

Office of the District Attorney

District Attorney Jonathan L. Adams
Towaliga Judicial Circuit

2024 Annual Report



Serving Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties

OUR MISSION

To seek justice, to act with integrity, and to work with our partner agencies to protect the citizens of the Towaliga Judicial Circuit and the State of Georgia. To prosecute professionally and competently; to treat all people courteously, and respectfully; to advocate for the rights of victims; and above all to make our community a safer place for all of its residents.

OUR DUTIES

- Prosecute all criminal cases in Superior and Juvenile Court
- Prosecute all criminal cases in Butts and Lamar County Probate Court
- Represent the State of Georgia in all appeals of circuit cases
- Attend and advise Grand Juries
- Draft indictments, accusations and Grand Jury presentments
- Draft Juvenile Petitions on delinquency cases
- Screen all cases for determination of disposition
- File and prosecute civil asset forfeiture cases
- Prosecute welfare fraud cases
- Advise law enforcement officials concerning search warrants, etc
- Review, authorize and monitor Title III wiretaps
- Verify and review local revenue bond issue petitions
- Process detainers and extraditions of out-of-state defendants
- Respond to open records and criminal record expungement requests
- Prepare Destruction/Retention Orders for law enforcement agencies
- Review and process cases for Accountability Court
- Review and process cases for Pre-Trial Diversion program
- Organize and assist Coroner Inquests
- Assist crime victims with state crime victim rights and procedures
- Chair Child Fatality Review Committee meetings
- Assist Multi-Disciplinary Team Reviews on child abuse cases
- Assist Sexual Assault Team Review meetings

VICTIM RIGHTS

Our office is committed to providing victim services and rights as guaranteed by the Georgia Constitution. Crime victims have the right:

- To reasonable, accurate and timely notice from any agency aware of:
 - arrest, release from custody, escape of accused
 - any scheduled court proceeding or changes to such proceedings
- To restitution, crime victims' compensation and return of property as allowed and provided by law
- To be treated fairly and with dignity by all criminal justice agencies involved and to be notified of their rights as victims of crime
- To not be excluded
- To be provided a separate waiting area
- To be heard concerning release, plea or sentencing of the accused
- To have proceedings free from unreasonable delay
- To confer with the prosecuting attorney in any criminal prosecution related to the victim
- To file a motion to be heard if notification was requested and no notice was received or opportunity to be heard given
- To request that court personnel and counsel not transmit, disclose or allow transmission to the defendant the victim's address, telephone number, or place of employment
- To agree or refuse to talk to or be interviewed by the accused, the accused's attorney or anyone contacting the victim on behalf of the accused
- To the filing of a victim impact statement and/or written objection in any parole proceedings involving the accused
- To knowledge and notification of the Parole Board's action on the case and of parole decisions
- To notification of the appellate process

OUR TEAM

In addition to the District Attorney, the Office of the District Attorney has a full time staff of ten prosecuting attorneys, six legal assistants, two investigators, and four victim advocates.

Our office is divided into trial teams that are assigned to individual counties and that handle all cases assigned to their respective courts. Our office handles all misdemeanor and felony cases in the Superior Courts of Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties, all juvenile cases in Juvenile Court of Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties, and all criminal cases in the Probate Courts of Butts and Lamar Counties.

Our goal is to ensure we have an outstanding team of professionals working to ensure justice for our community.



Lamar County (L-R): Wayne Jernigan, Caroline Storey, Allison Howard, and Max Smith.



Butts County (L-R): Cayce Ingalls, Michael Parrish, Michelle Duffey, James Moss, Dianne Miner, Chris Miranda, Rita Lewis and Bonita Lynn.



Monroe County (L-R): Fran Norris, Leslie Tilson, Carolee Jordan, Savario Spencer, Dorothy Hull, Jerry Meadows, Janet Pierson, Ginny Sapp, Morgan Andrews, Lorraine Bunn, and Jessica Haygood.

GRAND JURIES

Fifth Amendment, U.S. Constitution:

“No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury.”

