

# ST. LOUIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



## WHAT WE DO TO BRING FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE TO YOU

Duluth Court House  
100 N. 5th Ave. W., #501  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-2323

Virginia Court House  
300 S. 5th Ave., #222  
Virginia, MN 55792  
(218) 749-7101

Hibbing Court House  
1810 12th Ave. E., #107  
Hibbing, MN 55746  
(218) 262-0158

Govt. Services Center  
320 W. 2nd Street, #403  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-2034

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Veterans Support                    | 2     |
| Letter From Your County Attorney    | 3     |
| Civil Division                      | 4     |
| Criminal Division                   | 5     |
| PHHS Division                       | 6     |
| Summit Makes History                | 7     |
| Victim / Witness Division           | 8     |
| Support Staff                       | 9     |
| Honors, Awards, Outstanding Work    | 10    |
| Innovation, Partnership, Leadership | 11    |
| Crimes By The Numbers               | 12-14 |
| Good Deeds Done                     | 15    |
| Prayer In My Boot, Shihab Nye       | 16    |



## Veterans Support

Increasing the support of area veterans was part of an outreach effort pursued by the County Attorney’s Office this past year. Jeff Hall, a veteran and Team Leader at Duluth’s Vet Center spoke to the County Attorney and others during a community leaders’ Conversation Circle. Hall reminded participants that veterans appreciate it when others take the time to understand roadblocks that keep veterans from full involvement in the community.

Our support for veterans is manifested through coordinated efforts between our County Commissioners, District Court Judges and our office, making certain that veterans in the criminal justice system are identified early and made aware of services available to them.

We also demonstrate our support and express our gratitude to all veterans on our staff who are actively serving in the military. We sincerely appreciate other staffers who have actively served in various branches in past years.

Mark Rubin continues to lead the way by his recognition of veterans when speaking or performing at veteran events. These included the 60th Anniversary and re-dedication of the Gary New Duluth Veterans Memorial, the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, and the dedication of the Iron Range Veterans Memorial (shown above) in Virginia.



## Letter from St. Louis County Attorney Mark S. Rubin

*Justice through innovation, partnership, and leadership.*

Heading into year three as your County Attorney, I can truly say it has been a privilege and an honor to serve you, the citizens of St. Louis County. The momentum—of seeing justice served and hope restored for individuals and communities within our 7,000 square miles of responsibility—keeps growing every day. To be sure, I do not do this alone. It is a combined, cooperative effort of 67 talented individuals who make up the core of our offices in Duluth, Hibbing and Virginia.

Every day, the attorneys, investigators, and victim/witness and support staffs keep your best interests at heart. These individuals go beyond statutory responsibilities, using innovation and partnership with others, and they are extremely effective in achieving positive outcomes. Whether giving timely legal advice to the County Commissioners and various county departments, prosecuting serious crimes or advocating for the most vulnerable of our county's citizens, those who work in the St. Louis County Attorney's Office make certain your tax dollars are used wisely and effectively.

The results of their hard work can be seen within these pages. Especially noticeable is the pursuit of excellence through leadership, courage and collaboration. Qualities like these help to "restore the confidence of citizens in government," as American advocate and activist Marian Wright Edelman says.

It is also with a sense of gratitude that we will continue to serve our county with the diligence and perseverance you have come to expect. In the end, we can demonstrate that fairness leads to justice and justice leads to safe and strong communities.

"The overarching task of leadership today in every segment of American society is to give our youths, and all Americans, a sense that we can be engaged in enterprises that lend meaning to life, that we can regain control over our families and our national destiny, and that we can make a positive difference individually and collectively in building a decent, safe nation and world."

Marian Wright Edelman,  
The Measure of Our Success

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Rubin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Rubin  
St. Louis County Attorney



**Kim Maki**

Civil Division Head

**Duluth Office:**

- Leslie Beiers
- Nick Campanario
- Jim Nephew
- Thomas Stanley
- Timothy Tysdal

## Civil Division

Kim Maki, a seasoned professional with more than 10 years of experience—two of which have been in the Civil Division—is now that Division’s Head.

