



# Every Child is Capable of Success: Highlighting Juvenile Delinquency & Dependency

By Cathleen Henniges

The Pima County Bar Association ("PCBA") General Membership Luncheon series continued after a summer break with PCBA President Ronald Zack introducing attending Board Members, Patrons, Sustaining Members and welcoming the admission of new members. Luncheon meeting highlights included presenting Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA) Executive Director Anthony Young with a \$5,000 check representing a portion of the Lawyer Referral Service (LRS) percentage fee proceeds. The highly successful LRS program has generated funding to bring the PCBA's total 2016 SALA contributions to a remarkable \$11,265. President Zack also recognized Dr. Susan Trentham's 10 years of loyal service to the PCBA and presented a gift in appreciation of her dedication as PCBA Executive Director.

The Honorable Kathleen Quigley, Presiding Judge of the Pima County Juvenile Court, initiated presentation of the luncheon's main topic of "All Things Juvenile-Delinquency, Dependency" noting her goal to increase awareness of the Juvenile Court's programs and services. Judge Quigley introduced Tina Mattison, Deputy Court Administrator, to discuss the dependency side of the Court (i.e. cases that involve a parent who is unable or unwilling to exercise care, custody or control of a minor). Ms. Mattison related that dependency cases historically lasted up to two years, resulting in 19,000 hearings per year. She described how the Mediation Unit was created to hold settlement conferences to reduce the number of cases and issues that reach the judges. Other dependency programs include the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) who look out for the child's best interests, and the Family Drug Court which allows voluntary participation by parents who have a drug or alcohol addiction.

One program Ms. Mattison described to help reduce the time that cases are in the system is the Dependency Alternative Program. The program started in July 2015 and resolved 20% of its cases within six months. The program also helps families who need a guardian or other court order by facilitating expedited hearings.

John Schow, Director of Juvenile Court Services/Chief Probation Officer next talked about the juvenile justice and delinquency side of the Court. Mr. Schow indicated that 90% of the Court's time is spent on dependency cases, which is partly due to a decrease in the number of minors being arrested and detained. In the last five years, there has been no increase in juvenile crime, but Mr. Schow has seen has a 57% drop in detention rates and a 42% drop in probation. The number of juveniles referred to the Court

has similarly decreased from over 12,500 referrals after an arrest in 2010 down to 7,846 referrals in 2015.

Mr. Schow emphasized a change in culture at the Court in adopting the Kids at Hope philosophy that every child is capable of success. A risk and needs assessment is performed on each child to determine their risk level to re-offend. Mr. Schow described how the system identifies high risk children to allocate more time to assisting those children. The idea, as Mr. Schow explained, is that low risk children, which represent 70% of the children assessed, are not likely to return to the Court, so less exposure to the system reduces the impact on those children. Additionally, he described a Diversion program that keeps low risk kids out of the courtroom. Other promising changes include improved probation officer training in interventions and the implementation of new graduated responses and incentives, including providing at least four items of positive reinforcement to a child for every area noted for improvement.

Judge Quigley again highlighted numerous additional positive changes happening in the Juvenile Court, including the involvement of community partners to help make contact with the Court less traumatic, a new ACES program that provides role models to give children hope and encouragement, and a Domestic Violence Alternative Center (DVAC) where children can be taken for up to 23 hours instead of going to the detention facility.