

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

Mohave County Courts



Mission: The Mohave County Courts deliver timely justice in an impartial, innovative, and professional manner.

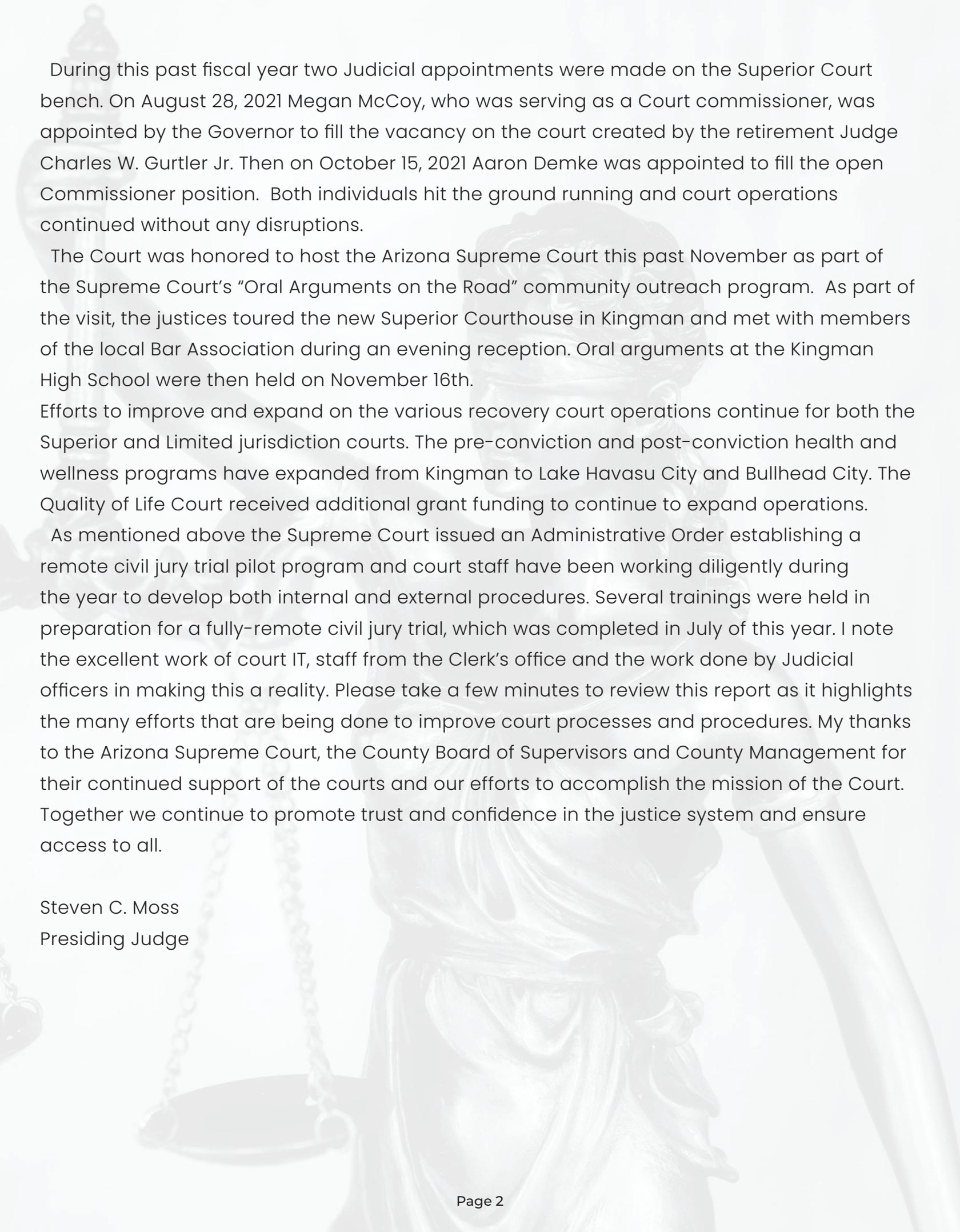


MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING JUDGE STEVEN MOSS

This past year the courts have worked hard to return to normal operations and at the same time have been engaged in projects to expand on new technology that had been implemented in early 2021. In fact, the Superior Court became the pilot court for a couple of new automation projects including CaseLines and a remote Civil Jury Trial program that has helped set standards for the State. In addition, I note the excellent work that continues to be done by Court and Probation staff as they continue to provide high quality service to all those who appear before the Court, who need to file documents or who are supported by the services of the recovery courts. The efforts of all judges and staff during this time have been outstanding.