St. Louis County government relies heavily on the Civil Division and its timely legal counsel for daily operational interactions. Its support and advice is foundational to decisions made by the County Commissioners, the County Administrator, county department heads, and their employees. Arrowhead Regional Corrections also relies on the Civil Division’s legal advice.

Other areas of service by the Division in 2012 included:

- Development of knowledge in the proposed expansion of the mining industry, enabling the county to beneficially position itself for years to come.
- Unanticipated work load following the June flood, involving 125 different projects, contracts and grant agreements covering millions of dollars of road reconstruction, including Jean Duluth and Haines Roads.

At the same time, attorneys worked dozens of hours on the legalities of bringing together the Duluth City Assessor’s Office with the County Assessor’s Office. Combining the two offices eliminates duplication of services, creates work process efficiencies and ensures a uniform set of standards and expectations as property assessments are conducted. This means county taxpayers will receive improved service through uniform property tax evaluations for all citizens throughout the county.

With customer service as its primary focus, the Civil Division ensures timely, well-reasoned and reliable advice to Administration and various departments as well.



Civil Division provided legal counsel for multiple reconstruction projects, such as Jean Duluth Road shown above.



### **Gary Bjorklund**

Criminal Division Head

#### **Duluth Office:**

Jon Holets  
 Christopher Pinkert  
 Jessica Smith  
 Nate Stumme  
 Rebekka Stumme  
 Kristen Swanson  
 Vicky Wanta

#### **Virginia Office:**

Michelle Anderson  
 Gordon Coldagelli  
 Leah Stauber

#### **Hibbing Office:**

Brian Simonson  
 Karl Sundquist  
 Jeff Vlatkovich

## **Criminal Division**

Gary Bjorklund leads the 13 criminal prosecutors who work in Duluth, Virginia and Hibbing. This highly effective team is responsible for charging and prosecuting all levels of adult criminal offenses within St. Louis County including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and county ordinance violations. Additionally, the prosecutors are involved in problem solving in the specialty courts, including DWI and Drug Court, and Mental Health Court.

Criminal Division attorneys are responsible for setting up and conducting law enforcement training to support police in the latest changes in laws and regulations. These training sessions are designed to improve investigation procedures, search and seizure methods, and other aspects of criminal investigation.

Particularly high profile and difficult cases that the Division was involved in this past year included:

- Brian Bridges was convicted of two counts of First Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct, First Degree Burglary, and Assault in the Third Degree. He was sentenced to 26 years in prison. The case involved a home invasion and the brutal beating and rape of a Hibbing woman.
- Randy Boettcher was found guilty of 11 counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct and Possessing Child Pornography. The Court sentenced Boettcher to a total of 252 months in prison.
- Andrew Clarke was convicted of four counts of Possessing and Selling Drugs. The jury also found Clarke to be a career offender. He received a 258 month prison sentence, which was double the amount under the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines.
- Dale Porter was found guilty of Assault in the Second Degree, Terroristic Threats, and Illegal Possession of a Pistol. The convictions were secured even though the victim refused to cooperate with the prosecution and ultimately testified on behalf of Porter at trial. The extensive investigation by law enforcement and the compiling of additional evidence made this a textbook case of "evidence-based prosecution."
- Paul Welle was convicted of Murder in the Second Degree and was sentenced to 216 months in prison. Welle was convicted of killing Paul Anderson outside a bar in Proctor.



## Public Health & Human Services Division

Public Health and Human Services Division (PHHS) protects adults and children most in danger of being victimized. It accomplishes this through involvement in child protection, civil commitment, guardianship and vulnerable adult maltreatment cases. Timely adjudication of paternity, establishment of child support cases and other enforcement action ensures appropriate economic assistance to families and children. Patricia Shaffer proficiently leads the Division.

