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DA's OFFICE 2016 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS EFFORTS IN POTTSTOWN, THE HEROIN-OPIOID EPIDEMIC AND THE OFFICE'S CONTINUED HIGH RATE OF SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTIONS

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (May 18, 2017)—Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele today released the [2016 District Attorney's Office Annual Report](#), which highlighted the office's key initiatives in Pottstown, Pa., and in battling the heroin-opioid epidemic. The report also notes the office's continued prosecutorial success with an overall conviction rate of 98.2 percent for the 9,566 criminal cases handled in 2016.

“Our team of prosecutors, county detectives and support personnel are doing terrific work in serving, protecting and keeping Montgomery County safe, and I'm very proud to highlight their work in this 2016 Annual Report,” said Steele. “We are dedicated to continue building on our success in and out of the courtroom.”

The annual report highlights the initiative in Pottstown, which ultimately began in May 2015 with 47 arrests following the “Operation War Ready” investigation of two warring gangs. Those arrests were prosecuted throughout 2016 and ultimately led to guilty verdicts and pleas by the 10 key defendants, including three sentences of 24-50 years, 25-60 years and 25-57 years for gang leaders convicted of attempted murder, aggravated assault, drug charges, weapons charges and criminal conspiracy. The defendants are now serving lengthy sentences in state or, in one case, federal prison. The efforts in Pottstown began a new phase in July 2016 when the District Attorney announced a new Community Prosecution Unit that is focused not only on working with police in criminal investigations and prosecutions but also collaborating with community leaders to improve the overall quality of life in the area. That announcement was quickly followed by the implementation of real-time crime surveillance cameras in 10 hot-spot areas of Pottstown, which are now online and being used by the Pottstown Police.

“The cameras along with focused efforts by three prosecutors have resulted in significant positive changes in Pottstown,” said Steele. “We're also seeing a positive economic effort in the area that we are confident will continue and expand.”

A second initiative highlighted in the report is the DA's multi-pronged approach to fighting the heroin-opioid-fentanyl epidemic that is impacting and killing a record number of people in Montgomery County. From educational efforts to drug take back programs to law enforcement operations and more, the District Attorney's commitment to fighting the scourge of drugs in Montgomery County is outlined.

"We are committed, and our law enforcement community is committed, to stemming the tide of the pain, suffering, addiction and death that those who traffic poison are raining down on our county and bringing into all of our lives," said Steele.

By the numbers, the District Attorney's Office handled 9,566 criminal cases, with 187 cases going to trial and verdict and 1,532 being settled through the Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition program. The Juvenile Division handled 3,132 court hearings (up from 2,787 in 2015) involving 622 juvenile adjudications. The Appellate Division handled 141 appeals dispositions with a 94.5 percent success rate in upholding convictions, including the Commonwealth's case against Rafie Ali. The 2016 Annual Report highlighted the Ali case, which set legal precedent, as well as other notable prosecutions across the spectrum of cases.

Additionally, the report outlined efforts beyond the courtroom, including the educational programs offered by the District Attorney's Office on a variety of topics related to the well-being and safety of Montgomery County residents, including crime prevention. Also highlighted were the prescription drug disposal program; and the charitable efforts undertaken by members of the DA's team such as the "Wheels of Justice" bicycle team that raises money for the families of fallen first responders and the "Heels of Justice" team that raises financial support for victims of domestic violence who are helped by Laurel House.

The 2016 District Attorney's Office Annual Report can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/17788>.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele