

FOCUS

A Look at the Maricopa County Juvenile Court



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Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County

Fall 1999 Edition

Keeping Valley Schools Safe

Program draws efforts of schools, court, police to prevent violence

The recent scenes of students and teachers injured or killed during incidents of school violence are at the forefront of community concerns across the nation. Fear of future eruptions of violence at the hands of youth has gripped the hearts and minds of the nation. School administrators and concerned parents are searching for effective ways to prevent further incidents.

Juvenile Probation Officer Gary Goss believes he is perfectly poised to help keep kids safe in school through his assignment with the Safe Schools Program.

In his 34 years as a probation officer, Goss believes Safe Schools is the most effective program he has experienced. It is a collaborative effort between schools, Juvenile Court and law enforcement agencies that puts troubled youth in daily contact with adults who provide education, counseling and other programs.

The Safe Schools Program teams juvenile probation officers and police school resource officers to identify children who may be angry or suffering emotional pain and are in need of help.

"We resolve the problem while it is still a molehill, before it becomes a mountain," Goss said. "Just



Safe Schools Juvenile Probation Officer Gary Goss (middle) takes a group of students in the Safe Schools Program on an outdoor excursion.

our physical presence has a calming effect."

Goss is one of 23 Juvenile Probation Officers working in 10 Maricopa County school districts as

part of the Safe Schools Program. Implemented in 1994 with funds allocated by the Legislature, the Safe Schools Program uses the officers' proactive presence to build a relationship with juveniles in the school. The initial Safe Schools budget has grown from \$1 million in 1994 to \$7 million statewide this year.

"Legislators saw the incidents of violence on school campuses rising and knew they needed to act rather than wait for tragedy to strike," said Hellen Carter, Director of Community Services Division of the Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Department. She has worked with the Safe Schools Program since its inception.

Carter said the collaboration makes the program successful both by intervening with at-risk children early and preventing violence in schools.

The early warning signs of violent behavior

The following is a checklist of characteristics of youth who have caused violent deaths in school-related incidents.

1. Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts.
2. Characteristically resorts to name calling, cursing or abusive language.
3. Habitually makes violent threats when angry.

Continued on page 3

Continued on page 2

“It allows the significant adults who deal with kids to do so in a way to prevent rather than react to crime,” Carter said. “It allows adults to develop a meaningful, mentoring relationship with juveniles at a school but with the understanding that if a law is broken, there will be consequences to pay.”

The heart of the program is the juvenile probation officer, who must balance the needs of the community and the needs of the schools, as well as serve as a mentor, a teacher and a role model for each student.

The juvenile probation officers work in offices on school grounds and participate in the classroom by providing Law Related Education, supervising probationers in their schools and coordinating information between probation staff and the schools. Goss, along with one other Safe Schools probation officer, and several school resource officers, focuses his effort on kids at Esquela Azteca Alternative School, in the Isaac School District for children on the fringe of delinquency.

Goss said typically, if a teacher cannot control a particular student, he will be called in to talk to the student. The relationship between the student and the probation officer allows the problem to be addressed on an individual basis, Goss said. In one instance, the time spent building a relationship with a student paid off when the student revealed some problems at home, which Goss found to be the reason for the child’s angry behavior at school.

“Subsequently, the kid feels like somebody not only knows about the problem and not only was willing to do something about it, but had the power to do it,” Goss said.

Mary Radcliffe, Assistant Superintendent of Operations for the Isaac School District said the program is a strong component of the

Top 10 school attendance areas of juvenile violent referrals in 1998**					
Unified Districts			Elementary Districts		
	<u>Violent</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Violent</u>	<u>Total</u>
Mesa	90	2805	Washington	65	966
Paradise Valley	75	1402	Roosevelt	38	396
Peoria	57	1347	Cartwright	32	875
Deer Valley	50	1012	Alhambra	32	552
Gilbert	37	843	Phoenix	30	472
Chandler	24	1007	Tempe	22	476
Scottsdale	25	878	Glendale	21	342
Dysart	15	285	Isaac	17	352
Gila Bend	4	40	Osborn	16	229
Wickenburg	4	58	Creighton	10	232
Union Districts			Other Districts		
	<u>Violent</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Violent</u>	<u>Total</u>
Phoenix	217	4034	Other	139	2908
Glendale	59	1308	Maricopa		
Tempe	39	1288	County Regional	52	853
Tolleson	13	438	Charter Schools	14	320
Agua Fria	7	268	Apache Junction		
Buckeye	8	93	Unified	3	57
			Other Colleges	2	104
			Misc. Parochial	2	80
			East Valley		
			Institute	1	46

***Note: These numbers reflect offenses committed by juveniles attending these districts and not offenses committed on the campuses.*

Source: Juvenile Probation Department

district’s overall safety measures. Radcliffe oversees the implementation of safety measures in the district and said when Safe Schools started, the number of incidents initially increased. The numbers have since decreased, she said.

“I don’t think there is any question our schools are safer,” Radcliffe said, adding that Safe Schools “is just a piece of what makes our schools safer.”

Goss said while incarceration sometimes is a necessary facet of the Safe Schools Program, anger “elimination” and educational programs are used more frequently and with increasing success. Radcliffe said the juvenile probation officers assigned to the Isaac School District have gone above and beyond the call of duty in working with their

students. Goss, for example, created an outdoors program for the kids at Esquela Azteca School, which includes camping and water trips to Lake Pleasant as well as river rafting near Lake Powell.

In the Buckeye Union High School District, the 10-hour-a-week Law Related Education classes were developed to include speakers from the Department of Public Safety, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office.

Radcliffe said in addition to the benefit of increased safety, the juvenile probation officers’ presence makes it easier for children on probation to stay out of trouble.

Continued on page 5

Safe Schools Program aids quest for safety in schools

Paducah. Springfield. Pearl. Littleton. Conyers.

These are communities that have experienced school shootings. Their names are engraved in our consciousness. These are names that have shaken our country out of the absolute belief that rural or suburban schools are safer than urban schools. These are names that remind us that we have to watch our children and help them when they are in distress.

There is no single reason for the school shootings. There is no magical cure to prevent it from reoccurring. There is, however, a program that helps in small ways to ensure that schools are safe for all our children: The Safe Schools Program.

The program teams a Safe Schools juvenile probation officer with a police officer, known as a School Resource Officer, to work with staff, teachers, children, parents and families to do prevention and intervention services on school campuses. For example, the Safe Schools team walk around campus, talk and listen to students, staff and faculty, and where necessary, intervene. They counsel students and they are resources for children and families, whether using services provided by the Juvenile Court, the larger community or creating programs so that individual needs are met. They teach classes about mediation; they supervise teen court programs, they supervise youngsters on probation within the school and they will do what is necessary to help the school be a safe, positive educational environment where children can learn.

Safe Schools teams work beyond three o'clock. The teams participate in after school activities with the youngsters. The teams create opportunities for the youngsters that they might not otherwise experience. Gary Goss, the Safe Schools Probation Officer of the Year, has taken students fishing and camping, in addition to his other responsibilities.

Maricopa County currently has 10 school districts and one technology institute participating in the Safe Schools Program. The program will be expanded thanks to the collaborative effort between the Juvenile Court, Maricopa County, Avondale, Chandler, Paradise Valley and Phoenix to use federal funding through the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to keep our schools safe.

Although there is no good answer for the harm that has been caused by the recent school shootings, the Safe Schools Program is one program that may help schools, children and families enjoy the educational opportunities in a safe manner.

— By Maurice Portley, Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, Superior Court in Maricopa County

Signs, from Page 1

4. Has previously brought a weapon to school.

5. Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.

6. Has a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency.

7. Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.

8. Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives or other incendiary devices.

