

# *The New Hires - 2023*



SANTA CLARA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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**Jency Breska** graduated from Santa Clara University in 2012. She was a Pi Sigma Alpha Presidential Scholarship recipient. Mrs. Breska received her degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 2016. At Hastings, she was the executive symposium editor for the Constitutional Law Quarterly, a competitor for the Saul Lefkowitz Moot Court Competition Team, circulation assistant to the UC Hastings Law Library, and an intake volunteer for the Legal Advice and Referral Clinic. She was also the vice president, 3L advisor, and Pil-Grad chair for the Pilipino American Law Society. At graduation, Mrs. Breska received the Wiley W. Manuel Public Interest Award for completing more than 150 hours of pro bono legal services during law school.

Mrs. Breska comes to our Office from a two-month stint at the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office in the Preliminary Hearing Unit. There, she secured a guilty verdict in a statutory rape trial. Before that, she worked four and a half years with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office. She was most recently assigned to the Felony Domestic Violence Unit as an assistant district attorney, primarily working on Felony DV, Elder Abuse, Stalking and Family Violence cases and handling preliminary examinations and trials. Prior to this assignment, she worked on the General Felonies Unit, where she conducted over 60 preliminary hearings during the height of COVID; Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Unit, where she conducted three jury trials and handled Felony DV hearings; and the Misdemeanor Unit, where she managed a team of four attorneys and completed 11 jury trials.

In 2015, Mrs. Breska was a certified law clerk for the Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office in Martinez. She was hired as a deputy district attorney through the Lawyers for America program in 2016. Mrs. Breska was a law clerk for Bay Area Legal Aid in San Francisco in 2014. Earlier that same year, she was a law clerk for the litigation section of the Santa Clara County Office of County Counsel. Mrs. Breska was a case administrator for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth District in San Francisco in 2012. Prior to that, she was an intern for the Santa Clara County Public Defender's Office under then public defender, Judge Shelyna Brown. She was a legal intern for the Office of the Attorney General in Washington D.C. in 2010.

The Notre Dame High School graduate was born and raised in San Jose. "It feels good to work in the community that I grew up and live in." The daughter of an immigrant, her first language was Bisaya, her mother's Filipino dialect. She credits her father, a contractor, and her mother, a nurse, for her appreciation of differences of opinions and cultural values. Mrs. Breska said she was drawn to work in the criminal justice system by her family's experience working with law enforcement as victims of fraud.

When Mrs. Breska isn't prosecuting cases, she enjoys running, water skiing, hiking, fishing, Warriors basketball, cooking, and working with rescue dogs. She recently fostered and then adopted a German Shepherd/Australian Cattle Dog mix, Ammo.



**Ryan Brogan** graduated summa cum laude from Ashford University in 2015, earning his undergraduate degree in Political Science and Government. He completed his degree through the school's distance learning program while on active duty in the U.S. Navy and was a member of three different academic honors societies. He received his law degree from the William S. Richardson School of Law in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2019. While there, he was part of the Delta Theta Phi Legal Fraternity and a student bar association member of the Faculty Hiring Committee that helped hire two tenure-track professors. He was an executive board member for the American Constitution Society.

Mr. Brogan was hired as a prosecutor for the Solano County District Attorney's Office in 2021. During his time there, he conducted six jury trials, four bench trials, argued over fifty evidentiary motions, and successfully negotiated dispositions in hundreds of misdemeanor cases, covering a wide range of offenses from sexual battery to DUI causing injury.

Prior to that, in 2020, Mr. Brogan was a post bar law clerk for this Office. His clerkship saw him assist with various stages of trial preparation in a four defendant, gang-related homicide. All this built naturally on his work as a legal intern for the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, City and County of Honolulu in 2019 and as a legal intern at the Department of the Attorney General in Honolulu in 2017.

A Bay Area native, Mr. Brogan was born and raised in Mountain View. He lived there with his mother, father, and brother, until he joined the Navy in 2009. Over the next five and a half years, he traveled all over the country and the world serving in several different positions as a logistics specialist in the Naval Supply Corps. He was the Command Strike Fighter Wing Pacific Detachment, Junior Sailor of the Year in 2010. Later that year, the aircraft maintenance program he managed was awarded an unprecedented perfect score during an assessment from the Office of the Commander of Pacific Naval Air Forces - a feat for which he later earned a Letter of Commendation from a three-star admiral. Mr. Brogan was also a recipient of the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal in 2012, 2013, and 2015, and the Navy Good Conduct Medal in 2012.

