

Pima County Attorney Laura Conover & The People's Office

Year 3
Review
2023

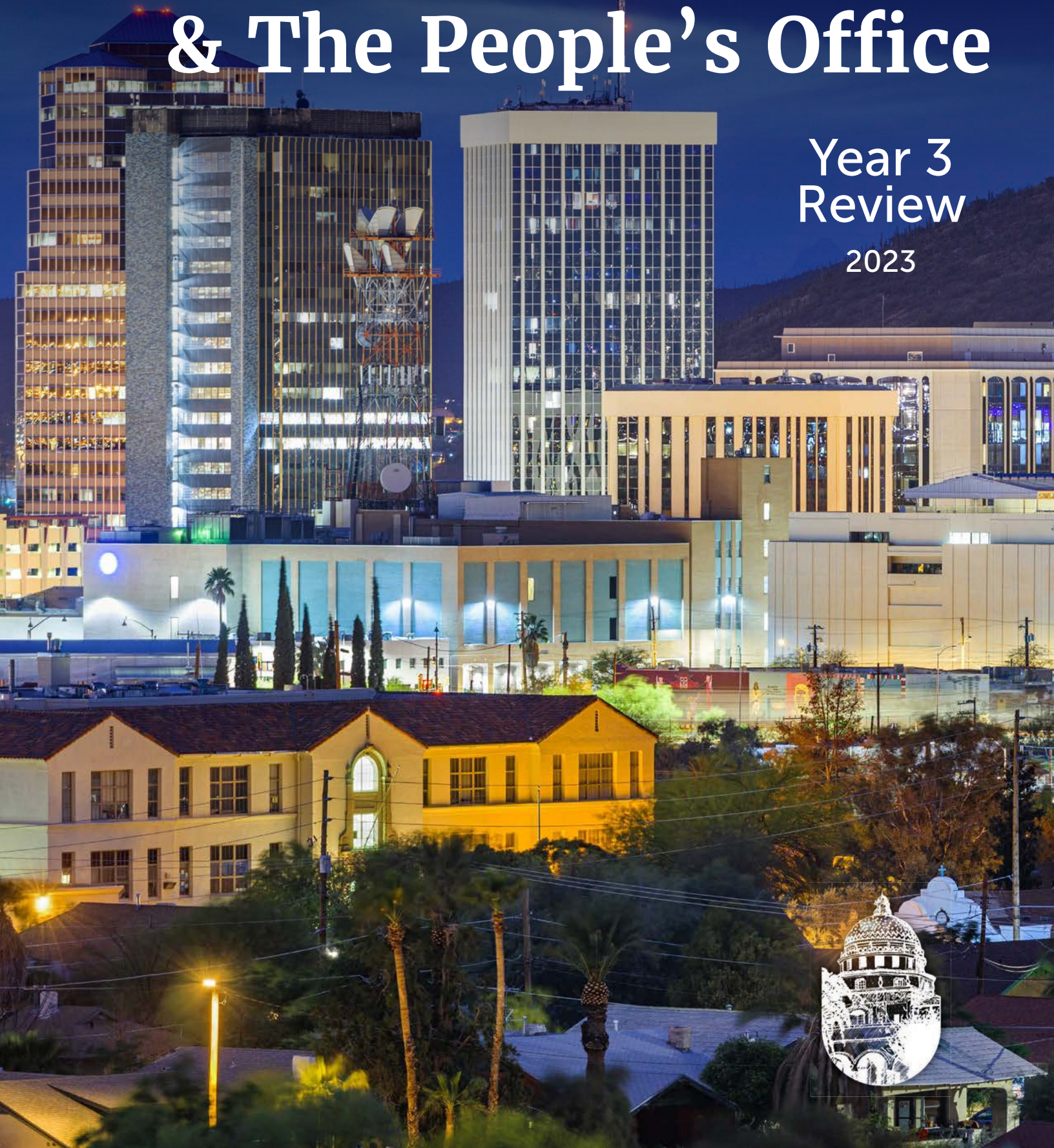




Photo by Tony Gallego



Laura Conover speaking to high schoolers during summer law camp.

Though I draft the Week in Review on Fridays, it can be a more difficult task to try to sum up an entire year at The People's Office. But here I shall endeavor.

We have decided the word of the year is "proactive." The first two years of the administration required a determined steadfastness while we took on the ravages of COVID and started to unbury from the crime wave of 2020 that lay in wait for us as we arrived in 2021. And while there is courage in that "holding steady," that everyone here should be proud of, there was a measure of frustration in being trapped in a constant reactive mode.

In the last six to nine months, we've moved into the proactive arena that we longed to be in. With the homicide rate substantially down and other measures of violent crime letting up, we have the breathing room to move our resources further into the work of bettering the quality of life for our neighborhoods and small businesses.

And we've launched programs we had promised to drive the system forward: the Nation's first Intergovernmental Agreement to specially deputize tribal prosecutors, first with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, followed shortly by the Tohono O'odham Nation, to better serve indigenous victims.

And most especially the State's sole adult Restorative Justice Program which began piloting cases in October.

Now fully staffed, the Civil Division has enjoyed tremendous success this year, not the least of which was the win at the Court of Appeals that restored Reproductive Health Care

for the entire State. As of this writing, we have filed our brief with the Arizona Supreme Court doing everything we can to protect vulnerable crime victims and avoid the criminalization of medical care. We await oral argument in December.

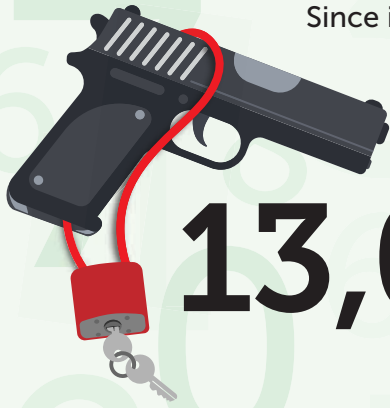
If we thought that our offices' first agency-wide pay raise since 1997 was a challenge, then you can only imagine the intensity of the County's first attempt at it since 1957. It was epic. This was another chance for us to fight to be more competitive and to compensate our employees for the extraordinarily difficult work that they do for our community every day. It's yet another major step in the right direction for The People's Office.

As we look ahead to 2024, we feel revived and ready to meet the challenges of the day. The Office is strong. The civil servants who were here when we arrived share their institutional knowledge with those that have come running through our welcoming doors, embracing the motto that the People's Office employs good employees who must also be truly great human beings.

To be continued,

Laura Conover
Pima County Attorney

By the Numbers



Since inception in 2000

142,399

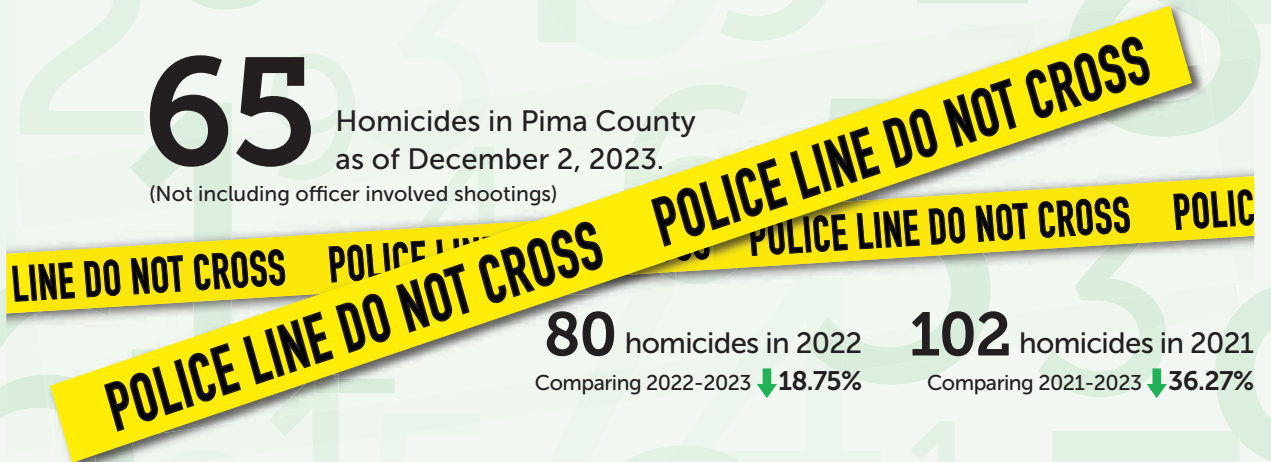
13,000⁺

free gun locks distributed
in the past year

65

Homicides in Pima County
as of December 2, 2023.

