

# CHRONICLE

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MARICOPA COUNTY ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT



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# CHIEF'S CORNER



I have had the privilege of serving this Court in different roles for nearly 27 years, beginning my career as a probation officer. The job of a probation officer, and our broader work as a department, has only grown in its complexity and become more challenging over time. One of the things that has changed since I began, is the reliance on research to guide that work. It is now well-researched as to what works in community corrections to accomplish lasting change, what researchers call ‘desistance,’ or the result of someone permanently exiting the justice system. The goal is not merely the absence of criminal conduct, but rather someone also contributing positively to the community around them and reaching their potential. Though research has settled what is effective and transformative, success is not guaranteed. It takes effort, diligence, professionalism, and devotion to continuous improvement. Even then, there are limits both in what probation can do and in the broader system.

The Department and the Arizona probation system have a history of such effort, refinement, and innovation. I wrote in a previous issue this summer of some of the leaders that laid that foundation for us in our Department. It was also established by leaders in other departments across the state and the Arizona Supreme Court, which ultimately establishes the standards relied upon in the profession. I trust that effort and focus will continue all the more in 2026, and our staff have my deepest appreciation for the hard work they do to enhance community safety. It is a dualistic approach – probation officers also make arrests, return people back to the Court, and conduct searches to remove weapons and other prohibited items. It is in alignment with our mission to do so and we take that very seriously. Real transformation, though, is much harder and takes innovation, determination, and patience. One of my favorite parts of this time of year is the opportunity to slow down and reflect on what the year brought.

The Department recently received an email from someone on probation that was a touching reminder of the potential of this work. She shared that she first met her probation officer while serving time in jail as a condition of her probation. The probation officer, though not assigned to her case at the time, came into the jail to teach a class which is part of a broader and very effective program of the Sheriff’s Office designed to provide pathways for lasting change. She saw professionalism and compassion in the probation officer. She left the jail and entered a residential treatment facility. The probation officer conducted field visits to the facility to engage with her and develop plans for where she would go next. The person noted the probation officer, “took the time to listen to anything I had to say and encouraged me when I needed it the most.” She went on to successfully complete the program and transition to everyday behaviors most adults take for granted but are often hard-learned by many on probation. Contacts at the facility were replaced with those made at her new residence and at the probation office. She described the support the probation officer provided which also came with accountability and correction. She went on to share, “She helped me get through the hardest time in my life and never stopped encouraging me to grow and change for the better. Being able to trust her with everything while she always held me accountable was huge.” She closed her note by reflecting on previous challenges she had with probation and that, “being able to get as far as I have with her in my corner really has changed my life.”



It is reflective of the work that goes on every day across Arizona. To our staff, I hope you had time for rest and renewal with those most important to you over the holiday season. Whether you're greeting someone at the front desk, supporting probation officers in the field through our communication center, performing tasks like making an arrest or conducting a search, serving individuals in initial appearance court, pretrial, or presentence, or even working as a former probation officer now serving as a Court administrator — all of it matters. Our collective effort can be transformative and enhance the safety of the community we serve. You have my admiration and respect for how you and your colleagues across Arizona do that very difficult work and balance the duality of our mission. I look forward to how we will continue to enhance that work in 2026.

*Michael P. Cimino*

Michael P. Cimino

Chief for the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department





# NEWS & INFORMATION

## APD HELPS HOST THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TURKEY FEAST

By Julie Wise and Alicia Chapman

The Adult Probation Department (APD) helped host the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Turkey Feast on November 20, 2025. Department staff served over 400 community members alongside the two other departments of the Judicial Branch, the Superior Court and the Juvenile Probation Department (JPD). Staff volunteered to give out over 400 toys, 200 hygiene packs, beanies, blankets, and 400 meals. Judicial Branch and community partners such as The Barbell Saves Project, Phoenix Fire and Police Departments, Superior Court Outreach, St. Mary's Food Bank, Terros Health, Dress for Success, JPD's Hope Closet, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Smart Justice, and Arizona Probation Officer's Association worked with APD to bring this event to life.

The Turkey Feast is about community, family, and giving back. Volunteers from across the Judicial Branch give their time to this community event and reflect on how to assist a community in need.

In addition to meals and gifts, many of the community partners offered services. JPD's Hope Closet distributed 200 hygiene packs. Terros Health's mobile unit provided free health screenings and flu shots. Smart Justice provided workforce and training opportunities for those who attended.

This event would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Turkey Feast Planning Committee, which is comprised of APD Education Manager Kristi Wimmer, APD Workforce Development Trainer JakinDee Kosaka, APD Senior Digital Media Specialist Emily Strock, and the committee chair, Administrative Assistant Alicia Chapman. When asked what the event means to her, Alicia stated "It is a privilege and an honor to work alongside the amazing staff who help make this event happen every year. Giving back has always been near and dear to my heart. I love how APD has continued this tradition for 30 years. It is incredibly rewarding being a part of this event every year. Seeing how one toy can make a difference to a child in this community is priceless. Seeing the smiles on the families' faces



One of many tables full of toys donated for the event.



Santa and Mrs. Claus (Brian and Jessica Ethington) speak to children at Turkey Feast.

and hearing their excitement is the most rewarding part of the process. The parents are always so thankful and happy that their children get to be a part of such an amazing experience. I am so grateful to be a part of this wonderful event year after year.”

