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7. **INTERVIEW WITH JUDGE GREG MAXON**

8. **Q=Chief Justice Scott Bales**

9. **A=Judge Greg Maxon**

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12. Q: Hello. I'm Scott Bales, Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. In this
13. edition of the arizonacourthelp.org podcast, we are joined by Judge Greg
14. Maxon. He is a longtime advocate for veterans and was instrumental in the
15. launch of several veteran's court around Arizona. Judge Maxon currently
16. presides over veteran's cases in the East Valley Regional Veteran's Court.
17. Judge, could you tell us what exactly a Veteran's Court is?

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19. A: Well what I explain to the veterans coming into Veteran's Court is we have a
20. number of therapeutic courts in our system. And, you know, we have
21. homeless courts, we have drug courts, and the mental health courts. And they
22. deal with particular issues. And what I explain to the veterans participating in
23. my court is that we deal with a particular population. We find that veterans
24. have some particular issues, unique issues. But they also have some unique
25. resources available to them to address those issues. And what we try and do

1. is we try and use those resources to get them engages in therapy and
2. treatment to address the reason why they're in the court.

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4. Q: So is it a particular courthouse that people go to as distinct from other kinds of
5. courts?

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7. A: Well in our case, Tempe hosts the regional courts so they come to the Tempe
8. Municipal Court. But there's no place called the Veteran's Court as a stand
9. alone place. It's a separate docket that each court sets up specifically for
10. veterans to have their cases heard.

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12. Q: So is the common thread that veterans are involved in the cases?

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14. A: Yes. To be involved in the Veteran's Court, you have to have served in the
15. military at some point in your life.

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17. Q: So what would be an example of a kind of case that might come before your
18. court?

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20. A: Well most of the courts, in fact all the courts here in Arizona that do veterans
21. cases, they're criminal cases. And mostly at the misdemeanor level. Although
22. Coconino County and Pinal County have got veterans courts and they do
23. address felony cases there. But predominance is misdemeanor cases. And
24. usually in the Justice of the Peace Court or the Municipal Court.

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1. Q: And how would the handling of one of those cases differ in a veteran's court
2. as compared to if it went through the ordinary court process?

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4. A: Well when somebody comes to Veteran's Court, they're told up front that we
5. don't do any contested cases. This is a therapeutic court. And if they want to
6. be in Veteran's Court, then we'll get them evaluated and lay out a plan of
7. treatment for them. And to be successful in the court they need to follow that
8. plan of treatment and complete it as we set it out for 'em.

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10. Q: How is that you became interested in this kind of a therapeutic court?

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12. A: Well I spent 35 years in the military myself and then I spent about a year and
13. a half as a director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. And
14. that's where I really started learning about some of the issues that our men
15. and women are facing as they come home from overseas assignments. We
16. have a lot of folks that served in combat over the last 15 years. And when
17. they come home they have a hard time getting re-integrated back in their
18. communities and sometimes they find themselves involved in the criminal
19. justice system.

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21. Q: You know, I suspect a lot of our listeners realize that in Arizona we have a
22. large number of military bases. But I'm curious. What is the presence more
23. generally in terms of veterans in our community?

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1. A: Well there are no exact numbers but the best estimates are there's
2. somewhere between 600 and 650,000 veterans in Arizona. Which is about
3. 10% of our population.
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5. Q: Boy that sounds like a lot of people. You serve for the East Valley Regional
6. Veterans Court. What exactly is its jurisdiction?
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8. A: Well we have seven cities that participate in this court and it's hosted by the
9. Tempe Municipal Court so our sessions are all held there. And as we were
10. talking about establishing veterans' courts in the East Valley, we came up the
11. the idea that maybe having the courts travel to a central location where we
12. have all the services, it's much easier for our service providers. And they're
13. the key to making these courts work as having your service providers right
14. there in the courts so they can work with the veterans as they come into
15. court. And rather than have, you know, "This is Tuesday so we got to go to
16. Chandler." Or, "This is Thursday. We gotta go to Tempe." Let's have it all in
17. one place. And we have set dockets. Each jurisdiction maintains their own
18. docket. We don't mix cases from different jurisdictions on any one docket. But
19. the key thing is we have those service providers. Those folks that are working
20. with our veterans as they're going through their treatment in the courtroom
21. with us. And so we've got four major participants. We've got Tempe,
22. Scottsdale, Gilbert and Chandler. And they all have separate dockets. Then
23. we also have Fountain Hills, Paradise Valley and Carefree Cave creek. And
24. we don't see a lot of cases from them so we do blend those cases in with our
25.

