

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE

Certainly, this past year presented some new opportunities and challenges for us all. The pandemic continues so we have made adjustments in the court process, our personal lives, and working together to ensure we serve the public in a timely and expeditious manner. I'm happy to report that the courts continued to remain open at all times. Staff continued to be available assisting the public and providing high quality service to all those who needed to file documents or appear in court. The efforts of all judges and staff during this time have been outstanding.

In March of this year, the new Superior Court in Kingman was officially opened and the move into the new building went very smoothly. The new offices and courtrooms provide improved work conditions and enhance the ability for the Court to hear and adjudicate matters in a timely fashion. During this time, court staff and judicial officers have continued to explore new opportunities to provide services remotely and electronically as well. The willingness of all court staff to embrace new technology and identify new ways of handling court matters has been very much appreciated.

While we continue to have staff leave and move on to other opportunities, this past year we had two significant court leaders retire. Clerk of the Court, Virlynn Tinnell, retired after 23 plus years as the elected clerk. Her efforts and work to improve court operations and to streamline the work of the office have contributed immensely to enhancing services and making not only the Mohave County courts better, but also the State court system. During the judicial conference this year she was recognized for her work when she was presented with the 2021 Administration of Justice Award. On June 30, 2021 Charles W. Gurtler Jr. retired after 26 years on the bench and after 9 years as the Presiding Judge. His dedicated work as a judge during these many years is very much appreciated. He will certainly be remembered for his efforts to expand the court facilities in Lake Havasu City, adding another courtroom in that building. He was also able to get the necessary approvals to expand the judicial offices in the Bullhead City courthouse. Perhaps most significant was his work with the Board of Supervisors and the county to secure the necessary funding to build the new Superior Courthouse in Kingman. His oversight and work on this project helped ensure its completion within budget and in a timely manner.

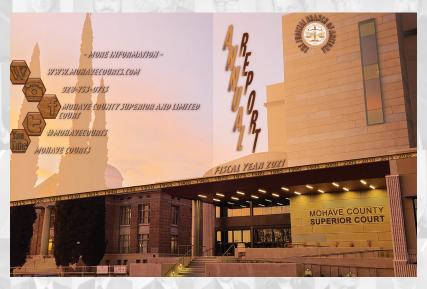
While many restrictions with regards to access to court facilities remained in place throughout the State and county, the court continued to push forward with several significant programs. For example, the court has been piloting the new electronic exhibit system called Caselines. Staff have worked closely with the Administrative Office of the Courts to ensure an effective roll-out of the system. A new Dependency Alternative Program has been implemented in the Superior Court with the goal of helping families reach the best decision regarding custody of their children without having to go through the entire dependency process. This program has helped families find ways to enhance reunification and has helped reduce the amount of time they need to spend in court.

I note earlier this year the court was approved by the Supreme Court to establish a remote civil jury trial pilot court utilizing the ZOOM application. Court IT staff are working closely with both judges and court staff to develop internal procedures and they are also reaching out to local attorneys to train them on this new process. It is anticipated that the court will conduct a fully remote civil jury in the coming months building off existing technology and using the new Caselines system. Additionally, the court is working with the National Center for State Courts to gather jury feedback on this process so it can be shared with other courts around the nation. I also note the recent opening of Hope Garden, a substance abuse treatment program for the youth. It's an outstanding program that will provide help for youth and families to work through difficult times in their lives.

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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. I am grateful for the dedicated work of our devoted judicial officers and court staff to improve public trust and confidence in the justice system.

Hon. Steven C. Moss Presiding Judge



Front Cover Photo taken by Heather Yarbrough-Puett

NEW SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION I JUDGE

With the retirement of the Honorable Charles W. Gurtler, Jr. on July 1, 2021 the Arizona Governor's Office opened the vacancy up to candidates wishing to fill the Mohave County Superior Court Division I Judge position. After weeks of anticipation, on August 20, 2021 the Arizona Governor's Office announced the



appointment of the Honorable Megan A. McCoy. Judge McCoy said "I am extremely honored to be appointed as Superior Court Judge, Division I. I am taking on a caseload in the Lake Havasu City area that will keep me involved in the family and juvenile courts. I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of those great judges that have served before me in Mohave County and proud to serve my community in this way."

