

**Letters to the Editor**  
continued from page A-4



ing of the security checks completed by the officers. These electronically recorded checks substantiate that the officers are conducting their checks in accordance with the standards. In the case of each suicide, this electronic recording has proven the officers checked the individuals within the previous 23 to 33 minutes. None of the three were on close observation watch as mental health had deemed a more frequent monitoring unnecessary.

As stated earlier, detention staff routinely place inmates on close observation watch, however, they do not have the authority to remove them from this status. No inmate within the Pinal County Jail has ever inflicted significant self-harm while on close observation watch.

I would like to thank all who have given, both verbal and written support to the detention staff for doing one of the most difficult jobs in the law enforcement profession and one that most individuals would not consider. Lastly, I would like to thank the detention staff for your dedication, professionalism and for doing your job every day in helping to keep the citizens of Pinal County safe. Because of you the Pinal County Adult Detention Facility is one of the best run in the state.

Terry W. Altman, Chief Deputy, Detention  
Pinal County Sheriff's Office

# Statewide Campaign Shares Positive Stories Going On At Public Schools

By Meghan McCoy  
The News

A campaign that helps promote inspiring stories featuring students, teachers, staff and administrators at public schools in Arizona is kicking off its second year of sharing great stories that are happening in the classroom every day for the 2008-2009 school year.

Executive Director of the Arizona School Board Association (ASBA) Panfilo Contreras said it was the work of a coalition statewide association that made the Arizona Public Schools Making A Difference Every Day Campaign possible a year ago. He said the idea behind the campaign is to get stories from the field and make them public to balance out the negative press and make people realize their are miracles happening in the classrooms statewide everyday.

"We want to encourage everyone to shine the spotlight on innovative teachers, cutting-edge programs and the accomplishments of our stu-

dents statewide," Contreras said. "There is a lot going on right in public school classrooms across Arizona and we're determined to share those stories." He added that they wanted the project to provide a source for the media to find positive news to print for the communities.

The entire educational community is encouraged to share their public education success stories throughout the entire school year through e-mail at [info@azschoolsmakeadifference.org](mailto:info@azschoolsmakeadifference.org) or through a form on the campaign Web site at [azschoolsmakeadifference.org/tellstory.asp](http://azschoolsmakeadifference.org/tellstory.asp).

The campaign would like to get the word about the program and encourage more people to submit their success stories in public schools, especially in Apache Junction, he added.

Contreras said a survey performed by Arizona State University every year called A+ Parent Satisfaction Survey, has started to show that parents are starting to hear the good stories about public

education. The research has shown that there is a marked increase in parental perceptions of public schools after a nine-year decline.

In addition to sharing news about what's happening at individual schools throughout Arizona, Web site visitors can also read about the great things happening at public schools statewide and sign-up for a weekly e-mail newsletter highlighting several of the week's top submissions. The e-mail newsletter also features stories from media across Arizona that highlights

positive public education stories.

The help of participating organizations that were involved to make the campaign a success include the Arizona Education Association (AEA), Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA), Arizona PTA, Arizona Rural Schools Association (ARSA), Arizona School Administrators (ASA), ASBA, Association of Arizona School Business Officials (AASBO) and the Greater Phoenix Education Management Council (GPEMC).

## Superior Court Earns Accolades

FLORENCE— The Superior Court in Pinal County is the recipient of a prestigious award issued by the state's highest court, the Arizona Supreme Court.

The award recognizes important initiatives designed to improve the justice system experience for the county residents who are served by the legal system.

The award recognized programs aimed at "Protecting Children, Families and Communities." Three programs were highlighted in the nomination and all three resulted from the diligent, hard work of the Pinal County Juvenile Court Community Advisory Board. This is an all-volunteer group made up of diverse professional, cultural and community backgrounds. They are appointed by the Presiding Juvenile Judge to help evaluate and enhance services provided by Juvenile Court Services.

The common interest is to ensure that Juvenile Court practices continue to reflect the best interests of youth, families, victims and the community. "The efforts of the Community Advisory Board have allowed the Juvenile Court to continue with its mission of empowering our children to make wise choices. By providing youth with educational assistance when needed, by affirming their positive progress on probation through additional incentives, and by focusing on the fact that character does in fact count, we remind young people that they have control of their futures," said Judge Stephen McCarville.

