

## Strategic Agenda Awards for 2014

Presented by  
Chief Justice  
Scott Bales and  
Presiding Judge Peter  
J. Cahill of the  
Superior Court in  
Gila County

Awards Committee:

The Honorable Peter  
Cahill, Chairman

The Honorable  
Rachel Carrillo

The Honorable  
Peter Eckerstrom

The Honorable  
Roxanne Song Ong

Gary Krcmarik

Janet Regner

Jim Bruner

### Goal 1: Promoting Access to Justice

#### *Simpla Phi Lex Project at the Superior Court in Pima County*

Pima County Court Commissioner Dean Christoffel brought 30 years of family law experience to his current role as Commissioner. He certainly knew of the anger, frustration, and confusion that self-represented litigants experienced when faced with the daunting task of figuring out what forms to file and how.

Commissioner Christoffel teamed up with Professor Emerita Barbara Atwood and students from the James E. Rogers College of Law and the University of Arizona English Department to create a new set of forms for family law proceedings. They dubbed the project "Simpla Phi Lex."

Using graphics and plain language text and by better organizing the forms for ease of use, the new forms are available in English and Spanish. There are more than 25 separate packets of forms covering dissolution, paternity, temporary orders, post-decree matters, and various other forms. The packets represent a total of more than 150 different forms with instructions.

### Goal 2: Protecting Children, Families, and Communities

#### A. Award for Limited Jurisdiction Courts

##### *Tucson City Court for Regional Municipalities Veteran Treatment Court & Dedicated Domestic Violence Court*

Tucson's City Court earns this award for two programs — the Regional Municipalities Veterans Treatment Court and the Dedicated Domestic Violence Court. In January 2013, the Tucson City Court Veterans court expanded and became the Regional Municipalities Veterans Treatment Court. This is a problem-solving, specialty treatment court coordinated through the municipalities of Tucson, Oro Valley, Marana, South Tucson, and Sahuarita. The court works in tandem with service providers including the Pima Prevention Partnership, Old Pueblo Community Services, the Veterans Administration, substance abuse treatment providers, and the University of Arizona law school.

Since January 2013, the Regional Municipalities Veterans Treatment Court has accepted 186 veterans out of a total of more than 400 referrals. Out of the 186, 93 have successfully completed the program, 62 veterans are actively participating in the program, 30 were discharged from the program, and one participant passed away before completing the program.

By diverting veterans from the jails, the court estimates that it has saved more than \$53,000 in jail day costs. Perhaps most important is the life-changing pathway out of the justice system and into successful everyday life for these veterans.

The Tucson City Court also established a *Dedicated Domestic Violence Court*. To address an extremely high caseload of domestic violence cases and protective order applications, Judge Wendy Million worked to establish a dedicated Domestic Violence Court. She also identified specific needs within the deaf and hard of hearing communities for victims and for interpreters. Grants were used to establish the courts and provide training for sign language interpreters, an education program for the deaf community, and collaboration with the Emerge! Center Against Domestic Violence and Community Outreach Program for the Deaf.

During the 16 months the Domestic Violence Court has been operating, it has processed 1,659 eligible cases and served 572 victims. Starting with arraignment through compliance with sentencing orders, advocates are available for every victim. New court procedures have made victims safer and offenders more accountable.

#### B. Award for General Jurisdiction Court

##### *Dependency Program Office at the Superior Court in Yavapai County*

This office oversees three vital programs: CASA – The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program; the Dependency Court Improvement Program, and the Family Treatment Court Program (formerly the Family Drug Court Program).

A team of fewer than five full-time equivalent personnel oversee these programs that protect children, families, and communities. Specifically:

- The Dependency Program Office has used advertising, newspaper articles, vehicle magnets, print ads, and recruiting to certify more than 50 new CASA volunteers in the last fiscal year. They plan to surpass that goal this year. Additionally, the Office oversees more than 85 active CASA volunteers.
- Established a community dependency coordinator to oversee the provision of services to families in crisis.
- Improved the Family Treatment Court Program to provide more support, reduce stigma and barriers to accessing community services, and provided outreach and support to enrolled participants as well as their family members. The Dependency Program Office hosts training and outreach opportunities related to substance abuse and parenting.
- Partnered with faith-based and professional organizations to support foster parenting, adoption, volunteering, substance abuse treatment, initiatives to support very young children in care as well as teens who will 'age out' of foster care, and the Cross-Over Youth Initiative.
- The Dependency Program Office also uses alternative dispute resolution to resolve disputes in dependency cases.