HOPE GARDEN

Juvenile Probation has been working tirelessly over the past two years to open Hope Garden, a substance abuse treatment program in a structured setting for probation youth. Hope Garden was developed out of a need to keep our youth local while involving families in treatment so there can be more family system change. These youth spend 10 weeks in the re-purposed wing of the detention facility learning about themselves, addiction, recovery and life skills. Community Partnership was imperative in making this dream a reality. Our staff worked with



AZ®Work, Arizona Youth Partnership, Human Resource Training Inc., local volunteers and our clinician to provide a varied schedule of programming that includes yoga, meditation, life skills, addiction and recovery classes, cognitive behavioral approaches and therapeutic oriented treatment. While in Hope Garden, youth continue to receive education, stay involved in any recovery court systems and build stronger family relationships while learning ways to lead a sober lifestyle. After completion of the tenweek program, youth and their families continue in outpatient services for a minimum of three months with the same providers to help ensure uniformity, smooth transitions and an ongoing recovery atmosphere. Hope Garden just successfully graduated the first 4 youth from the program.

NEW JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

The Mohave County Courts welcomed a newly appointed Justice of the Peace in April 2021. The Honorable Virlynn Tinnell was appointed by the Mohave County Board of Supervisors to fill the first Cerbat Precinct Justice of the Peace vacancy left by the retirement of Judge



John S. Taylor. Judge Tinnell said "I am honored to have been chosen to fill the remainder of Judge Taylor's term on the bench. Having served as a ProTem for the court many years ago it is exciting to serve in this capacity now. The county has grown and times have changed but I still enjoy serving the public in the court system."

SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE DEDICATION

The dedication for the new Mohave County Superior Courthouse took place on March 5, 2021. The Honorable Charles W. Gurtler, Jr. was the emcee for the event that featured remarks by Arizona Supreme



Court Chief Justice Robert Brutinel, Mohave County Supervisor Hildy Angius, and Tim Lewis, Senior Project Manager for contractor Johnson Carlier LLC. Supervisor Angius said Mohave County can boast about having the oldest courthouse in Arizona and now the newest courthouse. Behind every project there is a driving force. In this case, it was Judge Gurtler. Judge Gurtler's dedication to the law and the insistence that people that come through the court's doors and the people who work behind these doors deserve a building that solely and unwaveringly states that we care. Supervisor Angius thanked Judge Gurtler, Kip Anderson, and the staff of the Mohave Courts for their tireless work, stating "we are grateful for the work you do and the care you will give to all the people who will come through these doors."

TIMELY CASE RESOLUTION

During the course of FY-21 over 380 Preventative Notices were sent by mail or via electronic means to the parties of Civil, Family Law, and Probate case types. The notices prompted action from the parties or Court dismissal due to inactivity as per the applicable Arizona Court Rules. February 2021 the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Court Services Division formed a work group to look at felony case processing, chaired by Judge Pam Gates of Mar-

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icopa County.

The group comprised of members all across the State, are charged with identifying possible issues, making recommendations

for modifications, and brainstorming ideas for greater success within the Felony Time Standards being plagued by current social distancing requirements, parties showing symptoms, and other current global pandemic concerns and regulations.

MEDIATION

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mediation Department has revamped the way mediations are conducted. In 2020, we moved from face-toface mediations to telephonic and Zoom conferences. As remote work became a necessity, the ability to both access and provide information electronically was accomplished by utilizing (with a few additions) the existing shared mediations files. Signed agreements were submitted to the court on a weekly basis. In November 2020, the Mediation Department began the trial run of a process which would allow agreements to be electronically signed by the parties during the mediation conference. The process was implemented in January 2021 – the new process provides an extended time frame for mediation sessions (up to 3 hours) during which the mediation is conducted, the agreement is created and reviewed with the clients (with opportunities for mutually agreed revisions). In keeping with Rule 26 (a)(3), parties are offered the ability for the Mediator to electronically sign on their behalf. As the Mohave County Superior Court has moved to e-filing/docketing signed agreements of In Pro Per parties can now be submitted to court the same day of the mediation.