Mr. Brogan left active duty in 2015 so that he could pursue his legal education. His desire to become a prosecutor crystalized for him during a moment in traffic court, where he was observing as a law student. He watched the judge, defense counsel, and prosecutor work together to figure out a nuance in the law none of them were familiar with. He said: "Here was a group of people doing their level best to apply the law in a just and equitable way. That was my 'Aha!' moment. That's the level of integrity that I try to bring to court every day."

Mr. Brogan is an avid volunteer and has donated his time to the Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, the William S. Richardson School of Law Alumni Association, and the Veterans for American Ideals Rethinking Public Safety Working Group.



**Nick Chase** graduated cum laude from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2010. Eight years later, after serving in the military, he got his degree from the University of California, Davis, where he was the president of both the Student and King Hall veterans' associations. He was a Witkin Award winner for academic excellence and was selected for membership in the Order of Barristers.

Mr. Chase comes here after serving as a Contra Costa deputy district attorney since 2018. While there, he tried 15 cases to verdict and conducted 176 preliminary hearings. Assigned to the Victims of Violent Crime team, typically staffed by attorneys with nearly a decade of experience, he handled violent felonies ranging from carjacking to attempted murder.

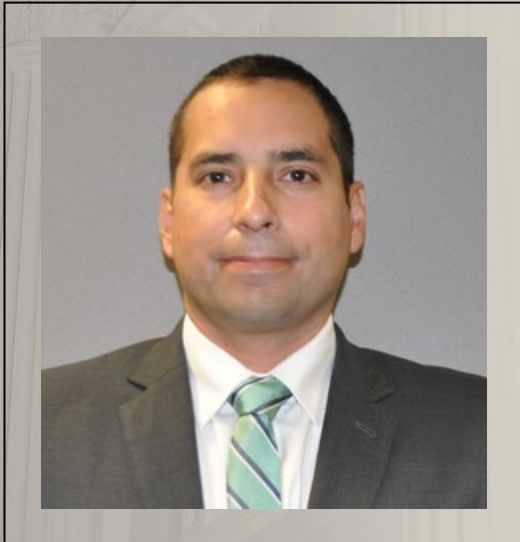
Before becoming a lawyer, Mr. Chase served in the United States Army and Army Reserve from 2011 to 2017. Mr. Chase was honorably discharged as a captain upon leaving the Reserve in 2017.

While on active duty, Mr. Chase served in Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Fort Drum, New York; and in Ghazni, Afghanistan. While based in Ghazni, he led a platoon of 25 soldiers in over 100 combat missions in Afghanistan during an 18-month rotation as platoon leader. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

While deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Mr. Chase served as a combat engineer platoon leader responsible for conducting route clearance operations along the Kabul-Kandahar highway. He planned and executed over 100 missions and cleared multiple improvised explosive devices in order to support coalition force and Afghan Security Force movement. He was responsible for the safety of 25 soldiers and the maintenance and accountability of over \$20 million worth of Army equipment. During his tenure as platoon leader, no soldier in his platoon was seriously wounded, despite frequent engagements with enemy forces, and no coalition force convoy was struck by an IED after his platoon cleared the route.

The Ben Lomond native said he had wanted to be lawyer since high school. His army career gave him the resiliency and ability to adapt - tools that he uses as a prosecutor.

"There is a truism we speak about in the military that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. The same is true in the courtroom."



**Vincent Doctor** graduated from the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York in 2007. While there, he was part of the Native American Heritage Forum, the Junior Varsity Lacrosse team, and an assistant coach for the Women's Club Lacrosse team. Mr. Doctor was on the Dean's List. After serving six years in the U.S. Army, he received his degree from Stanford Law School in 2017. He participated in the Native American Law Students Association, Stanford Law Veterans Organization, Paul Lomio Veterans Legal Assistance Program, International Refugee Assistance Project, and was an editor at the Stanford Journal of Criminal Law and Policy.

Mr. Doctor comes to this Office from the Jones Day Law Firm. As a fifth-year associate, Mr. Doctor worked on two federal criminal trials - a bank fraud case in the Northern District of California, and a securities fraud case in the Northern District of Texas. He was also a co-chair for the Jones Day Silicon Valley's 2021 Summer Associate Program.

In 2015, Mr. Doctor was a law clerk for the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in San Jose.

Mr. Doctor served on active duty with the U.S. Army from 2007 to 2013 earning the rank of captain. He is an Advanced Army Leadership School and Army Sapper Leader Course graduate. As a platoon leader, he was awarded the Bronze Star for leading a joint combat patrol with the Iraqi Police that cleared 3,637 kilometers of roads of bombs. He also received the Combat Action Badge for leading his platoon through a roadside bomb attack.