The Judicial Branch continues to be tremendously proud of this event as it reflects the very best of who the Judicial Branch is.



APD employees stop for a photo with a Phoenix Police Department SWAT vehicle.



Collections Supervisor Sonia Cruz puts together meals for attendees.



APD Officers Esmeralda Regino and Michelle Figueroa volunteer.

## VETERANS COURT EXPANSION OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAM, NEW PROGRAM PHASES LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

By Clara Colmenero

After years of serving their country, many Veterans return home to face new battles — struggles with addiction, trauma, and the challenges of reintegration into our communities. An expanded mentorship program and new phases in Veterans Court are giving Veterans the support they need as they work to rebuild their lives and navigate the judicial system with dignity and understanding.

Veterans Court is a therapeutic court that connects Veterans who are on supervised probation with community-based services and support. Participants progress through four updated phases focused on treatment, accountability, and personal growth. Upon graduation, eligible Veterans may receive reductions in fines and fees, and in some cases, early termination of probation, recognizing their commitment to rehabilitation and recovery.

“This program gives everyone on the Veterans Court Team — including myself — the opportunity to give back to our Veterans and offer them the assistance and services they deserve for serving our country,” said Kristian Morales, Commissioner. “The updated Veterans Court Program phases encourage and support Veteran participation to learn new skills and receive the services they need.”

New program phases:

- Treatment Plan Development and Orientation: Orients the Veteran to the program, screens for services, and establishes a treatment plan.
- Stabilization and Ongoing Treatment: Focuses on helping Veterans resolve any pressing needs, such as housing, mental health assistance, and withdrawals.
- Prosocial Habilitation: Addresses substance use, associating with antisocial or substance-using peers, deficient problem-solving skills, impulsiveness, and antisocial attitudes.
- Achievement and Life Transition: Transitions the Veteran from the Veterans Court structure to a proactive lifestyle and work environment regarding continuity of care post-graduation.

The Veterans Court team consists of a judicial officer, the state's attorney, defense counsel, Veterans Court mentors, a Veterans Administration social worker, community providers, and four adult probation officers.

"The goal is that they leave Veterans Court and are discharged from probation in a better place than when we found them," said Adult Probation Officer Alexa Hearn. "They get connected with services, and they have hopefully made some prosocial peers through treatment and are connected through employment and housing. There are many goals participants can achieve through the program."

This year, the Veterans Court has placed a stronger emphasis on inviting program graduates to return as mentors, offering invaluable support and encouragement to participants facing challenges. Among them is Jeremiah Winn, a graduate who completed the program in January 2025. Having been through Veterans Court twice himself, he has seen firsthand how recent improvements to the program are making a meaningful difference in the lives of fellow Veterans.

"Veterans Court gave me the resources that I did not know were out there. Had I not been placed in this court, I do not think I would have gotten the help I needed," said Winn, now a Veterans Court mentor. "And we now have a judicial system that is recognizing that people made mistakes, but they are here to figure out what the root cause is, and why they keep having the same person in the courtroom repeatedly."

By addressing the underlying issues that contribute to justice system involvement and offering targeted rehabilitation services, Veterans Court gives participants the tools and support they need to successfully reintegrate into the community and lead more stable and productive lives.

Winn shares his experience, hoping to encourage Veterans to not only speak up in court but also ask for the help they need to succeed.

"I share my story with them, that I was right where they are not more than 18 months ago, and in doing that, it establishes trust, but it also gives them a glimmer of hope," says Winn. "And I tell them your life is what you convince yourself it is."

## 2025 MASH PARADE: HELPING DOGS FIND A FOREVER HOME

By Ricardo Mendez and Brandon Shimizu

For the last several years, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Maricopa Animal Safe Haven (MASH) Program has hosted a Halloween parade to bring awareness to this excellent program. As part of their mission, MCSO officers and volunteers walk shelter dogs, providing exercise, socialization, and much needed human interaction for animals awaiting adoption.

However, sometimes they need help from outside agencies, and that is where six of our probation officers came in. On October 29, 2025, they geared up for the parade in full costume to help MCSO with their annual Halloween parade.

The program is always seeking volunteers to assist with daily walks and social interactions. This helps dogs and cats improve their well-being, increase their chances of being adopted, and reduce stress when meeting potential pet parents. For the six volunteers, it is a way to give back. Walking the dogs fosters empathy, teamwork, and wellness, reinforcing the MASH Program's focus on service and personal growth.



From left to right: Adult Probation Officers Alea Bahr, Kemberly Holguin, Hannah Mercier, Brandon Shimizu, Lauren Doyle, and Zoey Crisci.



The initiative also sends a powerful message that community safety includes caring for vulnerable populations, including animals. By rehabilitating abused animals and encouraging adoption, the MCSO MASH Program highlights the role law enforcement can play in strengthening neighborhoods through compassion and collaboration.

If you would like to volunteer, please email Dustin Keeney at [D\\_Keeney@MCSO.maricopa.gov](mailto:D_Keeney@MCSO.maricopa.gov). For adoptions, please go to <https://www.facebook.com/mcsomash/>.

## RECRUIT FOR APD!

Do you know someone outside APD who would be a strong candidate to join the team? Refer a friend or colleague to join APD!