During this past fiscal year two Judicial appointments were made on the Superior Court bench. On August 28, 2021 Megan McCoy, who was serving as a Court commissioner, was appointed by the Governor to fill the vacancy on the court created by the retirement Judge Charles W. Gurtler Jr. Then on October 15, 2021 Aaron Demke was appointed to fill the open Commissioner position. Both individuals hit the ground running and court operations continued without any disruptions.

The Court was honored to host the Arizona Supreme Court this past November as part of the Supreme Court's "Oral Arguments on the Road" community outreach program. As part of the visit, the justices toured the new Superior Courthouse in Kingman and met with members of the local Bar Association during an evening reception. Oral arguments at the Kingman High School were then held on November 16th.

Efforts to improve and expand on the various recovery court operations continue for both the Superior and Limited jurisdiction courts. The pre-conviction and post-conviction health and wellness programs have expanded from Kingman to Lake Havasu City and Bullhead City. The Quality of Life Court received additional grant funding to continue to expand operations.

As mentioned above the Supreme Court issued an Administrative Order establishing a remote civil jury trial pilot program and court staff have been working diligently during the year to develop both internal and external procedures. Several trainings were held in preparation for a fully-remote civil jury trial, which was completed in July of this year. I note the excellent work of court IT, staff from the Clerk's office and the work done by Judicial officers in making this a reality. Please take a few minutes to review this report as it highlights the many efforts that are being done to improve court processes and procedures. My thanks to the Arizona Supreme Court, the County Board of Supervisors and County Management for their continued support of the courts and our efforts to accomplish the mission of the Court. Together we continue to promote trust and confidence in the justice system and ensure access to all.

Steven C. Moss
Presiding Judge



REMOTE CIVIL JURY TRIAL

In 2019, Mohave County Superior Court was one of the first courts in the nation to begin conducting remote jury selection, as well as the first to begin conducting remote Grand Jury hearings. Due to the success of these two initiatives and the advancements in technology implemented by the Court, the National Center of State Courts invited Mohave County Superior Court to become a pilot court in implementing a fully remote civil jury trial.

After months of planning, training, and testing, the Court achieved the goal of a fully remote civil jury trial in July of 2022. All parties to the case, including the attorney, court reporter, witnesses, and the jury appeared remotely. All evidence and materials for the trial were handled electronically. The Zoom system and CaseLines program worked seamlessly, the court staff assisted the jurors in preparing for the hearing and the attorney was fully trained on all systems and was able to interact with the court without any problems. While a few changes to procedure have been identified, overall, the process worked as well as an in-person jury trial. In fact, the attorney involved in the case posted a very positive message on his Facebook page noting the success of the remote trial.



SUPERIOR COURT EXPANDS USE OF DIGITAL EVIDENCE PORTAL

Mohave County Superior Court has been the Pilot Court for the State of Arizona in the use of CaseLines, a digital evidence portal made available by the Arizona Supreme Court. This portal provides a standard online solution for the submission, management and storage of court case exhibits and is anticipated to be a key factor in conducting virtual hearings and managing digital evidence such as body cam videos. The CaseLines portal is eventually anticipated to be used Statewide, but Mohave County Superior Court is paving the way by using it nearly exclusively for the submission of evidence in all case types – starting with criminal cases on January 3, 2022.

The CaseLines digital evidence portal offers innovative technology for an efficient method of sharing exhibits among judges, attorneys and litigants. For qualifying hearings, and upon request, participants will be invited to upload evidence through the portal and will have 24/7 online access to their submissions. More information is located in local Administrative Order 2021 – 59.

ACCESS TO
SERVICES

E-FILING IN FAMILY LAW MATTERS EXPANDS

The Superior Court Clerk's office continues to expand e-filing. In March, 2022 attorneys and self-represented litigants were notified that they could electronically file their new domestic relations cases with the Court effective immediately. In December 2021, the Arizona Supreme Court issued an Administrative Order making eFiling mandatory for attorneys beginning March 1, 2022 for documents filed into existing cases, and mandatory for new case filings by attorneys on June 1, 2022. We have been the pilot court for the state, testing electronically submitted documents in family law matters and are now ready to roll the process out to the public.

NATIONAL CRIMINAL HISTORY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Lake Havasu City Justice Court was awarded a National Criminal History Improvement Grant from the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission in March of 2022.