Mr. Doctor's interest in public service began on an upstate New York Indian reservation, where his father grew up. Both of his parents instilled a sense of pride and public service in their lacrosse playing son. That led to the military, to the law, and – eventually - to our Office.



**John Imobersteg** graduated cum laude from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo in 2019. While there, he was a player with the Cal Poly Rugby team. Mr. Imobersteg received his degree from the University of San Francisco School of Law in 2022. He was a staffer for the Law Review, a moot court competitor in the Emory Civil Rights and Liberties Competition, co-chair for the Mentor Program and New Student Development Committee, and a 1L representative for the Student Bar Association.

Mr. Imobersteg began his career at this Office as a post bar intern in 2022. Earlier that same year, he was an extern for the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

In 2021, he was an intern for the Honorable Judge Sean P. Dabel in the Family Law Division of the County of San Mateo, Superior Court in Redwood City. Prior to that he was an intern for the Army Judge Advocate General's Corps at the United States Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. where he created motions about the prosecution of sexual assault in the military and assisted trial counsel with Article III (Brady equivalent) disclosures. In 2020, he was an intern for Richard Burchett Jr., Esq.

During Mr. Imobersteg's undergraduate studies, he was an intern for the Juvenile Justice and Dependency Court in San Luis Obispo County for the Honorable Judge Charles S. Crandall. It was there that the impact of the cases involving abused children struck him and made him rethink his hesitancy to work in public safety, like his father (an investigator with this Office) and mother (in the Mountain View Fire Department.) He thought: "Count your blessings."

The San Jose native, Eagle Scout, and Pioneer High grad enjoys backpacking, fishing, and American history.



**Elias Hernandez** graduated from Menlo College in 2018. He was on the Dean's List. Mr. Hernandez received his degree from Golden Gate University School of Law in 2022. He graduated in the top 10% of his class, was on the Dean's List, and was the 2022 International Academy of Trial Lawyers Student Advocacy Award recipient. He was a staff writer and executive research editor for the Law Review. Mr. Hernandez was on the National Mock Trial Team, where he was a Golden Griffin Challenge Finalist and, in 2022, team captain.

Mr. Hernandez began his career at this Office as a certified law clerk in 2021. During his internship, he managed 35 assignments and cases over a 12-week period, conducted seven hearings with witnesses from two motions to suppress and five preliminary hearings, conducted oral arguments for two Serna motion hearings, and completed a variety of assignments such as DUI diversion oppositions and restitution motions.

In 2020, Mr. Hernandez was a certified law student at the Contra Costa Public Defender's Office in Martinez. Earlier that year, he participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Step Summer Trial and Evidence Program, an intensive nine-week program designed to focus on key litigation skills. In 2018, Mr. Hernandez was a client service representative for Bank of America. He was a business development intern for Tregaron Capital, in Palo Alto, in 2017, and a management trainee intern for Enterprise Rent-A-Car in 2016.

The son of a court reporter and a carpenter, Mr. Hernandez grew up in the Bay Area thinking about sports and – maybe – being a police officer. Then he experienced trials.

A star Serra High wrestler, Mr. Hernandez said that he saw being in court not unlike being on the mat against a great opponent in the Cal High Championships – except the stakes were much more important.

Mr. Hernandez said: "The work of a prosecutor can be very time consuming and exhausting. They must face hard working and skilled defense attorneys on the other side of the aisle. My time as a student athlete taught me how to overcome such hardships and to prevail in competitive and challenging environments."



**Henry Kim** graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 2004. He received his degree from the Santa Clara University School of Law in 2010. While there, he was a Dean’s List recipient.

In 2021, Mr. Kim was hired as a deputy district attorney for the Stanislaus County District Attorney’s Office. Prior to being promoted to Felonies, Mr. Kim was the lead prosecutor in a misdemeanor department with three other DDAs. Mr. Kim conducted three jury trials to verdict, one bench trial, and several preliminary hearings.

Prior to becoming a prosecutor, Mr. Kim worked for the law office of Ruzicka, Wallace & Coughlin, LLP in Irvine. While there, he represented property owners, management companies, developers, and financial institutions. As a senior litigation associate, he investigated all manner of real estate transactions and litigation.

Mr. Kim began his career at this Office in 2010 as a law clerk assigned to the Gang and Homicide units. While clerking, Mr. Kim assisted DDA James Leonard in trial, among other things. During this trial, Mr. Kim saw the hard work and dedication of DDA Leonard and knew that this was the only profession that he wanted to pursue.

