

# FOCUS

## A Look at the Maricopa County Juvenile Court



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**Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County**

Fall 2000 Edition

# Adoption Fair cause to celebrate

## Maricopa County Adoption Fair to Celebrate Adoption

Date: • Saturday  
Nov. 4

Place: • Superior  
Court Old  
Courthouse:  
125 W.  
Washington,  
Downtown

### Tentative Fair Schedule

- 9:30 a.m. • Opening  
Ceremonies
- 10 a.m. • Fair opens
- Adoption  
hearings
  - Educational  
sessions
- 3 p.m. • Fair closes

### Educational topics

- *Legal issues*
- *Related  
adoptions*
- *Post adoption  
resources*
- *Adoption types*
- *International  
adoption*
- *Older children  
adoptions*
- *The certifica-  
tion process*
- *Special needs  
adoption*



It is a moment rarely seen by the public in Juvenile Court – the moment in the final adoption hearing when the paperwork is done and any doubts are cast aside as children in need become part of a loving family.

In Juvenile Court such moments of generosity and love are celebrated hundreds of times a year behind closed court doors because the adoption proceedings are confidential and closed to the public.

However, several Maricopa County families have agreed to share that moment with the public by opening their adoption hearings at the inaugural Maricopa County Adoption Fair to Celebrate Adoption, Saturday Nov. 4 at the Superior Court Old Courthouse, in downtown Phoenix.

Dozens of families will finalize their adoptions at the all-day fair, which will also offer several educational sessions on various adoption issues. The fair is expected to increase the public's awareness of the need for adoptive parents and to ease concerns that may be keeping prospective adoptive parents from moving forward.

"I believe that when adoption is made understandable through education and information more individuals will be able to make the decision

to start the adoption process," said Patrick Smock, deputy administrator for Maricopa County Juvenile Court. "The sessions hopefully will de-mystify the confidential world of adoptions, if only for a day, and make it something that everyone can complete."

By the time the majority of families walk into the final adoption hearing, the hard part is done — the bonding process has been established and the home setting has been made familiar.

During a final adoption hearing, a judicial officer asks all parties if the adoption should be made final. Once all have agreed, the adoption is finalized and legal.

## Parents needed

Officials from the Juvenile Court of Maricopa County initiated the plan through its Court Improvement Project Team, established to address requirements of 1999 legislation regarding the dependency process — a process that requires the court to swiftly find a permanent placement plan for abused, abandoned or neglected children.

"The need for adoptive parents is great. Dependency cases are moving to permanency in an expedited manner and in some cases that means terminating the parental rights," Smock said. "When this is completed the child is waiting for an adoptive

## Juvenile Court Adoption Facts

- 937 adoption hearings were completed in 1999
- Adoptions typically make up 4 percent to 5 percent of the court caseload

placement. The sooner a child is placed in a permanent setting the better for the child."

In trying to address a lack of adoptive parents for kids in the dependency process ready for adoption, the team looked to an annual Adoption Fair in New York for guidance.

Using the New York model and past adoption promotion events, a planning committee came up with the Adoption Fair itinerary. Committee member Sharon Denny, Director of AZ Family Adoptive Services, said similar adoption fairs have been held in the past, but never of the magnitude of the Nov. 4 event.

"I think it is going to be a great opportunity to learn about adoptions and to see how court hearings really happen," Denny said. "For some it will be the first step toward

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# Director's expertise now courtwide

During nearly two decades, John Barrett mastered ways to technologically improve the way Juvenile Court judges and juvenile probation officers do business.

He helped expand the Juvenile On Line Tracking System (JOLTS) in response to demands for better, faster, more accurate and more easily accessible information.

By focusing on developing and improving efficient ways of managing information via a computer system, he created a system that met the needs of the court and surpassed expectations of what could be achieved.

"Our philosophy is to think that anything can be done and can be done better," Barrett said. "We always try to give people a little more than they expect to get. We all wanted to make this the best juvenile court tracking system in the country, and I think we've gone a long way toward meeting that goal."

Barrett's job recently expanded beyond Juvenile Court to encompass duties as the Chief Technology Officer of Superior Court in Maricopa County.

His legacy with JOLTS is highly regarded.

"JOLTS has allowed the Court and the Probation Department to make decisions faster because information is readily available," Barrett said. "I wasn't there before JOLTS, but I imagine there was a lot of information written on index cards and legal pads." Once limited to record keeping and research for Juvenile Court, JOLTS has become a source of information many juvenile justice agencies can access. It's a model of efficiency in a



*Superior Court Chief Technology Officer John Barrett, former Director of Technology Services in the Juvenile Probation Department, recently teed off in adult court after years of driving technology at Juvenile Court Center.*

system where time is of the essence.

