

The Express



2nd Quarter

July 2015



Dates to Remember:

- 7/1 Fiscal Year Begins
- 7/3 4th Observed
- 7/4 Independence Day
- 7/26 Parents' Day
- 8/7 Purple Heart Day
- 8/19 Aviation Day
- 9/7 Labor Day
- 9/11 Patriot Day
- 9/13 Grandparents Day
- 9/18 POW/MIA Day
- 9/23 1st Day of Autumn

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Leticia Thrush Successfully Completes Diversion

After 21 years of service to the Yuma County Juvenile Court, Leticia Thrush is finally going to seek the career in education that she has wanted all along.



Leticia Thrush receives her plaque from Tim Hardy

At her retirement luncheon on March 4, before a standing room only crowd in the detention training room, Director Tim Hardy gave a lengthy and mostly accurate accounting of Leticia's many assignments.

Leticia's career started in August of 1993 and actually was in the field of education, as she was hired as an Education Specialist. She helped to run a literacy lab that was available to all juveniles on probation. When Aztec High School opened its doors in that same building in 1995, Leticia was one of its first teachers.

But, the next year, things started to turn. In 1996, Leticia and Mary Frost became School Probation

Officers, teaching law related education classes at Wellton Elementary School. During the summer months, she came back to the juvenile court to help with diversions.

When that program ended in 2006, Leticia returned as a full time probation officer. She first supervised a caseload of juveniles on probation for truancy and eventually became the expert on diversions.

Before presenting her with her plaque, Tim described Leticia as "the kind of employee you never have to worry about." She was a perfectionist, but very nervous about doing something she wasn't comfortable with—like being on call.

When it was finally her turn to address the crowd, Leticia made a point of saying that she had nothing prepared and then spent the next 21 minutes recognizing everyone with whom she had ever come in contact.

Leticia talked about coming to the United States at 16, speaking no English, but determined to get an education. She also found out that she was really good at softball, playing in high school and at Arizona Western College before getting her degree at Arizona State University.

She reminded Tim about the time that he sent her to borrow the keys to a former director's personal vehicle and about the flat tire for which she has never been compensated. She also reminded Sam Watson about denying her access to the San Luis office.



Leticia works at expressing herself during her speech

Most of us came away surprised that quiet, proper Leticia was so funny.

But, most of all, Leticia told us all that she felt like she was leaving a beautiful family and that she was heartbroken that she would no longer see us every day.

Well, Leticia, we will miss you, too. And, we wish you nothing but the best.

Community Service for Kids Means Cleaning Up Yuma Sites

VOICES FROM THE PAST

From the July 29, 1995 issue of the Yuma Daily Sun

Alleys have been cleaned up in La Jolla del Valley area just off Avenue B as part of a community service project of the Yuma County Juvenile Court Center.

Rene Medel, community service supervisor for the center, said the work is being done by juveniles under the supervision of service officers.

About 45 juveniles have been performing the work each day. Medel said those on intensive probation must perform a minimum of 32 hours of community service per week, while those on formal probation are on a 24 hour program.

Intake individuals are those who have violated curfew or other minor infractions and have been court-ordered to perform eight hours of community work.

Medel said the juveniles have also cleaned up the trash at the Avenue B site of the old county hospital. On Saturday, about 30 of the community service juveniles will be supervised by four officers for a cleanup project at Mittrey Lake. They will be working from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This is part of a state project in which all 15 counties will be utilizing their community service youths in cleaning up state parks.

Medel said the community service is only part of the activities at the juvenile court center.

Children from 8 to 17 are brought in by officers for various offenses such as shoplifting, aggravated assault or drug abuse, the latter of which is "about the worst," Medel said.

After they are brought in, cases are evaluated and some are given tickets to go before the juvenile judge. The judge decides on the severity of the offense and recommends community service hours, usually for the first and minor offenses. Should the juvenile be brought before the judge again, a probation of either three or six months is prescribed.

There are now eight formal probation officers, Medel said.

One of the most successful projects at the center is the Keys to Inner Vision (KIP), he said. Juveniles are enrolled in the program, which has a school curriculum. Classes are from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. three days per week for a five week session.

Carlos Dominguez, Cesar Figueroa and Charles Crawford are the instructors for the program and supervise outside activities, such as car washes and other fundraising events.

The last graduating class earned enough money for a trip to Sea World.

The class now in session wants to be able to go to Disneyland.