He thought to himself: “This is so honorable. This is so right. This is what I want to do. So, I gave everything I had, and that’s why I’m here 10 years later.”





**Christopher Knight** graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Claremont McKenna College in 2004. Mr. Knight received his degree from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law in 2009. He was a Reserve Officers' Training Corps Distinguished Military Graduate and received the Prosser Prize in Remedies.

Mr. Knight came to our Office from the Monterey County District Attorney's Office. He began his career there in 2017 as a trial attorney. Since 2020, he has served in an executive management position as an assistant district attorney. In this capacity, he supervised 14 prosecutors in the General Felony and Sexual Assault and Child Abuse units. Mr. Knight has tried 25 jury trials over the course of his career, including sexual assault cases and a special circumstance murder. He convicted a defendant of first-degree murder and the jury found a special circumstance (lying in wait) true in October of last year.

Mr. Knight was a deputy district attorney with the Fresno County District Attorney's Office beginning in 2014. He served as a trial attorney assigned to the Domestic Violence, General Felony, and Sexual Assault and Child Abuse units.

Mr. Knight served on active duty in the United States Army Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps with assignments including legal assistance, trial counsel, special assistant U.S. attorney, and a yearlong deployment to Kabul, Afghanistan. During his deployment, he advised generals, led a NATO claims team, and received the Bronze Star Medal for his service. He currently holds the rank of major in the Army Reserve where he was hand-picked to serve as aide-de-camp for three general officers in the JAG Corps. In this position, he plans inspections and travels with general officers to evaluate performance in: Military Justice; National Security Law; Administrative and Civil Law; Contract and Fiscal Law; legal support for soldiers and family members; and support to victims of sexual assault.

Mr. Knight grew up in Los Angeles County where his parents trained thoroughbred racehorses, but frequently visited his grandparents in South San Francisco. He was the first person in his family to graduate from college.

He transferred here because of his family's close connections to the Armenian community in Santa Clara County, the diversity of the county, and his admiration for the Office.

"DA Rosen does a great job balancing criminal accountability against harnessing the zeitgeist of the moment in terms of progressive prosecution," Mr. Knight said. "I think he's found a really good balance."

When Mr. Knight isn't prosecuting cases, he is spending time with his wife and two young children, working out, or reading nonfiction. Mr. Knight also teaches criminal law and procedure to 1Ls as a professor at Monterey College of Law in Seaside.



**Elina Laykhtman** graduated from the University of California, San Diego in 2009, majoring in political science. She received her degree from the University of San Francisco School of Law in 2014. While there, she was a board member of the Jewish Law Student Association.

Ms. Laykhtman comes to this Office from the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office in Stockton. She began her career there as a deputy district attorney in 2017. She has prosecuted 13 jury trials and conducted approximately 70 preliminary hearings. Ms. Laykhtman was most recently assigned to the Gang Unit.

In 2015, Ms. Laykhtman was hired at Picone and Defilippis, a P.L.C. in San Jose as a criminal defense attorney. Earlier that same year, she was a post bar law clerk for this Office. From 2013 to 2014, Ms. Laykhtman was a certified law clerk with the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office in Santa Rosa.

In one of her recent trials, Ms. Laykhtman prosecuted a gang member for shooting at and beating a homeless man. Ms. Laykhtman grew close to the victim, urging him to travel every day to court for the trial. It struck her how different they were – she, a Russian immigrant, a lawyer; he, an Asian transient. Ms. Laykhtman noted, "We were from different worlds. We would not have crossed paths in our lives. He deserved to have justice." She got a guilty verdict.

The source of Ms. Laykhtman's commitment to serve as a prosecutor stems from the warm welcome her Jewish family of seven received when they immigrated as refugees from St. Petersburg, Russia. It was either Minnesota or Palo Alto. They chose Palo Alto. Ms. Laykhtman's grandparents still live here.

Ms. Laykhtman stated, "I want to give back to this community for all that it has given me and my family."



**Jonathan Lee** graduated from San Jose State in 2013, following an associate degree at De Anza College. Last year, he received his master's degree in business administration from Xavier University in Cincinnati. Mr. Lee received his degree from Santa Clara University of Law in 2017, making the Dean's List and getting the CALI award for the highest grade in several classes.

Mr. Lee comes to this Office after serving as a deputy district attorney in Stanislaus County since 2019. While there, he reviewed more than 2000 cases for issuance of criminal charges. He completed approximately 70 preliminary hearings for cases alleging serious and violent felonies, including attempted murder and sexual assault. He successfully tried three misdemeanor and three felony jury trials, one of which involved multiple counts of forcible sexual assault and a pro-per defendant.

