

By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

### **This year and next**

As 2017 draws to a close, this article revisits what happened this year and what to look for next year. While 2017 witnessed many changes and improvements, 2018 promises a level of change in the Clerk's office that has not been experienced in twenty years. The highlights below come from the office's monthly email update, *The Brief*.

January: The restyled civil rules went into effect, the restyled criminal rules were filed for consideration, and a task force to restyle the family rules got underway.

February: The Veterans Stand Down helped participants resolve their court matters and receive services like food, clothing, healthcare, housing, and assistance finding jobs. The Superior Court's Law Library Resource Center was formally opened, including an onsite filing window.

March: A completed scanning project resulted in millions of pages of documents from cases filed more than 15 years ago becoming available electronically. The office opened on select Saturdays to issue marriage licenses and process passport applications.

April: Family court minute entries were removed from public access online. This was not popular with some, but a majority of feedback was positive. The records remain accessible electronically to parties and through the office's public access terminals.

May: The Case History Index was updated—a wealth of information about filings in the Superior Court in Maricopa County. Readers were reminded about the Clerk's document preparation guidelines for optimizing acceptance of documents and how they appear in the electronic court record ([http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov/document\\_preparation\\_guidelines.asp](http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov/document_preparation_guidelines.asp)).

June: Some sugar with the salt. Readers were notified that fees were going up in August and the office reported its success locating crime victims and getting them nearly \$150,000 in owed restitution in just three months' time.

July: Typically a slower time for the legal community, but the month the office received a National Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for its back-scanning project.

August: The office debuted a website to locate forgotten bonds and start the process of getting them returned. Who doesn't like finding money? ([http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov/release\\_bonds.asp](http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov/release_bonds.asp)).

September: Readers were reminded that individual subpoenas are intended to be issued for individual witnesses – not copied and used for multiple witnesses. The court announced the expansion of its mental health calendar to provide scheduling relief to the Desert Vista facility. And the Clerk’s office helped spread the word about a court resource for everyone: [www.azcourts.gov](http://www.azcourts.gov).

October: The office sent a reminder about recently approved rules that would take effect January 1 and an update on the office’s move to electronically certifying and transmitting court records.

November: News on the expansion of electronic sentencing – a faster, more efficient way of getting criminal sentencing documents where they need to go.

December: This compilation of updates and information. To receive *The Brief*, enter your email address at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AZMARIC/subscriber/new?preferences=true>, select “submit,” reenter the email, select “Add Subscriptions,” scroll down to “Newsletters” and click the plus sign, then select “The Brief” and click “Submit.”

Looking forward to 2018, the governor will appoint a new Clerk of Superior Court to take office in February. The new Clerk will serve throughout 2018, during which time primary and general elections will determine the elected Clerk who will take office in January 2019. Best wishes to the candidates willing to take on this important public service. It demands leading a complex and important judicial department and is worth the time and effort.

Finally, I am grateful for one more chance to reflect on a busy and productive year in the Clerk’s office, to thank you for your support and input throughout the year, and to wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a Happy New Year.