The Division filed 285 child protection petitions in 2012, up from 246 the previous year. These included 52 termination of parental rights petitions filed asking the court to free these children for adoption or placement in safe and permanent homes.

There were 136 referrals for civil commitment in 2012. A particularly egregious case involved a young man who, while under the influence of synthetic drugs, engaged in significant, self harm resulting in permanent loss of his eyesight.

The Division also prosecutes crimes committed by juveniles. Juvenile crime includes everything from minor offenses to violent crimes against persons. For instance, the Division prosecuted a juvenile accused of participating in an assault that left a 17-year-old girl fighting for her life after being stabbed in the chest and repeatedly struck by a baseball bat. In another case, a 17-year-old male acting with two adults robbed—at knifepoint—an adult who was at home with his young son.

Division attorneys are involved in contracts, licensing matters involving day care and child foster care providers, public assistance eligibility, benefit recovery, and investigation and prosecution of public assistance fraud.

The Division actively participates in many multidisciplinary teams. Examples include the School Attendance Review Board (SARB); Adult Protection Teams for North and South St. Louis County; a Quarterly Collaborative that includes representatives from Bois Forte, probation, social services and public health to address child protection and service to children; and a First Witness Multidisciplinary Team that addresses child abuse issues.

Looking to the future, PHHS attorneys will strive to continue their close partnership with the county’s Public Health and Human Service Department through timely provision of sound legal advice and effective advocacy.

**Patricia Shaffer**

PHHS Division Head

**Duluth Office:**

- Jennifer Barry
- Joseph Fischer
- Heather Korpela
- Clarissa McDonald
- Charles Schumacher
- Angie Shambour
- Benjamin Stromberg
- Joanne Vavrosky

**Virginia Office:**

- Sharon Chadwick
- Renae Darland

**Hibbing Office:**

- Gayle Goff
- Stacey Sundquist

**Investigators:**

- William Klein
- Shawn Laine
- Katherine Finc

## Summit Makes History

The first ever, Northeast Minnesota / Northwest Wisconsin County Attorneys' Summit was convened on November 16, 2012, by St. Louis County Attorney Mark S. Rubin.



Photo: County Attorney attendees at the NE MN / NW WI Summit included (Front Row, L-R): Gary Bjorklund, St. Louis; Molly Hicken, Cook; Laura Auron, Lake; Patricia Shaffer and Kim Maki, St. Louis. (Back Row, L – R) Dan Blank, Douglas; Thom Pertler, Carlton; Mark Rubin, St. Louis; and Jeffrey Naglosky, Koochiching.

Many of the region's County Attorneys often find themselves working together across county—and even state—lines while addressing complex issues and prosecuting difficult cases. Confirmation of the importance of the Summit to their work was evidenced by the presence of five area County Attorneys, and three Division Heads from St. Louis County, as well as Cook County's Assistant County Attorney, Molly Hicken.

Leadership was shared through peer-to-peer presentations of "Hot Topics" that were of interest to all. "This was a gathering for us, led by us," said Rubin.

Those presenting were:

- Thom Pertler, Carlton County Attorney – Drug Investigations
- Laura Auron, Lake County Attorney – Evidence-based, Domestic Assault Prosecutions in Absence of Victim Cooperation
- Molly Hicken, Cook County ACA – Courthouse Security & Safety

Jane Haubrich Casperson, Special Projects Investigator, facilitated a group conversation focusing on actions that help create supported and balanced life styles for professionals who must often shoulder heavy responsibilities in chaotic environments.

Citon Computer Corporation underwrote the Summit's funding, allowing the group to convene without taxpayer expense. Citon's corporate citizenship and commitment to community safety mirrored an emerging, national trend of business stepping up to help government serve the public in an era of ever tightening budgets.

As one Summit participant noted, "We convened because our mutual goals are excellence in the service we provide...and no less important, we convened because we care...not only for our constituents, but we care for each other."