It is really a common ground for all the agencies, all the juvenile justice departments, to focus, solve problems and find solutions."

The JOLTS system has become a leading example in the nation on managing court documents, maintaining information on juveniles, and keeping a comprehensive database on juvenile offenders.

Barrett said similar models based on JOLTS are in place in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit and Oklahoma.

In its basic form, JOLTS functions as a system to track the status of juvenile offender cases.

Its use extends to sending messages, setting court calendars and archiving documents.

JOLTS' success is integrating other agencies like the County Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender the Clerk's Office and

various law enforcement agencies.

The County Attorney's Office, for example, can file delinquency petitions through JOLTS, probation officers can produce reports on juveniles, the Clerk's Office can create and distribute minute entries and a judge can review the juvenile's record and up-to-date information on the bench.

"I would say it has had a very positive influence," Barrett said.

Many of his coworkers say Barrett's efforts with JOLTS during the past 19 years have indeed gone above and beyond what was expected.

"John has always listened to what everyone needs in an information system and then met and exceeded their expectations," said Cheryl Townsend, Director of the Juvenile Probation Department. "John also insured that the in-

## Nuts and Bolts of JOLTS

- JOLTS stands for Juvenile On Line Tracking System

- It is a system developed over a number of years to track the status of juveniles in the Juvenile Court system, juvenile case histories and court documents.

- The system has approximately 3,000 users statewide. Some Juvenile Probation Departments outside Maricopa County have access to JOLTS. The system is used mainly by the Juvenile Probation Department, Juvenile Court, county and state juvenile legal offices and various law enforcement agencies. Other agencies that use JOLTS include the Department of Economic Security, the Foster Care Review Board, county adult legal offices and the Department of Juvenile Corrections.

- The use of JOLTS recently expanded to additional city police departments and courts as a result of federal funding. The funds have allowed Juvenile Court to expand JOLTS' capabilities and to provide limited Internet access.

Public access to JOLTS, however, remains closed.

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# New assignment, new judge leads to more change on Juvenile Bench

After a year in which several new appointments were made to the Juvenile Court bench and several judicial officers departed and arrived through routine rotations, the makeup of the bench continues to change.

A new judge was assigned to Juvenile Court and a Juvenile Court commissioner is headed to Adult Court.

New to the Juvenile Bench is Judge Janet Barton, who was recently appointed to the Superior Court bench by Governor Jane Hull. Judge Barton is assigned to the Durango Juvenile Court facility and assigned to the cases previously assigned to Commissioner Bayham-Lesselyong.

During her swearing-in ceremony, Judge Barton expressed gratitude to those who have helped her in her career and reflected on her own childhood, admitting that in her youth, she was often a handful to her parents.

"The irony is not lost on them that I am assigned to Juvenile Court," She quipped.

She admits she's eager to adapt to her new career, and said she "thoroughly enjoyed" the assignment.

"I'm extremely excited," Judge Barton said of her appointment. "Getting that phone call from the gov-



*Vice Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court Charles E. Jones swears in Juvenile Judge Janet E. Barton.*

ernor was definitely the highlight of my year."

Judge Barton graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1975 with an undergraduate degree in accounting and earned her law degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law, in 1985. She spent the years in between working in the private sector.

She began her legal career in Arizona as an associate with Snell & Wilmer, the law firm where she clerked while a student during the summer of 1984. During her 15 years at Snell & Wilmer, Judge Barton practiced in the area of commercial litigation, with a focus on state and local tax law. In addition to her work with the law firm, Judge Barton was also a Judge Pro Tem from 1993-1997.

She also volunteered as Bar Counsel for the State Bar of Arizona and is a member of several organizations

and boards.

Commissioner Jane Bayham-Lesselyong is assigned to Probate Court at the Downtown facility. Commissioner Bayham-Lesselyong was assigned to the Juvenile Court bench in May 1999. She was appointed as a commissioner in January 1986 and has served in the Juvenile, Civil, Criminal and Family Court Departments. She said she hopes to return to Juvenile Court someday.

"I enjoyed being a part of the Juvenile Court, where everyone focused on improving the lives of children," Bayham-Lesselyong said. "Although the decisions of Juvenile Court can be the saddest ones in the entire court system, the successes of a putting a family back together, helping a kid learn to do the right thing or instinctively knowing the lesson is learned make Juvenile Court one of the most rewarding assignments in the system."



