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If you wish to contribute to this newsletter, please send articles, news items, photos or other correspondence to: karra@superiorcourt.maricopa.gov.

Committed to the Timely, Fair and Impartial Administration of Justice.




Judicial Branch News

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Record Number of Adoptions to be Finalized

Lucy and Kylie are two lucky little girls.

They will finally get their wish and live a foster child's dream: to be part of a family. On November 18, Kylie and Lucy will be among an estimated 170 children who will have their adoptions finalized at the 7th Annual Adoption Day at the Juvenile Court Center in Phoenix.



Kylie and her brothers Parker, Jordan and Hunter. Kylie will have her adoption finalized on Celebrate Adoption Day.

Janet Story and Kathryn Pidgeon, attorneys who are adoption specialists and organizers of Maricopa County's Adoption event, held on National Adoption Day, are sure this year's celebration will be another success.

"We expect to break last year's record," Pidgeon said. "Last year, Maricopa County's adoption celebration was one of the largest nationwide with 143 children adopted."

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Criminal Justice Tower Planned

To keep up with the burgeoning population in Maricopa County, the Board of Supervisors approved a county capital development plan that includes bringing a state-of-the-art criminal justice center to Downtown Phoenix. The Board stated that the court tower is its number one building priority.

integrated justice system. The structure will be the first downtown Superior Court building constructed since the Central Court Building in 1972.

On October 16th, the Board of Supervisors approved \$800,000 for implementation and management of basic concepts and initial programming of the court tower project.

The criminal justice tower will contain criminal courtrooms and criminal justice functions, incorporating a streamlined,

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Message From the Presiding Judge



Barbara Rodriguez Mundell
Presiding Judge

During the first year of my five-year assignment as presiding judge, I took the first step of a journey that opened my eyes about the public's perception about law and order, and fairness and justice.

By initiating community forums, I went into the community and found people who were willing to meet me and give me a piece of their minds.

Was I surprised by what I heard?

Yes. But I wasn't shocked or disappointed. I was invigorated.

I discovered that residents across Maricopa County were willing to spend part of their evening to meet with judges and court officials to share their views on what they need, want and expect from their courts and their judges.

If you missed an opportunity to come to a court-community meeting previously, there is one community forum scheduled for the month of November and I personally invite you to come and talk with me.

You are invited to join me at Mesa Community College, 1833 West Southern Avenue at 6 p.m., Tuesday, November 14.

As I move forward in my second year as presiding judge, I am committed to continue my conversations with the public and listen to reports of what we are doing well and what areas need improvement. I will continue hosting community forums, as long as people are interested in learning about their courts and sharing their opinions and recommendations on improving the judicial branch in Maricopa County.

Last year, I listened to parents, crime victims, students, teachers and other concerned residents talk about what they think are the most important issues facing them – and their courts. They include:

Juvenile justice – residents want their schools and neighborhoods to be safe. Juvenile Court in Maricopa County is committed to providing tools that succeed in helping the majority of delinquent juveniles to turn their lives around and remain law-abiding kids. Appropriate consequences are part of the effort to rehabilitate delinquent juveniles, including detention, community service, counseling and restitution.

Justice served in a timely fashion – victims, witnesses, defendants and members of the community expect resolution of criminal matters without unnecessary delay. The court monitors its criminal caseload to assure trials are being scheduled within the "speedy trial" mandate. I recently designated a cadre of judges to hear lawyers' requests to reschedule "firm" trial dates. Civil department judges are also assisting, by handling overflow criminal trials. It is our mission to resolve criminal matters efficiently, without sacrificing justice for speedy resolution. Although the court is faced with increasing numbers of criminal cases being filed, it is up to us to try to meet this challenge with our available resources.

Quality of judges – residents want to know their judges are among the best in the country. Our judges, court staff and court programs have been recognized with honors and awards for distinguished service to the community, commitment to uphold the constitution and dedication to protect each individual's rights, regardless of gender, race or age.