Georgia law requires that the Grand Jury must find a true bill in most felony cases before most felony cases may be brought to trial, therefore, a substantial amount of a Grand Jury’s time is spent inquiring into the existence of possible criminal conduct. However, not every criminal case requires action by the Grand Jury. Indictment by the Grand Jury is not required for misdemeanors and certain felony offenses. In all but capital felonies, the defendant may waive indictment by the Grand Jury. In these cases, the prosecuting attorney may file an accusation, or in some instances a citation, directly with the court. In addition, indictments are not used in cases when the accused is under 17 years of age and the case is brought in juvenile court.

By law, the District Attorney is the legal advisor for the Grand Jury. In so providing, the legislature recognized that most citizens who serve on the Grand Jury are unfamiliar with the many technicalities of the law. The District Attorney is responsible for advising you on any questions of law or procedure which you may have as a Grand Jury. The Grand Jury must rely on the District Attorney for legal advice and may not employ any other lawyer for that purpose. Assisting the District Attorney in carrying out these duties will be assistant district attorneys.

Most cases that will be brought before you begin with a crime being reported to, or discovered by, a law enforcement agency, such as the sheriff’s office, police department, or a state law enforcement agency. Following an investigation, a law enforcement officer will obtain a warrant for the arrest of the person believed to have committed the crime. In other cases, a private individual will have obtained an arrest warrant from a magistrate accusing a person of a crime. In these cases, there often will be little or no investigation of the charges by law enforcement.

After the accused is arrested, he or she will be brought before a magistrate, who will decide if the accused should be released on bail or held in custody. At that time, the accused may ask for a commitment hearing or allow the case to be bound over to Superior Court. If a commitment hearing is held, a magistrate will consider the facts in the case and determine if there is sufficient reason to believe that the accused committed the crime charged. If the magistrate determines that there is sufficient reason to believe the accused committed the crime, the case will be bound over to the Grand Jury. After receiving and reviewing the warrants, police reports and interviewing key witnesses, the District Attorney’s office will prepare an indictment or special presentment for presentation to you.

In addition to cases that are bound over, the District Attorney's office can bring an indictment or special presentment before you for investigation where the accused has not been arrested. Finally, if you or another member of the Grand Jury have personal knowledge that a crime has been committed for which the statute of limitations has not expired, the Grand Jury may request that the District Attorney prepare an indictment or special presentment so that the case may be considered by the Grand Jury.

It is the duty of the Grand Jury in criminal cases to determine from the evidence presented if there is probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed and to determine whether the person or persons named in the indictment or special presentment committed it.

Inspection or Investigations of Public Property, Records and Offices

The General Assembly has authorized the Grand Jury to conduct certain civil annual, periodic and optional inspections or investigations of designated public facilities and offices. Unlike their authority in criminal cases, the Grand Jury may conduct civil inspections or investigations only where specifically authorized by statute.

Annual Inspections

The Grand Jury is to inspect the condition and operation of the jail at least once each calendar year.

Periodic Inspections

At least once every three calendar years, the Grand Jury is to inspect and examine the offices and operations of the clerk of Superior Court, Judge of probate court, the county treasurer or depository and the offices of the District Attorney, if located in the county. If the District Attorney does not maintain an office in the county, the Grand Jury may inspect the offices of the District Attorney when they deem it necessary.

Optional Inspections or Investigations

Whenever deemed necessary by eight or more grand jurors, the Grand Jury shall appoint a committee of the Grand Jury to inspect or investigate the following:

- Any county office
- Any county building
- Any public authority of the county
- Any court or court official of the county
- The county board of education or the county school superintendent; or
- Any of the records, accounts, property, or operations of any of the entities described above

When the Grand Jury conducts a civil investigation or inspection under the 1994 legislation, the District Attorney will advise you concerning the procedures that must be followed. During an authorized inspection or investigation, the Grand Jury or the designated committee is authorized to examine books, records, and accounts, to have witnesses subpoenaed and to hear evidence. Any oral testimony heard by the Grand Jury must be taken under oath, as unsworn statements are not evidence.

The Grand Jury is authorized to appoint one citizen of the county to provide technical expertise during the inspection or investigation. This technical expert receives the same compensation as grand jurors.

The Grand Jury is authorized to prepare and submit for publication reports or presentments based on its inspections or investigations.