McCarville handles the Juvenile Court cases that are heard at the Superior Court in Pinal County. "I am proud of the Community Advisory Board for all of the great work they have done on behalf of our children," the judge added. "They have given the courts additional resources to benefit not only the child, but all of us in these times of financial concerns." The nomination that earned the prestigious award men-

tions three Superior Court initiatives:

"Probation Works" Incentive Program— Working with probation staff, the Community Advisory Board developed a plan to teach responsibility by rewarding probationers for good behavior. A point system allows probationers to gain rewards for improving their grades, completing community service projects or paying restitution ahead of schedule. Points can be redeemed for movie passes, pizza, school supplies, etc.

Character Counts Essay Contest— Now in its third year, the contest is open to Pinal youth from K-12, including home-schooled youth. Essays on one of the "six pillars of character"— Caring, Trustworthy, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness and Citizenship— are judged by the Community Advisory Board. In 2008, students submitted 825 essays.

Youth Justice Center Enrichment Programs— The Community Advisory Board has been instrumental in bringing several initiatives that enrich the lives of the young people serving detention at the Youth Justice Center. They created a photography and art program; initiated a partnership with the YMCA, which resulted in the donation of \$17,000 worth of fitness equipment to begin a Healthy Body/Healthy Mind program; and developed a music program, complete with donated instruments and books.

The Superior Court's Mental Health Task Force earned an Honorable Mention for its efforts toward forming a better, more comprehensive approach to individuals in the justice system who are affected by mental health conditions.



## Republican Club to Host Round Table

The Superstition Mountain Republican Club's next meeting will be held Tuesday, September 9, at the Feedbag Restaurant, 300 S. Phelps Dr., in Apache Junction. Social Time begins at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The Superstition Mountain Republican Club will host a "round table" discussion at this meeting. The organization will host a group of candidates to discuss how to propel a total Republican victory in November. Any candidate in attendance can provide a three-minute campaign update.

Kevin McCarthy, president of the Arizona Tax Research Association, will be the featured speaker on October 14.

McCarthy has served ATRA since 1986. A recognized expert in the public finance and taxation field, McCarthy has extensive experience representing taxpayers before

policy makers at the state and local level. He has been appointed to and served on numerous legislative and executive committees. He currently serves on the Property Tax Oversight Commission, Debt Oversight Commission, and Joint Legislative Committee on Property Tax.

The Feedbag offers a varied, moderately priced menu. The SMRC buys coffee or soft drinks for members and first-time guests.

The club discusses local, national and international political issues from a Pinal County perspective with lively and timely guests. The meetings are fun and informative. All registered Republicans and folks desiring to be Republicans are invited to attend and become members.

For more information, visit the SMRC Web site at [www.smrcaz.com](http://www.smrcaz.com).

## from Kollenborn, A-4

more than 100 books have been written about Superstition Mountain and most of them are filled with photographs of this famous Arizona landmark.

The Superstition Wilderness contains some 240 miles of hiking and riding trails. The most popular trailheads are First Water, Peralta, and the trailheads in Lost Dutchman State Park. There are some 17 trailheads that provide access to the wilderness area.

The Superstition Wilderness Area is now a very crowded wilderness. It is one area that will experience controlled access in the very near future if the forest district plans on keeping the region pristine. It is estimated some 70,000 people visited the western end of the Superstition Wilderness last year. Most of these visitors hiked into the mountains less than a mile. These kinds of numbers have changed the meaning of the word "wilderness." A wilderness area was envisioned to be a place of pristine and tranquil beauty, a place where contemporary man's things are left behind and only nature can be experienced. Men like Leopold, Muir and Pinchot had a vision of protecting some of America's outdoors for future generations to enjoy when they advocated wilderness areas in America.

Today, some of the most beautiful pristine areas in American are wilderness areas set aside by Americans with a vision for the future. The most valuable real estate in the Apache Junction area or Gold Canyon area borders the wilderness area. Just alone should speak for how valuable wilderness is to

Americans. Some of the individuals, who criticize the wilderness concept most, build their homes on the wilderness fence line and pay the highest price for their property.

We Americans are fortunate to have these special areas to retreat to when we have been overwhelmed by urban America. The fast lane society and stress kill more Americans than anything else. If only these people could just share a few moments of tranquility and solitude afforded by one of America's wilderness areas they might increase their survival chances threefold. A famous American once said, "Slow life's pace and enjoy being alive."

## from Supervisor, A-1

Division 6, Democratic incumbent Judge Janna Vanderpool, who ran unopposed, landed 10,303 votes. Meanwhile, on the Republican side, Steve Fuller bested Daniel Washburn 5,596 to 4,327.

Assessor and Democrat Paul Larkin earned 10,425 votes and will run against Republican Ron Reinagel (8,812 votes).