There are many ways to contribute to the Department, from providing community supervision or counseling to individuals on probation, to monitoring field activity or administrating caseloads. There is something for everyone! Explore career opportunities with the Judicial Branch by [clicking here](#).



Learn more about the Department by watching the video. The video can also be found on the website homepage, [click here](#). Email [apdrecruitment@jbazmc.maricopa.gov](mailto:apdrecruitment@jbazmc.maricopa.gov) for more information.

# DATA CORNER

The APD's Veterans caseloads are designed to meet the unique needs of the Veteran population. The adult probation officers who supervise these caseloads are specially trained to address the challenges Veterans may face during community supervision. Below is a snapshot of the Veterans caseloads during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, including the average population, the rate of successful probation completions for Veterans caseloads, and the number of dedicated caseloads for this population.

AVERAGE POPULATION OF  
ALL VETERANS CASELOADS

**210**  
DURING FY2025



**FOUR ADULT PROBATION  
OFFICERS SERVING A  
VETERANS CASELOAD IN  
FY2025**

These figures highlight APD's ongoing dedication to supporting Veterans through specialized supervision and tailored resources. They also provide valuable insights that help shape strategies to improve outcomes and deliver services more effectively for Veterans.





# ACHIEVEMENTS & CELEBRATIONS

## APD EMPLOYEES WIN PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

By Candace Hallberg

Each quarter, employees of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County, which includes Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, and the Superior Court, can nominate a coworker who has demonstrated outstanding performance in one of the following areas: teamwork, leadership, customer service, innovation, or group collaboration. Each department submits numerous nominations each quarter, and the Branch's Employee Recognition and Rewards Committee carefully selects the winners. The winners of each category for the quarter are submitted for nomination for the annual Judicial Branch Performance Excellence Award for their respective category. The Department proudly announces the following winners and runners-up:

- Keri Madrid, Adult Probation Officer, for Customer Service
- Janet Acuna, Adult Probation Officer, for Leadership
- Savana Cray, Adult Probation Officer, Runner-Up for Teamwork
- Dawn Lewallen, Victim Services Liaison, Runner-Up for Customer Service



Congratulations to all the winners and runners-up!

### JUDICIAL BRANCH PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARDS: CUSTOMER SERVICE - KERI MADRID

Submitted by Adult Probation Officer EmmaLee Adams

*"Keri Madrid exemplifies exceptional customer service in the APD. In August 2025, she was assigned a case involving an individual on sex offender intensive probation. When out in the field, Keri was only provided with a general location for this individual and she went above and beyond to find him. Upon arrival at the given location, she was unable to find this individual, but instead of giving up, as some might have, she remained determined. Keri drove up and down the street calling out for him. Eventually, she heard a faint voice respond, "I'm down here." The sound came from an alley behind a padlocked gate. Keri got down on the ground and discovered the individual lying behind a dumpster, appearing weak, immobile, and in distress, and she immediately called 9-1-1. Phoenix Fire and Medical personnel arrived, cut through the locked gate, and transported the individual to the hospital for urgent medical care. He later reported that he had been lying there for days, severely dehydrated, and close to giving up hope. If not for Keri's persistence, quick thinking, and determination, the outcome could have been much different. The individual expressed deep gratitude, continuously thanking her for saving his life, and each time, Keri responded with humility and grace. Keri also helped provide the individual with clothing, hygiene items from*

*the APD clothing closet, and residence and employment resources to help him get back on his feet. Keri's actions reflect her deep commitment to her work and her dedication to upholding the APD mission. She took extraordinary action that made a life-saving difference."*

## **JUDICIAL BRANCH PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARDS: LEADERSHIP - JANET ACUNA**

Submitted by Adult Probation Officer Supervisor Melissa Filas

*"I would like to formally recognize and nominate Adult Probation Officer Janet Acuna for her outstanding professionalism, adaptability, and dedication to service.*

*Janet recently volunteered to temporarily transition from her current assignment in the Community Reintegration Unit to support the Pretrial Services Division, a move that exemplifies her strong commitment to the mission and values of APD.*

*This two-to-three-month reassignment was not an easy decision, especially given that Janet had no prior experience in Pretrial Services. Despite the challenges, she embraced the opportunity with determination and grace, taking on the responsibility of learning a completely new area of our work. Her willingness to step outside of her comfort zone during a time of departmental transition is a true testament to her character.*

*Janet's selfless actions will have a meaningful impact on the Pretrial Services Division by helping ensure operational continuity and effectiveness during a critical staffing gap.*

*Janet has demonstrated what it means to lead by example, setting a high standard for teamwork, flexibility, and service within APD. Her actions reflect the core values of teamwork, service, adaptability, and leadership. She did not hesitate when a need arose.*

*Her proactive mindset and eagerness to grow professionally show her deep commitment not only to the Judicial Branch and to APD, but also to her colleagues and the community we serve. Janet reminds us that when one part of the organization needs support, stepping up strengthens the entire team.*

*I am truly honored to work alongside Janet and deeply appreciate her unwavering professionalism. She has gone above and beyond her regular duties, embraced a challenging new role with grace and focus, and consistently models the spirit of integrity, teamwork, and dedication.*

*Thank you, Janet, for your extraordinary service and for being a shining example of what it means to serve with heart."*