**Patty Wheeler**

Director

**Duluth Staff:**

Ann Fisk

Lori Ulvi

**Virginia Staff:**

Jaime Varichak

**Hibbing Staff:**

Elaine Lee

## Victim / Witness Division

Patty Wheeler, Director of the Victim/Witness Division, and her staff work diligently every day to assure victim rights are upheld and needed support is given. Each County Attorney's office has a Victim/Witness staff member assigned to it so that no matter what area of the county a person comes from, they have someone who knows their community and the services available in it.

Staff handled thousands of phone calls, texts, and emails from victims and witnesses, ensuring the Minnesota Crime Victim Rights laws are upheld. Often, victims are feeling afraid or confused, and witnesses might be frustrated or even angry with a system they do not understand. However, information about court advocacy, notification of hearing dates, trial preparation and a myriad of other issues are competently and compassionately dealt with by the advocates.

Even when nothing can be done through legal channels to assist these individuals, community resources are offered that can help a victim feel they have a voice in the process. Collaborative efforts with First Witness Child Advocacy Center, Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), Men as Peacemakers, Safe Haven, Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), Range Advocates for Family Peace, and other community members assist in carrying out the goal of the office, which is to be the voice for the people who have been victimized.

~ ~ ~

The St. Louis County Attorney's Youth Accountability Program is an alternative to Juvenile Court and is operative countywide. Lori Ulvi, Jamie Varichak, and Elaine Lee (Victim Witness Services staff) offer juveniles charged with theft, underage consumption, curfew violations and other low-level offenses an opportunity to participate in accountability and community service programming. In the Duluth area, restorative justice circles are offered as an alternative to appearing in Juvenile Court for some offenses.

Juveniles must meet eligibility requirements, and Youth Accountability teaches them how their crimes affect not only their families but also others in the community. If alcohol is a problem, they learn how their usage may lead to other dangerous behaviors. Successful completion of the program keeps the crime off the juveniles' records.

Parents and guardians said they like being involved with their kids and feel engaged in the decision making process regarding consequences. Many parents are grateful that the youth are still held accountable for their actions while being given a chance to correct their mistakes.

**Wade Backstrom**

Office Administrator

**Jane Haubrich  
Casperson**Special Projects  
Investigator**Duluth Staff:**

Yvonne Kalin, Supervisor

Betty Christenson

Shirley Garden

Teresa Harries

Rachel Lambert

Diane Lundberg

Carla Mercier

Jody Messner

Sue Peterson

Teresa White

Cynthia Zuk

**PHHS Staff:**

Mary Fruehauf, Supervisor

Tianna Burnett

Jackie Calvert

Diane Eck

Laura Tromblay

**Virginia Staff:**

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor

Patti Everson

Tracy McDonald

Candy Nelson

Tammy Sunsdahl

**Hibbing Staff:**

Veronica Ratliff, Supervisor

Alaina Denny

Char Meinzer

Rachael Turk

## Support Staff

The County Attorney's skilled support staff of 24 clerical employees continues to handle substantially larger amounts of information each year with a high level of expertise. Office Administrator, Wade Backstrom, supervises the staff. Additionally, Wade stewards the \$7 million annual budget, human resources matters, and technology management within the County Attorney's Office.

Three clerical supervisors manage the clerical team and maintain "DAMION," the electronic case management system. During 2012, there was continuous improvement of the electronic filing (e-filing) of criminal complaints which, in turn, provides more efficient management of documents and court filings.

The electronic notification project also launched last year. This allows electronic notification between our office and the Court, with the Court's electronic case management system transferring data in "real time" into our DAMION system. These improvements speed up the process and greatly reduce the margin for human error.

Our office is a member of the North East Minnesota Enforcement Safety Information System (NEMESIS) and has taken a leadership role in its development. NEMESIS provides a central resource for 27 regional law enforcement agencies. It aids in dispatching resources and in tracking information regarding people, incidents and cases throughout the criminal justice system.