Family Disputes – members of the community expect family matters to be resolved timely and in the best interest of children, parents and spouses. A number of changes have been implemented in Family Court to improve service to families, including Post Decree Court, a Decree on Demand program and streamlined processes. In early 2007, the court will introduce a pilot project in our Northeast Regional Court Facility at 40th Street and Union Hills to schedule family court proceedings during night and weekend hours.

The Judicial Branch in Maricopa County is committed to excellence. It is also committed to the timely, fair and impartial administration of justice. Hold us accountable by letting your voice be heard at our upcoming community forum.

Community Invited to Meet the Court

Presiding Judge Barbara Rodriguez Mundell has been meeting with the public at community forums which are co-hosted by community colleges around the Valley.

"I look forward to meeting individuals who are interested in the court system and ask them to come to a forum and share their perspective on what we are doing well, what court issues are most important to them, and what ways the courts can better serve the community," Judge Mundell said. She added that a number of judges and court officials are participating in the forums, to listen to comments and answer questions.

The first forum was held on October 3, at Paradise Valley Community College, 18401 N. 32nd Street, in Phoenix.



Judge Mundell answers a question from one of the invited guests.

The second community forum was held at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, October 17, at Estrella Mountain Community College, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale.

The final event in the series is at Mesa Community College, 6 p.m., Tuesday, November 14.

It will be held in the Paul A. Eisner Library, LB145, on the campus at 1833 W. Southern Avenue, Mesa.

"Each forum is a rewarding experience because we provide helpful information and also receive a lot of feedback from community members who attend," said Patricia Seguin, Community Outreach Director.

"I think these gatherings are really enjoyable because we discuss so many important topics about the court and community. Judges and officials are eager to hear what the community thinks of the court's programs, operations and processes," Seguin said.

For additional information, contact the Community Outreach Director, Patricia Seguin, 602-372-0595.



Judicial Officers pose with students from Paradise Valley Community College following the forum.

Record Number of Adoptions to be Finalized.....Continued



Judge Teresa Sanders with a newly adoptive family at the 2004 Celebrate Adoption event.

There is an ongoing need for adoptive families in Maricopa County, particularly for children in foster care.

Judge Eileen Willett

exceeded all that we could ever have hoped for." Larue said.

In Maricopa County Juvenile Court, five commissioners preside over adoptions every week. Currently, there are 371 open adoption cases involving 493 children in juvenile court. Although adoptions continue to increase annually and are at their highest level, there are still many children in Maricopa County who desperately need a permanent family.

"There is an ongoing need for adoptive families in Maricopa County, particularly for children in foster care," Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Eileen Willett said. "National Adoption Day celebrates the families who adopt as well as raises awareness for adoption. We would like to invite members of the community to attend the celebration to witness the smiles on the faces of the newly adopted children and their families. Come and share the joy. The children and families will touch your heart."

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the more than 118,000 children in foster care nationally waiting to find permanent, loving families.

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For Lynn Allen and her husband Cecil of Surprise, finalizing the adoption will be the perfect ending to the process of adding seven-year-old Lucy to their family.

"We wanted to finalize her adoption on National Adoption Day because we are willing to do whatever it takes to bring attention to such a worthwhile cause," Allen said.

Allen, a former social worker who is the foster mother to three more children, is now a full-time mom. As a social worker, Allen worked on Lucy's case for four years.

"At first, Lucy was a tough case. Many case workers thought the adoption of Lucy was a long shot. But I fell in love with her; she is the sweetest little girl," Allen said. "Lucy wanted to be adopted so badly and be part of a permanent family.

"There are many highs and lows associated with adoption. At times, I felt discouraged but deep down I knew I was doing what was best for the child and our family," Allen said. "I can't begin to tell you how much our foster and adopted children have enriched our lives."

National Adoption Day will also be a special day for Nina and her husband Ron Larue of Scottsdale and their new daughter Kylie.

The Larue's adoption was a long and emotional process. The journey began in 2001. On March 1st, they were notified they were approved for adoption.