## **JUDICIAL BRANCH PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARDS RUNNER-UP: TEAMWORK - SAVANA CRAY**

Submitted by Adult Probation Officer Catherine Agrusa

*"It is my privilege to recommend Savana Cray. She is an exceptional professional who consistently goes above and beyond to support her colleagues and exemplify the mission of our department and the Judicial Branch. When I began as a new officer last month, Savana immediately sought me out to offer her assistance and guidance. From the start, she made herself available whenever I had questions, often dropping everything she was doing to ensure I received the support I needed. She followed up with me daily, checking in to see if I required any help, and provided me with numerous resources, including several examples of court forms that have been instrumental in building my confidence and competence.*

*Savana also took the time to bring me into the community to observe how she works with individuals on Intensive Probation. This hands-on experience showed me not only how to perform my responsibilities effectively but also how to approach individuals on supervision with fairness, accountability, and compassion. She even helped me create a detailed spreadsheet to keep track of my caseload, ensuring I stayed organized and met with all my supervised individuals in a timely manner.*

*Her dedication extends far beyond normal expectations—Savana answers phone calls even when she is out of the office, takes time away from her own work to help complete paperwork, and never hesitates to provide mentorship, no matter how busy she may be. What makes Savana truly stand out is her deep understanding of how our work as officers connects to the unit's, the Department's, and the Judicial Branch's greater mission. She consistently emphasizes the critical role we play in upholding justice, reducing recidivism, supporting rehabilitation, and ensuring community safety. By modeling this awareness and instilling it in new officers, Savana strengthens not only individuals but also the entire team and system we serve.*

*Savana's professionalism, leadership, and generosity have had a lasting impact on me and countless others. She is an outstanding role model who embodies the highest standards of integrity and service. I wholeheartedly and without reservation recommend Savana for this award."*

## **JUDICIAL BRANCH PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AWARDS RUNNER-UP: CUSTOMER SERVICE - DAWN LEWALLEN**

Submitted by Adult Probation Officer Supervisor Michelle Holbrook

*"Dawn Lewallen exemplifies the highest standards of compassion, dedication, and professionalism in her role as a Victim Liaison with the APD. Her unwavering commitment to supporting victims through some of the most difficult moments in their lives makes her truly exceptional in this category.*

*One particularly notable example of Dawn's extraordinary contribution involved her support of victims during the sentencing phase of a criminal case. At the request of the presentence probation officer, Dawn first met with the victims to help them write their statement for the presentence report. During that meeting, she patiently walked them through the court process, clarified their role, and ensured they were aware of the resources and support available to them. Her empathy and clarity made a deep and lasting impact.*

*So much so that the victims personally asked Dawn if she would attend the sentencing hearing with them, a request she accepted without hesitation. Dawn attended the initial hearing, only to learn it had been rescheduled. Despite the disappointment, she again made herself available and returned for the rescheduled hearing to offer continued support. She sat with the victims as they gave their impact statements, comforted them as they cried, and remained by their side throughout the emotional experience.*

*Following the hearing, we received a heartfelt letter from the father of the victim expressing profound gratitude for Dawn's dedication. The final paragraph of that letter encapsulates the impact of her work:*

*'From that point forward, Dawn Lewallen became a very comforting and helpful victims' rights advocate on our behalf. We felt most fortunate to have Dawn Lewallen supporting us with information, advice, and emotional support. I can tell you that Dawn Lewallen is an excellent victim's rights advocate. Accordingly, I wanted to write both of you this letter commending Dawn Lewallen as an outstanding employee and a skilled and compassionate victims' rights advocate.'*

*This is just one example among many where Dawn has gone beyond her regular duties to serve with integrity, empathy, and professionalism. Her ability to build trust with victims and walk with them through the court process is a testament to her character and the essential role she plays in our department. Dawn Lewallen is not only deserving of recognition; she sets the standard for what it means to serve with compassion and excellence."*

# EXPLORING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRADUATION

By Joseph Coppola

On December 3, 2025, APD proudly recognized 32 employees for successfully completing the Exploring Leadership and Management (ELM) Program. This professional development initiative is open to all APD staff, both badged and non-badged, who are considering a future in a supervisory capacity. The program was developed using resources and guidance from the International City/County Management Association and consists of four full-day sessions designed to prepare participants for the challenges and responsibilities of leadership.

Throughout the program, participants explored a wide range of leadership competencies, including team leadership, administrative skills development, personnel management, performance evaluation, and effective communication. Additional topics include coaching and mentoring, motivating teams, managing change, and upholding ethical standards. Participants also engage in a wide variety of hands-on activities throughout the program designed to prepare them with skills to handle real-world scenarios. While not solely focused on the day-to-day duties of a supervisor, the program encourages participants to connect broader leadership concepts to their current and future roles within the Department.

Congratulations to all the graduates for their dedication and commitment to growth and leadership and upholding our vision to "engage in the development and support of all staff."

For employees of APD interested in participating in the ELM Program, Staff Development regularly provides information on how to apply. Keep in mind, space is limited, and seats often fill up very quickly!



December 2025 ELM Graduates.