NEMESIS connects local and state-wide criminal and juvenile justice information systems. This shared data process strengthens public safety between St. Louis, Carlton, Cook, Lake and Koochiching Counties.

## Honors, Awards, Outstanding Work



**Gary Bjorklund**, head of the Criminal Division, was awarded a Customer Service Recognition Award by the County Board. Third District Commissioner Dahlberg nominated Bjorklund for the award, praising him for his quiet strength and willingness to take on horrific cases. Said Dahlberg, "Not only would St. Louis County be at a great loss without such an individual working on our behalf, but so would the many vulnerable and abused of our society to whom Mr. Bjorklund gives a strong voice."



**Rebekka Stumme**, Assistant St. Louis County Attorney, received a Certificate of Appreciation Award from Proctor Mayor David Brenna. The honor was given in gratitude for the dedication and service Stumme provided to the City of Proctor during the trial of a homicide that occurred there. As a result of Stumme's skill and professionalism, the jury delivered a guilty verdict and obtained justice for the decedent and the family he left behind.



**Mark Rubin** was honored by the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA) with the 2012 M.A. Johnson Distinguished Service Award. The award recognizes an individual who demonstrates significant leadership and commitment to improve the quality of justice while increasing and enhancing public awareness of the office of County Attorney. MCAA President Don Ryan commended Rubin for his response to the Cook County Courthouse shooting. Rubin drove to the Courthouse in Grand Marais the morning following the shooting to assist the Cook County Sheriff's Office in preparing the complaint against the shooter. Rubin volunteered the assistance of his staff until the Cook County Attorney's Office staff could return to more normal operations.



**Community Conversation Circles** – Thirty-five community leaders and representatives from non-profits and advocacy groups were invited to participate in small group conversations with their County Attorney. All participants reported a strengthening of relationships with the office, a sincere effort of being listened to, and an outlook of pro-active accessibility with the office especially in times of potential adversity by the various constituents they serve.

Henry Banks, Host, People of Color Radio Program, Community Conversation Circle Participant.

## Innovation, Partnership, Leadership



A Drumming Circle was held following the Trafficking Awareness Press Conference. It was led by Native women and men and honored the survivors of sex trafficking.

**Trafficking Awareness and Prevention** – In conjunction with PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, AICHO (American Indian Community Housing Organization), the City of Duluth, and the Minnesota Women’s Foundation, the County Attorney’s Office continues to participate in efforts to protect the safety of young girls and women by increased public awareness and support for the regional and statewide anti-sex trafficking efforts. Working in collaboration with the City of Duluth, the St. Louis County Attorney’s Office is very proud to continue to be a partner in this effort to protect children and enhance the community’s response. In 2012, opportunities to educate the public occurred through press conferences, community forums, and outreach efforts.

**PHHS Division Attorneys** have regularly appeared in Minnesota Appellate courts. The Minnesota Court of Appeals filed four opinions in 2012 on cases handled by the Division Attorneys. They successfully defended the District Court decision in each of these cases. Also, through the Division’s work, St. Louis County again exceeded the federal benchmark for paternity establishment cases.

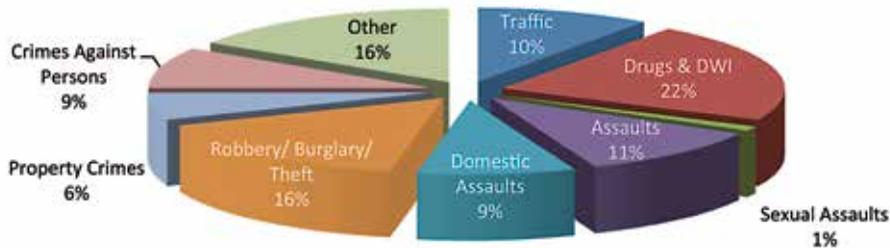
**U.S. Attorney and St. Louis County** – St. Louis County citizens continue to benefit from the strong relationship between our office and the office of B. Todd Jones, the Minnesota U.S. Attorney. This has been especially significant with the public safety and health issues involved in the sale and use of synthetic substances, firearm violence and narcotics trafficking.