(Not including officer involved shootings)



80 homicides in 2022
Comparing 2022-2023 \downarrow 18.75%

102 homicides in 2021
Comparing 2021-2023 \downarrow 36.27%



3,628

Mental Health Applications
Received (as of 11.22.23)



369.5 hours

the PCAO Staff volunteered in
the community (as of 10.30.23)



5,772

victims helped by PCAO advocates



2,156

victims accompanied to
court during judicial process

Calls to Victim Services, January through October 2023



Shawndrea Thomas

Communications Director



Nicole Heath

Legal Administrator

New Faces in Leadership

Shawndrea is PCAO's new Communications Director, bringing more than 15 years of media experience to The People's Office with valuable insight into the areas of crime reporting, investigations, media, and community relations.

Shawndrea is also a true-crime podcaster who recently worked as a news anchor and investigative reporter at KGUN 9 News in Tucson. She spent time as a journalist at television stations in Midland, Texas; Columbus, Ohio; Orlando, Florida and St. Louis, Missouri. One of her biggest projects was a documentary on Oxygen Network called "The Disappearance of Phoenix Cordon." The series focused on the issue of missing people of color and the lack of media coverage. She's also an advocate for skin cancer awareness, a cause near and dear to her heart after losing her brother to the disease.

Shawndrea holds two bachelor's degrees from Arizona State University in Broadcast Journalism and Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on African American Studies and Intercultural Communications. She is responsible for leading her awesome team in telling the story of the People's Office," along with handling local, state, and national news media. Shawndrea also manages the Office's communications plan, public platforms, the PCAO website, social media, and marketing initiatives.

Nicole joins our senior leadership team as our new Legal Administrator. Her job is to act as Administration Manager for PCAO staff, with responsibility for the Human Resources, Information Technology and Finance departments in the People's Office. She directs the vital work of these departments while collaborating efforts between PCAO and Pima County.

Nicole has extensive experience in the public sector, having spent much of her career in state government – most recently as the Deputy Bureau Chief and Fraud Manager for the Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Records. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Northern Arizona University, a master's degree in public administration with a certificate in Participatory Governance from Arizona State University and is a Certified Fraud Examiner.

Although Nicole is not native to Tucson or Pima County, she is passionate about making it her home. When she's not at PCAO, she's busy spending time with her children, her husband, or her dogs, and she's taking advantage of the great outdoors, usually by finding someplace to run or hike.





Emmanuelle Fahey

Restorative Justice Coordinator

Emmanuelle Fahey is the new Restorative Justice Coordinator at The People's Office. She spends her time researching, designing, building, and leading one of the State's first adult restorative justice programs, with guidance from our tribal brothers and sisters and building off the longtime success of the Community Justice Boards in the juvenile arena.

The program is designed to work with adults who have eligible offenses that include an identifiable victim. Emmanuelle will lead the program that focuses on the needs of victims and how offenders can work with them to provide accountability and make things right.

Before joining PCAO, Emmanuelle worked on urban safety projects for the city of Montréal with the International Center for Prevention of Crime. She also served the International Rescue Committee's Tucson office where she managed an employment program involving partnerships with local businesses. Emmanuelle holds a master's degree in Public Policy and Public Administration from Concordia University (Montréal) and a B.A. in International Studies from the University of Arizona. She's interested in the development of public policies and programs that address structural inequities and has a deep appreciation for the people of Pima County.



**Restorative
Justice Program**
Pima County Attorney's Office

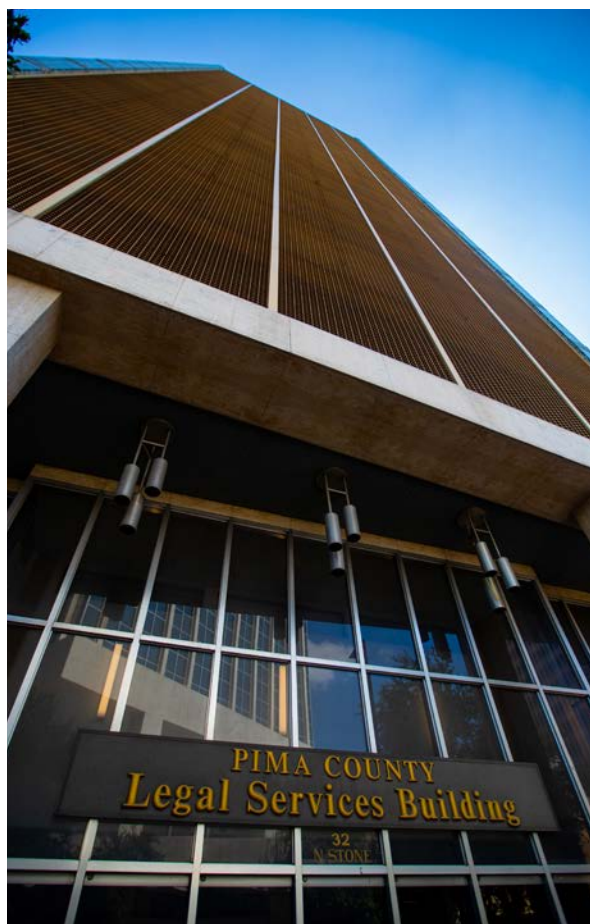


Catie Allen

Executive Assistant to Pima County Attorney Laura Conover & Chief Deputy County Attorney Baird Greene

Catie's recent promotion to executive Assistant for the County Attorney and Chief Deputy County Attorney is a key role at The People's Office. Catie is our first line of contact and is always on top of everything. She grew up in El Paso, Texas and graduated from New Mexico State University with a bachelor's degree in communications studies.

Catie has worked in a variety of industries from homebuilding to fighting illegal dumping to the music industry. When she's not handling things at PCAO, you can find her at a concert, (likely Taylor Swift) or spending time with her husband, family and two fur-dog babies.



Photos by Tony Gallego

Photo by A.E. Araiza



PCAO team at PRSA Impact awards with Chief Chad Kasmar, Desiree Voshefsky and Matt Russell from PRSA.

PRSA Impact Awards

Community outreach by the Pima County Attorney's Office was recognized in October 2023 by the Public Relations Society of America's Southern Arizona Chapter for two projects aimed at informing the residents of Pima County on matters of public safety and health.

The 2022 launch of the "Make the Call" public service announcement (PSA) campaign, and our annual report "Year Two Review" both earned recognition at the PRSA Impact Awards held Oct. 24 at the Hexagon Mining offices in downtown Tucson.

The "Make the Call" campaign features PSA's in both English and Spanish designed to assure people that Arizona's Good Samaritan Law protects them from being charged with minor drug possession when they call 911 to report an overdose in progress. It also encourages viewers to have Narcan, the nasal spray that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, in their home first-aid kits.

The collaborative effort included PCAO Chief

of Detectives Fabian Pacheco, Tucson Police Chief Chad Kasmar and Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos who shared their voices to help spread awareness.

The "Year Two Review" is a full-color report on the many ways that PCAO has worked to support Pima County residents by holding people accountable for the harm they cause, supporting crime victims, finding alternatives to incarceration for those whose crimes do not present an ongoing threat to public safety and in many, many ways through our Civil Division.

The projects were selected by public relations professionals in Tennessee, who judged all entries for the local PRSA awards. Part 2 in the "Make the Call" campaign series also released in October features a testimonial by Tucsonan Bryan Hamilton, who shares his story of addiction, recovery, and redemption. He talks about how his life was saved with Narcan, and how he has saved others by having Narcan on hand. The latest PSA is available online to share with others.

The People's Office Podcast

Production of The People's Office Podcast is now underway. It's a conversation with Pima County Attorney Laura Conover and others that focus on the issues and questions from the public that can have a direct impact on our community. Discussions will also cover updates and changes in Criminal Justice Reform, tackling community challenges, finding solutions, reflections, and up-to-date insight into what's happening at The People's Office. Be sure to tune in and contact us with your topic ideas by sending an email to: thepeoplesofficepodcast@pcao.pima.gov.

The People's Office Podcast





PCAO team and group from Tohono O'odham Nation for IGA signing.

Photo by Tony Gallego

Tohono O'odham IGA

On September 5, 2023, the Pima County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Pima County Attorney's Office and the Tohono O'odham Nation. The new IGA is the second of its kind in the nation, with the first being an IGA signed by the County and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in November of 2022.

The goal of the agreement is to open the doors of PCAO to tribal prosecutors. This gives the Nation the ability to help prosecute cases in Pima County involving tribal victims. Pima County Attorney Laura Conover along with Tohono O'odham Chairman Verlon M. Jose, Vice-Chairwoman Carla L. Johnson, Acting Chief Prosecutor Caroline Allen, Attorney General Howard Shanker, Assistant Attorney General Marissa Sites and Deputy Attorney General Hue Le attended the meeting.

County Attorney Conover told the Board that the agreement will help PCAO better serve tribal members in our community.

"The Tohono O'odham Nation led us in an

intergovernmental agreement with their nation. We went to their legislative council, and we're pleased with a unanimous vote in support of the IGA. We thank them for their trust. An IGA with the Tohono O'odham Nation, following the Pascua Yaqui IGA, will complete us in serving all of Pima County." Conover said.