# NEW OFFICERS AND SUPERVISORS SWORN IN

By Donald Cole

Please join the Staff Development and Safety Unit in welcoming to the Department 24 new probation officers, as well as two new supervisors. Probation officers completed six weeks of New Officer Training, Education, and Skill-building (NOTES) classes, including Defensive Tactics Academy and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Probation Officer Certification Academy. Additionally, a three-week transition phase is being used to allow Staff Development trainers the opportunity to work with officers and their newfound cases, as well as utilize real-life applications of the knowledge they acquired from their training.

Officers were able to work in a cohort to create petitions to revoke, criminal history documents, and orders of discharge. They also had the opportunity to review early terminations, earned time credit, and other documents that officers generate regularly within their caseload.

The officers finished their academy with a swearing-in ceremony led by APD Chief Michael Cimino and Hon. Jennifer Green, Presiding Criminal Department Judge on November 21, 2025, at the Supreme Court in downtown Phoenix.

In addition to the officers, newly promoted staff were sworn in. Danielle Golden was promoted to a supervisor of a standard unit at the Southeast Justice Center (SEJC) Office, and Francisca Salazar was promoted to a supervisor of a standard unit at the Western Region Center (WRC).

## NEW OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS

### Black Canyon Building (BCB)

- Standard Probation Officer Charvic Balderas
- Surveillance Officer Marie Reed

### Scottsdale

- Standard Probation Officers Lady Sanchez Montoya, Libby VanGilder

### Southeast Justice Center (SEJC)

- Standard Probation Officers Fatima Islas, Jack Spano, Daniel Dettloff, Scott Reynolds, Jelssica Capelouto, Jessica Murray

### Southport

- Standard Probation Officers Ashley Parras, Kingsley Longe, Ashley Gebhard, Julian Acosta, Gabrielle Chiu, Miranda Mings, Cass Hudson

### Sunnyslope

- Standard Probation Officers Amanda Hastings, Joshua Ryker, Robert Lumley, Diana Vasquez, Vanessa Holloway

### Western Regional Center (WRC)

- Standard Probation Officers Joanna Dennis, Michael Flavell



November 2025 NOTES Graduation class and new leaders.

# PROMOTIONS

Congratulations on  
your new positions!



**CLINT BELL**

Adult Probation Supervisor

Clint Bell began his career with APD as a probation officer in 2014. He initially began his career in standard field, where he supervised caseloads at the Scottsdale and Northport offices. In 2018, Clint took an opportunity to move to the Midwest and lead a detention facility in Dakota County, Minnesota. The cold weather eventually led him to return to Arizona and APD in 2020. Since his return, he has held several roles, including supervising a standard caseload at the Garfield office and a domestic violence caseload at BCB, Scottsdale, and SEJC. For the past 11 months, he has been part of the Court Liaison Unit.

In addition to his case work, Clint has found opportunities to get involved in department initiatives and events. He is a dedicated member of the Promoting Equity and Advocating Change Committee and has volunteered at the annual Turkey Feast throughout the years. He is also an active member of Pretrial Ambassadors, representing the Court Liaison Unit. Clint takes pleasure in mentoring new officers, guiding them to understand the essential work we do and ensuring they feel supported in their roles. Clint is excited to bring this blend of experience and skill into his new role as a supervisor. He looks forward to supporting his team's growth and fostering a positive environment. Clint will now serve in his new position as a standard supervisor within the Northern Field Division at the Scottsdale office.



**KATE SKELTON**

Adult Probation Supervisor

Kate began her career with APD in 2012. She initially served as a standard officer at the Garfield office and, in 2014, transferred to the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) Reentry Unit, where she supervised at the Garfield and Probation Service Center locations. During her time in the field, Kate became an adjunct firearms and defensive tactics instructor. In 2017, she moved to her most recent role within Staff Development as a full-time safety trainer at the Downtown Justice Center (DTJC).

Throughout her career, Kate has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to training, professional development, and service. In 2019, she completed a year-long process to become a certified defensive tactics lead instructor. In 2023, the Maricopa County Defensive Tactics Program earned statewide recognition for excellence, thanks to Kate's leadership and project management. However, Kate is not always in the mat room. In addition to holding numerous training certifications, she is a certified instructor for both Thinking for a Change and Decision Points. She also serves on the Communications Committee and continues to make meaningful contributions to Department initiatives. Kate steps into her new role as a standard supervisor in the Eastern Field Division out of the Southport Office.

# PRIDE

## 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Awards - 2025

### PEOPLE RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUAL DEEDS OF EXCELLENCE



### WHAT ARE PRIDE AWARDS?

The APD allows employees to recognize their peers by submitting a nomination for a People Recognizing Individual Deeds of Excellence (PRIDE) award. The PRIDE Committee reviews awards for appropriateness. There are six categories to choose from for each award submitted which aligns with the Department's Mission, Vision, and Values.