**Racial Justice Improvement Project (RJIP) Taskforce** – Leadership continues between our office, the District Court judges, the Public Defender’s office, Arrowhead Regional Corrections, community representatives, and law enforcement. The Taskforce is a specially funded grant project of the American Bar Association (ABA) charged with addressing racial disparities in pretrial release and bail decisions. Following a year and a half of planning and analysis, the task force conducted training last summer for all of the judges in the district as well as all probation officers involved in the pretrial release stage. During 2013, a uniform checklist and evaluation tool will be implemented and used by all judges. This pretrial process is expected to be a model for the ABA.

**Media and the Courts #101** – Five, first ever training events for area media outlets were held last year, focusing on the basics of criminal procedure, from arrest to sentencing. More than 40 journalists from three local television stations and two regional daily newspapers learned about the inner workings of the criminal justice system. They also received reinforcement for their role in the collaborative relationship needed between the “fourth estate” and the criminal justice system in a democratic society.

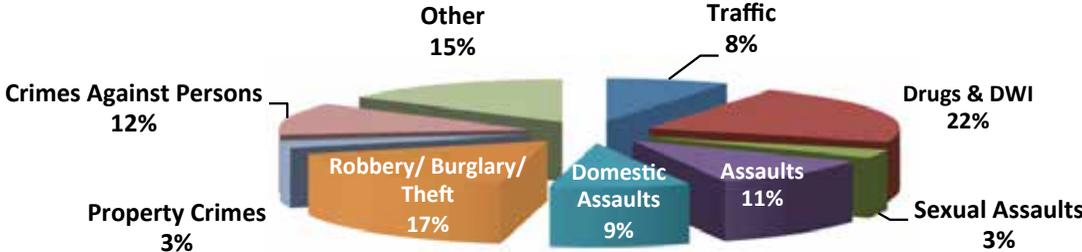
# Crimes by the Numbers

### Adult Cases by Crime Type 2012



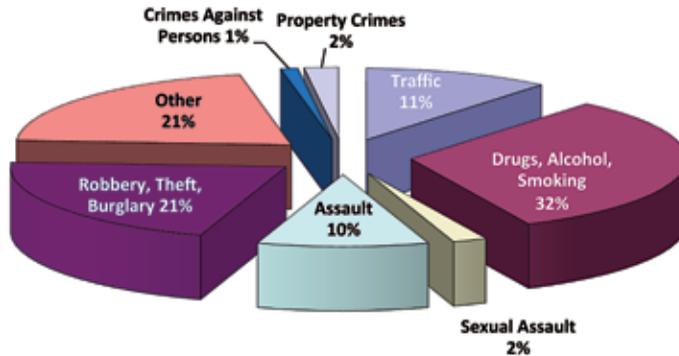
Adult felony referrals are up 17 percent overall. Causes may include the increased heroin and synthetic drug usage within the county and the growing appetite of burglars and thieves for recyclable material such as copper and jewelry. More cases are being successfully prosecuted due to the excellent investigative efforts of area, state, and federal law enforcement.