1. other dockets. And then the prosecutors for those cities whose docket it is,
2. they've been authorized by those cities to handle the cases.
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4. Q: Well it sounds like you take in a pretty good portion of Maricopa County. Are
5. there Veteran's Courts in other parts of the state?
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7. A: Well there are. In fact, Mesa has a very active court. Phoenix started their
8. court back in 2012 and in about 18 months became the largest veterans court
9. in the country. I think that kind of gives it a good idea of how much demand
10. there is for these kinds of services. Across the state we've got about 17
11. Veteran's Courts that encompass about 26 different jurisdictions. We've got a
12. number of regional courts. Tucson has five cities in their court. La Paz County
13. started a Veteran's Court and they've got five jurisdictions. Two cities and
14. three Justice of the Peace precincts participating in their court.
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16. Q: And I know you've been involved in helping set up those kinds of courts
17. around the state. Is this something that we're still trying to expand?
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19. A: We are. And right now I think we're limited by the resources the VA has. And
20. the key to getting these other courts started is working very closely with the
21. VA and give 'em plenty of lead time so they know the courts are coming and
22. they can start planning for the resources. We've been very fortunate with our
23. VA hospitals here in the state. They have expanded their services and hired
24. more people just to accommodate our veterans in our Veteran's Courts.
25.

1. Q: Judge you mentioned that it's important to connect the veterans with different
2. service providers. What exactly is a service provider? Can you give some
3. examples?
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5. A: Well the main service provider that we use is the VA itself. They've got, you
6. know, they understand veterans. They got great programs for veterans. And
7. many of the courts though will take veterans who are not eligible for VA
8. services for a number of reasons. So what we do is we find those community
9. providers that we can connect with. There are a lot of times the same
10. community providers that are providing services for people who are involved
11. in say DUI cases. Things like that. But we try, we get these men and women
12. connected with them. And then we monitor their progress through that
13. treatment as they go through it.
14.

15. Q: So for example would they be able to obtain substance abuse treatment in
16. that kind of a program?
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18. A: Substance abuse treatment, domestic violence treatment, anger
19. management, there's just a whole list of treatment programs that we have
20. these men and women engage in. Most of those programs, with the exception
21. of domestic violence, are offered by the VA. So if they're VA eligible, we know
22. the quality of those programs and we refer folks over there. But for those that
23. aren't eligible for the VA, we just used the same community providers that the
24. other courts would use if they were addressing those cases. But we try and
25. get them to a point where there's a warm hand-off. You know, from the court

1. to those providers where we set it up so they go there, they're expected and
2. they're not just calling them off of a list.

3.
4. Q: So I take it that part of the reason you refer to veteran's courts as therapeutic
5. courts is one they do is they connect people with these kinds of services.

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7. A: Yes. And quite honestly to be successful in the court they've got to complete
8. the programs we set out for 'em.

9.
10. Q: So without asking you to identify any one by name, could you describe a case
11. where you think the Veteran's Court really helped someone. I'd be curious
12. just to understand how it impacts individuals.