9. Has previously been truant, suspended or expelled from school.

10. Displays cruelty to animals.

11. Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult.

12. Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.

13. Has been bullied and/or bullies or intimidates peers or younger children.

14. Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems he/she causes him/herself.

15. Consistently prefers TV

shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.

16. Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.

17. Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.

18. Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance.

19. Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings.

20. Has threatened or attempted suicide.

In compiling this list, The National School Safety Center tracked

school-associated violent deaths in the United States from July 1992 to the present. Accounts of these incidents indicated that in most cases, troubled youth had demonstrated or has talked to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, anger, depression and frustration.

This checklist and subsequent information was reprinted by permission of the National School Safety Center.

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Fax: (805) 373-9277.

Web site: www.nccs1.org

Other school safety resources:

• "Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools": <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html>.

• Resources from the National Mental Health and Education Center: <http://www.naspweb.org/center.html>.

• "Crime in Schools: A Problem-Solving Approach": <http://www.usdoj.gov>.

• "Preventing School Violence: Best Practices of Mayors in Collaboration


with the Police, Schools and the Community": <http://www.usmayors.org/uscm>.


• "School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan": <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports.html>.

• "Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings" <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/conflic.pdf>.


JUVENILE COURT NEWS BRIEFS

Mark Your Calendars


 **Juvenile and Family Drug Court Conference**, January 6-8, 2000, Phoenix, AZ hosted by the Juvenile Court, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The conference will become an annual event.

 **11th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference** hosted by Prevent Child Abuse Inc., January 25-26, 2000, Mesa, AZ.

Juvenile Justice Grant

 The Juvenile Court, in partnership with Maricopa County, the Cities of Avondale, Chandler, Phoenix and the Town of Paradise Valley, will receive a grant of more than \$1 million for the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant program for 1999 to expand and enhance the Safe Schools program and expansion of the Juvenile On Line Tracking System with the various partners.

Court Conferences

 The Juvenile Court and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona hosted a conference June 30, 1999 that explored the legal and practical differences between the Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997, the preliminary protective hearing provisions of the Model Court Act of 1998 and the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Entitled "Working Together to Improve the Lives of Dependent American Indian Children," it was an invaluable opportunity to learn and discuss the concerns of the Indian tribes and strengthen the relationship between the Juvenile Court and

Happy 100th Birthday


One hundred years ago the first Juvenile Court was created in Chicago. It was the result of hard work by volunteers who saw the need to treat children differently than adults. They saw that children were jailed with adults just because they had committed minor offenses, were poor, or were not supervised.

The creation of the Juvenile Court represented a revolution in the way society valued and treated its children. It was created as "a court where children should not be treated as criminals but as delinquent children needing wise direction, care and correction," said Lucy Flowers, the "mother of the juvenile court."

Although the first Juvenile Court evinced a rehabilitative, rather than a punishment ideal, it did not envision itself being a refuge for children who committed serious crimes. Judge Richard S. Tuthill, the first Juvenile Court judge, sent 37 boys to the adult criminal system because they could not be rehabilitated within the juvenile court system.

The Juvenile Court, like America, has evolved greatly since 1899. The Juvenile Court, with the help of families, schools, religious organizations, community groups and volunteers, will continue to help children and families, while being society's legal mechanism to resolve difficult cases involving children and families.

local Indian tribes for the benefit of children. Craig Dorsay, an expert on the Indian Child Welfare Act, from Portland, Oregon was the keynote speaker.


 The Court hosted a brown bag lunch for adoption lawyers, adoption agencies and others to discuss the practical effects of the enactment of the Expedited Adoptions Law, Senate Bill 1116.

Commissioners Elizabeth Arriola, Margaret Downie and Thomas Jacobs provided an analysis of the ramifications of the act on the process of certifying adults to become potential adoptive parents, the adoptive process and the open communications aspect of the law and fielded questions for two hours.