Chairman Jose and Chairwoman Johnson also spoke before the Pima County Board of Supervisors to mark the special occasion.

"This is a win-win situation," Jose said. "The tribal council passed the resolution supporting this unanimously – no questions asked – because they believe that it is a win-win situation. Don't let this be the only example, the only model of moving forward, but of many more to come."

Chairwoman Johnson added "This is an example of how we can work together. We think about lines and jurisdictions. At the end of the day, we need to think about the betterment of our people and our futures together."

The new agreement will designate the head Tohono O'odham prosecutor as a Special Deputy County Attorney to act on behalf of the State of Arizona regarding cases in Pima County Superior Court. This will give Tohono O'odham tribal victims more services when trials are held outside of tribal and federal courtrooms. The IGA is a 5-year agreement with no cost to Pima County or the Nation. Civil Deputy County Attorney's Bobby Yu and Kyle Johnson were on hand for the vote as the drafters of the IGA.



Photo by Tony Gallego

Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Verlon M. Jose speaking to Pima County Board of Supervisors

Op-Ed Team



LAURA CONOVER



REGINA ROMERO



ADELITA GRIJALVA



CHAD KASMAR

Graphic provided by Canva

Op-Eds

Pima County Attorney Laura Conover joined Tucson Mayor Regina Romero, Pima County Board of Supervisors Chair Adelita Grijalva and Tucson Police Chief Chad Kasmar to collaborate on writing op-ed pieces about the collective efforts by the various offices to address the challenges in our region. We are continuing to work together to let the public

know where we are in our strategic plans, with a common goal of resolving the issues that impact the unhoused, those with substance use disorders and criminal activity that can affect our businesses and neighborhoods. This collaboration of City and County leaders is working toward real solutions to those problems.

Memorandum of Understanding Veteran's Court

On August 17, 2023, PCAO signed an agreement with the Regional Municipalities Veterans Treatment Court (RMVTC) that will provide the opportunity for veterans whose misdemeanor offenses occur in unincorporated Pima County to benefit from a proven program.

The RMVTC, previously available only for those who commit misdemeanor crimes within the boundaries of Tucson, is now available throughout Pima County after Conover signed an agreement along with Pima County Superior Court Presiding Judge Jeffrey Bergin, Green Valley Justice of the Peace Ray Carroll, Tucson City Court presiding judge Antonio Riojas, and City Court Magistrate Thaddeus Semon during a ceremony at Tucson City Court.

The program, launched in 2008 under now retired Judge Mike Pollard, offers unique opportunities to have cases heard in courtrooms where many judges, support staff, and attorneys share military experience.

The RMTCV program has become a national model for working with the unique situation of military veterans accused of misdemeanor crimes, bringing about a significant reduction in

repeat offenses by veterans.

Judge Semon noted that the national recidivism rates hover around 50 percent for veterans, but those exposed to the RMTCV have had recidivism rates at around 15 percent. In other words, 85 percent of those veterans never return to the criminal justice system.

Photo by Tony Gallego



(L to R) Green Valley Justice of the Peace Ray Carroll, City Court Magistrate Thaddeus Semon, Pima County Superior Court Presiding Judge Jeffrey Bergin, and Judge Antonio Riojas.



Stories from The People's Office

Snapshots of work in 2023 by the Pima County Attorney's Office

Stories written by Communications Director Shawndrea Thomas and Communications Specialist CT Revere

“The People's Office”

It's the label we gave ourselves when this administration came into office in 2021.

The reason is simple: The work done by the more than 300 people employed at the Pima County Attorney's Office touches all 1.1 million people who call Pima County their home.

For some, it's through the pursuit of justice – holding accountable those who commit harm and working to make whole those who are victimized by crime.

For others, it's a path toward restoring their lives, and keeping their families together by providing alternatives to spending time behind bars.

For most, it happens in ways that may not be so apparent. It's protecting people's rights as property owners, as workers, and as businesspeople. It's protecting the environment we share and the health of our community. Our work provides the people of Pima County with support on matters of taxation, land use, public safety, elections, access to public information, and more.

The stories in this Year Three Review are snapshots of this work. They are moments in time of the Pima County Attorney's Office's service to the community this past year that represent the work that is done every day by the public servants in the Pima County Legal Services Building in downtown Tucson.

In the telling of criminal cases, we do not name those arrested, charged, or convicted. While that is information available to the people, we don't consider sharing it our job in this forum. People are held accountable based on the law. That's our job. We don't wish to further punish or stigmatize the people we prosecute, regardless of the nature of their offenses.

Victims are named only with their approval because supporting those harmed by crime in the ways that mean the most to them is what our people do.

We hope these descriptions of moments in 2023 will help further the understanding of what we do on behalf of all those who live, work, and persevere in Pima County.



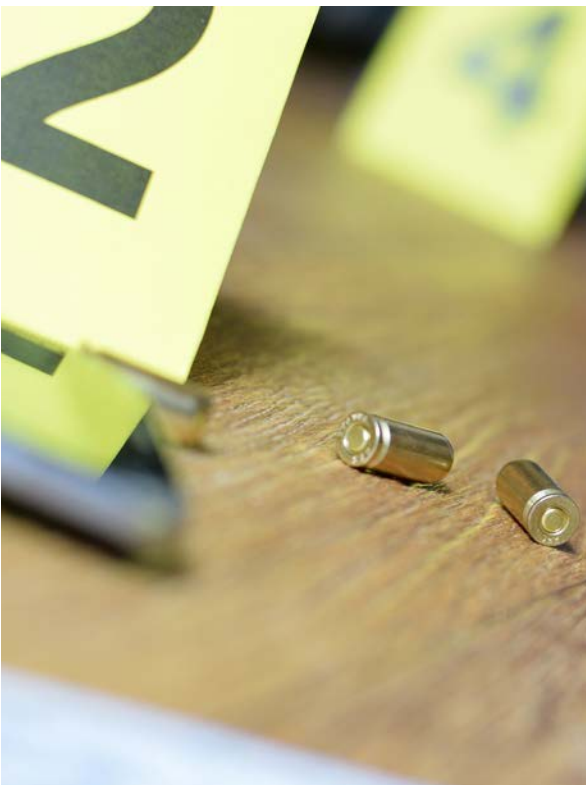
The Criminal Division of the Pima County Attorney's Office carries the responsibility of holding people accountable for the crimes they commit, while helping victims find justice. That includes making decisions about whether and how to charge people accused of criminal behavior, then determining what approach is appropriate to make them accountable. Those approaches include criminal trials or plea agreements that can lead to incarceration for those who present an ongoing threat to society.

As of Nov.21, 2023, the Criminal Division was presented with 9,171 felony cases leading so far to 3,991 criminal indictments, 1,109 plea agreements and 159 dismissals. Those felonies included 121 homicide charges, 993 cases of domestic violence, and 2,372 drug cases. The criminal process led to 4,176 years of prison sentences and 4,840 years of probation. Pima County Sheriff's Deputies and other law enforcement filed 8,820 misdemeanor cases, keeping our Misdemeanor prosecutors busy. PCAO's criminal prosecutors are responsible for all felony cases that occur in Pima County as well as any misdemeanor crimes reported by law enforcement in unincorporated parts of the county.

The teams led by Chief Criminal Deputy Bruce Chalk are constantly working to clear up a backlog of cases, including finding reasonable solutions for qualifying lesser crimes that can be moved into diversion programs. While some cases can lead to probation, others may qualify for diversion programs that provide an alternative to prison.

Our pre-indictment Diversion program, known as STEPS, was accepted as an alternative to prison by 360 people, with 133 completing their respective programs and another 113 failing to meet the diversion requirements. Another 355 people successfully completed The Pima County Adult Diversion program, while another 48 failed to meet the requirements. Here's a look at what's been happening in the division.

Addressing the Homicide Backlog



- A woman is shot to death in a hotel bathroom in June 2020, and police arrest her abusive boyfriend the following day.
- On Halloween 2020, a man and woman parked outside a local store are robbed at gunpoint by two men. When the driver speeds away, he is shot and killed. The next day, the murder weapon is listed for sale on social media, allowing detectives to track down the suspect based on the type of weapon and ammunition used in the killing.
- On January 4, 2021, a man dies after taking fentanyl that he purchased from a woman accused of knowingly peddling the deadly opioid.
- What began as a fistfight in July 2021 between two men residing on the same property turns deadly when one of the combatants picks up a hunting knife and stabs the other to death.
- November 2, 2021, a man is shot to death outside his stepfather's apartment building. A short time after, a suspect is arrested in what is a revenge killing for an earlier murder.



Stock image

These are snapshots of just a handful of crimes that were among a backlog of homicide cases awaiting charging decisions when the current administration took office at PCAO, a caseload that grew amid a record-setting spike in Pima County murders during the COVID pandemic.