Juvenile community service workers remove debris from alley west of Avenue B

The juveniles are renting a booth to sell cold treats for a block party on the Main Street Plaza and one at a car show at the Club Latino.

Medel said the juveniles who participate in the community service and the KIP program have the opportunity to boost their self esteem and often set goals for themselves.

Many of the juvenile on probation will get into trouble so they can come back, because they get the attention they need, Medel explained.

"Regardless of how people look at these juveniles, they forget that they are just kids and will do something to get attention."

As for activities for the juveniles, they can go to the Boys and Girls Club of Yuma, swimming or other places, Medel said, but many cannot afford the fees and do not have transportation.

Hope Assessment Center

By: Zachary Harrison

During the day to day operations, the Hope Center assesses children for a variety of reasons from behavioral issues at home to minor criminal charges.

The most common reason kids are brought to the Hope Center is for behavioral issues at home, school, or both. Some of these behavioral issues include being disrespectful to parents, leaving home without permission, using drugs, ditching school, among other issues at home and school.

The majority of these children are brought in by parents trying to get help for their child. Although most children come to the Hope Center with a parent, there are still a significant number brought in by law enforcement.

This often occurs when law enforcement responds to a domestic issue at a home. The Hope Center is frequently used as a cooling off period for families in these situations.

The Hope Center is not limited to helping children in these specific circumstances. The Hope Center also provides a variety of other ser-

vices to the community such as tours of the facility and respite care.

There have been several instances where kids have been suspended from school and parents have brought them to the Hope Center to do school work.

A couple of juveniles released from detention have stayed here until a parent could pick them up. In a few instances children have chosen to come to the Hope Center to get away from difficult situations at home.

There have been a few cases in which DCS needed to be contacted and the Hope Center has even provided respite services for a couple

of out of county runaways until their parents could arrive.

The Hope Center sees kids for a multitude of reasons, no matter what the reason our goal is to help children in need and to minimize the need for detainment pertaining to minor charges.



Jose Hernandez, Gabriela Lachica, Rudy Acosta, Beatriz Felix, Grant Rader, Martin Reyes, Zachary Harrison

May 6 Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics



Torch Run participants: Edna Lugo, Lenny Longoria, Sunni Espinoza, Gena Kramer, Cesar Figueroa, Juan Linarez, Imelda Arellano, Africa Carrasco

Chief Justice Tours Juvenile Court

The justices of the Arizona Supreme Court convened in Yuma on March 24 to conduct oral arguments at Gila Ridge High School as part of their statewide outreach and education efforts.

Chief Justice Scott Bales took the opportunity to visit the juvenile justice center the day before to take a look at some of the agency's innovative programming. He was accompanied by Dave Byers, the Director of the Administrative Office of the

Courts, and Byers' wife, a retired school teacher.

Although their visit was a short one, Bales and Byers; along with Presiding Superior Court Judge John Nelson, Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Mark Wayne Reeves and Juvenile Director Tim Hardy; were able to take a look at Aztec High School, the Detention Education Program and the HOPE Assessment Center.

Aztec High is the only charter school in the country operated by a court system. In a press conference after the visit, Bales talked about being inspired by what he saw at both Aztec and detention education with kids who might otherwise not graduate from high school.

The HOPE Assessment Center also received its share of praise, not only for its innovative approach to reducing admissions to detention and providing valuable support to the community, but also for reducing

costs by using existing facilities and personnel.

Bales was also impressed with the "Kids at Hope" philosophy under which the juvenile court is currently operating. He recognized that children shouldn't be viewed as at risk for failure, but rather as capable of success if given the right support and resources.

Both Bales and Byers agreed that what they saw in Yuma has the potential to be a modeled or copied by other courts around the state.



Dave Byers gestures while Judge Reeves, Judge Nelson and Justice Bales look on



Observing Mark Olin's classroom at Aztec

Rudy Acosta Is County's Employee of the Year

At the Yuma County employee appreciation banquet on April 25, Rudy Acosta was selected as Yuma County's Employee of the Year, the first time that a juvenile court employee has been honored in such a way.

As was stated in his nomination letter, Rudy has held a number of different positions at the juvenile court and in each one, has had the opportunity demonstrate his great leadership skills, innovative ideas, talent and flexibility at a juvenile probation officer.

Rudy started out 15 years ago as a detention supervisor. He then spent 13 years as a school probation officer at Gila Vista Junior High School, where he taught law related education, and then at Aztec High School, where he served as a the liaison between the school and the probation department.