Serving as a domestic violence prosecutor was a powerful and inspiring moment for Mr. Lee.

He said: "Helping survivors of domestic violence has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my prosecutorial career. It has given me the opportunity to help those who cannot always help themselves, allowed me to educate other prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and the public on the dangers and misconceptions surrounding domestic violence, and most importantly, reaffirmed my commitment to public service."

He was a worker's compensation attorney for the firm of Bo Katakian in San Jose from, 2018 to 2019, managing a caseload of more than 150 workers cases and negotiated over \$2 million in settlements.

Mr. Lee was a child support officer for the county for six years, managing more than 600 support cases from 2012 to 2018.

He clerked for the Monterey County Public Defender's Office and for the Federal Public Defender in 2016.

An Eagle Scout, Mr. Lee grew up in this county. His father was a San Jose Police officer; his grandmother, his mother, and several other relatives were county employees.

"Public service," he said. "is a family value."



**Jeffery Maisen** graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 2004, majoring in political science and playing for the club ice hockey team. He received his degree at Golden Gate University of Law in San Francisco in 2009, making the Dean's List.

Since 2009, Mr. Maisen has been employed by McArthur & Levin, LLP in Los Gatos. As a senior associate attorney, he has represented county offices of education, charter schools, and public-school institutions within the San Francisco Bay Area in a wide range of student-related civil litigation matters at both the state and federal levels. They include civil rights litigation (harassment and discrimination), student discipline, and special education. His work required regular collaboration and communication with a variety of diverse school communities across Santa Clara County, as well several Santa Clara County public agencies, including County Probation, County Counsel, County Mental Health, and Juvenile Court.

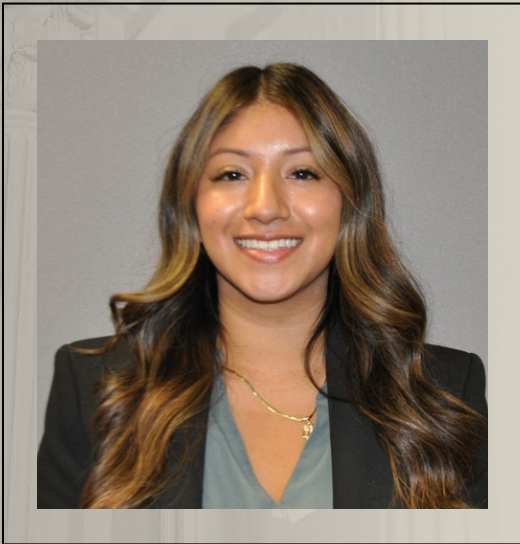
In 2008, Mr. Maisen was a certified law student in the San Francisco Public Defender's Office, where he assisted in a felony stalking trial, and also served at the Women's Employment Rights Clinic of GGU School of Law, where he represented low-wage workers in various types of employment disputes.

From 2000 to 2006, Mr. Maisen was a recreation leader with the City of San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services. There he planned and implemented daily activities and managed staff for local youth and seniors after-school recreation and summer programs.

Mr. Maisen has lifelong ties to Santa Clara County. He is a San Jose native who graduated from Andrew Hill High School, where he had his first experience with the law as a member of his high school's mock trial team. It was from this experience that Mr. Maisen first dreamed of being an attorney and working in the field of criminal justice. As a youth, Mr. Maisen was actively involved in public service to the community as a member of Scout Troop 286 where he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. His passion for community service was modeled by his parents – who served others in the healthcare field and military, and through their numerous volunteer efforts.

Mr. Maisen has personal ties to the local law enforcement community as well as this Office. His now retired father-in-law is a 30-year veteran of the San Jose Police Department and a 10-year veteran of the SCDA Bureau of Investigations. Mr. Maisen's brother-in-law is DDA Mike Vidmar, who Mr. Maisen observed try one of his first cases - an experience that affirmed Mr. Maisen's decision to pursue a career in law.

"I like the human element of the criminal justice system, people from all walks of life," he said. "It represents a fundamental element of our democratic principles and a true representation of our community as a whole."



**Jeanette Martinez** graduated with an early college/high school diploma from Dr. T.J. Owens Early College Academy, as part of the inaugural class, in 2011. She received her associate's degree from Gavilan College the very next day. She then transferred to and graduated from San Jose State University in 2013. Ms. Martinez received her advanced paralegal certificate in 2014. She received her degree from Santa Clara University School of Law in 2022, receiving a CALI Award in Leadership. During law school, Ms. Martinez worked at a law firm, volunteered as a clinical student for the Northern California Innocence Project, and was one of the founding board members for the First-Generation Law Student Association.

Ms. Martinez began her legal career in 2014, when she joined the Law Office of Lorna J. Drope in San Jose as a paralegal working on estate planning and conservatorships. Over the next eight years, she was promoted to supervising paralegal and office manager.

Ms. Martinez began her career at this Office in 2020 as a law clerk. She returned in 2021 as an honors law clerk. When asked how Ms. Martinez works with others, DDA Sarah French wrote: "This is where Jeanette shines because she is very warm, personable, and treats everyone with respect. Judges have complimented her, victims relate to her immediately and open up to her about themselves, and defense attorneys respect her."

Aside from her legal career, Ms. Martinez has served her community in different fields. She was a park services attendant with the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department in 2011. She was a member services representative for the Santa Clara County Federal Credit Union in 2013. She was an executive assistant and lead tutor for Learning Ladder, Inc. in Gilroy where she tutored students in English language arts and mathematics. Ms. Martinez volunteered with Fresh Lifelines for Youth and Santa Clara Law's Bridge to Justice.

As the eldest daughter to a Mexican-born cabinet maker and a housekeeper, she understood their feelings of distrust toward law enforcement and their daily struggles living in an English-speaking world. She understands it is especially difficult for victims and witnesses to open up about sensitive issues and be vulnerable about injustices when they don't speak the language well.

She said: "In all of my jobs, I loved to see the relief in people's faces when they realize they are speaking with someone who understands them in their language." Ms. Martinez looks forward to continuing to serve the community as a Spanish-speaking prosecutor.



**Ryan Morris** graduated from San Diego State University in 2011. He was on the Speech and Debate team and the Dean's List. In 2015, Mr. Morris received his degree from the University of San Diego School of Law. While there, he was on the USD National Mock Trial Team, the 2014 Tom Homann LGBT Law Association Scholarship recipient, president of the Criminal Law Society, vice president of OUTLaw, and a volunteer with the HIV Legal Clinic.

Mr. Morris comes to this Office from the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office in Martinez. Since 2016, Mr. Morris has successfully tried 31 trials to verdict for a myriad of offenses including domestic violence, vandalism, and assault with a deadly weapon. He was assigned to the Misdemeanor, General Felonies, Juvenile, Law and Motions, Special Operations, and most recently, the Mental Health Unit.

In 2015, Mr. Morris was a post bar law fellow with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office. He was a law clerk in the General Crime Division for the United States Attorney's Office in 2014.

Before law school, the San Diego native did stand up comedy for a year. Stand up taught Mr. Morris the importance of being efficient and deliberate with his word choice and presentation.

"As a comedian you usually only have a few minutes to establish rapport, make an audience comfortable, and convince a room of strangers that you are, in fact, funny," Mr. Morris said. "I utilize many of the skills I developed as a stand up in my role as a DDA. Whether it be during voir dire or speaking with witnesses, it's important to be able to connect to people quickly and make them feel comfortable."

When Mr. Morris isn't prosecuting cases, he enjoys tennis, piano, baking, and volunteering at the SF LGBT Center. He is also a member of the Filipino Bar Association, Asian Prosecutors Association, and the LGBT Bay Area Law Association.

A San Diego native of the low-income neighborhood of Skyline Hills, Mr. Morris had grown up around drive by shootings, brothers who had joined gangs, and couldn't wear red shoes until he was in college for fear of being misidentified as a gang member.

He said: "I wanted to do my part in keeping my community safe and holding people accountable."



**Ashley Parsons** graduated magna cum laude from Ohio State University in 2019, majoring in sports management. While there, she was a member of Pi Beta Phi, the vice president of the Greek Programming Board, and a college mentor for kids. Ms. Parsons graduated magna cum laude and in the top 5% of her class from the University of Miami School of Law in 2022. Ms. Parsons received the Dean’s Certificate of Achievement in Torts and in Federal Income Tax. She was a member of the Charles C. Papy, Jr. Moot Court Board, a Spring 2021 L-COMM II Dean’s Fellow, and an articles and comments editor for the UM Law Review.

Ms. Parsons started her career at this Office as a law clerk in 2022 where she prepared and argued oppositions to Romero motions, reviewed evidence and petitions to terminate sex offender registration, conducted preliminary hearings for failing to register, attempted burglary, petty theft, vandalism, and a felon in possession of ammunition. She returned in 2022 as a post bar law clerk in the Homicide Unit. It was working with DDA Sara Dabkowski that made Ms. Parsons pivot from wanting to negotiate salary caps for a professional sports team to the public impact of prosecution.

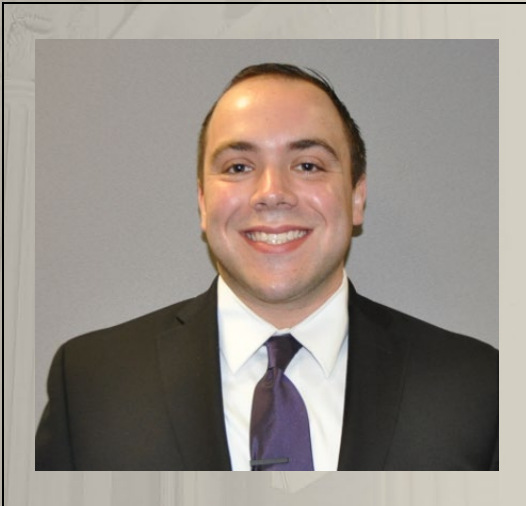
“She looks at the whole picture, so thoughtfully and with compassion for everyone in the process,” Ms. Parsons said of DDA Dabkowski. “In court, you can actually see the passion.”

While attending law school, Ms. Parsons was a legal extern for the University of Miami’s Athletics Compliance in 2021 where she utilized the NCAA Bylaws to audit student athletes and teams to ensure they were in compliance with the various rules regarding eligibility, team travel, and scheduling. Earlier that same year, she was a law clerk for MasTec in Miami. In 2020, she was a judicial intern for the Honorable Kevin Emas, the chief judge for the Florida Third District Court of Appeal. From 2017 to 2019, Ms. Parsons was a student assistant for the Ohio State Athletics Communications Department. That same year, she was a sales and marketing intern for DeVero in San Jose. In 2018, she was a cloud client computing sales and marketing intern for Dell, in Austin, Texas.

The Branham high school graduate was brought up in San Jose.

“There’s a really different level of pride knowing that I’m from here and that I get to serve the people of the community where I was born and raised.”

Ms. Parsons still watches Ohio State Football with her dog, Ziggy.



**Dylan Thomas** graduated cum laude from Oregon State University in 2019. He received his degree from Santa Clara University School of Law in 2022. While there, he was an executive board member of the American Constitutional Society and a Galloway Honors Moot Court participant.

Mr. Thomas began his career at this Office as a law clerk in 2020. He returned as a 2L law clerk in 2021 and a 3L law clerk in 2022. He was most recently a post bar law clerk arguing various felony and misdemeanor motions in court, as well as felony preliminary hearings.

In 2021, Mr. Thomas was a judicial intern for the Honorable Evette Pennypacker. That same year, he also volunteered with the Salvation Army of Silicon Valley as a Food Box distributor.

Mr. Thomas attributes his commitment to serving Santa Clara County to several sources. Both of his parents are from Saratoga and his extended family continues to live in the County. His grandfather served as a state parole agent in San Jose for several decades.

Mr. Thomas said: “It is my goal to follow in the steps of my grandfather by dedicating my career to serving this community as a deputy district attorney.”

It wasn’t always the case. He wanted to be a physical therapist at first, coming out of high school in Loomis. But the science wasn’t his passion. How to help people? What had high stakes? His stint as a clerk with the Sexual Assault team, seeing their skills and style, showed him his new path.

When Mr. Thomas isn’t prosecuting cases, he is exploring the area’s hiking trails, most recently Mount Diablo.





**Hannah Villalpando** graduated from the University of California, San Diego in 2019. Ms. Villalpando received her degree from Santa Clara University School of Law in 2022 with a 4.026 GPA. While there, she received numerous CALI Excellence awards. During law school, Ms. Villalpando was a risk management officer for the Santa Clara Law Student Bar Association, a fellow for Santa Clara Law Academic Success Program, community service chair for the Santa Clara Law Vietnamese American Law Students, and a participant in the Santa Clara law Honor Moot Court External team. She was also a member of the SCU School of Law Social Justice Coalition and a teaching assistant for SCU School of Law, Criminal Law.

Ms. Villalpando began her career at this Office as a law clerk in 2020. She returned in 2021 and 2022 as a 2L, 3L, and post bar law clerk.

In 2021, Ms. Villalpando was a 2L law clerk for the Homicide Unit of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office.