Other Inspections by the Grand Jury

County Tax Collector or Tax Commissioner: The county tax collector or tax commissioner is to submit the tax execution docket and cash book to the Grand Jury impaneled for the spring term of Superior Court.

County Treasurer: At least twice a year, the county treasurer is to submit a report to the Grand Jury showing the amounts of fines and forfeitures received by him or her, and to whom such funds were disbursed for the six-month period preceding the report.

Reports of Receipts and Disbursements: At each term of Superior Court, the Judge of the probate court, the county treasurer, the clerk of Superior Court and the sheriff are to submit a report of any money belonging to the county which was received by them, as well as any expenditures. They are also required to provide the Grand Jury with a copy of the most recent financial statement or annual audit of their office.

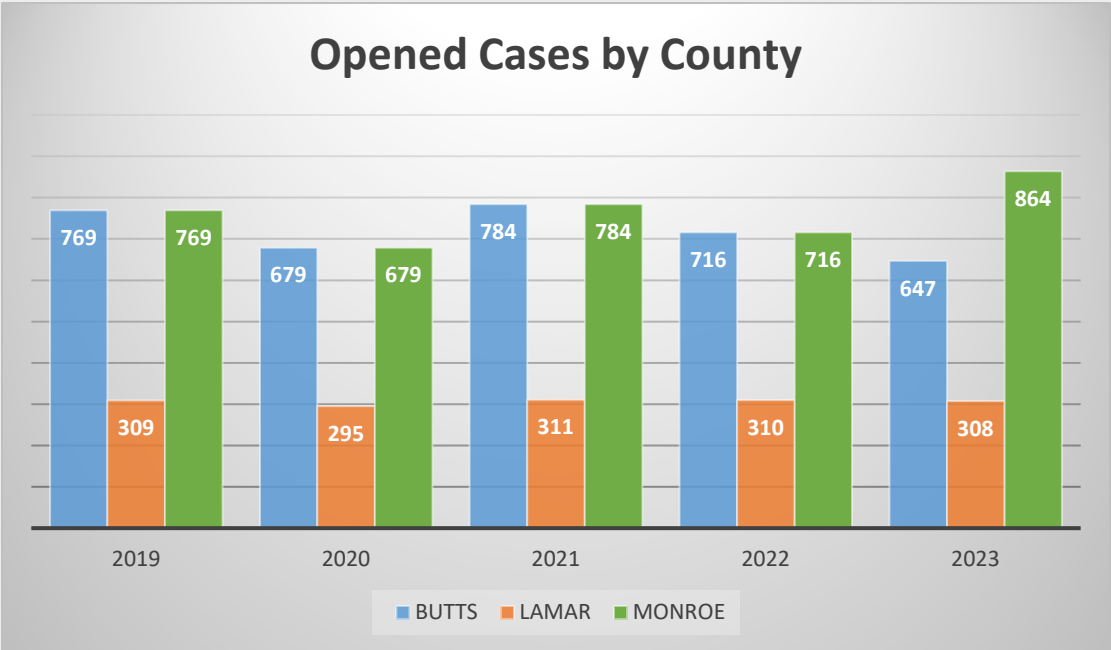
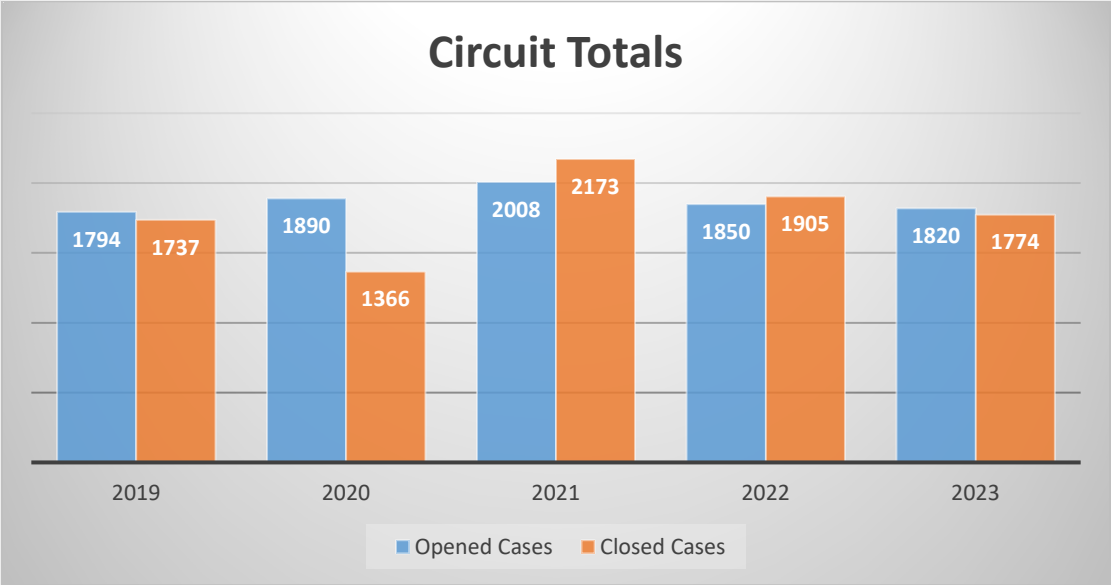
Public Education: Members of the State Board of Education and any other person having authority to select or aid in the selection of textbooks for the schools are required to report any gifts or offers of compensation or remuneration made to them on behalf of any schoolbook publishing house, corporation, or individual publishing textbooks.