While at Aztec, Rudy wore several hats; he was a compliance officer, project manager, parent-teacher facilitator, educator, social worker and a mentor to as many as 1,500 students throughout his stay there.

Rudy has become a technical resource to the entire court, as well, helping with such things as the implementation of the court's emergency notification system.

In September of 2014, Rudy took a leading role in the development of the HOPE Assessment Center, which serves as an alternative to detention and as a resource to the community on youth-related issues and services.

Rudy saved the juvenile court around \$15,000 in contract labor services, coordinating the renovation of one of the detention housing units into a more family-friendly setting. He is now assigned to the center as on the



Rudy Acosta receives his check

intake probation officers and program facilitator.

Rudy is a persuasive advocate for innovation and his flexible and positive attitude is an asset when critical changes need to be made. New ideas and progressive thinking are key to the success of our Juvenile Court team and there are few people who have done as much as Rudy to drive that innovation.

Aim for Success Program Hits its Mark

By: Patti Pepper

The **AIM FOR SUCCESS** program formerly known as the **LONG TERM STAY** program is a court-ordered program that is a result of the Honorable Kathryn Stocking-Tate's request for a program that would allow youth to stay in Yuma and receive transition services before returning to the community.

The program is designed to allow youth who are moderate to high risk, based on the Arizona Youth Assessment System (AZYAS) to remain in the community while being provided with a structured environment, individual and family counseling and participation in programs designed to assist with their transition back into the community, to increase their pro social skills and to reduce future delinquent behaviors.

The court reviews the status of each youth every 60 days. The AFS Team consists of multiple juvenile court departments, to include Probation, Detention, Detention Education, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Community Restitution (Change Begins With Me), Merging Two Worlds, Aztec High School, treatment agencies, and all positive supports in the community, i.e., coaches, pastors and extended family members.

Detention provides extensive programming that the juvenile must complete before they are eligible for transition activities out of detention.

The AFS program launched on April 1, 2014. The program is for juveniles who are over 15 years of age who commit multiple technical violations and who have experienced difficulties

within the family. Eligible youth will remain in detention up to four months and stay no longer than six months.

Once the youth reach Detention's Level Five and their 75th day in detention, they are eligible to be temporarily released for school, treatment services, Change Begins With Me activities and home passes.

The AFS team also partners with outside agencies such as Yuma Private Industry Council (YPIC), behavioral health providers and local schools.

Safety Plans and a 60 Day Transition Plan are developed by the family and the AFS Team for transitioning out of detention. The juvenile and parents take a more active role in participating in mandated services and become active participants in the juvenile's transition phase. T

he goal is for the juvenile and family to receive intensive services before the juvenile is transitioned back into the home. When the juvenile completes the secure portion of the program, they are released from detention and continued on probation in aftercare for a minimum of 45 days.

The program has been a **SUCCESS!** We have had four graduations and currently there are seven more youth in the program. Three of the graduates have obtained employment and two participants have graduated from high school.

The team members have worked very hard and are dedicated members of the Aim For Success Program.

Besides juvenile court and Aztec High School staff, team members include therapist Fernando Estrada and treatment staff from Arizona's Children Association and Community Intervention Associates.

How do Team members feel about the program? Here are their comments! "I feel our team, filled with **HOPE**, has made an impact on each and every one of the kids,"

"I feel that the team collaboration of all the court departments is what makes this program and the kids successful." "The program allows for a seamless transition from secure care to a graduated release back into the community with a continuum of services."

"I believe that for a child to be successful, you have to connect them with adults who truly care, and I have seen this through the Aim for Success Program."

"It is a very good program overall and impacts our youth in a positive way," "Youth learn how to make responsible choices, to avoid peer pressure, set goals, and develop a plan on achieving their goals."

"The program allows students to continue with a high quality education that keeps them on track towards graduation," and "The youth tend to open up a lot more and discuss their true emotions which helps them to learn skills to function better once there out in the community."

"We believe all children are capable of success, no exceptions."

Change Begins With Me! Enhances Community Restitution

By: Sherri Justice

The Community Restitution Department was reorganized in May of 2014 in response to the court's shift to using evidence-based practices for all programming. One of the results of this shift was the beginning of the Change Begins with Me Program.

A committee was formed to implement a program that focused on helping moderate to high risk teens, in conjunction with detention's Aim for Success program, participate in job shadowing and mentoring opportunities, gain life skills and learn job readiness skills using the Merging Two Worlds curriculum.

