

By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

It's Not All Filing and Finances at the Clerk's Office

In addition to court records and exhibits management, financial accounting, and victim restitution, issuing marriage licenses is among the Clerk's responsibilities. Valentine's Day is the office's busiest day issuing licenses. In 2014, Valentine's Day is on a Friday, which will drive many customers to obtain their license from the Clerk. Many of those customers will stay on the courthouse campus to have a Justice of the Peace perform their ceremony immediately after business hours.

The Clerk's Office anticipates serving over 100 couples on Valentine's Day. Wedding plans vary, with some getting married the same day their license is issued. With marriage licenses valid for one year in Arizona, other couples plan far in advance. It is common for couples to marry or have their license issued on particularly memorable days. In 2011, couples took advantage of January 1, September 10 and November 11 (1/11/11, 9/10/11, and 11/11/11 respectively). Similarly, 2012 and 2013 had popular dates: 10/11/12, 12/12/12, and 11/12/13. Occurrences of these easy-to-remember dates are dwindling in our calendar system. Some of the Clerk's customers receiving a marriage license on this year's Valentine's Day are already planning a Saturday wedding for the end of the year: 12/13/14.

Not all couples are so deliberate about specific dates. Some lean toward the practical, with an eye on the federal tax code. The Clerk's Office receives an annual rush for licenses in the closing weeks of each year. The office issues approximately 19,000 marriage licenses per year, averaging 75 licenses issued each business day. Over the last five years, the Clerk's Office has issued over 100,000 marriage licenses, with an average of over 120 licenses on Valentine's Day or the business day before.

The Clerk's Office issues marriage licenses during regular business hours at its locations across the Valley. Some Justice Courts and the Youngtown City Court are deputized to issue licenses on behalf of the Clerk. After the marriage ceremony, all licenses are returned to the Clerk's Customer Service Center in downtown Phoenix for recording as public records. The fee for a marriage license is \$76.00.

Strategic Plan

The Clerk's Office is implementing its strategic plan for 2014-2015. Although a strategic plan is not mandated, it has proved to be a valuable tool for the Clerk's Office. Like the business sector, the Clerk's strategic plan identifies trends and applies resources to a list of priorities. In the past, the office has focused on eFiling, the electronic court repository, improving service to customers, and recruiting and retaining a professional work force. By following its strategic plan and making adjustments, the office has consistently

focused on customer service while performing under budget through innovation and automation.

The Clerk's mission is to provide progressive and efficient court-related records management and financial services for the justice system, legal community, and public so that they have fair and timely access to accurate court records and services. The office's vision is to anticipate, meet, and exceed the expectations of our customers. For more information about the office, or to provide feedback and suggestions for the strategic plan or other Clerk's Office functions, visit the Clerk's website at www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov.