Ellen Roberts Named National Traffic Safety Prosecutor of the Year

Ellen Roberts, an Assistant State's Attorney for Palm Beach County, Florida for over 26 years, was honored as the National Traffic Safety Prosecutor of the Year. The award, presented by the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, was made at the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators Winter Meeting on December 7, 2011 at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, WV.

Having been involved in a variety of cases, Ms. Roberts has worked exclusively in the Palm Beach County Traffic Homicide Unit since its formation in June of 1993. She and her staff, consisting of one other attorney and two office staff, oversee the filing of between 100 and 200 cases each year. In addition to her prosecutorial duties of reviewing, filing and prosecuting these cases, she has taken her personal time to educate herself by attending many of the same traffic homicide courses that are required for her investigators. Further, she developed and taught countless officers in a traffic homicide seminar that she developed as well as teaching for the Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM) and for the Florida Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors Program.

Ms. Roberts is known throughout the State of Florida for her tenacity in prosecuting traffic fatalities. She is referred to as "Ma" by fellow prosecutors and office staff because of being sought out for her advice, skills and wisdom. Her efforts are not confined to Palm Beach County or even Florida as she actively works on extraditions to bring defendants back to face charges even after fleeing the country.

With plans to retire next year, Ellen Roberts will be truly missed. Her dedication and efforts have touched the lives of so many. The National Traffic Law Center of the National District Attorneys Association congratulates Ms. Roberts and wishes to thank her for her tireless efforts and deep dedication.

Traffic Prosecutors of Note

State and local prosecutors know full well the impact crime has on the citizens of this country, handling ninety-five to ninety-eight per cent of all criminal prosecutions each year. Prosecutors who handle traffic cases carry a lion’s share of these cases. While federal authorities do not keep track of the number of traffic citations issued each year, the number of impaired driving cases alone is staggering. Of the estimated 13 million arrests made in 2010, over 1.4 million of them were for driving under the influence.1

Impaired driving cases are demanding, often technical, and some of the most highly litigated cases prosecutors face on a daily basis. And, they are some of the most important. Aggressive prosecution of these cases not only seeks justice for victims and punishes the wrongdoers, it saves lives. While 32,885 people died in motor vehicle crashes on our nation’s highways in 2010, it was the lowest number since 1949. Alcohol impaired driving fatalities accounted for 10,759 (31%) of those deaths.2 Deaths caused by impairment due to drugs other than alcohol remains uncertain, but a number of drivers operate motor vehicles while taking both legal and illegal drugs such as stimulants, sedatives, antidepressants, marijuana and narcotics.3

The National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators, in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, seeks to recognize those prosecutors who have made a difference.
through the National Traffic Safety Award for Prosecutors. This award is presented annually to a prosecutor who has worked to save lives on the nation’s highways in impaired driving and/or other traffic safety matters above and beyond the normal bounds of duty, as demonstrated in one or more of the following areas:

- New or significant issues regarding impaired driving or other traffic safety issues
- Year-long demonstration of extraordinary dedication to traffic safety
- High profile case or complicated traffic safety issue
- Dedication on training to prosecutors, law enforcement, and/or the public, on traffic safety
- Impact on victim services and advocacy of victim's needs

The nominees for the 2010 National Traffic Safety Award for Prosecutors were:

- Kyle Anderson – Tennessee
- Paul Bachand – South Dakota
- David Carter – Montana
- Emerald Gratz – Minnesota
- Brian Iten – Florida
- Steven Kunzweiler – Oklahoma
- Joseph Magats – Illinois
- Daniel Orto – Arizona
- Kristen Noto Palmieri – Massachusetts
- Ellen Roberts – Florida
- Mark Sandburg – Florida
- Casey Silva – Massachusetts
- Charles Sparks – Oregon
- Martin Starke and Petaja Downyok – Florida
- Demetrios Tsilimigras – Illinois

The National Traffic Law Center of the National District Attorneys Association joins in recognizing these traffic prosecutors of note and wishes to thank all of those prosecutors, law enforcement officers and other traffic safety professionals who have worked so hard to make a difference.


New Mexico Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Honored

Donna Bevacqua-Young, Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor for the State of New Mexico, was presented with the Milford Award on November 5, 2011 by the New Mexico chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). The award is named after Nadine Milford, a longtime activist and lobbyist in the state after her daughter and three granddaughters were killed in an impaired driving crash on Christmas Eve in 1992. The award was made at MADD New Mexico’s 2011 Law Enforcement Recognition Event, “Honoring Heroes.”

Ms. Bevacqua-Young was recognized earlier in the year as the 2011 DWI Prosecutor of the Year for the State of New Mexico by Governor Martinez.

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Georgia Prosecutors Honored

The District Attorneys’ Association of Georgia and the Georgia Association of Solicitors-General announced their picks for the state’s top prosecutors for 2011 at the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia’s annual Summer Conference.

This year, four outstanding members of the prosecutorial community were recognized as the Solicitor-General, Assistant Solicitor-General, District Attorney, and Assistant District Attorney of the Year. The Georgia Association of Solicitors-General recognized Terry Turner of Appling County as Solicitor-General of the Year and Todd Hayes of Cobb County as Assistant Solicitor-General of the Year. The District Attorneys’ Association of Georgia recognized Danny Porter of the Gwinnett Judicial Circuit as the 2011 District Attorney of the Year. Cliff Sticher of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit was named the 2011 Assistant District Attorney of the Year.