Child Abuse: The Child Abuse Protocol Committee is to provide a copy of its annual report to the Grand Jury that meets during the fall term of Superior Court.

County Jail Inmate Records: The Grand Jury is to examine inmate records at the county jail.

OUR CASES

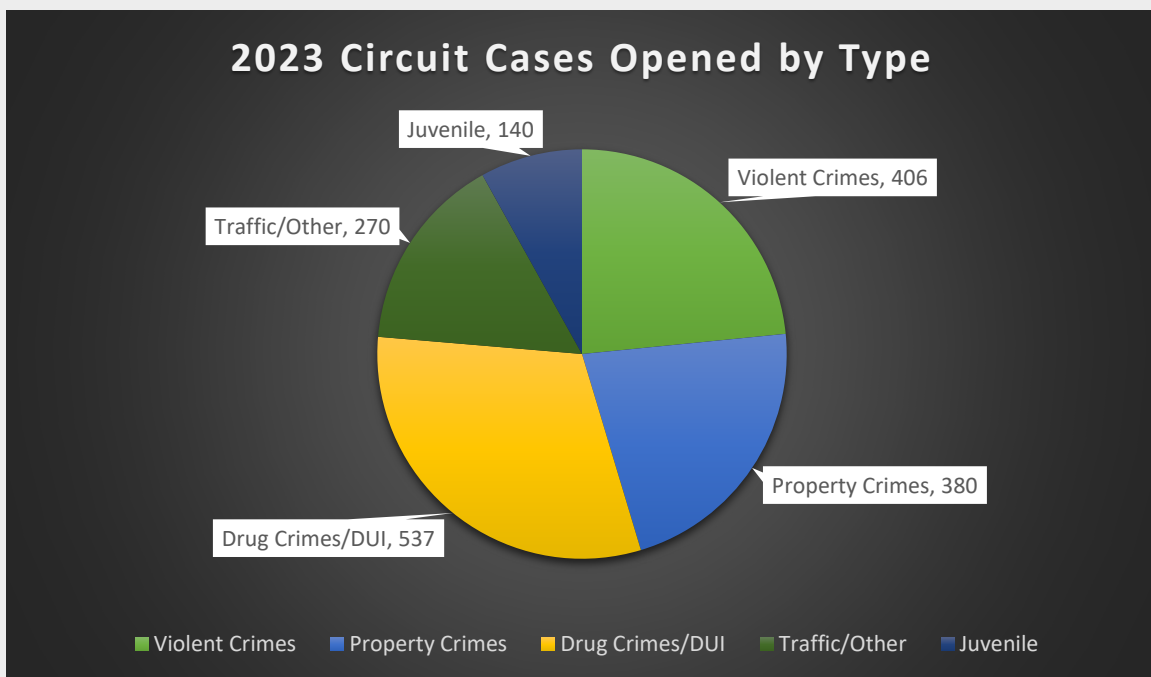
In 2023, we opened 1,819 cases for prosecution and closed 1,774 cases. The data in this report only reflects criminal cases resulting in arrests. Our current open caseload is 2,220 cases, which results in an average of 202 open cases for each Assistant District Attorney.



