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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **PIMA COUNTY ATTORNEY EXPANDS COURTHOUSE DOG PROGRAM**

TUCSON, ARIZONA - Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall announces the expansion of the County's Courthouse Dog Program with the addition of a new courthouse dog, Blake, a two year old pedigreed Labrador Retriever.

Started in October 2012 by the Pima County Attorney's Office and the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center, the Courthouse Dog Program was the first of its kind in Pima County. The Pima County Attorney's Office is part of a growing movement of criminal justice agencies that use facility dogs to provide comfort and emotional support to crime victims, particularly children and vulnerable adults. The Courthouse Dog Program, endorsed by the National District Attorneys Association, has been implemented by criminal justice agencies in 21 states.

"Having this program in Pima County has been an important tool to better support traumatized victims who have experienced horrific crimes," said LaWall. "Over the past year, Russell, our first Courthouse Dog, made a positive difference in the lives of young victims by providing a calming presence. Adding Blake will allow us to reach and serve more victims who need the comfort and support he will provide."

Blake was selected and professionally trained by Assistance Dogs of the West, an accredited nonprofit service dog organization located in New Mexico. His training began as a puppy at only three months old. As a graduate, Blake completed approximately two years of training and learned over 120 commands.

Blake will work four days a week at Superior and Justice Courts and one day a week at the Children's Advocacy Center. His primary focus will be on cases from the Pima County Attorney's Office Special Victims Unit that involve child victims or witnesses; he will also assist other vulnerable or traumatized victims who need extra support during the criminal justice process.

Blake will live with a specially trained Victim Advocate from the Pima County Attorney's Office who will also serve as his primary handler.

All funding for the Courthouse Dogs Program is obtained solely from assets seized from criminal enterprises. If you would like more information about the national Courthouse Dogs Program visit [www.courthousedogs.com](http://www.courthousedogs.com).

For more information about the programs and services offered by the Pima County Attorney's Office, please visit [www.pcao.pima.gov](http://www.pcao.pima.gov).

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