Goal 5: Improving Communications and Community Participation

Baby Care Bag Project, Community Advisory Board for Juvenile Court in Pinal County

Pinal County's all-volunteer Community Advisory Board (CAB) works to ensure that juvenile court practices continue to reflect the best interests of youth, families, victims, and the community. After being briefed by the Juvenile Court Director on the numbers of children in foster care in the county — more than 1,000 children — the volunteers knew they wanted to do something that would have a direct positive effect on this population. They decided to focus on the nearly 200 babies under the age of one.

CAB volunteers decided to create a Baby Care Bag — a bag filled with essentials for foster families who were providing a safe and secure home for these babies. The bags would contain diapers, formula, and clothing. After word started circulating about this project, help came from some unlikely places. The Department of Corrections Inmate Program held a fundraiser and donated more than $3000 to purchase more diapers, reusable tote bags, and material for blankets that were made by juveniles at the Youth Justice Center. Local quilting and knitting groups donated nearly 70 quilts and 200 baby hats. Other local groups collected clothing, bibs, and baby wipes, while a local elementary charter school collected more than 800 stuffed animals.

Assembling the gift bags was a joint effort between CAB volunteers and juveniles in the Youth Justice Center, inspiring the youth to help others. Working with the local CASA unit, the CAB was able to collaborate with four local foster care licensing agencies, community groups, and CASA advocates to effectively distribute the Baby Care Bags.

The Pinal County Juvenile Court Community Advisory Board provided 225 bags through this project. In addition to providing direct help to foster families of babies, the project created public awareness about the staggering number of children being removed from their homes due to neglect and abuse. The effort promoted volunteerism, even among detained youth and adults, and involved more than a dozen groups and agencies.

Special Thanks to the Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda Awards Committee members who carefully evaluated each award entry before selecting these winners. This is a subcommittee of the Arizona Judicial Council. Committee volunteers include:

- *Presiding Judge John Nelson, Superior Court in Yuma County*
- *Chief Judge Michael Brown, Arizona Court of Appeals*
- *The Honorable Michael Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court in Maricopa County*
- *Presiding Justice of the Peace David Widmaier, Navajo County Justice Courts*
- *Presiding Judge Louis Frank Dominguez, Surprise City Court*
- *Tony Penn, Public Member, Arizona Judicial Council*
- *Victor Flores, Public Member, Arizona Judicial Council*

2015 Strategic Agenda Awards

Presented
Tuesday, October 20

Little America Hotel
2515 East Butler Avenue
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Strategic Agenda Awards Luncheon 2015

Welcome & Appreciation to Awards Committee Members

Chief Justice Scott Bales

Strategic Agenda Awards

Presented by Presiding Judge John Nelson, Superior Court in Yuma County & Chief Judge Michael Brown, Arizona Court of Appeals, Division 1

Court Leadership Institute Awards

Presented by Kent Batty, Court Administrator Superior Court in Pima County

Introduction of Keynote Speaker, The Honorable Doug Ducey, Governor, State of Arizona

Introduction by Chief Justice Scott Bales

Goal 1: Promoting Access to Justice

Mental Health Court in Yuma County Superior Court

The Mental Health Court began in April 2013, and the team includes prosecutors, defense counsel, probation officers, law enforcement, peer support agencies, housing providers, and the regional behavioral health agency.

One of the team's priorities was to improve the eligibility criteria and plan for wrap-around services for offenders, prior to their release from custody. Wrap-around services provide solutions for seemingly simple issues that pose challenges for the mentally ill, such as transportation, assistance with applications for aid, confirming medical appointments, and compliance with court-ordered treatment.

The Mental Health Court became a regional court in 2015. Here are some highlights:

- 100% of participants are no longer homeless.
- 100% of eligible offenders are either employed, in vocational rehabilitation, or on a structured job search.
- There are two tracks — post-conviction (16-18 months) and deferred cases (12 months). Compliance with terms of treatment, attendance at court hearings, and stability on medications is mandatory.
- All offenders appear before one judge, have the same defense counsel, are managed by the same probation team, and have the same community health provider teams, thereby assuring continuity of services.

Goal 2: Protecting Children, Families, and Communities

Evidence Based Pretrial Services,
Kathy Waters, Administrative Office of the Courts

Working with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Kathy Waters has led the charge in reforming the pretrial justice process in the Arizona courts through a new and improved risk assessment. Arizona is only the second US state to have a statewide risk assessment for pretrial defendants.

Changes embodied in the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration section 5-201 memorialize these new procedures for statewide, standardized implementation. Implementation of evidence based pretrial services will keep the right people in custody, while lower-risk individuals can be released and not languish in jail because they cannot afford bond. This program protects public safety while also ensuring that jobs, families, and personal dignity are preserved for low-risk individuals.

Goal 3: Improving Court Processes to Better Serve the Public

Office of the Court Interpreter (OCI) Software Project, Superior Court in Pima County

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandate that courts provide qualified interpreters and translators to litigants whose primary language is not English. Pima County has seen an increase in demand for interpreters while available financial resources have diminished. Pima County has found it difficult to find proficient bilinguals to act as interpreters in 81 languages over the past 10 years because notice time was often two days or less.

The OCI software project assists the language access office in improving the time for identifying, hiring, qualifying, and preparing interpreters to assist across court divisions and departments. The software allows for management of interpreter and translation services from the inception of a case to disposition, automatically calendaring events once identified in our case management system. Judges and court staff can now expect interpreter services to be timelier. The software will greatly reduce the need to cancel or delay proceedings because interpreters are unavailable.

The OCI project has resulted in greater efficiencies and time savings. For example, the Summary Trial Calendar, which is used by judges to manage their trial calendars, used to take four hours to create and distribute. That process can now be accomplished in five minutes.

Finally, the quality of interpreter services has increased because of the expanded time for preparation, a nearly paperless environment, and the ability to efficiently send emails to multiple interpreters at once.

Goal 4: Enhancing Professionalism within Arizona's Courts

Maricopa County Justice Courts — Best Practice: Ensuring Access to Justice for Self-Represented Litigants
Presented to Presiding Justice of the Peace C. Steven McMurry, Justice of the Peace Gerald Williams, and Judicial Education Officer Charles Adornetto

Arizona's Justice Courts traditionally serve a significant number of self-represented litigants. The economic conditions of the last several years have increased the number of individuals opting to represent themselves in court. This poses unique challenges to our Justice Courts where the majority of cases are heard. Under the leadership of Presiding Justice of the Peace McMurry, Justice of the Peace Gerald Williams and Charles Adornetto drafted and spearheaded a Best Practice to lead the Justice Courts in Maricopa County to a higher level of service to self-represented litigants.

Formalized in a Best Practice documentation, the guidelines were adopted by the Maricopa County Justice Court's Best Practice Committee. A showcase seminar featuring several speakers took place on September 25. The Best Practice provides specific, actionable examples of how to work with self-represented individuals during a variety of proceedings. The rationale behind the development of this Best Practice is to ensure that court patrons trust the process and the judge, understand what is expected of them, and that everyone has equal access to justice.