Democratic County Recorder Laura Dean-Lytle collected 10,615 votes. Meanwhile, Republican hopeful John Acton received 8,758.

Democratic Treasurer "Dodie" Doolittle (10,568 votes) will take on Republican Rayna Palmer, currently CEO of Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce, (8,853 votes).

Democratic County Attorney James P. Walsh ran unopposed, gathering 10,165 votes.

Democratic County Recorder

## from Mental Health Court, A-1

"National research shows that 16 percent of people jailed for criminal offenses also have mental health diagnoses," Johnson said. "People with mental health conditions are more likely to be arrested. By default, the criminal justice system becomes the mental health care delivery system or the gateway to that system."

Johnson appointed Judge Janna Vanderpool as administrative presiding judge over the Mental Health Court in Pinal County.

To address a growing problem and awareness of the issues facing the mentally ill in the justice system, the Superior Court in Pinal County formed a Mental Health Task Force in 2005. Vanderpool is a founding member of the task force. Other members included representatives from medical and behavioral care providers, County Health and Human Services, the county attorney, public defender, county jail, clerk of the court, probation and other allied organizations.

"The task force's goal was collaboration to more swiftly identify the mentally ill, ensure that they are treated with dignity and provide opportunities for treatment," Vanderpool said. "This protects our neighborhoods and communities, saves money and reduces trauma to both the accused and the victims."

When someone is accused of a crime, the courts have to determine if someone is competent to stand trial and if the person can assist their attorney or public defender in preparing their defense.

"Individuals who do not have the ability to understand what is happening— whether that is due to a disability, mental illness or other mental health issues— must be protected from prosecution

in our courts until their ability to understand the proceedings and to assist their attorneys is restored," Johnson said. "Often, with treatment, medication and education on how the justice system works, we can move forward with a case that might have been dismissed due to competency issues."

"Prior to these recent changes, it could take a year or more of back and forth, just to determine if someone is competent to stand trial or aid in their defense," Vanderpool said. "Now we can shorten that time by many months."

The process for court-ordered mental health treatment or therapy falls under stringent guidelines laid out in law. There multiple legal steps and professional evaluations before someone can be court-ordered into treatment or placed into a qualified facility for therapy. Low-level, nonviolent offenders with mental health conditions sometimes can be released for appropriate treatment and supervision. The courts can also appoint a conservator or guardian, if necessary.

"There are several significant public benefits from more acute attention to, and early assessment of, the mentally ill in our justice system," Vanderpool said. "Previously, those needing these services were sent to the state hospital and the state's cost for evaluation and restoration to competency was incredibly expensive. Now, we save taxpayer money by not incarcerating non-violent offenders who have a suitable place to reside. Additionally, we are now able to provide monitored, out-of-custody and in-jail restoration to competency services."

**WHY TRADE IT IN?**

**GRAND OPENING**

- No One Comes to Your House
- No Consignment Fees
- Safe
- You Name the Price
- Short Term
- You Collect the Money
- Fast Results
- Main Street Frontage
- Maximum Value
- We Advertise & Show Your Vehicle
- (Pricing Assistance)
- We Clean Vehicle Weekly

**U-Sell Auto & RV**  
7744 E. Main • Mesa, AZ  
480.984.5765

**SANDIE SMITH**  
County Supervisor  
District 2

*"Call me with your concerns"*

sandie.smith@co.pinal.az.us  
**(480) 982-0659**  
fax (520) 866-6107  
575 N. Idaho Rd. Suite 101  
Apache Junction, AZ 85219

*Ad paid for by Sandie Smith*

**NOW OPEN!**

**St. Vincent DePaul is Having a Grand Opening Party!**

**Tuesday, September 9, 2008**

With Apache Junction Mayor John Insalaco at 10 AM

**First 25 Customers to Spend \$50 Will Receive a \$25 Gift Card for Their Next Purchase**

The Store is Filled with Value Including:  
Low Cost Clothes, Furniture and Household Items!

**We've Moved!**

**New Apache Junction Location!**

**2540 W. Apache Trail, Ste. #105, A.J.**  
**480.380.4515**  
(Across from Super Wal-Mart)

Hours: Mon. - Sat. 10 AM - 6 PM • Closed Sun.  
Check Out Our Website for Other Convenient Locations:  
[www.stvincentdepaul.net](http://www.stvincentdepaul.net)

**★ We Accept Donations at the Stores ★**  
**Or Call: 602.254.3338 for Pickup**