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Encourage the Heart
- Enable Others to Act
- Challenge the Process
- Thank You

**APD COMMUNICATIONS CENTER:** Amy Melgaard

**BLACK CANYON BUILDING:** Adriana Pena, Arielle Santacruz, Azra Haseljic, Carolyn Arteaga, Daniel Russomano, Destiny Wilson, Haani Penafiel, Joshua Ibanaz Jimenez, Katherine Cohen, Tori Browne

**CENTRAL COURT BUILDING (CCB):** Yohanna Rodriguez

**DOWNTOWN JUSTICE CENTER (DTJC)- STAFF DEVELOPMENT:** Efrain Colin, Raquel Shackelford, Sinisa Malisanovic

**DURANGO CUSTODY SERVICE CENTER (CSC):** Megan Merker

**DURANGO/WESTPORT:** Francisco Sanchez, Gerald Strickland

**INTAKE, TRANSFER, AND RELEASE (ITR):** Keith Stein, Reyna Roa

**LUHRS:** Elvia Flores, Nicole Salamin

**SCOTTSDALE:** Arthur Christian, Karlie Colbert

**SOUTHEAST JUSTICE CENTER (SEJC):** Amanda Hanson, Chelsea Opper, Clayton Hunt, Donnie Frazier, Fallon Metzinger, Jaime Tullberg, Ryan Nilsen, Scott Stoffel, Sean Lockhart, Taytem Strauel

**SOUTH COURT TOWER:** Jennifer Borgen, Yaritza Juarez

**SOUTHPORT:** Mariela Camacho, Shane Dudley, Tianna Parrish

**SUNNYSLOPE:** Diana Vasquez, Ricardo Mendez

**SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COURT CENTER (SWRCC):** Gabriella Mendoza, Stephanie Valenzuela

**WEST COURT BUILDING (WCB):** Amy Ahrens, Brijon Warren, Denise Perez, Elisa Young, Erika Balcazar, George Matthews, Nathan Hilburn, Tammy Norris

**WESTERN REGIONAL COURT CENTER (WRCC):** Alda Garcia, Cassandra Dobbs, Catherine Agrusa, Jermaine Davis, Karlton Johnson, Maggie Mitchell, Marilyn Castro, Samuel Jaidah



# VOICE

## HONORING SERVICE WITH SUPPORT: INSIDE MARICOPA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT'S VETERANS COURT

By Alexa Hearn

Maricopa County Superior Court's Veterans Court stands as a powerful example of how the justice system can adapt to meet the specialized needs of those who have served our country. Many Veterans carry the invisible wounds of service, including post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, substance use challenges, or difficulties transitioning back into civilian life. These issues can sometimes contribute to behaviors that lead to involvement with the criminal justice system. Instead of relying solely on traditional punitive measures, Veterans Court offers a structured, compassionate, and accountability-focused path designed to help Veterans address the underlying issues contributing to their circumstances.

Through a collaborative, problem-solving approach, participants receive individualized care as they progress through the Veterans Court year-long structured phase program. The Veterans' Court team, which includes a judicial officer, APD, the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, the Maricopa County Public Defender's Office, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other community partners, work together to ensure each participant remains engaged and supported throughout their journey. A unique aspect of the program is the Veteran Mentor Program, where volunteer mentors, who are Veterans and graduates of the program themselves, provide steady guidance, encouragement, and camaraderie that only those with shared experience can offer.

While the program is rooted in compassion, it also maintains high expectations. Participants are required to demonstrate accountability, make consistent progress in treatment, abide by their terms and conditions of probation, and comply with all court directives. The Court acknowledges achievements throughout the process, celebrating milestones such as sustained sobriety, engagement with the Department of Veterans Affairs, employment gains, educational accomplishments, adoption of service animals, strengthened family relationships, and ultimately, graduation from the program. With graduation comes the possibility of early termination from probation, a misdemeanor designation for undesignated offenses, and a reduction or elimination of outstanding court-ordered fines and fees.

These successes have ripple effects, strengthening families, improving community safety, and restoring dignity and stability to Veterans who may have felt overwhelmed or unsupported. Research and real-world experience show that Veterans Court



reduces recidivism, enhance mental and physical health outcomes, and connect Veterans with critical services through the Department of Veterans Affairs and community partners. At its core, this program reflects a simple but essential belief: those who have served our nation deserve a justice system that understands their experiences and supports their path to recovery. By addressing the root causes of involvement in the justice system, the Maricopa County Superior Court's Veterans Treatment Court honors veterans by giving them the tools to build a healthier, more secure future.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES: MENTAL HEALTH UNIT STRENGTHENS CRISIS RESPONSE THROUGH THE CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM**

By Samantha Gravett

Each quarter, our Mental Health Unit proudly participates in the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Academy, a collaborative training initiative that brings together local law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals, and community-based service providers to help improve responses to mental health crises. This ongoing partnership reflects our deep commitment to improving outcomes for individuals living with mental illness, behavioral health disorders, and those experiencing crises. As we strengthen our professional partnerships and foundation of best practices, we increase success rates of resolving crisis situations and help to reduce further involvement within the criminal justice system.

### **HOW WE GOT INVOLVED**

Our involvement in CIT began with the leadership of our Mental Health Unit Adult Probation Officer Supervisors, Samantha Gravett, Julie Wise, and Cassandra Dobbs, who recognized the importance of furthering adult probation officer development and bridging the gap between probation, police, and crisis response teams. Through their efforts, adult probation officers in the Mental Health Unit have been invited to participate in county-wide police department CIT academies.



Adult Probation Officer Supervisors Samantha Gravett, Julie Wise, and Cassandra Dobbs.

### **THE GOALS OF CIT**

The CIT program is grounded in two core goals:

1. To develop the most compassionate and effective crisis response system that is the least intrusive in a person's life.
2. To help individuals with mental health disorders and/or substance use challenges access appropriate treatment, rather than enter the criminal justice system due to illness-related behaviors.