Partnering with YPIC and other community agencies to find employment the program has an ultimate goal of helping these youth make a seamless transition from probation to the community, prepared for the future.

Implementation of the Change Begins with Me! Program, formerly called the Tier II program, was made possible by reassigning a probation officer and a detention officer to the Community Restitution Department. In May of 2014, a group of 10 teens, both male and female, ages 16-17 years of age, were selected using the criteria of moderate-maximum risk/needs on the AZYAS tool.

The teens selected were from both standard and intensive probation. After the job readiness training was completed, the teens were assisted in job searching. Guidance was provided in the completion of their applications and resume building. Teens are also provided guidance on appropriate interview techniques and dress, as well as guidance in the appropriate use of social media and internet correspondence. Some of the other projects that have been completed since the inception of the program are as follows:

Building bird houses with Jan Wilson and building a float for the Christmas Light Parade and then riding the float in the parade. The teens have gone on career tours with the FBI, at a glass manufacturing plant

and have done trail maintenance with BLM at Telegraph Pass.

The program also has a healthy lifestyle component; the teens hike Telegraph Pass, cook, perform community service at the Humane Society, Food Bank, Hospice Compassus, Catholic Community Services and other non-profit agencies.

They've also built (garden) planters at the Juvenile Court, assisted by Master Gardener Gene Ingersoll, and are currently constructing others in collaboration with the County Health Department as part of their senior nutrition program for a residential program in Somerton.

Staff also watch movies with "a message" with the youth assigned to the program and then discuss the content of the movies, and sometimes the youth journal about what they got from the movie.

Commitment to education is constantly emphasized and teens are encouraged to do whatever it takes to achieve grades which show their true academic ability and potential. Staff have also taken opportunities to let the teens just breathe and have some fun. Outings include trips to local parks and recreation areas and occasionally playing games or just sitting and talking.

Many of the youth that we serve are lacking in appropriate, positive relationships, social skills and effective communication skills. We work with the teens to help them overcome this by learning self-respect, respect and empathy for others, social skills, commitment, teamwork, integrity and responsibility, among other things. The program's duration is typically 4-6 months, however some teens have needed more time. It is open-ended and as teens leave the program for whatever reason (graduation, defaulting, etc.), others come aboard. The teens have formed very strong bonds and,



John Cicala, Monte Preston and Sherri Justice with program youth at the dedication of John's Garden

despite their differences, have come to consider themselves family.

To date, 29 teens have been in the program. The first four who completed the program graduated on December 3, 2014, a second group of four graduated on February 26, and yet another group of three graduated on April 28.

Of the 29 referred to the program, three defaulted from probation, one was terminated from the program for inappropriate behavior, one voluntarily withdrew, and three aged out when they turned 18. By and large, the program has resulted in far more success stories than incompletions. As of today's date, 11 teens have obtained employment.

All of the youth who have graduated or are scheduled to graduate have made some or significant improvement in their personal behavior and family relationships. They have all begun to make positive choices and have been either employed or are actively seeking employment.

This program works very closely with Probation and Detention and has greatly improved relationships between different departments within the court and has also resulted in treatment plans with common goals and objectives. This new way of dealing with the youth assigned to the court has been very beneficial to the treatment of the youth that we serve as well as to their families.

Delinquents Win Yuma County Softball Tournament for Sixth Consecutive Year on April 11



Front Row: Yolanda Huerta-Urbalejo, Courtney Reed, Ranee Arviso, Theresa Figmaka, Lindsay Caraway. Back Row: Jose Urbalejo, Gary Snyder, Cesar Acosta, Marcos Mercado, Jamie McGalliard, Frankie Veloz, Charlie Santa Cruz. Not pictured is Lenny Longoria.

Aging to Perfection

Yolanda Huerta
 Juan Linarez
 Alex Godinez
 Gabriela Lachica
 Bricena Gomez
 Fred Muntinga
 Suman Pangasa
 Dawn Blake
 Gary Maxwell
 Charlie Santa Cruz
 David Sherman
 Karen Hamby
 Anet Solorzano

June 2
 July 3
 July 4
 July 6
 July 9
 July 12
 July 14
 July 18
 July 20
 July 20
 July 27
 July 30
 Aug 1

Evangelina Hernandez
 Edna Lugo
 Debra Ullery
 Kathleen Hutchinson
 Yvonne Graf

Aug 7
 Aug 10
 Aug 12
 Aug 14
 Aug 21

Lisa Klauck
 Martin Reyes
 Diana Sanchez
 Cristine Vassar
 Deonne Pottorff
 Kathryn Stocking-Tate
 Walt Contreras
 Veronica Davis
 Mike Eslinger
 Lize Lucero
 Luis Torres
 Laura Ortega
 Juan Rodriguez

