my staff worked in the office while 50% of my staff worked remotely from home due to Covid-19. During this time, my weekly staff meetings were conducted virtually through Zoom.

XIII. Substance Awareness/Victim Impact Panel

I continue to follow the policy that I imposed when I took office requiring **all persons** charged with an alcohol or drug related offense to attend a “Victim Impact Panel”. The “VIP” is a 2 hour program during which attendees hear from a panel of speakers that include:

- (a) People who have served serious sentences as a result of substance related offenses (they discuss how their crime has impacted their lives as well as the lives of their family and friends);
- (b) People who have been seriously injured or who have lost a loved one due to an alcohol or drug related offense;
- (c) Members of the Greene County Sheriff's Office;
- (d) Members of the Greene County Probation Department;
- (e) Members of the Greene County District Attorney's Office; and
- (f) Members of the New York State Police

This program is sponsored by the Greene County Probation Department, Greene County Sheriff Office & the Greene County District Attorney's Office. Our Probation Department selects speakers who are appropriate to deliver a message to participants. Their selections have been excellent as their messages have been very powerful.

Once again during the 2021 year, three Victim Impact Panels were held. Due to the Covid pandemic the panel was pre-recorded and presented virtually.

Although "education" is the goal, an attendance fee is charged, which results in a contribution to the STOP DWI Program. These funds are used for both education and prosecution of DWI and DWAI Offenses. Education, however includes the "Four D's" offenses: Drunk Driving, Drugged Driving, Distracted Driving and Drowsy Driving.

XIV. School Involvement in Substance Awareness

The Greene County Sheriff's Office, Greene County Probation Department and Greene County District Attorney's Office continue to work together to present the Victim Impact Panel to our schools. Our goal is to hold a Victim Impact Panel in each of the school districts each school year.

Unfortunately, due to the **Covid-19** Pandemic and School closures a VIP was not held in any of the schools during the 2021 year. The panel will begin again in 2022.

XV. Crime in the Prisons

I continue to stress the need to keep Correction Officers within our local Jail and State Prisons (Coxsackie and Greene Correctional) safe. I assist in doing this by prosecuting such crimes as "assaults on Officers", "possession of weapons in the Prisons" and "possession of controlled substances in the Prisons". During the 2021 year, dozens of inmates were indicted and prosecuted on weapons charges, drug charges and assaults.

In February 2021 a female Correction Officer was attacked by a male inmate who struck her several times in the face and then ripped her uniform shirt open. Fortunately other inmates came to her aid before other Officers arrived. The female CO was taken to the hospital with several injuries.

The inmate has been Indicted on Felony charges. It is our intent to prosecute this matter to the fullest extent of the law.

Statistics show that Prison Crime either levels off or declines when inmates know that their criminal activity within the facility will result in prosecution that adds additional years to their prison sentence.

My office continues to be committed to the safety of our Correction Officers.

XVI. Search Warrants:

With the new age of computers, cell phones and internet, as well as “Infotainment” Center Systems found in motor vehicles, we’ve learn that invaluable evidence is stored and preserved both in a perpetrator’s cell phone as well as with cell phone and computer companies. This has led to a tremendous increase in the number of applications for search warrants. Whenever information is sought from one’s cell phone or from a computer or cell phone company a detailed Search Warrant application must be filed with a judge.

The average application takes approximately 4 to 6 hours to prepare. In addition, many times the warrant itself is prepared by my office, and a mini proceeding is required in front of a judge before a warrant is signed. Such applications have increased the amount of time that a member of my staff must devote to a criminal case.

During this 2021 year my office has prepared and submitted at least 125 Search Warrant Applications to the Court. This is a significant increase in the number of applications that we have handled in past years. I attribute this increase to the vast amount of information that we are now able to obtain from electronic devices. I also believe it is attributed to the increase in violent crime that we have experienced since Bail and Discovery Reform Laws went into effect.

XVII Caseload Comparison

Greene County has seen an increase in both Criminal Cases and Vehicle and Traffic Cases in 2021. We prosecuted an additional 181 Criminal Cases and an additional 1177 Vehicle and Traffic cases in 2021. In total, 1810 new Criminal Cases and 19,815 new Vehicle and Traffic Cases were opened. We continue to keep up with the increasing caseloads.

XVIII Working with schools

My office continues to assist our school districts in dealing with issues of abuse of student truancy. We remind parents that excessive unexcused absences could well qualify as “neglect” and “child endangerment”.

My office participates in Bi-Monthly “At Risk Youth Task Force” meetings that are attended by the Greene County Mental Health Department, our 6 School Districts, the Greene County Youth Bureau, the Greene County Probation Department, Twin Counties Recovery Services and other agencies.

XIX. Conclusion

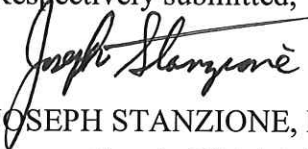
In conclusion, the Greene County District Attorney’s Office continues to be extremely active, and committed to securing the safety of our citizens. Our goal is to prosecute crime in an ethical, professional and efficient manner. My Office works hand in hand with the Greene County Probation Department, the Greene County Sheriff’s Office, the New York State Police and the various local Police Agencies in investigations, arrests and prosecutions of criminals.

I am proud of my staff of dedicated public servants who make up the Greene County District Attorney’s Office.

I will continue to work hard in order to maintain the trust that the citizens of Greene County placed in me to lead the District Attorney’s Office.

I am appreciative of the support our Greene County Administrator and Greene County Legislators have extended to me and to my office since my election. They continue to be genuinely concerned with the safety and welfare of the citizens of our community.

Respectively submitted,



JOSEPH STANZIONE, ESQ.,
Greene County District Attorney