Although the expedited process will help children gain permanency sooner, many of the processes will be the same so the court can en-

sure the best placement for the child.

Court Award

 The National Association of County Organizations awarded the Juvenile Probation Department Victim's Rights program in August. The program was implemented Sept. 1, 1996 and is operated out of the Juvenile Probation Department's Community Services Division.

The award was accepted by Hellen Carter, Director of the Juvenile Probation Department's Community Services Division.

Carter said she nominated the program for the award based on the performance of probation officers Milton Carpenter, who created the program, and Pam Ellis. Carter considers the program the premier Victim's Rights program in the nation. She said Carpenter is recognized nationally as one of the best victim rights experts.

An adoption for all ages: Parents are 52, children 4 through 17

In an act of unselfishness, love and unabashed optimism, a middle-aged Mesa couple increased their family July 29 by adopting 10 children whose mother could not provide them with even minimal maternal care.

Shirley and Van Hughes, both 52, and the 10 children for whom they have cared for more than two years appeared before a Maricopa County Superior Court Commissioner to finalize the adoption. Family members and representatives of the media attended the event at the Superior Court Southeast Facility in Mesa.

Because of public interest in the case, Juvenile Court Commissioner Thomas Jacobs granted a request from the Maricopa County Attorney's Office to open the proceeding, which is normally closed to the public. The adoption is the largest in recent Superior Court history and possibly the largest in the nation to date.

"I am happy with my mom and dad," said 10-year-old Juan Javier Baumea. "I love them very much. It's like a dream come true. I never thought we were going to be adopted."

The process that led to the

adoption began more than four years ago. On April 30, 1995, the Arizona Department of Economic Security, removed the 10 siblings from a downtown Phoenix residence after police found them living in squalor -- some covered in feces and some among scampering rodents, according to media reports.

Once the children became full dependent wards of the state, one by one, the siblings were placed in the care of the Hugheses beginning in May, 1995. After being separated in other foster homes, all were finally reunited under one roof by August of 1997. Donicio, 4; Veronica, 6; Stephanie Maria, 8; Jose Enrique, 9; Juan Javier, 10; Agustino, 12; Estevan, 13; Asucena, 15; Maria Teresa, 16; and Francisco, 17 have stayed since. Upon becoming the children's legal parents, Shirley Hughes told the media what the 10 children mean to her.

"These children have been in my



The newly created Hughes family talks to media after the Juvenile Court hearing July 29. Pictured below, Shirley and Van Hughes listen to Maricopa County Superior Court Commissioner Thomas Jacobs during the adoption proceedings.



home for a long time. I can't remember not being with them," Shirley Hughes said. "This is just a finalization. Now no one can take them away."

Safe Schools, from Page 2

"In the past, when the kids would be assigned a probation officer, there could have been a great period of time between visits," Radcliffe said. Now, the availability has made the kids "more successful in terms of meeting the conditions of their probation," she said.

Carter, with juvenile probation community services, said the popular program cannot meet the needs of all the Maricopa County schools that wish to participate.

Carter said Safe Schools will expand if the Legislature allocates

additional funding. In the meantime Carter said the City of Phoenix and Maricopa County have collaborated under a Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant to fund 11 more Safe School Probation Officers and eight School Resource Officers in Valley schools. Chandler, Avondale and the town of Paradise Valley also are partners in the effort.

Goss said the daily contact with students enables him to reinforce positive behavior instead of only showing up when the student is acting out negatively.

"We would always want to take more time patting them on the

back than yelling at them for something they did bad," Goss said. "If we weren't there, that wouldn't be happening."

Maricopa County districts and schools currently participating in the program are:

Buckeye Union High School District, Cartwright District, Creighton Elementary School District, Dysart Unified District, Fowler Elementary School District, Isaac School District, Mesa Unified School District, Murphy Elementary School District, Osborn School District, Phoenix Elementary School District and the East Valley Institute of Technology.

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