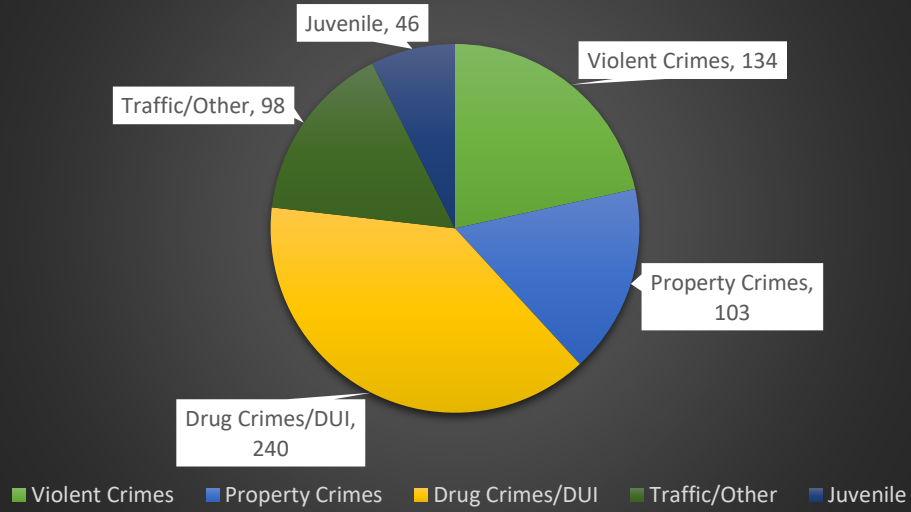
CASES OPENED BY TYPE

This chart demonstrates the majority of cases received in our office are either Drug Crimes or DUI/Traffic. There is a need for us to take a multi-pronged approach to Drug and Alcohol prosecution. We work closely with law enforcement to ensure we target dealers and to ensure stiff punishment. We will also increase our efforts with the Accountability Courts to address the issues of addiction.

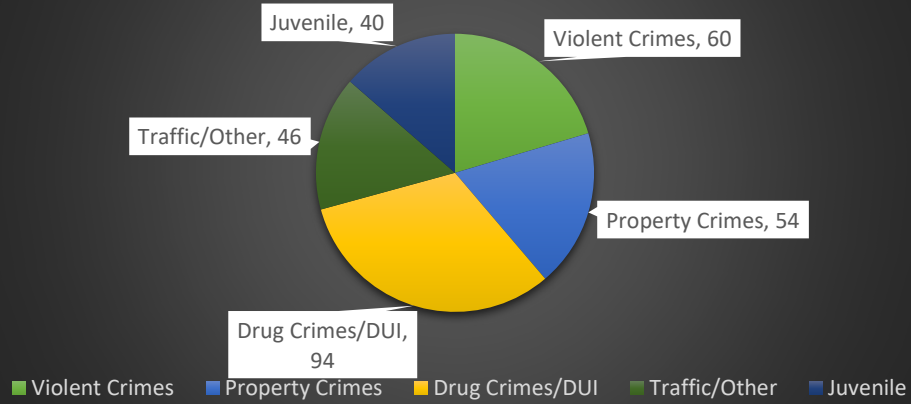
The chart below illustrates the caseload by percentage of cases being opened in the Office of the District Attorney in 2023. Our tracking instrument does not collect data from juvenile court or probation revocations to sufficiently break down those types of cases. However, they involve all manner of violations, from simple technical issues with the compliance to newly committed offenses.



