



NEWS FROM:
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Three Promoted to Newly Created Major Crimes Unit in P.D. Office
Shirk cites more crimes with weapons; notes preference to promote from within

Jacksonville, FL: After completing a full year in office, Fourth Circuit Public Defender Matt Shirk has determined that reorganization is necessary in the Unit that handles the most horrific crimes and that will ensure continued provision of effective representation for his clients. In what to date has been the Homicide Unit at the Public Defender's Office, is now divided into two separate units; Capital Crimes Unit and Major Crimes Unit, the former exclusively involves cases where a death sentence is possible.

"We are handling significantly more cases and unfortunately many of those stem from heinous crimes involving weapons," said Shirk. "If our clients are found guilty, they will be punished. But when providing the very necessary check on the State, we may convince a jury that our client is in fact innocent, then we are providing the justice that Americans deserve."

Leading the new Major Crimes Unit is Director Sean Espenship. Also new to Major Crimes are Assistant Public Defenders Al Perkins and Senovia Lance. All three represent promotions from within the Public Defender's Office.

Director Espenship comes to Major Crimes after serving as Director, Clay County. He has been with the P.D. office for the last five years and previously spent five years as a private tax attorney. A licensed C.P.A., he also operated a fish market business. He holds a J.D. from Nova Southeastern Law and a B.A. from University of South Florida.

Al Perkins has been an APD in the 4th Circuit for 18 years, most recently serving as a Division Chief in the Felony Unit. A graduate of the University of Kansas Law, he also has experience as a private practice attorney. Prior to a legal career, he earned an engineering degree at the University of Wisconsin and worked in the industrial sector.

Senovia Lance also comes to Major Crimes from the Felony Unit. She started as an APD in 2006 in the County Court Unit. The '06 graduate of Stetson University Law gained experience interning for the State Attorney of another Circuit. A Jacksonville native, Senovia is an avid runner and is very active in her church.

"We make a point to promote from within," said Shirk. "In the development of the newly created Major Crimes Unit, we were able to appoint three existing APD's, each very talented individuals with diverse legal experiences."



Espenship



Perkins



Lance