520 Telephonic Mediations were set, of which 257 resulted in a full or partial parenting plan agreement with 122 canceled, vacated, rescheduled or party/parties failed to appear.

65% success rate in FY20/21.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEPENDENCY ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM (DAP) IN MOHAVE COUNTY

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. In the one day process, case stakeholders meet with a mediator with the goal of reaching agreement regarding the best legal arrangement for the child's custody and parenting time - that is, a safe and stable environment that addresses the family's needs, is in the best interest of the child, and is approved by all stakeholders. The typical case stakeholders are parents and family members, the child(ren), an advisory attorney, and the Arizona Department of Child Safety. An experienced advisory attorney assists the family in understanding legal rights and options throughout the mediation. Court and clerk-of-the-court staff help facilitate the DAP process when agreement is reached by all participants. Upon agreement, a hearing is called the same day of the DAP mediation. The judge enters either temporary or final custody orders and participants walk away from court with a certified copy of the court orders. This gives the family an immediate sense of safety and helps alleviate the child and family's emotional stress due to the crisis or safety concerns that prompted the referral.



LAW AND JUSTICE CENTER

The recently completed Mohave County Superior Courthouse is a 20 million-dollar building with four stories, seven courtrooms, four jury rooms, two conference rooms, and over 100 employees. A long-awaited addition to the county's judicial system, the new building's technology provided a unique set of opportunities—and obstacles—for the court's IT team, from the initial design process through ongoing maintenance and planning for future expansion. Instead of relying on an outside vendor to install and maintain the entire building's Audio / Video needs, the Court IT team was tasked with creating and installing a custom solution from the ground-up that would meet the current and future demands. This proved to be a critical decision as the design and most of the equipment was already purchased and being tested when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Mohave County. However, given the design was created by the in-house IT team, alterations to meet the new way of providing services was easily adapted and implemented into the final Courthouse systems. Designing and installing such a technically advanced system completely by the local IT Team has placed a spotlight on Mohave County Superior Court IT team on a national level from AV magazines published in the United States.

NEW WAY OF PROVIDING SERVICES

As with the rest of the world, the courts have been forced to become creative in the way services are provided over the past year. Mohave County Superior Court was the first court in the nation to move forward with a fully remote Grand Jury and was one of the first to move forward with a fully remote Jury Selection process. The work completed by Mohave County Court IT was recognized by the National Center for State Courts in the form of being the recipient of the 2020 G Thomas Muensterman Award for Jury Innovation. In addition, several states around the nation developed their own remote processes and procedures around the work Mohave County Superior Court completed. Towards the end of FY21, Mohave County Superior Court continued to expand remote services into a full remote Civil Jury Trail with all participants appearing remotely. The entire remote hearing process could not be made possible without the implementation of a new cloud based evidence storage system that is used to share all evidence to the parties in the case during the hearing.

COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

Court IT continues to move forward with innovative projects that will help streamline services in the Court System. Over the past year, the Court IT department has focused a great deal of energy on remote services as well as enhancing the technology within the courtrooms themselves. In addition to the 7 new courtrooms in the new Law and Justice Center, three other courtrooms were also upgraded this year to enhance remote services capabilities. Taking this step, we now have 95% of all of the courtrooms in Mohave County capable of conducting remote hearings.

NEW COURTHOUSE FEATURED IN NCSC 2020 COURTHOUSE DESIGN RETROSPECTIVE

The New Courthouse was featured within the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) "2010-2020 Retrospective of Courthouse Design", under the "General & Multi-Jurisdiction & Appellate Courthouses" tab on pages 56-59. One of the notable project features is a "bridge connection from the new building to the historic courthouse provides secure access and allows for dynamic views of the historic jail and re-designed campus." The digital publication is available on the NCSC website at:

https://www.ncsc.org/services-and-experts/areas-of-expertise/facilities-planning/ retrospective-of-courthouse-design

REACTIVATION OF JURY TRIALS

With the reactivation of trials on June 30th, 2020, Zoom was again utilized for the juror selection process. Keeping true to our mission statement, Mohave County Superior Court used technology to provide innovative solutions to our court system.