The CIT Academy is a 40-hour Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board certified training course filled with scenario-based learning, de-escalation techniques, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Adult probation officers not only gain a wealth of

knowledge and resources, but they also gain insight into practices and responses most likely to lead to positive outcomes. Adult probation officers work through realistic crisis scenarios, all of which could be experienced in a day in the life of a field adult probation officer. The scenarios are observed and facilitated by mental health professionals and highly trained law enforcement, who pivot based upon the adult probation officer's response. This hands-on experience provides valuable coaching and feedback, equipping adult probation officers with the skills to handle crisis situations more effectively and safely, and fostering a safe place to learn and ask questions.

## **RECOGNIZING OUR CIT-CERTIFIED ADULT PROBATION OFFICERS**

We are proud to recognize the following 18 adult probation officers and supervisors who have gained CIT certification. These adult probation officers now bring specialized training and a trauma-informed approach to their work, helping connect individuals with the support they need while simultaneously reducing risk and influencing change.

- Samantha Gravett, Adult Probation Officer Supervisor
- Julie Wise, Adult Probation Officer Supervisor
- Cassandra Dobbs, Adult Probation Officer Supervisor
- Nathan Chaplin, Adult Probation Officer Supervisor
- Adam Macho, Adult Probation Officer
- Alexandra Temple, Adult Probation Officer
- Amy Pina, Adult Probation Officer
- Brian Thompson, Adult Probation Officer
- Chad Clark, Adult Probation Officer
- Donesha Nicholson, Adult Probation Officer
- Jazmin Padilla, Adult Probation Officer
- Makenna Castel, Adult Probation Officer
- Rocio Hernandez, Adult Probation Officer
- Sarah Fernandez, Adult Probation Officer
- Stephanie Myers, Adult Probation Officer
- Tracy Gorr, Adult Probation Officer
- Tyslin Chisley, Adult Probation Officer
- Vincent Garcia Landry, Adult Probation Officer

We are proud of the role the Mental Health Unit plays in advancing the CIT mission, and in turn furthering our Department's mission. We look forward to continuing this vital partnership each quarter. Together, we are building a safer, more informed response system — one that prioritizes treatment over punishment and dignity over stigma.

# NINE APD OFFICERS ATTEND HUMAN TRAFFICKING SUMMIT

By Samantha Gravett

Nine members of the APD Sex Trafficking Survivors Workgroup attended the third annual 'A Call to Action! Arizona Human Trafficking Summit,' joining hundreds of professionals and advocates from across the state in the fight against human trafficking. The summit brought together leaders and practitioners from law enforcement, education, child safety, medical care, victim advocacy, and mental health. Its purpose was to equip Arizona's community with knowledge, tools, and strategies to prevent human trafficking, support survivors, and strengthen collaboration across sectors.

Throughout the event, experts shared powerful insights on how sex trafficking impacts the criminal justice system, schools and youth, and emphasized the importance of a united, multidisciplinary approach. Participants explored innovative strategies for prevention, early identification of victims, and comprehensive victim support services.

Officers who attended the summit gained new perspectives, valuable resources, and practical approaches that will enhance their ongoing efforts to advocate for and support survivors as they put together a sex trafficking awareness training for the Department. The group also learned the critical role of the survivors' voice in the effectiveness of combating human trafficking. Below are session summaries written by two probation officers who attended the event that conveys valuable human trafficking knowledge from the summit.

## SUGARING & SEX TRAFFICKING

By Darcy McLeod

At the Arizona Human Trafficking Summit, I attended a session titled *Sugaring & Sex Trafficking* presented by Brook Urick, who describes herself as the "original whistleblower" on a website that connected younger individuals with older, wealthy individuals. Urick is also the author of *Wink Wink Nudge Nudge: Sexual Exploits and Secrets from Inside a Sugar Daddy Website*, a memoir about her experience working for the website.

In 2018, the United States federal government passed two acts, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act. These were enacted to combat online sex trafficking by imposing penalties for online platforms that promote or facilitate prostitution. Despite the passing of these acts, many illicit websites still exist, and victims continue to be trafficked through the use of the internet due to its complexities and prevention hardships. Urick explained how most victims do not consider themselves victims and often remain silent because they fear prosecution.

Urick concluded her presentation with a call to action:

- Connect with survivors and express understanding of the widespread use of these deceptive websites
- Leverage your platform to bring attention to the harms of sugaring and challenge its acceptance
- Promote understanding by listening to survivors and connecting with youth who are at risk of sugaring

As a member of the APD Sex Trafficking Survivors Workgroup, I was fortunate to read Urick's book prior to attending the summit. Although the book contains sensitive material, it provides valuable insight into the pathway of sex trafficking that can be introduced through "sugaring" (a relationship where a younger individual engages in a romantic or intimate relationship with a wealthier, older individual) and deceptive websites.

## STRIP CLUBS

By Kora Witthun

Heather Hammond, with the Arizona State University (ASU) Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research (STIR), presented the session *Strip Clubs* at the Arizona Human Trafficking Summit. This session focused on exploring the hidden exploitations and dangers associated with strip clubs. She stated that many people fail to recognize the hidden exploits occurring within strip clubs, as they are marketed as legal places of business. However, loose enforcement of laws and policies puts workers at unnecessary risk. For example, Arizona law prohibits full nudity in establishments that serve alcohol, however, this law is often breached. In addition, many strip club workers also experience pressure from management to perform sexual acts on attendees.