This grant allows the Lake Havasu City Justice Court to create an overtime project that allows our clerks to audit each of our files to ensure all criminal history disposition reporting is complete and accurate. In addition, this grant allows us to ensure all domestic violence charges are reported accurately. This clean up project has not only helped us to maintain the integrity of the criminal history records of our offenders, it also has allowed us to audit our files for inconsistencies and/or human errors. This grant provides our court the funds required to maintain this overtime project through December 2023. This grant has also provided us with the time and resources required to help find solutions to ensure our criminal history reporting process is improved.

ACCESS AND FAIRNESS SURVEY

In October, 2021 court staff spent four days surveying court users about their experience in the courthouse. Staff used the National Center for State Courts Access and Fairness survey asking court users to respond to the 19 questions contained within the survey. 84 individuals from the Kingman, Bullhead City and Lake Havasu City court locations responded to the questions. Answers to the questions provide information regarding the court's accessibility and its treatment of customers in terms of fairness, equality, and respect. Overall, court users noted very positive responses to the treatment and information they were provided. Noted below are responses to several of the questions asked.



Q: The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.

95% said they Strongly Agree or Agree

Q: I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.

92% said they Strongly Agree or Agree

Q: I was treated with courtesy and respect.

97% said they Strongly Agree or Agree

Q: The Judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.

92% said they Strongly Agree or Agree



DEPENDENCY ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Through collaborative efforts of the Department of Child Safety, Office of the Attorney General, Clerk's Office, experienced family law attorneys, and with support and guidance from the dependency bench, a Dependency Alternative Program (DAP) was implemented in Mohave County Superior Court in 2021. DAP is a voluntary, family-centric program with the goal of preventing dependency filings when a safe, legal alternative can be arranged. With the safety and best interest of children at the forefront, the underlying interests of the program include keeping decision-making power with families, promoting expeditious access to justice and ensuring responsible stewardship of finite public resources.

Cooperative efforts of DCS and flexibility of the court have allowed DAP referrals to be heard as soon as necessary. Cases are individually assessed, and DAP day is scheduled to take place in Kingman's



Superior Court location within one to two weeks of referral, dependent on need. There were 24 referrals to the DAP program in FY22 which involved 34 children and yielded 19 successful placements with family or kinship for 27 children.

CONCILIATION COURT - MEDIATION SERVICES

Mohave County Superior Court strives to establish or increase parenting time for non-custodial parents or legal guardians through an expedited and less confrontational process. This is achieved by ordering parties, where parenting time has not been established or is in dispute, to mediation. During FY2022 the Superior Court Mediators conducted 496 Zoom and telephonic mediations. Of those mediations, full or partial agreements were reached in 272 or 55% of them resulting in parenting plans immediately being filed with the Court. In cases where mediation has been successful and circumstances evolve and change, parties may request, in writing to the Court, multiple or subsequent mediation appointments for help in navigating changes to their parenting plans.

Arizona Revised Statute 25-351 requires the completion of a Parent Education Program prior to participating in Mediation. During FY2022, Mohave County Conciliation Court offered an online parenting class that satisfied the requirements of the Arizona Statute. There were 575 unique completions of this program. The online parenting class was available 24 hours per day allowing participants to complete the class at their convenience. Tracking showed that many participants completed the class multiple times in a diligent effort to retain and understand the information and knowledge presented regarding shared parenting strategies.

CASA (COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES)

CASA of Mohave County includes the program staff within the Mohave County Superior Court that recruits and manages the CASA volunteers. CASA of Mohave County is one of 15 county CASA programs that are administered by the CASA of Arizona Office, which is a program of the Dependency Children's Services Division of the Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts. Our CASA Volunteers are appointed by the Presiding Juvenile Judge to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children. They help to make sure the children do not get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. CASA's stay with each case until the case



PICTURED ABOVE: THE NEW CASA CAR ON BEALE ST. IN DOWNTOWN KINGMAN.

is closed or the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

Our CASA Program Staff, along with the support of the volunteers, partner with the non-profit organization, CASA Council of Mohave County, throughout the year to raise awareness of CASA, as well as to recruit new CASA volunteers. and much more. This year there were seven new volunteers successfully trained and sworn in as officers of the court.

CRIMINAL CASE FLOW REVIEW

As the court has begun to return to a new normal since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been challenged with balancing the need to ensure access to justice as well as protecting the community. Working with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) we have begun a process to evaluate our criminal case processing. These efforts will include meetings with local judges and staff as well as meetings with local judicial partners to gather information and look at our current business process, use of technology, and staffing models.