The jury selection process was a success, with some jurors participating by Zoom, making the Mohave Model one of the first, if not the very first court in the nation to accomplish this goal. Twenty-five jurors appeared in person, and ten chose to appear using Zoom technology. Those appearing in person reported to the old DES Building for check-in, which allowed for adequate social distancing. They were then directed to the courtroom as needed. The entire process took the same amount of time as it would have if all jurors were in person and Judge Sipe had his jury selected and seated before noon. As we continued to offer the option of Zoom selection as trials continued, except for a brief halt of trials once again in December of 2020 through February 2021, trials have continued averaging Il trials a month.

VIRLYNN TINNELL, FORMER CLERK OF COURT, RECEIVES THE 2021 ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AWARD FROM THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

During the recent Judicial Conference the Arizona Supreme Court presented retired Mohave County Clerk of the Court, Virlynn Tinnell, with its 2021 Administration of Justice Award. Virlynn served as the Clerk of the Superior Court from 1999 until her retirement in April 2021 when she was appointed as the Cerbat Justice of the Peace by the Mohave County Board of Supervisors. During her tenure as Clerk, Virlynn actively participated on several State-wide committees and served as a director with the National Association for Court Management. Virlynn's

efforts to help improve court operations include the implementation of an on-line storage system for all court records, to more recently, the roll-out of electronic-filing, electronic-appeals, electronic warrants and electronic-evidence systems. Virlynn's office also worked to improve services to customers of the court, including the implementation of a Debit card system to pay jurors and for restitution payments. Dave Byers, Administrative Director of the Supreme Court, noted, "whenever a court was needed to pilot a new program, Virlynn was always willing to step-forward and take on the challenge". This award recognizes Virlynn' s dedication and work over the past 20 years which has helped to improve court operations and enhance the service provided to the citizens of Mohave County.



KYLE RIMEL AWARDED FOR JURY INNOVATION

On March 5, 2021, Kyle Rimel, Court Information Technology Director, was presented with the National Center for State Courts 2020 G. Thomas Munsterman Award for Jury Innovation. Presented annually since 2008, the award was established to recognize states, local courts, individuals, or other organizations that have made significant improvements or innovations in jury procedures, operations, or practices. Only four other individuals have been recognized for this award. The award is named for G. Thomas Munsterman, founder and former director of the Center for Jury Studies and an internationally renowned innovator in jury systems and research. On March 31, 2021, Kyle Rimel, also received the 2020 Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda Award for Remote Jury Selection. The nomination for Remote Jury Selection was selected as the winner in the category for Promoting Public Trust and Confidence. The award was presented by Chief Justice Robert Brutinel and recognizes Kyle's outstanding service and contribution to the Arizona Judicial Branch.

CHRISTINA SPURLOCK APPOINTED AS CLERK OF THE COURT

Effective April 19, 2021 and upon the resignation of long time Clerk Virlynn Tinnell, the Honorable Judge Charles W. Gurtler, Jr. appointed Chief Deputy Christina Spurlock to serve as Interim Clerk of Superior Court. On August 20, 2021 the official appointment was made by Governor Ducey. Christina has worked in the Clerk's office for over 14 years and brings a wealth of knowledge on every aspect of the inner workings of the office. Christina is a life-long resident of Kingman, Arizona and has a large family here. Her interests include crafting and outdoor sports; and she is an active member of various community clubs and organizations. While she knows she has big shoes to fill, Christina is more than ready to take on the upcoming challenges of utilizing advances in technology to further the Statewide efforts to digitize court records.

GRADUATES OF COURT MANAGER PROGRAM

Congratulations to Natalie Eggers and Emily Snay for successfully completing all course work necessary to earn their Certified Court Manager credentials from the Institute for Court Management at the National Center for State Courts. They showed dedication to their personal and professional development as well, through continued education and training. All while balancing their normal duties assigned to them.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE ARIZONA CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER'S ASSOCIATION STATEWIDE AWARDS

On July 21, 2021, while celebrating National Pretrial, Probation, and Parole Supervision Week, the Mohave County Probation Department recognized award winners chosen as their nominations for the Arizona Chief Probation Officer's Association Statewide Awards and their yearly internal award winners.