### Adult Cases by Crime Type 2011



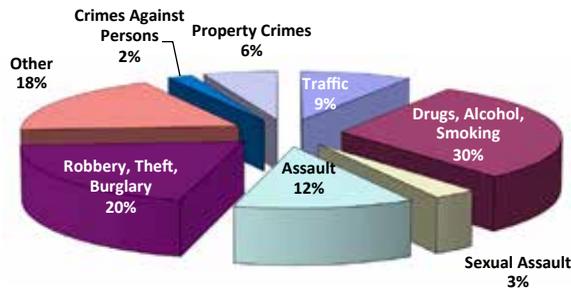
# Crimes by the Numbers

## Juvenile Cases by Crime Type 2012



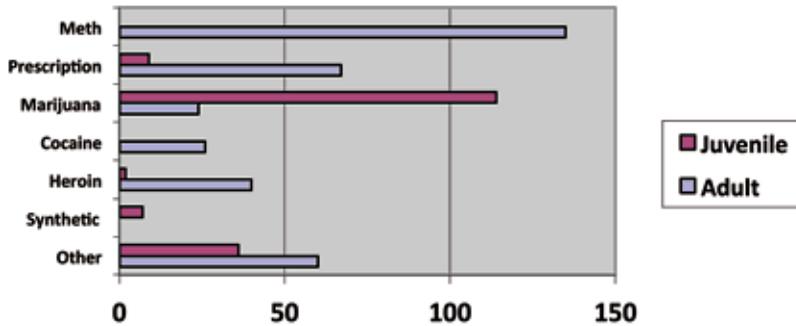
Juvenile delinquency referrals decreased last year by nearly 3.5 percent overall. However, the violent level of some crimes committed by youth is increasing. This is an area of ongoing concern. One positive development is the Youth Accountability Program as an alternative to Juvenile Court. This pre-petition diversion program holds lower level juvenile offenders accountable and teaches them how their crimes affect their families and their community. It is being used successfully with juveniles who have no or limited prior contact with the Court.

## Juvenile Cases by Crime Type 2011



# Crimes by the Numbers

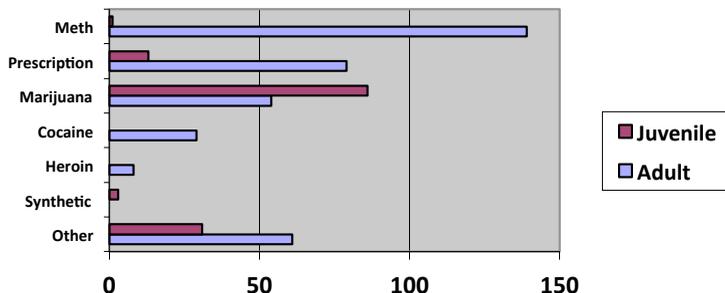
### Drug Referrals by Drug Type 2012



Methamphetamine persists as the illegal drug of choice for adults in St. Louis County. Heroin cases increased dramatically last year, with law enforcement reporting a startling rise in heroin overdoses and deaths. A disturbing trend is the sharp increase in the abuse of prescription pain medications by people of all ages, especially young adults. Addressing this trend requires continuing collaboration and education between our office, the medical community, and law enforcement.

Synthetic drugs are a major problem, especially among the young. Our office interacts collaboratively with law enforcement, federal authorities and area non-profits in an effort to eliminate the sale of these life altering chemical compounds.

### Drug Referrals by Drug Type 2011



## Good Deeds Done

**Our thanks to SLC Assistant County Attorney, Vicky Wanta, for this year's Annual Report's inspirational quote.**

"One of my quotes is from the last episode of *Boy Meets World*. I used this quote in my law school application essays, and I urged two of my friends to use it in their grad school application essays ... and it's gotten us all into law school. So I'm 3 for 3 so far."

Mr. Feeny: Believe in yourselves. Dream. Try. Do good.

Topanga: Don't you mean do well?

Mr. Feeny: No, I mean do good.

It is a given that our County Attorney Office staff are professionals in their jobs. Additionally, each year they give hundreds of hours to the communities where they live through personal dedication and involvement. Some of their activities are listed, below. See if you agree...our employees exemplify Mr. Feeny's advice.