"We may have questioned it at times but each time we hold our daughter, our much sought-after daughter, we know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God's timing is perfect and our beautiful little girl has greatly

Criminal Justice Tower Project on the Horizon.....Continued

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By 2015, it's estimated the population in Maricopa County will grow to 4.7 million people. Over that period, felony caseloads are expected to increase from 39,000 felonies to 57,000. Based on those numbers, the court determined there needs to be enough space to house 223 judges and 6,000 court and clerk staff.

"We evaluated all existing facilities and determined we need to meet space needs through a combination of existing facilities and construction of new buildings," Superior Court Presiding Judge Barbara Rodriguez Mundell said. "We also need to explore options to help at-risk individuals lead law-abiding lives. Options range from incarceration for violent or repeat offenders to development of constructive alternatives to incarceration and sentencing for low-risk non-violent offenders."

The implementation of restorative justice programming, which holds offenders accountable while offering them effective re-integration into society, will be a key component of the new criminal justice center.

"Our community has already seen the success of the restorative justice model in high early settlement rates at Regional Court Center and

Early Disposition Court," Judge Mundell said. "This model is popular with victims' rights advocates because it makes crime victims an equal partner in the process. The emphasis is on offenders making full restitution to victims."

Part of the county capital development plan also calls for expansion of courts and probation at the Southeast Regional Court; completion of the Northwest and Northeast Regional Courts and the

acquisition of property for the Southwest Regional Court in Avondale.

"I would like to thank the Board of Supervisors and County Management for their strong support of court and court-related departments in the County Strategic Plan and the FY07 budget," Judge Mundell said. "The Court continues its commitment to continuous self-examination and to enhance services in a responsible and cost-effective manner."

Highlights of the Criminal Justice Tower

- "One-stop shopping" with offices for probation intake, court interpretation and translation services, pre-trial release screening and public assistance agency offices.
- All criminal trials will be held downtown, but the Regional Court Center and the Early Disposition Court will remain at regional sites, and special criminal trials can be assigned to Southeast. This allows the five Southeast criminal trial divisions to relocate downtown, backfilling court space in the Southeast Court Building with much needed family and civil courts
- Between 45 and 70 new criminal courts, depending on configuration.
- Separate circulation patterns for in-custody defendants, jurors, victims, witnesses, judges and court personnel.
- Utilize space in ECB and CCB with six juvenile courtrooms and additional family, civil and probate courtrooms.

Judge Gets Top Award for Improving Family Court



*Judge Norman Davis
Family Court Presiding Judge*

Presiding Family Court Judge Norman Davis received the 2006 Award of Excellence from the Arizona Courts Association for making sweeping changes in family cases so there is the least financial and emotional damage done to spouses and their children.

“Judge Davis is passionate about Family Court and believes the guiding principle of the Family Court should be to ‘Do No Harm’ to the family relationship,” was cited as key reason he was selected for the award.

Over the past two years, Judge Davis used his innovation, insight and leadership to restructure Family Court by making sweeping changes to its practices and performance.

He created a number of programs, including:

- eCourt, which is a program to help litigants representing themselves correctly prepare paperwork for their cases by using an interactive website <http://ecourt.maricopa.gov>. User-

friendly, the eCourt makes it possible for litigants to prepare their own paperwork for a separation or divorce, giving them access to the Court they would otherwise not have. Several other counties in Arizona adopted Judge Davis’ program after it was implemented in Maricopa County two years ago.

- Decree on Demand, that has reduced the waiting time for litigants to obtain default or consent decrees or orders that previously took six to eight weeks. Litigants can now obtain these decrees the day after they request them and can schedule their default hearing over the internet at a time that is convenient. This program received the National Association of County Managers (NACo) award for outstanding achievement. The website address to schedule a default hearing is also: <http://ecourt.maricopa.gov>

- Post Decree Child Support Court that cut the average time to modify child support by as much as five months. Previously it took from four to six months to get child support amended. It now takes 30 to 45 days. Litigants come to Court for only one hearing, and they leave with a final order. The program has an extremely high agreement rate.