A consulting team from the NCSC with many years of experience working in the court system will work with the Court and justice stakeholders to identify and develop the steps and processes that the court should take in order to succeed in this effort. A kick-off meeting with the consulting team to lay out expectations and answer any questions was held in March, 2022 and onsite meetings with judges, staff and judicial partners was scheduled for early in August, 2022. The consulting team will meet with the court and other stakeholders to identify what is working and where processes can be enhanced. The consulting team will provide a report identifying areas that could be enhanced to improve case processing and promote areas that are working well. After the report has been published, the consulting team will be available to assist and consult with the court to develop new processes that will enhance the quality of justice and level of service to the public.



EXTENDING SERVICES TO REMOTE JURORS

As a pilot court for the National Center for State Courts, Mohave County Superior Court received a grant to provide tablets to prospective Jurors who do not have equipment or internet connectivity necessary to participate in the jury process. These devices are



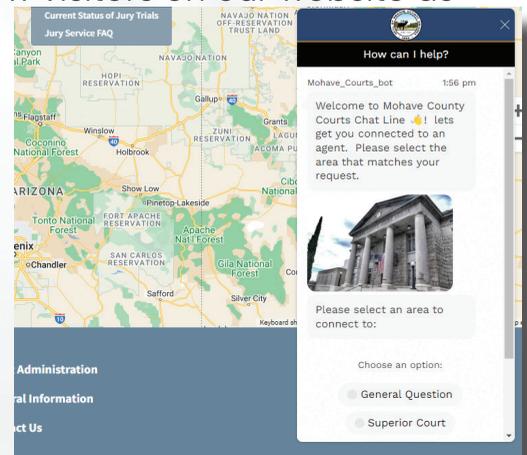
NEW TABLETS FOR REMOTE JURORS

deployed to individuals one week prior to jury selection with simple instructions on how to use the devices as well as what is expected of them to participate remotely during jury selection. These devices have been locked down to allow only specific applications as well as provide the ability with remote assist and GPS tracking.

COURT WEBSITE CHAT FEATURE

Over the past several years we have been providing a service on our public website to allow our customers to speak directly with a court representative through a chat service and was recognized on a national level at a Court Conference several years ago for being one of the first courts in the nation to provide this service. However, recently this service has been changed to provide a greater range of services by allowing our citizens to not only chat with live court representatives, but they now can leave a direct and detailed message for our individual courts after hours.

Additionally, our agents now can see new visitors on our website as soon as they arrive, determine how long they have been browsing the site, then initiate the chat request themselves to see if the customer needs any help. This new service boasts the ability for us to create an AI Bot that will learn and automatically answer frequently asked questions without the need to speak to a human at all. This feature is still in development, we hope to have it live soon.



LIVE CHAT FEATURE

SECURITY CAMERA SYSTEM REPLACEMENT

Over the past year Mohave County Superior Court has and will continue to utilize grant funding to replace legacy security camera systems in various Court Buildings. These new systems are operating at a much higher video resolution to allow better viewing capabilities for Court Security and Department Administrators making our courts safer as a result.

COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

Mohave County Court IT continues to move forward with improving the technology in all Superior and Limited Jurisdiction Courtrooms. Over the past year, the Court IT department has focused on equipping courtrooms with the ability to support digital evidence. By installing this equipment, it allows parties in the case to easily navigate through the digital evidence portal right from the attorney tables or lectern.



NEW LECTERN DIGITAL EVIDENCE EQUIPMENT

FORWARD THINKING

Mohave County Court IT is continuing to look at different technologies to ensure the products set currently in place will not only support the current needs but the needs of the future. In the ever-changing world of technology, it is critical to understand this need as companies, vendors and products change rapidly. This past year the Court IT Department has deployed this strategy and changed two major product sets. First video conferencing. The platform that we have selected in the past is showing signs of market share loss and company deterioration that has resulted in higher buy-in costs. To ensure our courts are protected from being locked into this solution, a new video platform has been selected as our standard video conferencing solution for all courts in Mohave County. The second area is focused around our report delivery model. The method we have used in the past is at a price point that is no longer competitive. By switching report delivery product sets we were able to provide the same services for a tenth of the cost.



SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

On November 3, 2021, Megan A. McCoy and Aaron M. Demke were sworn in as judges for the Mohave County Superior Court. Governor Doug Ducey appointed Judge McCoy on August 28, 2021, to the seat vacated by the retirement of Judge Charles W. Gurtler, Jr. When an elected judge retires or resigns prior to a general election, the vacancy created by the retirement or resignation is filled by gubernatorial appointment until the next general election.

