

# NEWSFLASH



## Clerk of the Superior Court's Office, Maricopa County, AZ

July 2019

### **Where there is a "will" there is a way**

Going back in Maricopa County history from the 1800s up to 1984, a person was able to submit their personal will to the Clerk's Office for safekeeping. In 1984, the statute that authorized this provision was repealed. However, the Clerk's Office still had to maintain the thousands of paper wills that had been turned in to them over the decades. These wills were most recently stored in a vault in the Customer Service Center and the mechanism for retrieving a will was a paper, manual process using an old library card catalogue.

Seeing the need to ensure a better record-keeping and retrieval system of these wills the Office had in its possession, Probate Registrar Maridel Soileau and Project Manager Chris Driscoll agreed it was in the best interests of the Office to address the issue. As a result in July 2018, they launched the Safekeeping of Wills Project.

As of this month, they have all but completed the monumental task. The results include:

- 1) Five different outdated WordPerfect lists were reformatted and put into an Excel spreadsheet. This involved over 10,000 entries between the wills the Office had for safekeeping and the paper receipts.
- 2) All of the manual paper receipts were scanned and are available in the Office's electronic repository. The Office no longer needs to rely on the outdated card catalogue system.
- 3) All of the wills in the Office's possession were reviewed and compared with the names of the wills on the newly-created Excel spreadsheet. This comparison process was very time consuming, but necessary to make sure the records are accurate because Admin. Order 2016-114 provides that the Office is required to keep these wills for 75 years from the date they were deposited for safekeeping.

Special Counsel Jessica Fotinos said, "It took Chris and Maridel a tremendous number of work-hours to get this done because it involved reviewing each of the hard copies of the old wills that were in the vault. However, the end result is that we now have a more secure and streamlined process for the retention and distribution of these wills."

Maridel said, "It is very gratifying to see things are in order and in electronic format."

Both Maridel and Chris were awarded a special Office award for their teamwork in the achievement of this unique project.