*Commissioner Jane Bayham-Lesselyong*

## On-campus safety program proven effective

Tragedies may have been averted because of the quiet existence of the Safe Schools Program.

Earlier this year, six times when juveniles brought guns to school, other students reported the situation to a Safe Schools staff member before anything violent could happen.

"With Columbine, you had students who knew about it ... but didn't tell anyone," said Hellen Carter, Director of the Community Services Division of the Juvenile Probation Department. "By these students building these relationships with the school resource officers and probation officers, they're actually preventing tragedies from happening."

Safe Schools is effective through its presence in the schools.

The program is a cooperative effort between the schools, local police departments the Juvenile Probation Department and local businesses.

A police officer, known as a school resource officer, and a juvenile probation officer are housed on campus. There, they are resources to the students and staff.

They educate the school's students on law related topics and establish a preventative presence on the campus.

Carter said the probation officer's presence on campus also helps to identify and treat emotionally troubled children.

The program started with 12 juvenile probation of-

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## Safe Schools, From Page 3

ficers in 1994 with State funds.

Last year, with a federal grant, the program expanded by 11 probation officers, bringing the total to 35 officers serving 10 school districts.

Grant money sent juvenile probation officers to schools that could not earlier participate in the program because of a lack of state funding for more officers.

Maricopa County School districts and schools currently participating in the program include:

Buckeye Union High School District, Cartwright District, Creighton Elementary School District, Dysart Unified School District, Fowler Elementary School District, Isaac School District, Mesa Unified School District, Murphy Elementary School District, Osborn School District and Phoenix Elementary School District.

### An average month for a Safe Schools Probation Officer

- 20 law related education classes with 25 kids in each class.
- 400 individual contacts with students, including those on probation.
- 14 support groups of six to 12 students.
- 20 parent contacts.
- 5 community meetings.
- 50 school personnel contacts.
- 22 police contacts.
- 28 probation officer contacts.

## Adoption Fair, From Page 1

getting their feet wet in the adoption process."

Denny said topics covered in the educational sessions mirror questions her agency gets from prospective adoptive parents on topics such as international adoption, adoption of older children versus younger children, related and non-related adoptions and the legal issue of adoption.

The educational sessions and the court proceedings will take place simultaneously in separate rooms, however each educational session will be offered once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

The court hearings will be held inside the Old

Courthouse, 125 W. Washington Ave., as well as the educational sessions.

Adoption agency information booths will be available in the adjoining Cesar Chavez Memorial Plaza. Food will also be available in the plaza. In addition to local private adoption agencies, representatives from the County Attorney's Office, the Attorney General's Office, the Juvenile Probation Department, Arizona Department of Economic Security and Superior Court were part of the planning committee. The event is the first in what committee members hope will be an annual event.

For more information call Patrick Smock at Juvenile Court, (602) 506-4559.

## Men at work



Superior Court Presiding Judge Colin F. Campbell (middle right) and Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Maurice Portley (right) help to lay the foundation of the Juvenile Court Southeast Facility expansion project in Mesa.

## Construction starts at Mesa juvenile detention facility

Maricopa County and Superior Court officials recently broke ground for construction and renovation at the Juvenile Court Center Southeast Facility in Mesa.

The construction will bring a \$3.6 million parking garage and the renovation will provide 120 additional beds at the Mesa Juvenile Detention Center.

The project is funded by a nine-year, \$900 million jail tax passed by voters in 1998.

Although the majority of the funds went toward a downtown adult jail facility, \$60 million is being used for Juvenile Court facility improvements.

The expansion is needed to address an increase in detained juveniles that accompany a burgeoning county population. The expansion at southeast comes at a time when the

detention population is consistently above capacity, which at the Mesa facility is currently at 139 beds.

Juvenile Court Center officials said the facility construction and renovation plans have taken into consideration a projected 30 percent juvenile population growth within the next 10 - 15 years.

Juveniles who do not have their own cell are forced to sleep on the floor creating safety and security concerns.

Future expansion at the Durango facility will include a two-story courthouse with about 12 courtrooms and 220 beds for the Durango Juvenile Detention facility.

In addition to more beds at the southeast facility, an additional courtroom and more space for administration is in the plans.

# JUVENILE COURT NEWS BRIEFS

## Truancy program triples service

With a \$300,000 grant from the Governor's Office, a Juvenile Probation Department program to reduce truancy has more than tripled its service to Valley Schools.

Juvenile Probation Community Services Division Director Hellen Carter explained that the Court Unified Truancy Suppression (CUTS) program expanded from service to 140 schools.

The grant also created three more staff positions in the program, doubling to six the number of probation officers working for CUTS.