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14. A: Well a lot of the case are fairly routine. But I do have two examples that are
15. kind of on the extreme edge and but had good results, our very first docket in
16. Tempe where we started our Tempe Veteran's Court, um, I had the veterans
17. stand up and introduce themselves. And there was one gentleman in a
18. wheelchair. And he had been hurt in the first golf war back in the early 90's.
19. He had a spinal injury and so he couldn't stand up to introduce himself. And
20. when I finally called his case up, I asked him, "Well how are things going?"
21. And he 'd been arrested for a DUI. And he looked me in the eye and said I'm
22. going to put a gun in my mouth and kill myself. And come to find out he had a
23. few days earlier, fallen out of his wheelchair and it was 15 hours before
24. somebody found him. He had a lot of friends so to speak as long as his VA
25. checks were coming in. So, I mean that was kind of the environment he was

1. in. And I think he felt that life was just too hard. And for him, killing himself
2. seemed like a reasonable alternative. And so I asked him if he'd been to the
3. VA. And he said he had a bad experience. I said, "Well just work with us. Give
4. us a chance." Within the week they had in-home healthcare set up for him.
5. They'd set him up for rides where he was spending \$900 a month on just
6. taxis because he lost his license. He couldn't drive. And so they got the
7. services in there. And ten months later we actually graduated from him. And
8. his graduation speech or talk, he said, "The luckiest thing in my life was I got
9. arrested. 'Cause otherwise I probably would have killed myself. And so we got
10. him connected with the right kind of services to address his issues. We got
11. him the help he was needing but he just didn't know how to find it. The other
12. case I had on my docket for about a year and a half. And this was a young
13. man who was a combat medic and had seen some horrific things in Iraq. Very
14. serious case of PTSD but his, the number one issue we really needed to deal
15. with was substance abuse. HE came in court and he looked intoxicated and I
16. had a Tempe Police Officer come in and we breathalyzed him in court. And he
17. was almost a .3. So I took him into custody. I said, "I'm finding you in
18. contempt of court. For coming into court drunk. I took him into custody. We
19. immediately released him from custody into a 90-day in-patient treatment
20. program over at the VA. He stayed with that program. He stayed in what we
21. call After Care for about a year after that. And we finally got him engaged in
22. his trauma treatment for his PTSD. And we graduated him about six months
23. ago.

1. Q: Wow. It must be gratifying to work on those kinds of cases. Do you have
2. some suggestions generally for veterans or their families about what they can
3. do if they find themselves sort of caught up in a criminal legal problem?
4.

5. A: Well the first thing is if they're a Veteran, ask the court if they have a Veteran's
6. Court program. Not all courts do. In fact, most don't. But many do so if they
7. ask that question. And then just understand that if you engage in the
8. Veteran's Court program, you know, we're not gonna concern ourselves right
9. away with guilt or innocence. We're more focused on what do we need to do
10. with this veteran to get him back on the right path. And we don't just focus on
11. medical treatment. WE also work with them on housing, employment, getting
12. their VA benefits, filing for a disability claims, getting their education benefits -
13. getting them enrolled in school. So we really try and do everything we can to
14. get him back into that - to be competitive in the community. Both in their daily
15. activities but also in the job market.
16.

17. Q: Well Judge it sounds like the Veteran's Courts are a great resource both for
18. the veterans and for our communities more broadly. I thank you for your
19. leadership and helping develop them across our state. And I also thank you
20. for our service to our country.
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22. A: OH thank you very much.
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24. Q: And I thank our listeners for listening to this azcourthelp.org podcast. IT's
25. sponsored and produced by your Arizona Supreme Court. AZCourtHelp.org is

1. a virtual legal recourse center offering legal help to everyday people. You can
2. go online to find more podcasts and help for a variety of legal matters. And
3. Judge, I know there's an online resource specifically related to veteran's
4. issues. Could you identify that for our listeners?
5.

6. A: Yes. A few years ago the Arizona Supreme Court helped sponsor a website
7. called Law for Vets. And the website is www.lawforveterans.org and it's the
8. state bar foundation that operates it under the sponsorship of the Arizona
9. Supreme Court. And it's a wealth of information. Not just on criminal issues,
10. but housing issues, employment issues, benefits issues. So if somebody has
11. a legal issue and they're veteraned, I encourage them to look at that website
12. just to see if there's some information on there that they can use to help
13. address that issue.
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15. Q: Thank you for listening to this AZCourtHelp.org podcast. For more information
16. on this and other topics, visit AZCourtHelp.org.
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