



A Message from Commonwealth's Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti

Dear Friends,

For the last four years, our Office has been committed to lifting the voices of victims, rehabilitation, and holding people accountable in a way that is active, healing, and transformative. To this end, I helped create Restorative Arlington and its pilot program, Heart of Safety, for 16–26-year-olds charged with crimes that would likely end in imprisonment. Heart of Safety requires victim consent and has been well-received by victims, defendants, the community, victim advocacy organizations, and federal law enforcement partners. The goals and [strategic plan](#) for creating Restorative Arlington have been to promote restorative practices in the legal system, schools, and the community. We did that with Heart of Safety. The community presence has recently been enhanced with a federal grant from the Office of Victims of Crime to Restorative Arlington in partnership with Doorways. That grant – the first of its kind – will provide the necessary training and capacity for community-based referrals for intimate partner violence.

We also are expanding our capacity for diversion programs with the Office of Aid and Rehabilitation. In partnership with OAR and Vera Institute for Justice, we created a prosecutor-led diversion program that has operated for more than a year. Our office just received a \$1 million 2024 Second Chance Act Pay for Success from the Department of Justice over five years to grow the program with OAR. The OAR Diversion program provides direct services and referrals to defendants to include but not limited treatments for mental health, substance abuse, housing, job, and vocational training. OAR, Restorative Arlington, Doorways, and our Office will be holding a town hall to share information about these programs.

As the crucial election for the 47th President of the United States looms on the horizon, I urge you to exercise your right to vote. Take a moment to verify your voter registration and familiarize yourself with your rights. Here at the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, we are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring fair and unimpeded elections, where every eligible voter can cast their ballot without any form of interference or intimidation. Please see our election information webpage for questions about your rights and eligibility to [vote](#).

Kind regards,
Parisa Dehghani-Tafti

Case Updates

Domestic Assault & Battery- On May 24, 2024, an Arlington County jury found Gary Murray guilty of strangulation and domestic assault and battery against a child. Mr. Murray was sentenced on August 21st to 12 months on the domestic assault and battery conviction and 4 years with 3 years suspended on the strangulation to run consecutive to each other.

First Degree Murder- On June 13, 2024, an Arlington County jury found Alimamy Fornah guilty of first-degree murder. Mr. Fornah was sentenced on October 3rd to life in prison for the murder of Shontae Crawford on June 19, 2023.

Grand Larceny & Destruction of Property - On July 17, 2024, an Arlington County jury found Adisorn Damrongchai guilty of two counts of Destruction of Property > \$1,000, Larceny with Intent to Sell, Possession of Burglariou Tools, Destruction of Property < \$1,000 and Tampering with a Vehicle, for multiple vehicle break-ins and airbag thefts which occurred on November 13, 2022. Damrongchai's co-defendant, Yuchen Zhang, pled guilty in June of 2023 to Grand Larceny and two counts of Destruction of Property > \$1,000 for the same incident. Damrongchai is awaiting sentencing later this month.

Restorative Justice Case Updates

Recent Dismissals after successful RJ in August and September:

- An intoxicated adult in an Arlington bar yelled obscene things at a woman and touched her butt. The case went to conference successfully and the charges were dismissed after all parties were satisfied with completion of the restorative plan.
- Three juveniles were in a school fight. The case went to conference successfully and the charges were dismissed after all parties were satisfied with completion of the restorative plan.
- An adult committed a property crime based on bias. The case went to conference successfully and the charges were dismissed after all parties were satisfied with completion of the restorative plan.
- An adult committed a theft over \$1,000. The case went to conference successfully and the charges were dismissed after all parties were satisfied with completion of the restorative plan.
- An assault and battery between two adult family members. The case went to conference successfully and the charges were dismissed after all parties were satisfied with completion of the restorative plan.

Five cases currently pending in various stages of the RJ process:

- An adult who committed a series of property crimes based on bias.
- Four juveniles who were involved in a series of group assaults.
- A juvenile who assaulted an adult on the metro.
- A juvenile who recklessly handled a firearm in his apartment.
- A stabbing among a group of three young adult



Employee Spotlight: *Grace Woodard* **Director of Restorative Justice & Diversion Services**

Q: What does RJ mean to you?

