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MADD Honors Two City Attorney Prosecutors

Kristen Fossler and Ryan Harris recognized for work fighting DUIs

Chief Deputy City Attorney Kristen Fossler and Deputy City Attorney Ryan Harris were honored today at the 2023 MADD Law Enforcement and Prosecutor Recognition Awards, for their work combating drunk driving in San Diego.

Fossler, who heads the Case Issuance Unit of the City Attorney's Office, received the Victim Advocate of the Year award at this morning's ceremony. Fossler was honored for spearheading efforts to raise the amount of bail for DUI defendants for the first time in at least 17 years.

Harris was named MADD Prosecutor of the Year for saving lives on San Diego roadways through his dedication and passion for prosecuting drunken driving cases.

“Both of these prosecutors have worked hard to protect our community and richly deserve these honors,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“Kristen saw a need to change the bail schedule to keep our roadways safe, and Ryan’s success in prosecuting drunk motorists sends a message to all San Diegans to think twice before driving impaired.”**

While working in the Case Issuance Unit of the City Attorney's Office, Fossler, along with Chief Deputy City Attorney Sam Park, who heads the General Trial Unit and supervises the deputies who prosecute DUIs, realized that the bail schedule for DUI charges in San Diego had not been raised since 2006, and for some DUI charges, not since 2001. However, DUI fatalities are on the rise in San Diego County. The percentage of injury collisions involving alcohol and drugs has increased, and so has the average blood alcohol content level in DUI cases.

Fossler, with the assistance of Park, recommended to the San Diego Superior Court Bail Schedule Committee that it increase bail amounts for DUIs throughout San Diego County. Working with MADD to compile information and statistics, she successfully argued that the seriousness of the offenses warranted higher bail. The Court agreed and raised bail to \$5,000 (from \$2,500) for first-time offenses, to \$15,000 (from \$10,000) for second-time offenses, and to \$20,000 (from \$15,000) for third-time offenses.

Fossler graduated from the University of San Diego School of Law and joined the City Attorney's Office as a prosecutor in 1998. She has worked in the General Trial Unit, Appellate Unit, and Case Issuance Unit, where much of her practice is focused on DUIs. She works closely with the Office's victim service coordinators to provide assistance and resources to victims of all types of crime, including DUIs.

Fossler said she pursued law school as a path to public service and chose to work at the City Attorney's Office so she could serve the people of the city where she grew up. "I'm inspired daily by colleagues who strive for excellence in all they do while pursuing justice," she said. "I am passionate about helping victims and working hard to ensure victims are made whole."

Ryan Harris is a member of the City Attorney's DUI prosecution team, which prosecutes thousands of DUI cases a year.

Last year, Harris handled 124 DUI cases and completed three jury trials. He distinguished himself by fiercely advocating for appropriate bail, release terms, and sentencing terms, with public safety always in mind.

Harris is a graduate of California Western School of Law in San Diego. He started as an intern in the City Attorney's Office in 2020, then became a law clerk in 2021, and was hired as a Deputy City Attorney later that year. Harris is also a graduate of the Southern California Traffic College which helped him further his expertise as a DUI prosecutor.

Harris said he was drawn to the City Attorney's Office because of the opportunity to go to trial right out of law school and, like Fossler, to represent the city he grew up in and loves. He says he knew he could handle being a lawyer after working as a door-to-door solar salesperson in college. Why? "Neither a judge nor a jury can slam a door in your face," he said.

"We are honored to acknowledge prosecutors and advocates from the San Diego City Attorney's office," said Patricia Rillera, MADD's California Executive Director. **"MADD San Diego appreciates the meaningful opportunities to collaborate with the San Diego City Attorney's office as we work toward a day of no more victims."**

The City Attorney's Office is committed to preventing impaired driving and reducing alcohol and drug-impaired traffic deaths and injuries. We thank the California Office of Traffic Safety for its generous yearly grant funding our unique drugged and drunk driving team.

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