



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE PINAL COUNTY ATTORNEY

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PINAL COUNTY PRESENTS PIZZA PARTY TO FLORENCE K-8 GRADE WITH BEST ATTENDANCE UNDER NEW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

FLORENCE, AZ (3/10/15) – Every nine seconds a student becomes a drop out. Even worse, 75% of state prison inmates dropped out of school. Those same drop outs cost the nation more than \$260 billion dollars over their lifetimes, due to lost wages, lost taxes and lost productivity and the list goes on. These truancy facts span nationwide, including Pinal County.

So, to entice children to attend school, Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles, along with the Florence School District, the Pinal County Juvenile Court Services, and Sheriff Paul Babeu created a school attendance program with the goal of keeping children in school and out of trouble.

The program rolled out to Florence K-8 staff and parents just recently, but on Monday, students heard about it for the first time. County Attorney Lando Voyles and Sheriff Paul Babeu explained the program to students and spoke to them about the importance of attending school and getting a good education. To reward students for their efforts, County Attorney Lando Voyles and Sheriff Paul Babeu promised to throw a pizza party for the grade level with the highest attendance at the end of this current quarter. The winning grade must hold the highest percent of student attendance for the final quarter of the 2014-2015 school year and maintain a minimum of 85% attendance over the same time.

The pilot program's primary goal focuses on incentivization, but consequences do exist should a child be continually absent from school. If a child misses school, unexcused, three or more times, the school refers the student and their parents or guardians to the Pinal County Attorney's Office for a joint meeting with school administration, a probation officer and a deputy county attorney. The educational meeting highlights what truancy means and the negative effects it has on a child's future.

"We are extremely fortunate to have Florence K-8 chosen to be the pilot school for this program. Truancy is a serious issue across the country that puts our kids in jeopardy of falling behind and missing graduation. The Florence School District is excited to work along Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles and the Pinal County Truancy Department to help create positive incentives for kids to attend school," said Florence School District Assistant Superintendent Chris Knutsen.

"The research suggests that truant students often engage in high-risk behaviors that eventually entangle them in the juvenile justice system. We are hopeful that our efforts will demonstrate positive outcomes with the truancy population. We look forward to partnering with the local schools and the Pinal County Attorney's Office on the truancy prevention efforts," said Pinal County Juvenile Court Service Deputy Director Denise Smith.



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“Education is the best way to ensure a successful future. Kids have to be in school to learn and graduate. We will work as partners with educators and parents to ensure this happens,” said Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu.

“Sheriff Paul Babeu, the Florence School District, Pinal County Juvenile Court Services, and I remain committed to keeping our children in school and providing them with the education and necessary tools they need to grow as productive citizens in our communities,” said Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles.

The school attendance program started in the third quarter for Florence K-8, but the competition for the pizza party starts in the fourth quarter. County Attorney Lando Voyles expects to roll out a similar program county wide this fall.

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