These cases, along with scores more, are now moving through Pima County's criminal justice system.

When County Attorney Laura Conover and her team took office in January 2021, they inherited 144 homicide cases from previous years that had not been disposed of yet, even as a record of 116 more homicides came into the Office.

To address this gap in accountability and justice, the Office hired back several seasoned prosecutors who had left PCAO and held weekly "Homicide Panels" that bring together PCAO leadership, Major Crimes prosecutors, and case detectives to make decisions on how to proceed with cases.

"It was a grueling process to try and work those numbers down to an area where they're more in line with what we're used to and more in line with what the resources are that are available can support," said Mark Hotchkiss, bureau chief of the Major Crimes Bureau at the Pima County Attorney's Office.

The "perfect storm" of backlogged cases and new homicides came at a time when a public health crisis shut down courtrooms, impeding the process of bringing justice to victims and accountability to those charged in the crimes.

"Catching up took a toll on all involved," Hotchkiss said.

"These are emotionally draining and difficult cases to work, but they're tremendously important cases to work," he said. "Most of the individuals in our office that are working these cases derive a lot of personal and professional

satisfaction. While we can never correct the wrong that was done, we can provide some small sense of justice to a family that has had their life turned upside down."

On average, less than 10 percent of homicide charges go to trial, with the remainder handled through plea agreements or rarely dismissal. But that doesn't change the process or ease the workload leading up to that decision, Hotchkiss said.

Voluminous police reports, forensic work such as fingerprints and DNA work, firearm analysis, phone downloads, along with witness statements and other investigation and analysis "provide evidence in the interest of shining a light on what really happened," he said.

"Even if the volume goes up, that doesn't mean that our time and attention for each case should be impacted by that. And I don't think it was," Hotchkiss said. "It was just something that required us to find more time in each day to attend to these cases."

The burden of proof for felony crimes, including murder, is "beyond a reasonable doubt."

"That's a very high burden, and it should be," he said. "And life isn't always black and white in terms of some of the challenges that we may confront when attempting to prove these cases beyond a reasonable doubt."

As of mid-October 2023, fewer than 50 homicide cases remained unaddressed by PCAO prosecutors and post-COVID, the homicide rate has dropped to a more "normal" level.

"We're in a better place now in terms of being able to manage the flow of things that are coming in the door and manage the cases we already have," Hotchkiss said. "However, you know, there's not really an acceptable amount of homicide that we can feel comfortable with as a community."



Photo by Tony Callego

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Earlier this year, Pima County and the City of Tucson joined forces to issue a proclamation announcing the formation of a new task force designed to solve and prosecute crimes committed against indigenous women and girls in Pima County. The joint task force will work with both local and tribal governments and the families of Indigenous women who are either missing or murdered.

Elayne Gregg stood at a microphone podium outside the City of Tucson's Ward 1 Council Office, holding a large photograph of her daughter, Rhia, who was murdered in 2009.

"It's a beautiful day. A grand day. A monumental day," Gregg said, her emotions visibly in conflict with her words. "I woke up really excited. Happy tears. Tears of grief as well."

The mix of grief and hope on that sunny morning in May was in response to local leaders coming together to address a longstanding nightmare for too many American Indian families: the violence perpetrated against women and girls from indigenous families.

The crowd gathered in front of the podium held photographs of daughters, wives, and sisters. All of them, like Rhia, were either murdered or missing from their homes and loved ones.

"Fourteen years ago, my daughter went to visit a friend down the road. Unfortunately, she did not come back home," Gregg said of the loss of her daughter in Ajo, a community in western Pima County. "Instead, her lifeless body – and innocent body – was found in a wash nearby, brutally raped and murdered. She was only seven years old."

The hope she holds is that local officials are joining the fight.

On May 5, 2023, representatives of Pima County and the City of Tucson joined leaders from the Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O'odham communities, and area non-profit organizations to launch the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls City/County Joint Task Force.

Ward 1 Councilmember Lane Santa Cruz said the formation of the task force is a long-overdue step that recognizes the pleas of those who grieve lost loved ones.

"For years, Indigenous women have been leading on this issue, and for years their demands for answers, for accountability, for solutions, have been unaddressed by municipal, county and state officials," Santa Cruz said. "We need urgent action to address the crisis in our region, which

Photo by Shawndrea Thomas



Family of missing and murdered victim.

has one of the highest numbers for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls – and people – as far as cases in this country."

Adelita Grijalva, chair of the Pima County Board of Supervisors, noted that a resolution to address the issue passed unanimously by the Board and that both County Administrator Jan Leshner and Pima County Attorney Laura Conover are committed to working collaboratively to make change.

On Sept. 5 of this year, Pima County approved an intergovernmental agreement on behalf of PCAO and the Tohono O'odham Attorney General's Office that allows the two agencies to jointly prosecute in Pima County Superior Court non-native offenders who commit crimes on native lands. A similar IGA was approved in 2022 with the Pascua Yaqui Attorney General.

"We're really excited now to have an intergovernmental agreement with the Pima County Attorney's Office through Pima County to be able to bring these cases to state court and seek some sort of justice," said Pascua Yaqui Deputy Attorney General O.J. Flores. "Those are the first steps to a greater partnership so we can help our families. We look forward to evolving this really, really quickly to help some of our families."

April Ignacio, founder of the organization Indivisible Tohono, said the formation of the task force marks the first time local, non-tribal governments have become involved.

"The idea of Pima County and the City of Tucson wanting to take this step forward is a

huge deal for Indian Country,” she said. “It’s the first time we’re seeing this in America and it’s happening on O’odham land, and I think that it is beautiful to be part of that.”

The local leaders will be joining an ongoing struggle for justice and accountability, she added.

“Pascua Yaqui has always been at the forefront of tackling jurisdictional issues and it’s their leadership that is a major driving force in Indian country and so them being here for this short amount of time is a big deal. It’s a big deal when the Pima County Attorney shows up, and she’s here,” Ignacio said. “It’s a big deal when there’s a representative from Raul Grijalva’s office, and he’s here. So, I need the community to see that we don’t have to continue to marinate in our grief. We can take steps forward to be a beacon of hope and to keep these family members in our memories.”

Anna Harper-Guerrero, executive vice-president of Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse in Tucson, noted that violence against indigenous women and girls has its roots in U.S. history.

“We know that when this land was taken, sexual violence was the tool that was used against women and girls to take these lands. And it persists today,” she said. “We have to acknowledge the trauma and pain that so many families have suffered with for so long, and that our lack of policies, our lack of allocation of resources has only served to make them more invisible and to promote the erasure of so many women and girls whose faces you see here today.”

Pascua Yaqui Chairman Peter Yucupicio noted that the display of faces murdered or missing “reminds me of my family.”

“I hope that we form this alliance, this bridge,



Elayne Gregg speaking at task force event.

Photo by Shawndrea Thomas

these connections to make sure we can address these issues,” Yucupicio said. “We’ve been working, Miss Conover and everybody else, to try and get to that point.”

For Elayne Gregg, the help from outside is welcome, but long overdue.

“If you were to look at the victim services that our people on our tribal lands get, you could see that they are severely insufficient. This is why it is so important to speak up and demand help,” she said. “And what I have learned through my pain and through my silence is that I still have a voice and that we have a voice. I have found support and love through sharing my grief. Thank you, Tucson, for your efforts to ensure our safety through progress. This is just the beginning.”

Justice Reform: Fresh Start Program

The smiles on the faces of those waiting to help visitors at the annual Fresh Start Expo at the Tucson Convention Center were as bright as the morning sun on that Saturday, October 21.

Workers from all corners of Pima County’s justice system were eager to help resolve legal issues that have haunted area residents for years and even decades.

As those seeking legal assistance filed into the TCC, they were greeted by cheerfully helpful staff from all local courts, the Pima County Attorney’s Office, the Pima County Public Defense Services, and others who waited to provide judgement-free assistance in what promised to be a life-

Fresh Start Vendors helping visitors.



Photo by Tony Callego



Vendors from 2023 Fresh Start Expo, Laura Conover & Desiree Voshefsky and Dr. Da'Mond Holt

changing day.

County Attorney Laura Conover says the expo is the most important community safety event of the year in Southern Arizona.

"What is possible here at Fresh Start in a one-stop shop isn't possible anywhere else," she said. "I mean this is where you can sign up for sealing your records, expunging prior convictions, dealing with fines, getting your rights restored, getting back out from under a conviction, and while you're waiting to see the judge, you're looking at services, you're looking at housing, you're looking at education, employment, you can come out of here on on such better footing, and there's nothing more special than this."

When the program started in 2019,

approximately 400 people came for legal help. That number grew to about 1,000 last year and even more this year.

The nearly 1,500 people who took advantage of the Fresh Start Expo showed up early, signed in, and were ushered to their private meeting space at TCC where their legal needs would be handled, whether for tickets, fines, or expungable charges.

