

By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

### **Why this year's Thanksgiving is bittersweet**

Reflecting on our lives and being thankful for what our successes and failures have taught us is valuable in business and at home. This Thanksgiving is bittersweet because it is the last time I will be able to put these thoughts in a *Clerk's Corner* article. After reflecting on more than 30 years of work in the clerk's office, I am most thankful for the following three things.

*Incredible staff.* It has been a pleasure coming to work each day knowing I am surrounded by hardworking, dedicated, and amazing people. Many have retired, moved, or just moved on during my tenure and the ranks have always refilled with equally caring and diligent, wonderful individuals. People want to be part of a successful organization, have a fulfilling experience, and make a difference in exchange for the hours they commit to their work. The clerk's office has recruited great people by developing a great reputation and maintaining it over time. The individuals who make up the team have consistently shined over the years and I am thankful for the glowing comments I have received while traveling around the state. Whether it's sharing knowledge with other clerks' offices or being the place that could answer a question that no one else could, I have always felt that if our office and the individuals within it could be recognized as great customer service agents, other people would want to join us.

*Support from judicial leadership.* The need for and benefit of having the support of court leaders has been most evident in technology over three decades of increasing change. Technology as a broad term has resulted in efficiency, reduced tax burdens, and better services to the bench, litigants, legal support staff, employees, and everyone our work touches. The leadership of several Chief Justices of the Supreme Court was key to the success of moving technology forward in our court and in all of Arizona's courts. Without consistent support over different administrations, the technology would have stalled or been delayed. When this office had ideas or proposals it was vital for the presiding judge and chief justice to support the ideas or they would have withered on the vine. One thing I know from decades of experience is that consistent, forward-thinking support from the highest levels of court leadership doesn't happen everywhere. Arizona is truly a national leader in courts and the interstate collaboration, support, and joint commitment toward improvement that we enjoy is not only necessary for effective action, but requires a welcome absence of turf wars and need for credit.

*Improved relationships and association with the legal community.* I have purposefully not mentioned names for fear of anyone feeling left out or underappreciated for their many contributions, but I have to make an exception for Dan McAuliffe. He played an important role decades ago bringing the Clerks of Superior Court into so many

conversations and raising their visibility within the legal community and court system. It was Dan who lobbied for including a clerk's representative on the State Bar's Civil Practice and Procedure Committee—a position in which I served for more than 25 years. Dan was vocal about recognizing the benefits of working with the Clerks and inviting them to discussions that would ultimately have a direct impact on clerk and court operations. Thankfully, it is common now for a clerk's representative to sit on local and statewide committees, task forces, educational development, the MCBA's Bench/Bar Committee, and other groups giving input on how courts can best function. The court system benefits from having a Clerk's input during the process of considering change, and the Clerks deeply appreciate having a seat at the table.

Like many of you, I will be enjoying the company of my family this Thanksgiving. I am also thankful for the chance to write about a few professional highlights over the course of my career. Looking back, it is the people who stand with you against seemingly impossible odds that make the tough days manageable and the good days great. I hope you join me in celebrating those people in your personal and professional lives this Thanksgiving.