AZCPO Association Awards Joshua Scurti- Juvenile Detention Officer of the Year Ambur Banas – Juvenile Probation Officer of the Year Stephen Behl – Adult Probation Officer of the Year Nicole Aragon – Employee of the Year Ed Prell – Supervisor of the Year

Excellence in Education Awards Ed Prell – Probation Education Michael Geraci – Defensive Tactics

<u>Local Awards</u> Amber Freed – Director's Choice Award John Somma – Chief's Choice Award Steve Radmanovich – Mission Possible Award





SYMPOSIUM ON INFANT AND TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH

With the continued support of Arizona's First Things First, the Mohave County Superior Court Team held their 9th Annual Symposium on Infant and Toddler Mental Health on April 6, 2021. The Symposium was held virtually for the first time and was considered a success! The Infant and Toddler Mental Health Symposium focuses on the importance of issues concerning children ages zero to three and their families. The Symposium brings together multi-disciplinary evidenced-based practices to aid in the prevention, recognition, assessment and treatment of traumatic experiences in young children and their families. The goal of the Symposium is to provide an opportunity to enhance professional, investigative, and legal skills when dealing with all forms of maltreatment including those related to family violence. This year there were over 45D participants from Arizona and the tri-state area, with more than ten distinguished presenters on a multitude of topics including: Communication Strategies to Connect with Autism Parents, Minor Sex Trafficking, Law and Ethics, Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol and Drugs, Failure to Thrive and Neglect. Developing Cross Cultural Knowledge Through Indigenous Historical and Intergenerational Trauma.

PROBATION CELEBRATES NATIONAL PRETRIAL, PROBATION, AND PAROLE SUPERVISION WEEK

July 18-24, 2021 was National Pretrial, Probation, and Parole Supervision Week. On July 21, 2021, the adult and juvenile divisions cross trained each other on the initiatives, programs, and practices they have been part of for the last year. Supervisor Ed Prell gave a presentation on the use of EPICS to lead probationers to positive change. Officer Safety Supervisor and Fugitive Apprehension Unit leader,

Ronnie Walker, presented on the US Marshal's Task Force and how their services should be utilized to find high-risk warrants in Mohave County. Deputy Director of Juvenile Court, Natalie Eggers presented on the department's protocols for identifying victims of sex trafficking, involvement with the local Mohave County Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Coalition; and new program Sex Trafficking and Recovery (STAR) Group. Supervisor Sara Colbert gave a presentation on Project AIM, the juvenile detention's Evening Reporting Center and Hope Garden, a new substance abuse program housed in the Juvenile Detention Center. Supervisor De Shae Fangmeyer presented on the juvenile specialty courts including Juvenile Recovery Court, Juvenile Health and Wellness Court, and Truancy Court; and Supervisor Emily Snay presented for Supervisor Phil Shannon on the Juvenile Review Implementation and Development Team and the projects they have been working on.

On July 22, 2021, the department continued the recognition and celebration of Probation and Parole Week by swearing in new Detention, Probation, and Surveillance Officers. They were sworn in by the Honorable Presiding Judge, Steven Moss, in front of some family, friends, and co-workers.

MOHAVE COUNTY JUVENILE COURT COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB)

Lake Havasu City CAB contributed to the Lake Havasu Soccer League for sport equipment and to the Arizona Children's Association (AzCA) to train lifeguards. Bullhead City CAB contributed to the Mohave Valley Elementary School for document cameras and to the River Valley High School's 9th grade Environmental Science class for hydroponic equipment. Kingman CAB contributed to the Kingman Fire Department (KFD) Explorers Program to assist with participant testing costs and to the Kingman Academy of Learning (KAOL) Chime Choir Program for musical instruments.

VETERANS COURT

The Lake Havasu City/Kingman Regional Veterans Treatment Court utilized the SAMHSA grant that was awarded in September 2017 to support 224 participants in their path towards sobriety. These Veterans have been connected to services including peer support, mental health, and substance abuse treatment. The initial grant award was for 3 years, but the program was awarded a one year no-cost extension through September 2021. This extension allowed the program to support treatment completion for participants that were in the beginning phases of their program. An additional 38 Veterans successfully completed the program from September 1, 2020 to August 26, 2021.