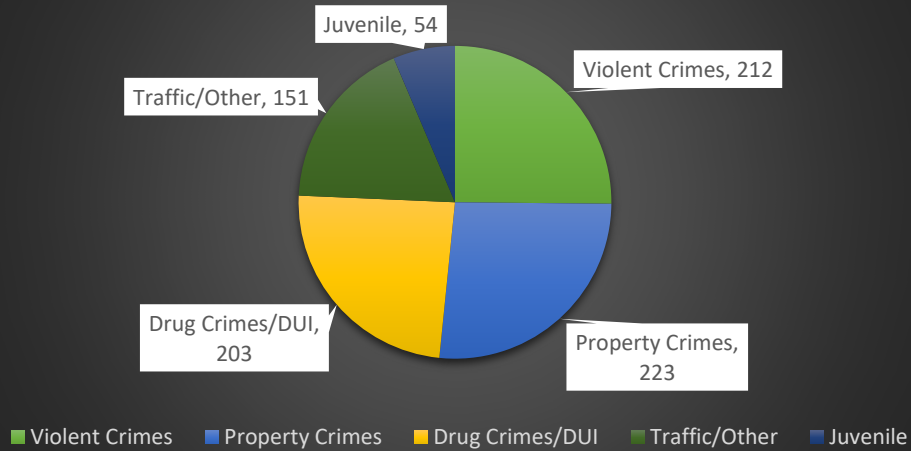
2023 Butts County Opened by Type



2023 Lamar County



2023 Monroe Cases



OUR WORK - BUILDING CASES

Team Work Improves Investigations

Our prosecutors, victim advocates and investigators are on call and available to law enforcement 24/7, particularly in serious violent felony cases against adults and children or other complex cases. Our prosecutors provide legal advice regarding search warrants, interviews of suspects, and whether additional evidence is required to prove a case in court.

Grand Jury

After an arrest, warrants are forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. Our support staff and investigators gather reports and additional follow-up from law enforcement, as well, as acquiring additional needed information, such as medical reports, scientific testing results or additional witness statements. Once our prosecutors determine a case is ready for formal charges to be lodged, they draft indictments in cases requiring Grand Jury review or accusations in cases statutorily permitted to be charged by the State. The majority of cases passing through the District Attorney's Office are presented to the Grand Jury, where citizens are selected to hear evidence and determine whether probable cause exists. The Grand Jury issues a True Bill (meaning there is sufficient evidence for probable cause) or a No Bill (meaning lack of evidence or probable cause).

Trial

The majority of cases in the criminal justice system are resolved by guilty pleas when defendants accept responsibility for their crimes. When a defendant declines to plead guilty, we provide a trial by jury which can take place every quarter. This year, our office worked hard to ensure we tried multiple criminal cases throughout the year.

There are four trial weeks each year in each county. Our goal is to ensure we use each trial week to resolve serious cases. Our law enforcement partners, Assistant District Attorneys, Victim Advocates, District Attorney Investigators, and Legal Assistants work hard on every case to present the best case possible at trial and support our victims.

Alternative to Prosecution

Our office works on several initiatives every year dedicated to support our commitment to better serving a safer community.

Accountability Courts

Accountability courts provide alternative sentencing for qualifying persons, typically those who have a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder. They work to lower recidivism and prison costs by breaking the cycle of addiction and mental illness, which are the root causes of many offenses. The court requires regular check-ins with a judge, intensive treatment, counseling, drug testing, curfews, and court supervision to hold offenders accountable for their rehabilitation.

The goal of accountability courts is to restore participants to productive, working, tax-paying citizens who provide for their families, thereby reducing costs to social services and the penal system.

Established in 2005 by Superior Court Judge William A. Fears, the Towaliga Accountability Courts, Inc. (TAC) has the distinction of being one of the oldest programs in Georgia.

The program serves Butts, Lamar, and Monroe Counties and offers substance abuse treatment and ancillary services. Co-occurring issues are addressed through individual counseling and other community resources.

The Towaliga Accountability Courts are working to establish a Mental Health Court, and a Veteran's Court to provide for complete wrap-around court services.

Pre-Trial Diversion

The Diversion program was created pursuant to O.C.G.A. §15-18-80 as an alternative to the prosecution of offenders in the criminal system. The Diversion Program is designed for first offenders who have committed crimes that did not result in injury to a victim, are otherwise non-violent and non-aggressive in nature and do not involve Driving under the influence charges, nor domestic violence.