- *Child mortality review team*
- *School mock trial mentor*
- *Child protection team*
- *Congregations Caring for the Earth event coordinator*
- *Family law forum panelist*
- *Attorney's union trustee*
- *Montessori School Of Duluth volunteer*
- *11th District Bar Association secretary*
- *UM-D adjunct lecturer, eminent domain law*
- *MN Court Committee on Equality and Justice*
- *Home-Bound seniors' grocery shopper*
- *Elder Abuse/ Vulnerable Adult speaker Expert*
- *Children's Justice initiative*
- *6th Dist Representative, Governor's Commission On Judicial Selection*
- *Elementary and high school and classroom parent volunteers*
- *Duluth Charter Commission President*
- *Foster parent*
- *Interagency Committee On Ending Domestic Violence*
- *Human Trafficking Taskforce*
- *First Witness and PAVSA volunteer*
- *Range Domestic Violence team member*
- *Legislation advocate for on-duty weapons*
- *South St. Louis County Domestic Violence Sentencing Circle*
- *Domestic Violence Community Response Team Coordinator*
- *Local 3761 President*
- *MN Judicial Branch Committee for Equality and Justice, Subcommittee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*
- *11th District Bar Association family law speaker on child support*
- *NERCC fathers' speaker on importance of child support to families.*
- *Supreme Court Subcommittee Member*
- *Virginia Community Foundation Board Member*
- *Duluth Police Department & Fond Du Lac Tribal College trainer*
- *Northland Foundation mentorship volunteer*
- *Blue Devil Youth Hockey team manager*
- *Girl Scout speakers and volunteers*
- *First Witness Trainer, forensic interviews*
- *Lake Superior Chapter of Muskies, Inc., member/volunteer - youth and veterans*
- *Children's Hospital volunteer*
- *Northwest Gun Club-Youth Club scorekeeper*
- *Assertive Community Treatment Team, mental health collaborative trainer*
- *Lake Superior Pointing Dog Assn trainer*
- *First Witness tech volunteer*
- *Church committees and membership*
- *Annual Junior Bonspiel organizer*
- *Touched by Breast Cancer Golf Classic Vice President*
- *Co-Director, Side Lake, Angling Horizons, fishing for people with disabilities*
- *Women's Shelter volunteer trainer*
- *Hibbing High School Sar committee member*
- *Latin American Culture Camp volunteer*
- *JDAI committee member*
- *MS Annual Walk participant / fund raiser*
- *Ordean Foundation Board of Directors*
- *Men As Peacemakers*
- *Trainer for child care providers*
- *PTSA members*
- *Civil Air Patrol And Ski Patrol volunteer*
- *Duluth Community Garden volunteer*
- *Trans-Racial Adoptive Families For Multi-Cultural Awareness*
- *National Guard members*
- *Boy Scout volunteer*
- *Chemical Advisory Committee*

# "Prayer In My Boot"

By Naomi Shihab Nye

For the wind no one expected  
For the boy who does not know the answer

For the graceful handle I found in a field  
attached to nothing  
pray it is universally applicable

For our tracks which disappear  
the moment we leave them

For the face peering through the cafe window  
as we sip our soup

For cheerful American classrooms sparkling  
with crisp colored alphabets  
happy cat posters  
the cage of the guinea pig  
the dog with division flying out of his tail  
and the classrooms of our cousins  
on the other side of the earth  
how solemn they are  
how gray or green or plain  
how there is nothing dangling  
nothing striped or polka-dotted or cheery  
no self-portraits or visions of cupids  
and in these rooms the students raise their hands  
and learn the stories of the world

For library books in alphabetical order  
and family businesses that failed  
and the house with the boarded windows  
and the gap in the middle of a sentence  
and the envelope we keep mailing ourselves

For every hopeful morning given and given  
and every future rough edge  
and every afternoon  
turning over in its sleep

"Last year, Poet Naomi Shihab Nye was kind enough to allow us to use her poem, *SHOULDERS*, as an inspiration for a more hopeful future. This year, she is again generously allowing us to share her work with you."

Mark S. Rubin  
St. Louis County Attorney

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