- Early Resolution Triage Program which requires all self-represented litigants in contested cases to meet with staff members to mediate their differences. All issues on which they concur are immediately reduced to a written agreement. These are signed the day of the conference. This program also has an extremely high settlement rate. If parental unfitness issues are alleged or

suspected, the matter is immediately referred for evaluation.

- Uniform Case Management provides that all contested matters are set for a Resolution Management Conference as soon as a request for any type of hearing is made. A judge hearing the matter determines where there is agreement and includes that in orders, sets deadlines for the parties to obtain the services that are needed before the case can be tried, and sets a date for the next hearing. These conferences resolve conflict and empower families to make decisions about their future. During its first 16 months, this system reduced the number of open family cases in Maricopa County by 29 percent.

Judge Davis continues to devise methods for improving Family Court procedures.

“We’re working on a number of additional things including the opening of a Support Enforcement Court and a Parenting-Time Enforcement Court, as well as a Family Night Court and a Family Saturday Court after the first of the year,” Judge Davis said. “We are also planning to design parenting time supervision and exchange center in conjunction with the Night and Saturday Courts if we can find the resources.”

He notes that virtually all of the reforms that have been created and implemented in Family Court “have been accomplished with few or no additional resources.”

Court Appointments, Promotions and New Hires

Two court employees with lengthy service in the Human Resources of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County have been promoted to new assignments.

Danna Quinn, of Phoenix, moved to the position of Assistant Human Resources Director, from her previous assignment as Employment Services Administrator. Quinn's promotion created another advancement opportunity, and **Andreia Griego**, of Scottsdale, was selected to move up from her job as Senior Analyst for Human Resources to the position of Employment Services Administrator.



Danna Quinn



Andreia Griego

Court Administrator Marcus Reinkensmeyer is pleased to announce the appointment of **Elizabeth Ncube** as Trial Courts Training and Education Administrator for the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County. She fills the position vacated by Pamela Lizardi in July.

Prior to her appointment, Ncube served six years developing judicial education programs at the Administrative Office of the Courts Education Services Division.

Superior Court is pleased to announce the appointment of **Jennifer Murray** as its new Law Library Assistant Director.

Prior to her appointment, Murray worked as a senior research librarian at the law firm of Greenberg Traurig. Murray graduated with a Juris Doctorate from Arizona State University. She begins her duties on October 23.

Elberta Binder has been appointed as an E-court manager at Superior Court. Previously, Binder served as an adjunct faculty member at Phoenix College. Binder began her assignment on September 11.

Governor Janet Napolitano appointed **Karen A. Potts** and **Christopher Thomas Whitten** to serve on the Maricopa County Superior Court bench.

Judge Potts, a professor at Phoenix College, worked at Streich Lang as a litigator and an assistant Attorney General in the financial fraud division.

Judge Whitten was an attorney with Whitten Berry, PLLC.

Judge Whitten will be assigned to the Civil Court Department at the Southeast Court Facility in Mesa. Judge Potts will be assigned to the Family Court Department at the Southeast Facility in Mesa.

The five newest court commissioners appointed to the Maricopa County Superior Court bench by Presiding Judge Barbara Rodriguez Mundell will be honored by family, friends, judges, commissioners and court officials during investiture ceremonies beginning at 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 7 in the Board of Supervisors Auditorium, 205 W. Jefferson, Phoenix.

The commissioners include **Michael Barth, Mark Brain, Jaime Holguin, Joan Huls and James Morrow**.

Courtside

Photo Highlights

In the News

Court Forums Draw Large Audience

Superior Court's community forum at Estrella Mountain Community College drew 110 participants. (Top Left)



"Countdown to Armageddon", a British Broadcasting Company production, was filmed in Judge Colin Campbell's Chambers in the Old Courthouse. (Below)

Noreen Sharp, Presiding Judge Barbara Rodriguez Mundell and Karin Philips volunteering to hand out customer service surveys in front of the Central Court Building. (Bottom Right)



The newly constructed Justice Court Center, 6th Avenue and Jackson, will be ready for occupancy in December.