In accordance with the conditions outlined in their contractual agreements, individuals accepted to participate in the Diversion Program will immediately be subjected to individualized and controlled supervisory programs for a specified period of time in lieu of traditional prosecution. That is, persons who meet eligibility criteria will be offered the opportunity to participate in the Diversion Program which will serve as an alternative to the county's traditional methods in handling cases.

Community Outreach



The District Attorney's Office in Butts, Monroe and Lamar Counties along with representatives from the Butts and Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Jackson Police Department, Division of Family and Children Services, Butts and Monroe County Board of Education, Georgia Department of Community Supervision, Butts and Monroe County Extension Office, Department of Juvenile Justice, and gathered to place blue pinwheels on the Courthouse Square. The month of April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and is represented by the color blue.



Our victim advocates enjoy supporting the community by preparing meals to provide needed assistance for many of our neighbors. Victim advocates delivered donated items from co-workers and the Butts County Life Enrichment Team to Haven House. For more information on services offered by Haven House, see www.henryhavenhouse.org or call 770-954-9229.



We are proud of Chief ADA Dorothy Hull earning the 2023 Assistant District Attorney of the year award. Her service to Butts, Lamar, and Monroe Counties is outstanding!



District Attorney Jonathan Adams with Prosecuting Attorney's Council Gang Resource Prosecutor John Regan, as he is sworn in as a Special Assistant District Attorney to fight gang activity in the Towaliga Judicial Circuit.

Our ultimate goal is for our community to be a safe place to live, work, and play. There is no one solution to addressing crime in our community. It is a dynamic and changing landscape in which we have to address both defendants and victims as individuals. Our intention is to remove extremely violent individuals and sexual predators from our society through incarceration, but we also recognize that many defendants have the potential to live productive and fruitful lives if core issues with mental health and addiction are properly addressed. Our best work is performed when we collaborate with our partners such as law enforcement, community leaders, church leaders and school leaders. It is a genuine pleasure to be a voice for victims in our community and I look forward to our continued progress as your District Attorney.

- District Attorney Jonathan Adams

TOWALIGA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT DISTRICT ATTORNEY VICTIM SERVICES

Director of Victim Services

Lorraine Bunn – 478-994-7652

lbunn@pacga.org

Butts County - 770-504-2407

Bonita Lynn, Advocate

blynn@pacga.org

Lamar County - 770-5004-6054

Allison Howard, Advocate

awhoward@pacga.org

Monroe County - 478-994-7652

Morgan Andrews, Advocate

mandrews@pacga.org

CALL US FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE WITH ANY INFORMATION
REGARDING CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS AND SERVICES

OR

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.towaligada.com
IN ANY EMERGENCY, CALL 911

Important Numbers:

Butts County:

Sheriff Gary Long, Butts County Sheriff's Office	770-775-8216
Chief David Akins, Jackson Police Department	770-775-7878

Lamar County:

Sheriff Brad White, Lamar County Sheriff's Office	770-358-5159
Chief Belinda Penamon, Barnesville Police Department	770-358-1234

Monroe County:

Sheriff W. Brad Freeman, Monroe County Sheriff's Office	478-994-7048
Chief Woodrow Blue, Forsyth Police Department	478-994-6022

For Emergency Temporary Protective Orders, Shelter, Counseling, Sexual Assault Services, and Child Advocacy Centers:

Monroe County Sheriff's Office C.A.R.E. Cottage	478-994-7287
Haven House- Crisis Line	770-954-9229
Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia	478-745-9292
Crescent House Child Advocacy Center	478-633-7044
Southern Crescent Sexual Assault & Child Advocacy Center	770-477-2177



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BUTTS COUNTY • 625 W. Third Street, Suite 8 Jackson, Georgia 30233 • 770-504-2407
LAMAR COUNTY • 326 Thomaston Street Barnesville, Georgia 30204 • 770-504-6054
MONROE COUNTY • 137 L. Cary Bittick Drive Forsyth, Georgia 31029 • 478-994-7652

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*Committed to developing offenders' job skills needed for successful reentry into society.*