A mobile courtroom of judges and attorneys from each of Pima County's courts as well as legal assistants were on hand to record what was done for those in need of a resolution.

Dr. Da'Mond T. Holt, founder of Fresh Start, said the event provides a first step for people moving past their legal entanglements while starting the healing process for themselves and their families.

"We need to do this is because when people come out of prison, a lot of times they're not ready. They don't have the jobs, they don't have housing, they don't have education, they don't have skills. So, what we see is when people don't have those type of items as far as restorative and re-entry, it impacts recidivism where people go back to prison. So we're trying to do all we can to keep more people in their community, more people with their family, instead of sitting in prison," Holt said.

The event also helps to restore rights to visitors, including the right to vote.

Thomas Cortese staffed a vendor table at the Expo for the third consecutive year. But this year's event was particularly meaningful to him because he was able to put his own past behind him.

"Being able to be part of this for the last three years is so incredible," Cortese said. "It's emotional because...November 6th, I'm going to get my rights restored, and today I got all of that done here at Fresh Start. So now my voice is going to be heard as far as voting."

In addition to legal help, other one-stop services available to attendees included access to housing and educational opportunities, employment, counseling, clothing, and haircuts.

Some 50 vendors set up shop at the event, offering services and advice to attendees.

Rodney Williams worked the Expo on behalf of the non-profit Restore to Life, which assists those with criminal records in finding employment.

"The community that I work with is the disabled community, and they have organic issues that they will never resolve. So, we advocate for them" Williams said. "I always noticed that the ex-offenders would end up homeless. And they would end up homeless due to a lack of services. And they would end up back in prison."

Speakers included County Attorney Conover and Pima County Board of Supervisors Chair Adelita Grijalva. The event also featured musical performers and a list of inspirational speakers.



Stock image

Diversion Program

A significant focus since County Attorney Laura Conover took office in January 2021 has been supporting existing diversion programs that seek alternatives to incarceration for people with substance dependency and mental health issues, while creating new programs in pursuit of justice reform.

Specialty Courts such as the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) program, and Drug Court offer people second chances at leading productive lives and keeping families intact when their offenses do not present a threat to others.

Community Justice Boards provide the opportunity for some juveniles accused of crimes to make face-to-face amends to their victims in exchange for avoiding incarceration or other penalties. An adult version of Restorative Justice, rooted in the practices of indigenous peoples, began development in 2023 and launched the first pilot cases in November of 2023.

Restorative Justice

Jessica Doubleday was working behind the cash register at a Southside discount store on the night of June 19, 2013, when her sense of safety and security was stolen. The 23-year-old mother of two was robbed at gunpoint by a man who was on a crime spree in the neighborhood where she worked and lived.

"After being robbed, I felt like I lost my sense of safety, dignity, and even with the courts you just feel like I never had a chance to stand up and say what I felt afterward," she said. "I suffered with nightmares and PTSD, and anxiety. I had a hard time sleeping. I had to go back to work the next night, working the closing shift, so it felt like there wasn't a lot of empathy for anybody who went through the process."

The man who committed the crime was arrested soon after, being identified as the suspect in other robberies.

During the legal process, Jessica struggled with the same questions so many crime victims ask: "Why me?"

It was a question that was never answered. A decade later, Jessica Doubleday is now helping other crime victims get that closure from those who caused them harm.

The Pima County Attorney's Office now has one of Arizona's first adult Restorative Justice Programs (RJP) and Doubleday is among a team of volunteers who participate in the new process that has its roots in centuries of Indigenous peacekeeping practices.

The process brings the victim and the person responsible together voluntarily with facilitators and community volunteers to provide the opportunity to make amends outside of the traditional criminal justice system.

Jessica Doubleday



Photo by Tony Gallego

Restorative Justice was introduced in the '70s to address two dynamics of crime, said Emmanuelle Fahey, PCAO's Restorative Justice Coordinator.

Victims who want to know more about the person responsible person can learn "why it happened to them – why they were chosen," she said.

The other focus of the program is the person who caused harm taking responsibility for their actions, Fahey added.

"The process is designed to address the harm, so we're looking at underlying causes of criminal behavior, and the process itself helps that person get connected to social services they need to avoid a repeat offense," she said.

RJ programs across the country show a significant drop in repeat offenses by those who complete the program, which provides corrective steps that result in charges being dismissed and access to public services being restored.

Doubleday says crime can have a big impact on a community.

"It would have been great to see there was a human behind that and what they are going through," she said. "It would have given me closure in ways to just be able to say how it affected me."

PCAO's program is underway with new cases in the works, Fahey said. Working partnerships with Pima County Public Defense Services, as well as social service providers and training by the Center for Community Mediation and Facilitation make it

effective. Eligible offenses are limited to property crimes, with the intent to expand eligibility to other offenses in the future.

Fahey says RJ has the potential to create positive change in a criminal justice system that needs reform.

"I feel lucky and privileged enough to be in this position to work on a program that is a true community alternative to the current legal system, and to provide a space of healing and understanding for both the victim and the responsible person," she said. "Restorative Justice, it's about mending relationships, because even if people don't know each other personally, they are in a community together, and having a safe community that cares about each other and works together to address harm in a way that calls in that person, and then reintegrates them back into society, is the kind of society I want to live in."

Stock image



Drug Court/Drug Treatment Alternative To Prison Graduation

Linda Newell brought laughter to her fellow specialty court graduates and their supporters while recalling the start of her recovery from drug dependency.

"Sometimes, someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your heart race, and changes your life forever," she said from the stage at the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind's Berger Performing Arts Center. "We call those people 'the police.'"

Reminiscing about her journey to becoming a graduate of the Pima County Attorney's Office's Drug Court program, Newell recalled the time 15 months earlier when it started.

"If you walked up to me about 466 days ago and told me I'd be over a year sober, graduating drug court, working on my recovery and that my PO (probation officer) would be one of my best friends, I probably would have laughed in your face," she said.

It's a common sentiment among those who take advantage of PCAO's Diversion Programs, including those who graduated from Drug Court and the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) on May 17, 2023.

Ten graduates took the stage that night as a proud and exuberant audience of parents, siblings, employers, children, and friends listened and celebrated them. Collectively, the graduates represented 4,126 days of sobriety and a milestone in their path to recovery from addiction.

Graduation, however, is just part of the process, said former grad Desiree Voshefsky, a keynote speaker who now works as a Recovery and Harm Reduction Advocate for Community Medical Services in Pima County.

"Whatever you need to utilize to keep you in your recovery, whether it's 12-step, whether it's medication, whether it's faith-based, whether it's family, whether it's work, find it. Keep hold of it

TOGETHER

WE CAN DO GREAT THINGS

Community events and group photos featuring various individuals, including people in costumes (tiger, lion, elf), a person in a green elf costume, a group of people in a room with a large screen, and individuals in various settings (red table with flowers, black t-shirt with 'DEMAND EQUITY', group of people in a room with a large screen).



2023 in Photos





Photo by CT Revere

DTAP (Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison) Graduation 2023.

after you're off this graduation stage" Voshefsky told the new graduates. "That's when the training wheels come off."

Several graduates acknowledged that the support of family helped them reach the stage that night.

"The person who is primarily responsible for where I am now, I would have to say, is my sister Delilah," said DTAP graduate Daniel Castro. "She had faith. I had no faith, but she knew I had something in me that I could grasp and hold onto."

Voshefsky told the graduates that staying sober can open doors they couldn't have imagined before.

"Whatever you guys are dreaming of – whatever you want to do with your lives – you can do it," she told the class. "I never thought I'd be where I am today. I was up against people with master's degrees and things like that, and all I had was my peer support certification. But I tried and I ended up getting it."

Newell said she is grateful for the opportunity to find a new path in life after years of addiction.

"I'm proud to live in a place where the criminal justice system is pushing forward a major paradigm shift," she said of the PCAO specialty courts. "We're changing the belief that addicts are criminals to the understanding that we are sick."

Noting that she was wearing a gown and mortar board for the first time since graduating high school, Newell said this was the most difficult education of her life.

"I'm not only graduating drug court, I'm graduating from generations of familial cycles, a lifetime of personal trauma and a decade of addiction," she said. "High school ain't got nothing on this."

On Thursday, Sept. 14, another dozen Pima County residents celebrated a new start to their lives as they completed the Drug Court or the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) program in a graduation ceremony at the Berger Performing Arts Center.

Five people completed the Drug Court program and another seven marked the end of their journey through the Pima County Attorney's DTAP program before an audience of family, friends, and supporters as each continues to work toward recovery from substance dependence.

Pima County Attorney Laura Conover, after having private conversations with each graduate – a tradition in her two-plus years in office – addressed the supporters in the audience

"I think these graduates with us tonight would want us to focus on you, because you were the village that surely helped them get here," she said. "You are the family and the friends, the employers, the pastors, the neighbors, the lifelong support that they needed in order to get to this place and time tonight."