The program was developed to serve a need for dealing with truancy matters within the community rather than by referring juveniles to court.

Juveniles with consistent unexcused absences can be referred to Juvenile Court and be found to be truant.

Truancy referrals consistently are in the top five of Juvenile Court's list of most common offenses.

Although truancy may not be considered a major crime, Carter said it may be a gateway to larger problems.

"Kids who are truant aren't under adult supervision and are more likely to get into trouble," Carter said. "If we don't get them early on, a lot of kids will have a lifetime of problems."

The key aspect of the program occurs with the first citation for truancy — providing educational sessions for both the parents and children, at the school, and a day of community service for children.

Possible resources

"Kids who are truant aren't under adult supervision and are more likely to get into trouble"

• Hellen Carter,  
Community Services  
Division Director

for the child are discussed at the first meeting among all concerned.

These resources can be provided by the school through special education programming for the child who is having emotional or learning difficulty, a social services agency in the community, and court paid services such as individual or group counseling. If parenting skills are in question, the parents can be offered classes that would be conducted on the campus or other site by staff of the Maricopa County Probation Department.

The parents can also be ordered to participate in a counseling program with the child. If the juvenile continues truant behavior, the matter is set before a judge to be dealt with in Juvenile Court.

Carter said expanding the program means more children will be aware of the consequences of ditching school.

"CUTS has a prevention aspect as well," Carter said. "By involving the family, the community and the child, it raises their awareness that this is not a petty offense; it's a serious thing."

## Legislative update

*The following legislation directly impacts Juvenile Court:*

### Delinquency

**Senate Bill 1083** – Reorganizes the process to handle claims that a child may not be mentally competent for court proceedings. Also defines the time to restore the child to competency if found incompetent.

### Adoption

**House Bill 2406** – Corrects provisions that were omitted in 1999. For example, the Court has 60 days to certify an adult seeking adoption certification and a parent who adopts need only have the application updated if another adoption is desired within three years. It also

clarifies the adoption hearing times lines - 60 days if the child has been in the home for one year, 90 days if the child is under 6 months or lived with the adults for at least 6 months, 6 months for stepparent and other adoptions.

### Other

**Senate Bill 1136** – Continues the Family Builders program to have private providers intervene in prevent the removal of a child from the home.

**Senate Bill 1280** allocates \$10 million of TANF funds in each of the next three years for substance abuse treatment to parents, guardians and custodians where substance abuse is a significant barrier to maintaining, preserving or reunifying the family, and/or obtaining and maintaining employment.

## JOLTS, From Page 2

formation system supported the mission of the Juvenile Court Center and all its employees."

Juvenile probation deputy director, Steve Carpenter, credits Barrett with taking JOLTS from infancy to maturity through his work and leadership.

"He is one of the founding forefathers of JOLTS," Carpenter said. "With his can-do attitude, he makes everything we do in JOLTS possible."

Barrett plans to take the philosophy of integrating various agencies into one computer information system

to adult court.

Barrett's duties will be filled on an interim basis until a replacement is hired.

Longtime Research and Planning Services, a technology division of the Juvenile Probation Department, staff members Bill Edel and Dick Kennedy will fill Barrett's shoes on an interim basis.

Barrett said taking the new job was bittersweet because it meant leaving the family atmosphere he cherished at the Juvenile Court Center.

"I enjoyed the people that worked there," Barrett said. "Because they loved their work and it showed every day."

# JUVENILE COURT JUDICIAL OFFICERS

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**Southeast Court Center**  
**1810 South Lewis St.**  
**Mesa, AZ 85210**

**Durango Court Center**  
**3125 West Durango**  
**Phoenix, AZ 85009**

Presiding Judge Maurice Portley	602.506.2306	Associate Presiding Judge Pam Franks	602.506.3528
Judge Rebecca Albrecht	602.506.3727	Judge Janet Barton	602.506.5340
Judge Silvia Arellano	602.506.3649	Judge Thomas Dunevant III	602.506.2050
Judge Dennis Dairman	602.506.1855	Judge Brian Hauser	602.506.6086
Judge Emmet Ronan	602.506.0438	Judge William Sargeant III	602.506.3663
Judge Linda Scott	602.506.2610	Judge Eileen Willett	602.506.3343
Commissioner Thomas Jacobs	602.506.4203	Commissioner Robert Colosi	602.506.3366
Commissioner Elizabeth Yancey	602.506.2040	Commissioner George Foster Jr.	602.506.3892

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**Superior Court of Arizona**  
**Juvenile Court**  
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