As the SAMHSA grant period comes to end, the program has looked for additional resources to support the program. Both Lake Havasu City and Kingman have received support from their respective Veterans Resource Teams. Local Veteran friendly agencies have stepped in to cover the costs of treat

ment and substance use testing. Also, in February of 2021, the Lake Havasu City Veterans Treatment Court was awarded a state grant from the Veterans Donation Fund in the amount of \$74,400.00. This grant is being used to support substance abuse treatment and substance use testing through 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges and obstacles for the Lake Havasu City/Kingman Regional Veterans Treatment Court. In the early month of the pandemic, the courts adapted to restrictions by holding virtual staffing and hearings using Zoom. Community service projects were put on hold and treatment providers held sessions virtually. Currently, both locations have returned to in-person hearings with an option to appear virtually. Most participants have opted to return in-person. Treatment providers have also returned to in-person sessions with the option to appear virtually. The program has reinstated community service projects and participants have enjoyed the opportunities to engage in social activities. The Veterans Treatment Court team is constantly changing and adapting to engage and assist our Veteran participants.



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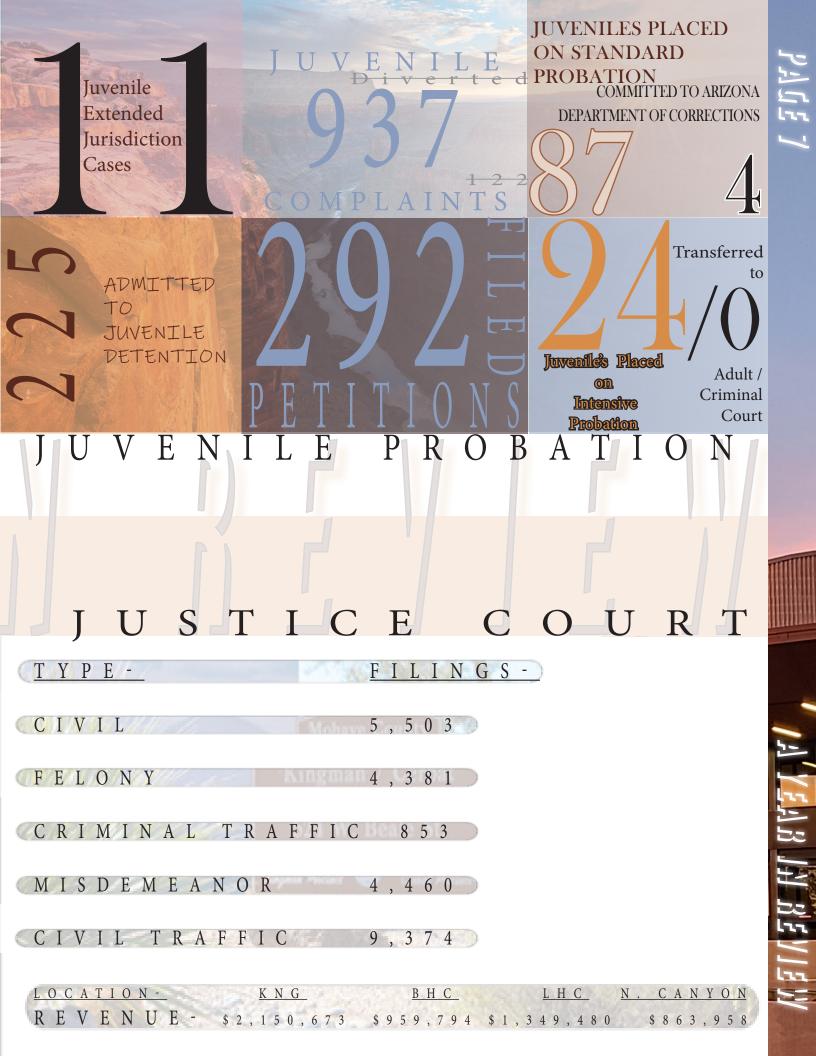
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