Conover acknowledged the hardship that comes with loving and supporting someone struggling through addiction.

"And man, oh man, is it not paying off tonight?" she asked. "Look at these beautiful people in their caps and gowns. I think what they have done to get here tonight is like climbing the mountain backwards, without any shoes on the slippery ice. And then this thing called COVID that hung over their heads while they were achieving victory after victory to get here tonight.... Congratulations to each and every one of you."

Juvenile Unit

At the People's Office, we believe that kids should be kids every chance they get. That includes when they run afoul of the law.

"One of the biggest things that we really became intentional about is trying to keep as many of the juvenile cases (as possible) in the juvenile system," said Dale Cardy, supervisor of PCAO's Juvenile Unit. "There are certainly some cases, given the severity of the case, that that can't happen, and they have to be moved to the adult system by law in Arizona."

But aside from cases that are required by law to treat juvenile offenders as adults to hold them accountable for their crimes, every effort is made to keep kids in the juvenile system.

"Our office believes that juvenile cases are better served in the juvenile system because the juvenile is going to get swifter consequences, and they are going to get more age-appropriate therapeutic interventions," Cardy said. "In trying to do this, one of the main avenues we have used is something called 'extended jurisdiction.'"

Arizona law allows for offenders charged at age 17 to wait until their 19th birthday to face prosecution.

"We have been able to do that on a number of cases that would otherwise have gone into the adult justice system – and particularly over the last three years," Cardy said.

As a result of using that law as a standard practice, the number of juvenile offenders being prosecuted in adult court has dropped from as many as 125 per year prior to the start of this

Photo by Tony Gallego



Dale Cardy

administration to fewer than 50 per year.

The approach is supported by studies of how the human mind develops and matures regarding behavior.

"What they've found is that the adolescent brain doesn't fully develop until the early 20s, sometimes even 25 (years old)," he said. "The last portion of the brain that develops is the prefrontal cortex, which is the portion of the brain that kind of deals with cognitive thinking, making choices, making rational decisions."

Cases involving serious violent crimes by anyone 15 or older that present an ongoing threat to the community, Arizona law requires prosecution in the adult system.

"We're very mindful of the seriousness of the cases, the nature of the case, our need to protect victims, our need to protect the community, as well as whether the case is appropriate in the juvenile system," Cardy said.





Stock image

Community Justice Boards

A quarter century before the Pima County Attorney's Office began developing Arizona's first adult restorative justice program, the office began using the same alternative to criminal prosecution for some juveniles whose mistakes led to arrest.

The Community Justice Boards were instituted in 1998 in Pima County to give youthful offenders a chance to avoid detention and jail by providing the opportunity to face their victims and own up to their mistakes.

"The idea behind it was to partner with different community agencies, volunteers that donate their time to work with youth who have minor citations," said Jordanna Carvahlo, PCAO's Adult and Youth Diversion Program Manager. "We started on the south side of Tucson with three different boards in 1998 and since then, right up until COVID hit, we had 19 different boards in 10 locations all throughout Pima County."

With boards stretching from Tucson to Ajo, the program was robust and busy until early 2020.

"When COVID hit and we had to shut down immediately, we had a very full caseload," Carvahlo said. "So we had to pivot very quickly to work with them so that they didn't feel that fracture in their in their meetings. You know, there's a lot at stake for these kids."

Like so many other endeavors, the CJB program shifted to virtual meetings, keeping the process alive while losing the personal connection afforded by face-to-face interaction.

When the pandemic eased and many people began coming together again, many of the volunteers who had made the program so successful were not among them.

So, the rebuilding began, with continued financial support from volunteer fundraisers

known as Neighbors for Justice.

"We're at seven boards in seven different locations," Carvahlo said. "Our main goal when we knew we were going back in-person was not necessarily having a robust number of boards, but really the location spread...to make sure that we had that footprint across Pima County so that youth and their families weren't traveling, so that our volunteers weren't traveling."

PCAO's Community Justice Boards are always in search of volunteers to support the effort, she said.

"We do ask for a one-year commitment," Carvahlo added. "We do want volunteers, you know, who are really dedicated to giving their time. Consistency is the key. It's twice a month, four hours a night."

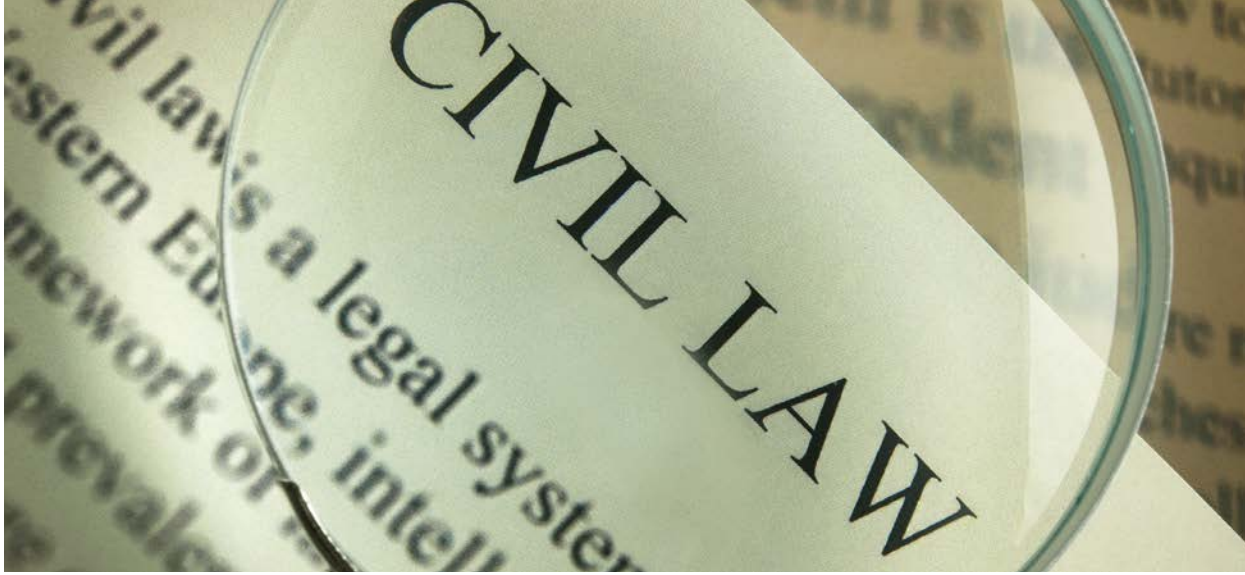
And with that commitment, the "kiddos" can get a second chance.

Jordanna Carvahlo



Photo by Tony Gallego

Stock image



As the Pima County Attorney, we are the People's attorney, and the legal staff here in our Civil Division led by Civil Chief Deputy Sam Brown is what differentiates us from a District Attorney's Office. Our representation of Pima County can range from defending the County against lawsuits to advising the Board of Supervisors & Administration, handling public records requests and business transactions.

Additionally, "The People's Office" represents the interests of those who live and work in Pima County through multiple units that operate under the Civil umbrella. Those units are:

- Business & Transactions
- Elections
- Unemployment
- Health Law
- Land Use & Environmental
- Public Records Requests
- Tax
- Tort



Photo by Tony Gallego

Bobby Yu

Through our work in these areas, the Pima County Attorney's Office plays a role in protecting the health, safety, economic vitality and civil liberties of all Pima County residents, business owners and workers. The following stories are examples of the work done by our Civil Division on a daily basis.

Civil Economic Development

Ensuring that the people who live and work in Pima County have opportunities for high-paying jobs, desirable living quarters and a diversity of shopping, dining and other entertainment is part of what the Pima County Attorney's Office provides through attorneys working in the Civil Division.

In 2023, that work included ensuring the success of economic development projects designed to do all those things.

Bobby Yu, the Business and Transactions Unit Supervisor in PCAO's Civil Division, provides the legal guidance needed to parlay property owned by Pima County into successful projects that benefit the region.

"We provide legal advice. We review contracts. We review real property agreements and even draft some and provide input if there is any contract dispute with someone that's not the County," Yu explains. "We advise more than 20 County departments. We also advise the Board of Supervisors and County Administration."

Through working in all those ways with all those clients of The People's Office, beneficial projects proceed without legal hitches.

One such project is the much-celebrated effort that is bringing the American Battery Factory to the Aerospace, Defense and Technology Business and Research Park south of the Tucson International Airport.

In that county-owned location, the Utah-based outfit will manufacture an array of batteries, including lithium batteries used in electric vehicles that they promise will be eco-friendly, inside a building they will construct on leased land, Yu said.

"They will have a purchase option if they complete the facility and provide a certain number of jobs," he said. "Specifically, 300 high-paying jobs of at least \$65,000 average salary, and they do so within 24 months."