A: Restorative Justice is not just a program that my office offers to victims of crime, but it's a way of being. RJ centers a desire to live peaceably with each other. RJ understands that harms are best address by the people directly impacted by the harm, that all people experience harm differently resulting in vastly different needs. Many people are skeptical that RJ can work, and my response to them is to reflect on times they've hurt the people they love most. What did that feel like? What were you willing to do to make the situation right? My most profound healing has happened directly with the person I've hurt, and the person who has hurt me. This is not a process to do alone, but one to undertake with significant support and time to reflect and plan. This is what our RJ program offers.

I work with an incredible team of facilitators at Restorative Arlington who change lives every day through RJ processes. This is not "soft"; it's powerfully true, and it works. I believe deeply in the power of RJ to transform lives—I see it all the time.

My favorite aspect of my job is that I'm tasked with helping my colleagues dream beyond their current prosecutorial tools to what else might effectively address harm and violence in our community. As a pastor, I am often tasked with painting a vision for what is possible in the world and how we can each play a role. I love that I get to do this with prosecutors through RJ. Changing systems is hard, but possible through strong relationships, trust, and hope for a better future.

Q: You've been the RJ Director for one year now- What's changed? Accomplishments? Setbacks?

A: When I started in February of 2023, there were frameworks for both diversion programs that our office runs (Heart of Safety RJ and OAR Diversion), but there was still a lot of work to do to get referrals flowing. I refined the programs, created referral structures, and trained my colleagues. Referrals came within just a few months.

Of course there were challenges along the way, as there are with any new program. I frequently troubleshoot issues about how to share information with our non-profit partners Restorative Arlington and OAR. We also spent a significant amount of time with both programs narrowing in on who is the best fit for the programs. But, through significant trial and error we now have two highly successful diversion programs that I am quite proud of. Heart of Safety provides a restorative justice conferencing program for felonies and serious misdemeanors ([read more here](#)) and OAR Diversion provides wrap-around support for high-system-utilizers to reach community stability.

I've led various trainings for my office and provided significant resources about restorative justice and diversion. I enjoy creating opportunities for my colleagues to continue to learn about RJ and other reform-related questions. I've worked closely with national partners such as the Vera Institute for Justice and Equal Justice USA to provide these training. Working with Vera and EJUSA has continued to elevate our office as a national leader in evidence-based reform prosecution. I work with prosecutors' offices across the country

to help them replicate what we've accomplished here in Arlington and learn from their successes and challenges as well. My position helps keep our office connected to the national movement. I'm also proud of the community outreach work I've done. I sit on the Arlington County Reentry Council, along with various other county-wide work groups. I've built close relationships with other jurisdictions as well to collaborate on cases with defendants who have charges across jurisdictions. Through these relationships, I've been able to help prosecutors consider diversion even if a person doesn't qualify for our specialty dockets or a diversion program. I've helped OAR and Restorative Arlington apply to various grants. I'm optimistic that we will have substantial grant funds come soon to grow both programs.

Q: Where do you wish to see OCA & RJ in the next year?

A: I hope that Restorative Arlington and OAR can continue to scale and grow their capacity. They are both constantly looking for funding opportunities to scale so they can keep up with the number of referrals that our office generates. I'm so proud of my colleagues' openness to consider RJ and diversion, so I can only imagine that will grow with time.

OCA in the Community



Expungement Clinic – On June 22, 2024, our office in partnership with the Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Arlington County Sheriff's Office and numerous community organizations hosted the first expungement clinic of the year at Arlington Presbyterian Church from 10 AM – 1 PM. ***Our next expungement fair will be on December 7, 2024.***

National Night Out - On August 6, 2024, we joined the City of Falls Church Police Department and its constituents [National Night Out](#). This campaign took place between 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Cherry Hill Park in Falls Church.

3rd Annual Heritage Community Festival- On September 4, 2024, we joined the Hispanic Parents Association of Arlington Schools in celebrating the kick-off of Hispanic Heritage Month with the 3rd Annual Heritage Community Festival at Tyrol Hill Park. Our office hosted an information table at the event, and we enjoyed the great food, activities, and music with other attendees.

Green Valley Day - On September 21, 2024, we celebrated Green Valley Community Day at Drew Elementary School. Along with many other community organizations, our office hosted an information table at the event and enjoyed great music and food with other attendees.

**OCA Loves To Build
Relationships! Let Us Know
If You Are Having An Event!**

Contact Us Today!

Please Email Our Office At
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