Hammond also discussed how strip clubs foster an ideal environment for strip club workers to be victimized. There is a high risk of trafficking recruitment within strip clubs due to traffickers recruiting the workers using false protection promises and money coercion. Transactional sex and grooming tactics become normalized within strip clubs, making those who work there vulnerable to traffickers who target them. In addition, traffickers may force their victims to work at strip clubs and collect their earnings.

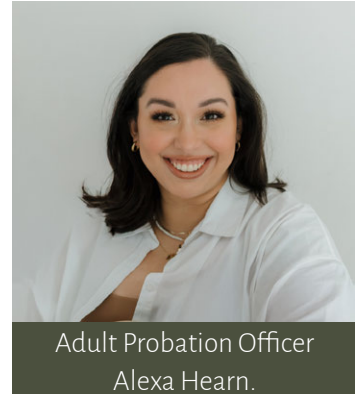
It is important to highlight data collected by a 2025 study conducted by ASU STIR, *Behind Bars: The Lived Experiences of Incarcerated Women*. This study surveyed female inmates incarcerated with MCSO. Of the respondents, 25% reported having worked at a strip club at some point in their lives, with the youngest starting age of nine-years-old. Of those who worked at a strip club, 32% reported that they could not stop working there and were forced to continue, while 44% reported that their earnings went to someone other than themselves. In addition, 50% reported they had been sex trafficked at some point in their life. This study associates high rates of victimization through strip clubs. It is important to note that it is also very common for these crimes to go unreported. For example, while 62% of respondents responded to have experienced sexual assault as an adult, only 22% reported this to law enforcement.

Risk factors associated with strip clubs are especially important to consider in the context of probation, as individuals on probation may report employment at strip clubs. For some individuals on probation, settings such as strip clubs or the wider presence of sex work may not offer the support they need and can challenge them with increased risks.



# A DAY IN THE LIFE - VETERANS COURT OFFICER

Alexa Hearn began her career as an adult probation officer with APD in October 2022. She was initially assigned to the Mental Health Unit. This assignment aligned with both her prior educational and professional experience. Even though she loved her time in the Mental Health Unit, in March 2024, she moved to a Veterans caseload. She holds a master's degree in Forensic Psychology, which has allowed her to look into why an individual is in the criminal justice system and what is the driving force behind their behavior. As a result of her education and experience, she contributed to the new program phases within the Veterans Court with the goal that they leave probation in a better place than when they arrived in the system. The updated Veterans Court program phases that encourage and support Veterans' participation to learn new skills and receive the services that they need were recently rolled out. Since joining the Veterans Court, Alexa has had 13 Veterans on her caseload successfully graduate from the program.



## WHAT IS YOUR MAIN RESPONSIBILITY?

**ALEXA:** *In my current role, I supervise only the Veteran population, which has unique needs including post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, military sexual trauma, and/or difficulties transitioning back into civilian life. Through our program, we aim to identify the root cause of a Veteran's involvement with the criminal justice system and connect them with the appropriate resources at the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

## WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE?

**ALEXA:** *Like any probation officer, a typical day looks different every day — except for Thursdays. Veterans Court is every Thursday afternoon in Downtown Phoenix. If anyone from APD would like to observe, please reach out!*

## WHAT IS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR ROLE THAT OTHERS MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT?

**ALEXA:** *A probation officer does not have to be a Veteran themselves or have any experience with the military to join the unit! (However, they will receive the appropriate training)*

## IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU INTERACT WITH OTHER AREAS OF THE DEPARTMENT?

**ALEXA:** *I am one of the caseload screeners, so I work with adult probation officers from other caseloads to see if a case is appropriate for Veterans Court. I am also present at unit meetings about Veterans Court. Uniquely, our unit includes the Supervised Youth caseloads, so it is neat to have exposure to another treatment court program. You wouldn't think it, but we often bounce ideas off each other!*

## IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT?

**ALEXA:** *Every year, there is an event called Veterans StandDown at the Arizona State Fairgrounds. The next event will be March 12-13, 2026. Various agencies such as the Department of Economic Security, the Arizona Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and others, attend to provide much-needed resources (and free lunch!) to Veterans. Additionally, Veterans can petition the Superior Court for early termination from probation and/or a reduction of their outstanding fines and fees (if they meet the criteria). City matters can be addressed with the respective courts as well. Any supervised Veteran can attend; they do not have to be currently supervised on a Veterans caseload. If you have questions or would like to volunteer for the event, please reach out to a Veterans caseload officer!*

**RODRIGO ARCE**

ADULT PROBATION OFFICER  
APD employee since 2001

**FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Individuals on probation's personal successes, camaraderie, and, of course, the flexibility!

**WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING/READING?**

*Absentia* (on Netflix) and *Nobody's Girl* (I scored an early copy).

**FUN FACT:**

I won a giraffe naming contest when I was 10 (named "Savannah") presented by the timeless Dave Muncey on TV.

**FAVORITE QUOTE:**

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere..."*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.



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