

Maricopa Lawyer

Clerk's Corner

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By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

### **Making the Holidays a Little Easier *and Brighter***

Victims of crime experience life differently than non-victims. A one-time event can stay with a victim throughout their life, changing and shaping their experience in the world and sometimes changing their family makeup forever. The court system is designed to produce timely justice. When the court makes a final determination in a criminal case, convicted defendants are often ordered to pay restitution to their victims.

Restitution is a monetary obligation that, once established, remains owed to the victim until paid in full. Like attorneys and parties to cases, victims need to keep their mailing address up-to-date with the Clerk's Office. This ensures victims receive their restitution.

In a program known as Victim-Locate, the Clerk's Office partnered with the County Attorney to locate victims who have moved or otherwise fell out of contact with the Clerk's office. Restitution money that goes unclaimed for too long has to be designated as unclaimed property and is transferred to the Arizona Department of Revenue. Locating victims allows the Clerk's Office to distribute funds to the proper business or individual owed restitution as a victim of crime.

Once committed, a crime and its lasting effects on the victim cannot be undone. Locating those who are owed restitution and providing them their funds offers some acknowledgment that the court system carried out its important role and obligation to crime victims and to society.

Since the victim-locate program began earlier this year, the Clerk's Office has sent over \$384,500 in restitution to victims of crime who previously could not be located due to bad addresses on file with the Clerk's Office. The holidays can be particularly difficult for anyone facing financial stress. Adding the loss of a loved one or the trauma often associated with being the victim of crime only intensifies those stressors. While it is small comfort, getting restitution to the people who are owed it at this time of year may make the holidays a little easier and reaffirm the accountability society expects.

In addition to the official duties of the office, special thanks go to the staff of the Clerk's Office at this time of year for what they do out of a sense of community. Despite any personal setbacks or obligations, year-after-year Clerk employees have given their time and money to help those less fortunate.

The Clerk's Office participates in three primary charitable activities each year. Operation Cobbler takes donations of used shoes that local tradesmen clean and repair before giving them to schools, homeless shelters and to others in need. Since 2000, the Clerk's Office has donated nearly 4,000 shoes for this effort. The socks and necessities drive collects

donations of socks, toiletries and other necessities that are donated to the homeless, near-homeless and others in the area through the Shoebox Ministry. Since 2001, the Clerk's Office has donated more than 3,500 pairs of socks and thousands of other items for this drive. Lastly, the Clerk's Office participates in Toys for Tots, the Marine Corps' charitable drive to provide new books and toys to local children who otherwise might not receive any gifts over the holidays. Since 2003, the Clerk's Office has donated more than 2,000 books and toys for the children of local families.

It is a privilege to serve those who interact with the Superior Court in Maricopa County and it is an honor to work with a great staff who continually strive for outstanding customer service. Their efforts benefit our customers, each other, and some who will never pass through the courts and who they will never have the chance to meet.

Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year to all!