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DA'S OFFICE 2017 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS OFFICE'S HIGH RATE OF SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTIONS, DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS, KEY INITIATIVES AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (August 9, 2018)—Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele today released his 2017 District Attorney's Office Annual Report, which highlighted significant initiatives and accomplishments during his second year in office, including a 98 percent conviction rate in 2017, notable prosecutions, alternative sentencing efforts for deserving defendants, community involvement and ongoing efforts to battle the heroin-opioid-fentanyl crisis.

By the numbers, the District Attorney's Office handled 9,888 adult and juvenile cases. The Juvenile Division handled 3,006 court hearings involving 560 juvenile adjudications. The Appellate Division handled 156 appeals dispositions with a 93.6 percent success rate in upholding convictions, including the Commonwealth's case against double murderer Raghunandan Yandamuri.

"I couldn't be more proud of everyone on our team—prosecutors, detectives and staff," said Steele. "The hard work that each person does every day is what leads to our many successes and to making a difference in peoples' lives. Our team is made up of truly dedicated public servants, always striving to serve Montgomery County residents and be an exemplar for other district attorneys' offices around the country. I am very pleased to share this 2017 Annual Report, which highlights our successes in and out of the courtroom."

Highlights in the Annual Report are:

Heroin-Opioid-Fentanyl: A Snapshot of the Epidemic

The fight continues in this deadly crisis. In Montgomery County, 245 people died from drug overdose in 2017, down slightly from 249 the year before—possibly indicating there is a light at the end of the long tunnel. The Annual Report provides a broad overview of the crisis and how we got to this point, including noting the increasing presence of fentanyl in overdose deaths and educating the reader on just how deadly fentanyl is. It also graphically shows that this crisis of heroin-opioids-fentanyl is happening in all parts of the county and notes that 367 doses of naloxone had been given by law enforcement in the county, saving many lives. Additionally, “The Opioid Epidemic” Grand Jury Report is synopsised and shared with the citizens of Montgomery County, as is the Drug Take Back Program, which has removed nearly 15,000 pounds of unwanted and unneeded medicines from family medicine cabinets in 2017. “We are committed, and our law enforcement community is committed, to stemming the tide of the pain, suffering, addiction and death that those who traffic poison are raining down on our communities and bringing into all of our lives,” said Steele.

98% Successful Prosecutions/Notable Cases

Many notable trials and cases were successfully prosecuted in 2017 resulting in a 98 percent overall conviction rate. Notable and successful prosecutions included drug trafficker David Pacheco, who was sentenced to 40 to 80 years in prison for trafficking 27 kilos of heroin; Cherie Amore, who was convicted of kidnapping an infant from the King of Prussia Mall; gun trafficker Michael Hill; and prolific bank robber Joseph Mieluchowski; among others. Notable successful homicide prosecutions included the conviction of double murderer Joshua Trunk, who shot his mother and her boyfriend; Omar Massenburg and Ryan Lee, who were finally brought to justice for the 2011 killing of 17-year-old D’Ravious Dawkins in Norristown; and Matthew Wertz Jr., who stabbed his aunt to death in Conshohocken. The Annual Report notes that since 2011 the homicide clearance rate in Montgomery County is 94.9 percent.

Diversions and Special Programs

“Being tough on crime also means giving some people who deserve it a second chance,” says DA Steele. Through the Youth Aid Panels (YAP) Program, the successful Drug Court, the new pilot Drug Education & Abuse Prevention Program for young drug offenders, and the ARD Program, the District Attorney’s Office is doing just that. The Annual Report profiles these diversionary efforts.

Support for Victims and Witnesses

DA Steele and the entire staff is committed to helping the victims of crime as well as witnesses who testify. Beyond the beloved K9 Turks, who comforts victims, especially young victims, who need to testify in difficult cases, the DA’s Victim Witness Unit assisted 4,429 direct victims, providing valuable assistance with notifications of court-related matters; sentencing and prison release dates; victim impact statements; crime victim compensation and restitution information.

Community Involvement

The Annual Report also highlights a few of the community outreach efforts by prosecutors, detectives and staff members. The DA and the entire team are active and engaged members of their communities, speaking to student and community groups about a variety of topics; participating in events across the county like National Night Out and Pottstown Cares; working with under-represented students and other student groups; and raising money for families of fallen police officers and abused women through Wheels of Justice and Heels of Justice, respectively.

The 2017 District Attorney's Office Annual Report can be viewed online and downloaded at <https://www.montcopa.org/da>.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele