

# Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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## **District Attorney Jackie Lacey Honors Five for Courageous Acts**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today honored five people for their courage in coming to the aid of their neighbors and then testifying against the assailants in court.

The honorees include a couple who was assaulted after they intervened in a domestic dispute; a father and son who stopped a drunken driver as he tried to flee a fatal car crash; and a man who came to the rescue of a woman being sexually assaulted in a grocery store parking lot.

“I admire the courage exhibited by these ordinary people who stepped up in the face of danger to help their neighbors in need,” District Attorney Lacey said. “I also am thankful for their persistence and dedication to helping my deputy district attorneys take violent offenders off our streets. Their actions helped us secure justice for our community.”

District Attorney Lacey recognized the honorees this afternoon at a Courageous Citizen Awards ceremony. It was hosted by the Rotary Club of Westchester.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office presents these awards several times a year to people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes or even capturing suspects.

Awards were presented to:

**Andrew Norman, 26, and Lauren Taylor, 26, of Los Angeles. (Case no. VA141740, presented by Deputy District Attorney Andrea Mader)**

A gang member showed up unannounced at his ex-girlfriend’s apartment in Los Angeles on Dec. 2, 2015, for an unscheduled visit with their daughter. Andrew Norman and Lauren Taylor, who lived in the building, were coming home from work and heard the man and woman arguing. They asked the man to leave. Feeling disrespected, he threatened to return. Soon after, Mr. Norman and Ms. Taylor were leaving the complex when they saw the man on the street. He fired a gun in their direction,

striking Mr. Norman's foot. Mr. Norman ran after the shooter and helped police find him. The couple testified for the prosecution at trial.

The defendant was found guilty of two counts of assault with a firearm, two counts of a felon in possession of a firearm and one count of a felon in possession of ammunition. He was sentenced to 26 years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

**Juan Vanegas, 42, and Christian Vanegas, 16, of Los Angeles. (Case no. TA146116, presented by Deputy District Attorney Jessica Kronstadt)**

On May 20, 2018, a 3-year-old boy was struck and killed by a drunken driver in Los Angeles. Christian Vanegas, 16, was at home waiting for his father, Juan Vanegas, when he heard the crash and ran out to help. Mr. Vanegas and his wife, who were nearby, also heard the crash and rushed to the scene. Mr. Vanegas saw the man trying to flee the area in his truck and stopped him by puncturing a tire. Mr. Vanegas and Christian kept the man at the scene until police arrived. Mr. Vanegas attended every court session and provided information to prosecutors that allowed them to secure a conviction. The defendant was convicted of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and sentenced to 12 years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department.

**Mark Johnson, 59, of Los Angeles. (Case no. BA461113, presented by Deputy District Attorney Paul Thompson)**

A man was sexually assaulting a woman in a Los Angeles grocery store parking lot on Sept. 17, 2017, when Mark Johnson stepped up and stopped the violent attack. Mr. Johnson was in the parking lot and saw the woman hanging from a car door with the man naked on top of her. He alerted security, and as he approached, saw the man display a handgun. Mr. Johnson distracted the man, allowing the victim to break free and escape. The man grabbed onto the woman's car as she drove away. He was dragged several feet. Mr. Johnson's actions saved the victim from greater harm and his testimony at trial helped prosecutors obtain a conviction.

The defendant was convicted of one count of felony assault by force likely to produce great bodily injury and sentenced to four years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department.

**[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.