Presiding Superior Court Judge Steven C. Moss announced on October 15, 2021, the appointment of Aaron Demke to the position of Court Commissioner. Judge Demke filled the vacancy left by former Court Commissioner Megan McCoy. "Mr. Demke brings an extensive knowledge of the court system with him to the bench and is a very knowledgeable, dedicated, and able attorney. The numerous letters of public support the Court received highlighted his personal integrity, professionalism, strong work-ethic, and his ability to make sound decisions," stated Presiding Judge Moss. The Swearing-in Ceremony was attended by judges, court staff, and family members at the Mohave County Superior Courthouse.



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: THE HONORABLE MEGAN MCCOY, PRESIDING JUDGE STEVE MOSS, AND THE HONORABLE AARON DEMKE

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

National Adoption Day is a collective effort to raise awareness of the more than 115,000 children waiting to be adopted from foster care in the United States. Parents, judges, attorneys, and child advocates joined together to do something great on National Adoption Day – officially create forever-families. This year, Mohave County Superior Court celebrated National Adoption Day on November 17 and 18 2021 with Judge McCoy, Judge Demke and Judge Williams officiating 17 adoptions on these two days in Mohave County. Courtesy of CASA Council, judges gifted each adoptee an Adoption Bear as a memento of the day their forever-families became official.

A special thanks to staff for decorating courtrooms for this celebration of adoptions! Some of our adoptions were officiated in a virtual/hybrid format. We are grateful for the collaborative efforts of the court to adapt and celebrate despite the challenges of this year.



SUPREME COURT ORAL ARGUMENTS

The Court was honored to host the Arizona Supreme Court in November, 2021, as they visited Mohave County as part of the Supreme Court's "Oral Arguments on the Road" community outreach program. The justices took time to meet with the judges and toured the new Superior Courthouse in Kingman. They also met with local attorneys and members of the public later that day at a reception hosted by the local Bar Association. Then on November 16, 2021, they held oral arguments at Kingman High School. The event was held in front of the student body and community members. After the oral arguments, the Supreme Court justices answered questions about the court system, judicial branch, and careers in law. Local judges from the Superior Court and Justice Court were in attendance.

In anticipation of their visit, Superior Court Presiding Judge Steven C. Moss said, "it is a unique opportunity for students to witness oral arguments on cases pending before the court. During their visit, we will share with the justices some of the innovations implemented the past few years at the Mohave County Courts and they will tour the new Superior Courthouse in Kingman.."



SUPREME COURT JUSTICES



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP

10TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON INFANT AND TODDLER HEALTH

This year the Mohave County Superior Court Team hosted the 10th Annual Northwest Arizona Symposium on Infant and Toddler Mental Health on April 6-7, 2022. The event is free to all attendees through funding provided by Arizona's "First Things First" program.

Two-hundred professionals from Mohave and La Paz Counties, and across Arizona, gathered at the London Bridge Resort in Lake Havasu City for these two days of workshops, keynotes, and networking opportunities.

MINOR VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING WORKGROUP

This team is comprised of Natalie Eggers, Deputy Director of Juvenile Court, Sara Colbert, Deputy Probation Officer Senior, Emily Snay, Deputy Probation Officer Senior, Melissa Register, Probation Clinician, and Megan De Baca, Deputy Probation Officer Lead. They are also members of the Mohave County Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Coalition. The Mohave County Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Coalition utilizes a three-year \$370,000 grant from the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime to build resources as well as inform the community and increase awareness around child sex trafficking. Included in the coalition are law enforcement agencies, the Mohave County Department of Public Health, faith-based communities, Kingman Regional Medical Center, Southwest Behavioral & Health Services, Kingman Aid to Abused People, the probation department, local schools and more. You may see the coalition at Craft Fairs, the Cancer Fair, Walk Away from Drugs, and other community events.



WORKGROUP BOOTH AT THE FAIR

HOPE GARDEN

Hope Garden, a substance abuse treatment program in Juvenile Detention, held its first graduation of four (4) participants on August 13, 2021 and its second graduation of three (3) participants on March 18, 2022. It is a 10-week closed program with a holistic approach to substance abuse treatment and family wellness. One goal of Hope Garden is to have youth and families in the program receiving services simultaneously. Throughout the 10 weeks, youth receive education at our accredited school, health care and meals, as well as structured support and therapeutic programming. Time for visitation, free time, courtyard, pro-social and religious services are incorporated into the program.

