



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HOSTS MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

Nogales Arizona, Santa Cruz County Jail Liaison, Martin Felix, recently organized mental health awareness training for first responders, court professionals and other members of the community who may be the first point of contact for those entering the justice system. The two-day summit held at the Santa Cruz County Complex was part of the ongoing substance abuse and mental health programs spearheaded by Judge Emilio Velasquez.

“One of the things that is most important about today, is that we don’t forget about those who are still suffering from mental health. They are still stigmatized and they are still having issues finding resources,” said Velasquez in his opening remarks.

In 2019, Velasquez started a coalition for the courts with an increased focus on substance abuse and mental health. “Since 2019, everything has come into fruition that we have planned. The face of the court system has changed. One of the things is that the criminal justice system is now holding people accountable, but we’re also allowing for redemption. Making sure that they get second chances.”

As a result of the coalition, the court implemented a drug and behavioral empowerment court, and recently created the position of jail liaison. It is the responsibility of the jail liaison to evaluate nonviolent inmates and determine if there are community resources available for those who are suffering from mental health or substance abuse related problems.

“You are the voice for people. Don’t forget, you are their voice. Embrace them and help them to get to where they are going,” said Velasquez during the training. #END

[Media Contact >](#)