The Mitty High School graduate grew up doing ballet and playing soccer at the Santa Clara Community Center. Ms. Villalpando attended Santa Clara public schools and volunteered at local food banks and churches. Despite leaving to attend college, she eventually found her way back home to attend SCU. Her father is Mexican, her mother, Vietnamese.

Ms. Villalpando said: "As a woman of color who was raised by immigrants, I understand the unique problems that this diverse community faces. My community has taught me to listen intently to others, speak up against injustice, and to work tirelessly to ensure that everyone feels welcome and protected in Santa Clara County."

Ms. Villalpando was leaning heavily toward a career in the Public Defender's Office when she attended Dinner with a DA and met DDA Byron Suarez. He told her that being a public defender was an honorable job. The former San Jose police officer explained that for impact – there's was nothing like being a prosecutor who advocated for defendants, victims, and the People. "It stuck with me," she said. "That has to be my route: where the decisions are being made."



**Joshua Yoo** graduated magna cum laude from Illinois Wesleyan in 2016, where he was president of the Asian Pacific Student Association, the school's chapter of Habitat for Humanity, and played varsity tennis. He received his master's degree in public policy from New York University in 2019. Mr. Yoo received his degree from University California, Berkeley School of Law in 2022. At Berkeley, he was an alumni-coordinator with the Law Mock Trial Team; academic chair of the Asian Pacific American Law Student Association; and co-editor in chief of the Asian American Law Journal.

He joins our Office as prosecutor after serving – from 2021 to 2022- as a post bar, 2L honors and law clerk. Deputy District Attorney Kelly Meeker wrote: “Mr. Yoo volunteered to assist me on a late Wednesday evening, after 5:00 p.m., for a rush bail motion assignment. The motion was needed in less than 24 hours and prepared for oral argument. The case involved a serious sexual assault charge and an allegation of stalking which occurred after the sexual assault had occurred but prior to it being reported to the police. The community is safer because of his work efforts.”

Asked about Mr. Yoo's work ethic, DDA Jimmy Demertzis wrote one word: “Engine.”

While in school, Mr. Yoo was a co-director of the East Bay Dreamers Project, a student-initiated legal services project that partners with the East Bay Community Law Center.

From 2016 to 2018, he joined North Star Academy, through Teach for America in Newark, N.J., teaching chemistry to more than 100 students each year.

Mr. Yoo was raised in the Chicago area, to Korean immigrants working in their dry-cleaning business. Originally, he dreamed of being a doctor, as did his parents, the job's prestige honoring his parent's sacrifices. But Mr. Yoo's students in Newark - many of them having had negative interactions with the criminal justice system - taught him something back: he wanted to become a prosecutor.



**Farrah Zarea** graduated from the University of Southern California in 2011. She received her degree from USC's Gould School of Law in 2014, as a Public Interest Fellow.

Since 2022, Ms. Zarea has worked at the San Francisco District Attorney's Office as an assistant district attorney. While there, she managed a caseload of over 75 complex cases on the General Felonies Trial Unit.

Ms. Zarea was a deputy district attorney for the Solano County District Attorney's Office in Fairfield in 2019. There, she conducted 10 jury trials, including four felony trials, and over 120 preliminary hearings. In 2017, Ms. Zarea was a deputy district attorney for the Fresno County District Attorney's Office where she conducted 12 jury trials and one court trial.

Ms. Zarea began her career at this Office as post bar intern in 2014. During her four clerkships, the Office's focus on social justice issues, emphasis on scruples over winning, and leadership in criminal justice reform made a deep impression. Deputy District Attorney Alexandra Gadeberg especially: Ms. Zarea's mentor was quick on her feet in court, calm under pressure, and cared about what was right over winning. She began to dream about joining Alex and the Office one day.

The Leigh High School graduate grew up in San Jose. From the age of 12-years-old until she graduated high school, she served the community as a volunteer coach with the Special Olympics in San Jose. As a young adult, she was a literacy tutor at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library to adult learners with diverse backgrounds. While Ms. Zarea moved out of the Bay Area for work, she would return on the weekends to volunteer for Angels on Stage, a non-profit theater troupe for children with disabilities. Her sister, who has an intellectual disability, has inspired her deep-seated devotion to serving this County's disabled community – a group which tends to be marginalized and commonly falls victim to crime because they are particularly vulnerable.

"As someone who has a unique understanding of the struggles these individuals face, I am exceptionally situated to serving this community," Ms. Zarea said. "In broader terms, I am invested in Santa Clara County at large because it is made up of my family members, friends, and people I've known all my life. I want to serve them by seeking justice and creating a safer place to live and work."