VETERANS COURT



**WALL OF HONOR
INSIDE THE COURTROOM**

The Lake Havasu City/Kingman Regional Veterans Treatment Court has been awarded a 4-year Bureau of Justice Assistance grant in the amount of \$623,958 for October 1, 2021 -September 30, 2025. The grant will help in continuing the program and providing the services needed. The Lake Havasu City Treatment Court has enrolled 304 participants since inception in November 2013 with 223 participants successfully graduating the program with a recidivism rate of 9.5%. The Kingman City Court has had 80 participants successfully graduate the program with a recidivism rate of under 5%.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS COURT

The purpose of the Health and Wellness Court (HAWC) is to problem solve through communication and collaboration in order to support participants in achieving stable and crime free lives. The Mohave County Adult Mental Health and Wellness Court is committed to connecting Mental Health Court participants to an array of services and support, which include medications, counseling, substance abuse treatment, benefits, housing, crisis intervention services, peer supports, and case management. Standardized patient placement criteria govern the level of care that is provided. Adjustments to the level of care are predicated on each participant's response to treatment and individualized to their needs.

The Pre-conviction HAWC program began in Kingman in July 2021, and currently has 5 participants. The Post-conviction HAWC program began in September 2021, with 7 participants at this time. A HAWC program was started late this year in Lake Havasu City. The program will be extended to Bullhead City sometime during the next fiscal year.

QUALITY OF LIFE COURT

The Quality of Life Court began several years ago as a pilot program geared towards individuals suffering from Opioid or other substance-use disorders. The program was made possible through a Department of Justice grant that is administered by the Mohave Substance Treatment Education Prevention Partnership (MSTEPP). The intent was to target those who were in the beginning stages of the disorder or were low-level offenders. The program involves case management that is handled by court staff, peer support, probation, and area service providers.

Peer support has been instrumental in assisting individuals as they begin their journey down the road to recovery. Those key individuals are actual graduates of the program who have returned and made a commitment to help others along the way. Every graduate to date has indicated the turning point for them was when they realized that someone cared about them and supported them in their recovery.



SUPERIOR COURT REVENUE AND STATS

Case type	Filings	Dispo	Revenue
Admin	2592	N/A	\$162,730.41
Civil	2111	2058	\$310,363.68
Criminal	1993	2172	\$4,527,924.30
Family	1213	1504	\$194,438.40
Juvenile	989	1236	\$259,339.60
Probate	1481	1351	\$218,158.76
TOTALS	--	--	\$5,672,955.50

SUPERIOR COURT INTERPRETER COST

Language	Cost
Spanish	\$41,212.89
Other Languages*	\$5,114.46
TOTALS	\$46,327.35

JUSTICE COURT REVENUE AND STATS

City	Revenue
Lake Havasu	\$1,324,337.00
Kingman	\$2,003,061.00
Bullhead	\$924,989.00
North County	\$602,457.00
TOTALS	\$4,854,844.00

Case Type	Filings
Civil	5,703
Misdemeanor	5,112
Felony	4,619
Criminal Traffic	1,252
Civil traffic	9,372

*MANDARIN, TAGALOG, TURKISH, SIGN LANGUAGE, PUNJABI, RUSSIAN

ADULT PROBATION STATS

Adult population Average	1,210
Intense Probation Supervision Average	40
Indirect Services population Average	399
Pre-Sentence investigations (PSI)	915
PSI Combined with Violations	10
Full Term Dispositions	396
Early Term Dispositions	62
Earned Time Credit (ETC)	1
Revoked to Prison	195
Judicial Terminations	15
Community Restitution Hours Completed	28,974
Standard Probation Absconders	90
Drug-Related Probation Absconders	94

JUVENILE PROBATION STATS

Referrals/Complaints	1,216
Petitions Filed	312
Diversions	40
Dispositions	157
ADJC Commitments	7
Standard Probation	131
JIPS	26
Transferred to Adult	1
Extended Jurisdiction	19
Admission to Detention	247

Recovery Court -19 screened -18 accepted -3 graduated -15 currently enrolled	Truancy Court -25 participants -14 successful -7 unsuccessful -3 pending	Hope Garden -3 screened -3 accepted -3 graduated	Health and Wellness -11 screened -11 accepted -0 graduates -8 currently enrolled
---	---	--	---

CASA STATS

Successful Volunteer Recruitments	7
# of Hours Served on Cases	1,235
# of Miles Driven by CASAs	13,282
# of Open Dependency Cases	342
# of Children in Open Dependency Cases	561

**“In matters of truth and justice there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning people are all the same”
-Albert Einstein**

