

THE PROSECUTOR'S PROGRESS

AN UPDATE FROM THE VIRGINIA BEACH COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



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A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY



In response to a high-number of domestic-related homicides, my office recently launched a Domestic Violence Awareness campaign. The campaign focuses on acknowledging obstacles to ending an abusive relationship, educating domestic violence victims about available resources, and encouraging them to leave volatile relationships and seek safety.

In 2015 and 2016, approximately 25% of Virginia Beach homicides were domestic in nature. This office has seen too many victims killed at the hands of a loved one. Abusers thrive off of exerting power and control, leaving their loved ones afraid to get out. Too often this fear of escaping the home has resulted in serious injury or death.

Domestic violence is any form of physical violence against a family or household member, punishable by up to 12 months in jail for the first offense. It is often between intimate partners, but can include abuse of children and parents. Domestic violence can impact anyone, regardless of age, socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, or educational considerations.

Although Commonwealth's Attorneys in Virginia are not statutorily required or funded to prosecute misdemeanor domestic violence cases, the Virginia Beach Office has made domestic violence prosecution a priority for years. In recent years, this office has prosecuted more than 1,500 domestic violence cases per year. Victims are often reluctant to come forward and report abuse and often struggle with participating in the prosecution of their loved one. Although there are multiple challenges involved in escaping a volatile relationship, I want victims to understand that there are resources available to help, regardless of the situation.

With the assistance of Virginia Beach's Multimedia Services division, my office created a public service announcement on domestic violence which depicts a few of the challenges domestic violence victims face. To view the 30-second PSA, click [here](#). It will air on local television as well as in Virginia Beach movie theaters.

Victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, or human trafficking should call the Samaritan House Crisis Response Hotline at (757) 430-2120. This hotline is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those who are experiencing a medical emergency or are in immediate danger should always call 911. For more information about resources available to victims of domestic violence or learn how to help them, visit the Samaritan House [website](#). If you or someone you know is in danger, please don't hesitate to seek help now.

Sincerely,
Colin Stolle
Commonwealth's Attorney

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Message from the Commonwealth's Attorney: Help Fight Domestic Violence*
- *Featured Cases of the Quarter*
- *Consumer Corner: Beware the "Yes" Scam*
- *New App Alert: Tumblr*



FEATURED CASES OF THE QUARTER

Commonwealth v. Raiquan Turner



Charge: First Degree Felony Murder, Robbery (2 counts), Use of Firearm (2 counts), Conspiracy

Sentence: 3 Life Terms plus 18 Years

Facts: On May 30, 2015, the victim, Paul Abbey, and his friend were robbed at gunpoint in the parking lot of Cheetah's Gentleman's Club by Turner and an accomplice. During the robbery, Turner shot and killed Abbey. Abbey's friend suffered a graze wound to the head. The two groups of men did not know each other, but had made small talk earlier in the night at the club. Keith Mitchell, the getaway driver, pled guilty to Accessory after the Fact-Homicide and will be sentenced May 22. A third co-defendant is set for trial on March 21. One week after the crimes in Virginia Beach, Turner committed violent crimes in Hampton for which he is serving a 20-year federal sentence.

Commonwealth v. John Michael Abbrescia



Charges: Rape, Aggravated Sexual Battery, Forcible Sodomy, Object Sexual Penetration, Custodial Indecent Liberties (3 counts)

Sentence: 35 Years

Facts: Between August 1, 2014, and April 1, 2016, Abbrescia sexually abused a young child known to him on multiple occasions. Additionally, he forced the child to watch pornographic films. The child disclosed the abuse to the school guidance counselor. When Abbrescia found out that the child had disclosed the abuse, he told the child to lie to investigators. During an interview with detectives, Abbrescia provided a full confession to all of the abuse. He also admitted that he was HIV positive at the time. Abbrescia's DNA was found on the child's bed, box spring, and bedroom floor.

Commonwealth v. Sarah Flanders



Charges: Second Degree Felony Murder, Felony Hit and Run—Personal Injury or Death

Sentence: 22 Years

Facts: At about 5:20 a.m. on September 20, 2014, Flanders struck her friend, Richard Pentz, with a red Dodge Durango in the parking lot of Plaza Middle School. As she was leaving the scene, she notified two Virginia Dominion Power employees who were working nearby that there was a man bleeding to death in the parking lot and that it looked like he had been hit by a car. The Dominion Power employees called rescue and provided to the police a description of Flanders and the Durango. Pentz died of blunt force trauma to the torso. The Durango was located at the home of a friend of Flanders. Flanders' DNA was found on the steering wheel and the gear shift, and Pentz's DNA was located on the driver's side front bumper of the vehicle.

Commonwealth v. Angie Brown



Charge: Aggravated Malicious Wounding

Sentence: 20 Years

Facts: On April 3, 2014, Angie Brown and the victim were at Sliders Sports Bar. The victim and her friend were leaving the bar when Brown approached them and confronted them about talking a mutual male friend. Brown then attacked the victim from behind, knocking her to the ground and slashing her with a razor. The victim had severe slash wounds all over her body. Razor blades were located in the center console and trunk of Brown's car as well as in her purse. The owner of Sliders found a bloody razor in the parking lot near the location of the attack. DNA testing proved blood on the razor belonged to Brown and the victim. Brown used that type of razor blade in her profession of hairdressing.

For more details on these cases and other Commonwealth's Attorney's Office news, visit: www.vbgov.com/oca.



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**TOGETHER, WE CAN
KEEP VIRGINIA
BEACH SAFE!**

The Office of the
Commonwealth's Attorney is
dedicated to serving our
community.

To request the Office's
assistance at your community
event, please e-mail Public
Information Officer
Macie Allen at
mpallen@vb.gov.

The Consumer Corner

Beware the "Yes" Scam

Police departments around Virginia have been receiving complaints about a new version of a phone scam. Citizens report receiving automated calls from someone claiming to be from a business. The scammer often uses a local area code to appear legitimate. The companies they are supposedly representing include phone companies, cruise lines, home security agencies, or social security firms. The scammer asks, "Can you hear me?" If you answer "yes", the scammer can record your voice and use it to claim that you agreed to certain charges, such as authorizing charges on a phone, cable, or utility bill. Try not to answer even simple questions on unsolicited calls. If you're unsure who is calling, just hang up. If the call is from someone you know and it is important, they will call back or leave a voice mail.

If you already received one of these calls and think you responded with a verbal "yes", here is what you should do:

- Check your bank statements, bills, and credit card statements closely for fraudulent charges. It's possible the scammer has already collected some of your personal information.
- Report any suspicious charges to the company or bank immediately. Dispute anything you did not authorize or purchase. If they say you've been recorded authorizing the charge and you don't recall that, ask for proof.



Be cautious and avoid providing your personal information over the phone. There are many versions of this scam in which thieves try to steal personal information or trick the caller into wiring money. Always trust your instincts.

New App Alert: Tumblr

Tumblr is a social media app that allows users to post pictures and short blog posts. While this is a fun way for teens to communicate, there are some potential dangers if parents aren't monitoring their teens' usage. It is difficult to create privacy settings, so teens often post everything publicly. This also opens up teens to becoming victims of scams and security issues. There is a large amount of adult content available on Tumblr, including pornography and other sexually explicit material. Child pornography has also been reported on Tumblr. Parents, remind your teens that everything they do online is traceable, and once something is online, it is nearly impossible to delete or take back. Remind teens that posting inappropriate material can get them in legal trouble, damage their reputation, and jeopardize their future.

