

The News Eagle

Pike County prosecutor receives national award

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PIKE COUNTY - Pike County District Attorney Ray Tonkin announced August 25th that a nationwide organization of prosecutors accepted his nomination of Pike County First Assistant District Attorney Bruce DeSarro for the annual award for Outstanding Trial Advocacy for his work in the investigation and prosecution of Eric Frein, which he did along with Tonkin.

The organization, the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation (AGACL), is composed of current and former prosecutors involved in prosecuting murder cases from around the nation. Each year AGACL recognizes several outstanding prosecutors at their yearly conference in what is referred to as the "Best of the Best" presentation. The Board of Directors for AGACL reviews nominations for prosecutors across the country and makes the selection for award recipients.

On August 9, during a ceremony held in Pasadena, California, DeSarro was one of seven prosecutors to receive AGACL's Outstanding Advocacy Award for excellence in either trial or appellate advocacy.

During the ceremony, DeSarro's work during the investigation and prosecution of Eric Frein was highlighted. Frein was convicted earlier this year for the First Degree Murder of Corporal Bryon Dickson and Attempted Murder of Trooper Alex Douglass, along with several other charges including charges of Terrorism and Possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The incident occurred on September 12, 2014, at the Blooming Grove Barracks in Pike County. After Frein was identified as the perpetrator of the crimes, a 48-day manhunt ensued for the capture of Frein which received much state and national media coverage. After a trial, a jury found Frein guilty of all charges filed against him and sentenced him to death.

Several passages from DeSarro's opening statement in the trial were noted for the audience. DeSarro was credited with not only providing an excellent summary of the large amounts of evidence that were to be presented to the jury but also a detailed and emotional account of the last moments of Corporal Dickson's life. DeSarro's presentation of forensic and victim impact testimony during the trial was also highlighted in addition to his assistance to the investigation.

District Attorney Tonkin as part of his nomination called DeSarro integral to every part of the case from the early hours of the investigation through the prosecution and ultimate death sentence Frein received. In commenting on the award DeSarro stated, "I am very honored by this award, which really is in recognition of not only my work, but even more so, District Attorney Tonkin's." DeSarro also thanked AGACL for their leadership in capital litigation on behalf of our national community's most aggrieved victims and against our societies worst criminals.

DeSarro began his career as a prosecutor in 1999 in Pike County and served as an Assistant District Attorney until 2008 when he was appointed First Assistant District Attorney. In addition to DeSarro's award, the six other prosecutors receiving awards were from Alabama, Arizona, California and Texas.