Moving forward, the agreement calls for American Battery to provide 600 such jobs within the next four years, and 1,000 jobs within six years.

"This is expected to bring a lot of economic development to the County," Yu said. "The County is expecting that there will be more than a billion dollars that will ultimately get spent in the County for capital improvements and an overall impact of \$3.1 billion" to the State of Arizona.

Another project in the works during 2023 has been to develop less than an acre of vacant land at 75 E. Broadway, behind the former Chicago Store in downtown Tucson.

Several efforts have been proposed to construct a high-rise multi-use building in the location without

success. PCAO assisted the County in negotiating a lease-option agreement with the Rio Nuevo District and the Rio Nuevo District has developed a request for proposals to construct a building of at least eight stories.

The pending project calls for PCAO to work with Pima County as the landowner, the Rio Nuevo District Board as the economic development entity for downtown revitalization, and the City of Tucson, Yu said.

"And, of course, businesses wanting to move into a rejuvenated downtown," he added.

Arizona Supreme Court Decision and Title 36

When it comes to protecting Pima County residents through involuntary commitment orders, The People's Office believes the spirit of the law is more critical than the letter of the law.

And Arizona's highest court agrees. The Arizona Supreme Court sided with PCAO's Civil Division in a 2023 decision that overturned the State Court of Appeals reinstating a Title 36 mental health commitment order for a patient determined persistently or acutely disabled.

In February 2022, two out of the three appellate judges hearing the case decided the order should be vacated after the patient's lawyer argued that the agency that had evaluated the patient made an error in materials submitted to the trial court.

"The Court of Appeals found that the physicians' affidavits did not strictly comply with the statutory requirements and vacated the trial court's order," said PCAO's Attorney Tiffany Tom, who argued the case at the high court. "We decided to petition the Arizona Supreme Court because the patient's rights were not affected by any error, and we believed that the Court of Appeals applied the incorrect standard in reviewing the trial court's decision."

Involuntary commitment proceedings are serious because they deprive the patient of their liberty to decide how or whether to engage in mental health treatment for up to a year, Tom said. The goal is to ensure the patient becomes stabilized and subsequently receives outpatient treatment in the community.

So prior court decisions have called for strict compliance with the procedural rules, including what must be included in affidavits from evaluating physicians that support their conclusions about the mental health of the patient, Tom said.

"In this case, in line with longstanding practice in Pima County, all the necessary information was

included either in the affidavits or the attached evaluation reports, which were served on the patient before the hearing and later admitted into evidence with no objection from the patient," she said. On appeal, however, the patient's lawyer objected to allowing any of the statutorily required information to be contained in the attached evaluations.

Based on that technical error, the Court of Appeals overturned the trial court's order for involuntary commitment. On review, the Supreme Court clarified the state of the law, holding that although the affidavits must contain all the information the statute required, this same information may be contained in attachments to the affidavits, if they specifically incorporate such attachments by reference.

The Supreme Court decision will help county attorneys throughout Arizona avoid having Title 36 orders vacated based on purely technical challenges, said Jonathan Pinkney, supervising attorney of PCAO's Health Law Unit.

"Strict compliance with the statutes has been historically required in Title 36 cases, meaning that there has been an intolerance for technical errors regardless of whether a patient has been prejudiced by any error," he said. "The trial court has to find clear and convincing evidence that a patient is likely to cause severe harm to themselves or others before ordering them into treatment. The Arizona Supreme Court found that such an order should not be overturned purely because of a technical error that the trial court was not given an opportunity to address...and that's why this case is very important."



Photo by Tony Gallego

Stock image



Our team of certified and experienced law enforcement officers working in the Detectives Division supports our attorneys as they prepare to prosecute cases and assist area law enforcement. At times, our detectives take the lead in bringing people to justice.

Stopping Contractor Fraud

On June 15, 2023, just days before the longest and hottest stretch of weather ever recorded in Tucson, PCAO Chief Detective Fabian Pacheco opened an email on the agency website that invites people to report cases of suspected fraud.

The victim wanted to file a complaint against a local air conditioning contractor who accepted payment toward work that remained undone as the record heat set in.

Rather than providing a new air conditioning unit that he'd pledged to install the previous November when a down payment was made, followed by numerous weekly payments, all the contractor offered were excuses for not even starting the work.

Pacheco, a veteran lawman who heads a unit of certified detectives at The People's Office, contacted the Tucson woman to find out more about her frustrating experience.

"She kept meticulous records," he said. "She had invoices. Contracts. She kept SMS text messages between her and the suspect and provided a very good and compelling statement about what had happened and how she had been defrauded."

Her story began in November 2022 when she was quoted a price of \$6,682 to replace the unit, a price that included installation,

rental of a crane, labor, and a two-year warranty.

When the woman told the contractor that the price didn't fit her budget, he offered to accept an initial payment of \$1,500 and weekly installments of \$350 to do the work.

With no progress by January 2023, she became concerned enough to confront the contractor. Through months of excuses from the contractor, she paid him \$4,250.

"Now we get down to May, June of this year," Pacheco said. "The temperature is easily 105 degrees and no AC unit."

Pacheco started looking into the contractor, finding several addresses on record as his place of residence, but he was at none of them. He found that his heating and cooling business had opened under one name, then another. And another.

He also found another victim who became part of the investigation.

Soon after, Pacheco was able to reach the man by phone. After the detective told him why he was calling, the contractor agreed to meet.

That meeting never happened, and Pacheco issued a case with PCAO's Fraud Unit, and the man was indicted by a Grand Jury on two counts of theft.

A Man with a Machete in Downtown Tucson

The intersection of Stone Avenue and Pennington Street was buzzing with activity on August 22, and the sound of slashing steel echoed across Jacome Plaza outside the Joel D. Valdez Library.

A short time earlier, a man had stood outside the Legal Services Building scraping the blades of a machete and a dagger together, catching the attention of employees at the Pima County Attorney's Office.

Before that, the same armed man had entered the building housing the Public Defender's Office and then caused alarm at the library that prompted employees to lock the doors and call 911.

As the level of concern rose, PCAO's Chief of Detectives Fabian Pacheco and Detective Alex Montoya left the building at 32 North Stone Avenue to find out what was happening.

"At one point, he was in front of our building," said Pacheco. "But by the time we go outside, he's at Stone and Pennington. We see this subject with a machete about three feet long and a separate 'push-type' knife. It was very apparent that this subject was suffering from significant mental health issues."

The man was also seen standing in front of southbound traffic on Stone Avenue, stopping motorists with his menacing behavior.

"We called the Tucson Police on our radio," Pacheco said. "At the same time, the Tucson Police Department was working a major incident at Flowing Wells High School, where they were investigating a report of a suspicious person who had come onto campus and was possibly on school grounds armed. So naturally, that required a lot of resources."

With all marked police units occupied, Pacheco and Montoya began to follow the man.

"It was now a situation where we had to deal with it because it was our duty and obligation to address this and ensure there was no harm that comes to any member of the public," Pacheco said.

The detectives approached the man at Jacome Plaza, using caution and employing de-escalation skills they had learned from careers in law enforcement.

"We...tried to de-escalate it to have him put



Machete collected from suspect during arrest.

the knives down, but he wasn't having any of it," Pacheco said. "He wasn't cooperating. He was pretty worked up and it was concerning to us."

When the man walked away from the detectives, they followed at a safe distance, keeping him in sight. At West Cushing Street and North Frontage Road, they saw him drop the knives, detectives recovered them before placing the man under arrest and turning him over to Tucson Police.

Pacheco attributed the peaceful resolution to the training of he and his team of detectives.

"That very easily could have gone another way," he said. "He could have harmed a citizen, or he could have escalated it to the point where it becomes an officer-involved shooting. We don't want that."

After his arrest, PCAO detectives learned that the man came to Tucson a short time before the incident.

"It appears that he came here in July of this year from Georgia, and already has two or three contacts with us," Pacheco said.



Photo by 88-Crime



88-Crime community event.

88-CRIME

It's been another successful year for 88-CRIME and its mission to prevent and reduce crime by forming partnerships with the community, law enforcement and the media. 88-CRIME is guided by the best practices of Crime Stoppers, USA while offering anonymity and cash rewards to anyone who provides information leading to an arrest of a felon or fugitive. The 88-CRIME program is one of the most successful and cost-effective crime-fighting tools available. The program also promotes public safety by building stronger relationships with law enforcement and community collaborators. In 2023, program director Babette McDonald met with over 57 collaborators and her office attended 33 community events while reaching over 35,000 participants and educating the public on 88-CRIME and PCAO's Save a Life Gun Safety Program.

Over the past year, the 88-CRIME program has received over 1,961 tips and since inception, the organization has received 106,206 tips. The Board of Directors has approved over \$28,000 in rewards and through our tip line, over 1.5 million dollars in property has been recovered with more than 1.3 million dollars has been seized in drugs by law enforcement.