Sept 2
 Sept 2
 Sept 6
 Sept 6
 Sept 7
 Sept 9
 Sept 15
 Sept 21
 Sept 22
 Sept 26
 Sept 27
 Sept 29
 Sept 29



1st Quarter Awards



Matt Fox

**Surveillance Officer
Standard Probation
Employee of the Quarter**

Matt Fox is a surveillance officer with standard probation's pilot program, Juveniles Under Supervision and Treatment (JUST). He was recognized for his willingness to assist other officers with their caseloads, including intensive probation and Drug Court. Feedback from the families with whom he works has been very positive.



Juan Cortez

**Detention Officer
of the Quarter**

Juan Cortez is a Detention Officer I. He was recognized by his supervisor for taking on additional responsibilities without complaint, for completing his tasks right the first time and taking pride in his work. Juan works well with the children in detention and is always trying to make a positive impact in their lives.



Sherri Justice

**Probation Officer
of the Quarter**

Sherri Justice is Probation Officer II in the Community Restitution Unit, overseeing the Change Begins With Me (Tier II) program. She exemplifies the "Kids at Hope" philosophy and is a strong facilitator and mentor in the motivational interviewing (MI) process. Her community resources have assisted four children going through her program to obtain jobs.

2nd Quarter Awards



Stacy Davidson

**Court Services Assistant II
Employee of the Quarter**

Stacy Davidson holds a lead position in the Clerk's Office. She was nominated by two different coworkers, both referring to her willingness to train new employees. Stacy has outstanding knowledge and training skills and helps new employees to believe in themselves and their ability to succeed. She is never too busy to help out and has a "groovy and enlightening sense of humor."



Vijay Mohindra

**Detention Officer
of the Quarter**

Vijay Mohindra a Detention Officer I. He was nominated by his supervisor for the excellent job that he does overseeing the juveniles in all of the different pods to which he is assigned. He works hard and is known as a "team player," always making himself available when shifts are short on staff. He can diffuse situations when tensions are high and recognizes when juveniles are struggling.



Juan Linarez

**Probation Officer
of the Quarter**

Juan Linarez is a Probation Officer I working out of the San Luis office. He is a self-motivated officer who is very proactive in getting his youth involved in treatment. During this past quarter, he coordinated a field trip for 26 youth to an Arizona Diamondbacks game. He also served as the juvenile court's coordinator and participated in the Arizona Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics.

New Hires



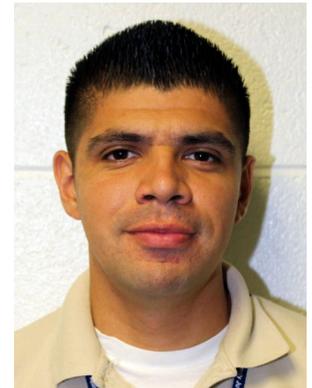
Sarah Jaramillo
Detention Officer Trainee
March 2



Mayra Fonseca
Volunteer
March 4



Jesus Meza
Dispatcher
April 14



Francisco Hernandez
Detention Officer Trainee
May 4

Numbers That Matter

By: Jennifer Rader

Probation Fees Collected				Restitution Collected			
	January	February	March	January	February	March	
Standard	\$ 8,740.30	\$ 10,864.08	\$ 11,093.00	\$ 742.09	\$1,586.36	\$1,092.07	
JIPS	\$ 1,400.29	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 3,405.94	\$ 97.00	\$ 478.08	\$ 571.00	
Diversion	\$ 960.00	\$ 1,870.00	\$ 1,465.00	\$ 36.22	\$ 336.57	\$ 52.58	
Collections	\$ 916.40	\$ 692.00	\$ 39.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	
Off Probation	\$ 882.00	\$ 1,068.50	\$ 1,297.00	\$ 240.68	\$ 120.33	\$ 280.08	
Total	\$12,807.00	\$16,694.58	\$17,299.94	\$1,115.98	\$2,521.34	\$1,995.73	

The staff of The Blog is looking for your suggestions on ways to improve the content of the newsletter, as well as ideas for upcoming issues. If you have any ideas or would like to submit a story, contact Leo Mendez at lmendez@courts.az.gov or Ben Rowe at browe@courts.az.gov, or any member of the newsletter committee.