Through PCAO's Gun Safety Program, 142,399 gun locks have been given out since inception.

For 2023 through 11-30-23 – the program has given out 19,832 gunlocks and the following table reflects where gun locks have been distributed.

Another note for the year is that the division redesigned the 88-CRIME website to better



Babette McDonald, Dan Marries and Pat Marshall



Photos by 88-Crime

Laura Conover and Tucson Metro Chamber of Commerce CEO Michael Guymon with McGruff at 2023 Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner

connect with the community along with meetings and software trainings with board members and local law enforcement to improve collaboration and reporting efforts.

9,487-gun locks have been given out during community events.

2,725-gun locks were given to Pediatricians and Medical Offices

7,620-gun locks have also been given to our collaborative Partners



6,348*

Arrests Made



6,874*

Cases Cleared

88 CRIME

882-7463

It's Anonymous

Pima County
Attorney's Office

88crime.org



*Since Inception



Stock image

Supporting Crime Victims

The Pima County Attorney's Office has long been a model for supporting crime victims with services that help them get through traumatic experiences and the criminal justice process that follows.

Built around the strength of Arizona's Victim Bill of Rights, PCAO's Victim Services Division has offered a strong force of full-time advocates assisted by volunteers who arrive with law enforcement at major crime scenes and build trusting relationships with people harmed by crime that are maintained through a long and difficult process of healing and experiencing justice.

But like all other services that succeed through personal connections, services to crime victims in Pima County suffered during the profound disruption of the COVID pandemic.

"In normal times, pre-COVID times, we had about 15 advocates here, plus our lead advocates, our supervisors, and everybody would carry a caseload of about 70 cases each. That would be

a mix of DV (domestic violence), sexual assault, armed robbery, kidnapping, homicide cases," said Carolyn Dexter South, a veteran victim advocate and newly promoted supervisor at PCAO. "We make contact with the victims or next of kin and we help them understand what is happening as the case moves very slowly through our criminal justice system."

After March of 2020, advocates were no longer allowed to join law enforcement at crime scenes, a key component of building those much-needed relationships with victims.

"Not being able to go out and work with people in their moment of crisis was very difficult for all of us," Dexter South said.

And the disruptions continued once the criminal justice system shifted to the new normal.

"One main difference was that the courthouse, for a little while, was not allowing any in-person hearings. So, a victim's right to be present and heard at a court hearing looked very different," she said.

The courts arranged for telephonic and online hearings, which kept cases moving forward, but without optimal involvement for victims and at a cost to the Victim Services Division, which has seen a decline in both staff and volunteers.

Victim Advocate Carolyn Dexter



Photo by Tony Gallego



Courtroom support dogs are on hand for victims when needed



Stock image

The Pima County Attorney's Office promotes public safety by reaching out to the community to share information, strengthen relationships and bring people together to keep our community safe and healthy.

We do this work through our social media presence and our community outreach team, comprised of helpful and caring staff and volunteers. Here are some notable events we participated in over the past year.

Love of Reading

Love of Reading Week is one of our favorite Outreach activities for Laura and our team. Every year, schools in Pima County invite dignitaries and community members to read books to students. This year we visited Grijalva Elementary, Lawrence Intermediate, and Davis Bilingual. Our Convictions and Sentencing Integrity Unit (CSIU) Director, Brad Roach, joined in on the fun and told some very relatable stories about how he grew up and Laura was able to use her bilingual skills to read books in both English and Spanish.



Laura Conover at Love of Reading school event.

TUCSAAM

Throughout the year, numerous organizations in Southern Arizona work together to support survivors of sexual violence. April is designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month to bring the issue to the forefront in Pima County. The 2023 Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign is coordinated by: Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation SAAF, Pima County Health Department, Arizona Youth Partnership Anti-Violence Project, Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault, University of Arizona, and the Tucson Police Department just to name a few. PCAO served on the TUCSAAM committee and participated in the SAAM kick off, Take Back the Night, and Dine Out for Safety.



CT Revere working at SAAM Dine out for Safety event.

Photos by Tony Gallego and PCAO Staff



Photo by Tony Gallego

PCAO staff wearing orange for Gun Violence Awareness Month.

Gun Violence Prevention Month

As part of our efforts to raise awareness about gun violence, we joined forces with Banner University Hospital, The City of Tucson, Tucson Police, and the Pima County Health Department

to produce a collaborative PSA on the issue. We also created our own gun lock PSA. Other efforts at the People's Office include free gun locks that are always available in our lobby.

Sister Jose Women's Shelter

Our PCAO staff are out nearly every weekend to give back to the community at resource fairs and neighborhood clean-ups. We also love to get our law clerks involved in service projects. One of our projects was preparing and

serving dinner at Sister Jose Women's Shelter. Our team had the honor of creating a delicious dinner for 40 beautiful women who enjoyed their homecooked meal and thanked us for stopping by.



Photos by PCAO Staff



PCAO team volunteering to cook dinner at Sister Jose Women's Shelter.

Community Safety Heroes

In 2023, PCAO honored another group of people who exemplify what makes our communities great. The purpose of the Community Safety Awards is to recognize everyday residents who go above and beyond in their community, or their neighborhood to build safer, healthier communities.

Examples of activities recognized at the Community Safety Awards include:

- Neighbors looking out for neighbors
- Feeding the community
- Providing services and opportunities to youth
- Extraordinary acts of kindness or courage
- Engaging community members in a cause
- Preventing harm before it happens

The awards recognize the unsung heroes among us who improve public safety and public health from outside of the professions of law enforcement.

2023 Awardees Include:

Mel and Melissa Dominguez - Galeria Mitotera

Anton Russell - The Drawing Studio, Inc.

Kenny Doyle - Boys and Girls Club

Lorna Ingram - NAACP Tucson Branch

Naomi Vega - Enlightening Hope Project



Laura Conover and Baird Greene with winners of 2023 Community Safety Awards.

Photos by Tony Callego

Anti-Racketeering Revolving Fund

Our spring cycle of Anti-Racketeering Revolving Fund (ARRF) Community Grants saw applications from diverse organizations from across the region. Recipients included I AM YOU 360 Safe Housing Model, The Haven Native-Ways program, and Homicide Survivors, Inc. The Pima County Anti-Racketeering Revolving Fund was created by the forfeiture of property that came from the proceeds of crime or that was used or intended to be used to commit crime. The Pima County Attorney's Office provides grant funding via this program to community-based non-profits in Pima County whose missions are supportive of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Sofia handing over ARRF Funds Check.



Photo by PCAO Staff

INTEGRITY

We are honest with the public and committed as Officers of the Court to the oath we took, the Constitution, and Rules of Ethics.

COURAGE

We are fearless, empowered to step outside of our comfort zone, strong in vulnerability, and anchored by integrity.

RESPECT

We have a sincere regard for all workers, everyone who makes the Office operations possible, and the people of Pima County, including those who are incarcerated and those who have suffered harm.

EMPATHY

We value all employees and everyone in the community for who they are. No one is disposable.

DIVERSITY

We are inclusive and involve people from different social and ethnic backgrounds and beliefs; the Office reflects the community it serves.

COMMUNITY TRUST

PCAO is accessible and responsive; the disenfranchised are invited to talk to us about their ideas and concerns related to community safety.

PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

We are building a culture of pride in high quality work; everyone in the Office is a professional with a job worth doing well.

JUSTICE, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY

We invest in all staff and attorneys. We value and respect each other's differences. We are committed to rooting out racial discrimination within the criminal justice system.

COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

We value authenticity and candor over harmony. We solicit feedback from employees when appropriate. We are direct and expect the same in return.

ACCOUNTABILITY & HEALING

PCAO is a safe place where employees can take ownership of their mistakes and move forward.

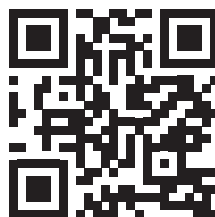


Photo by Tony Gallego

Recording People's Office Podcast episode #1.

Connect with PCAO and stay informed!

- Visit our newly redeveloped website at www.pcao.pima.gov
- Follow us on social media! <https://www.facebook.com/PimaCountyAttorney>
- Twitter & Instagram: [@pimacountyatty](https://twitter.com/pimacountyatty)
- Like and subscribe to our YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/PCAOonYT>
- Subscribe to our community newsletter: <https://www.pcao.pima.gov/pcao-news/>
- Tune in to The People's Office podcast: www.pcao.pima.gov





THANK YOU!

I would like to give a special thank you to all of our dedicated staff and awesome volunteers here at The People's Office for their hard work this year. We're looking forward to a productive and exciting 2024 as we wrap up a year filled with embraced change, optimism, and courage.

You are all wonderful, I'm inspired by you, and I can't wait to see how we raise the bar for excellence next year.

Thank you for your public service to the people of Pima County.

Pima County Attorney
Laura Conover

