

# Judge of the Year

*Bryson works to build community trust in courts.*

*By Angela Lutz*

Like many native Midwesterners, **Kyle Bryson, '88**, doesn't like talking about himself. But with a thriving legal career that led him to be appointed presiding judge of Pima County Superior Court in Arizona, he definitely has a lot to say about the importance of working hard, providing mentorship, and ensuring justice is served.

His dedication to honorably upholding the law was recognized by the Arizona Supreme Court last summer when the institution named him its Judge of the Year, a distinction given to an individual who helps improve public trust and confidence in the state's courts. Bryson said the people who really earned the award are the more than 1,000 people who work in the Pima County court system.

"A leadership mentor once told me the key to success was hiring smart, dedicated people you trust, getting them the tools they need to thrive, and then letting them get to work," Bryson said. "That's really all I've done here. The award honors them."

Though he has certainly found success in the role, Bryson never dreamed he would become a judge. If it weren't for the support of friends and colleagues, he likely never would have applied for the job. He was working as a partner in a small general litigation firm in Tucson, Arizona, when he was invited to apply for a court commissioner position in 2000. In that capacity, he presided over family law trials and probate, civil, and criminal matters, and he was happy doing that until he was encouraged to become a retained judge. The governor appointed him as a retained judge in 2010, and he began his sixth year as presiding judge in July.

"In my nearly 20 years on the bench, the overarching focal point is and has been the privilege of service," Bryson said. "It is an honor each and every day to represent the people in our judicial system and to serve our community and our state. I am truly humbled to be a member of our bench and of the judiciary as a whole."

Bryson also cites his Washburn University School of Law professors' influence on his management and communication skills, as well as his ability to handle many different types of cases during an era when specialization was becoming the norm.



Kyle Bryson, '88. Photo submitted

"The professors did all they could do to maximize each student's chance to prosper, focusing not just on the black-letter law or rules, but emphasizing a more holistic approach to the law," Bryson said. "To this day, I often quote or express a philosophy one of my professors said when I'm giving presentations or speaking. Their collective impact has been lasting and meaningful."

To pass on the gift of mentorship, Bryson regularly speaks to students about the tremendous responsibility that comes along with the privileges of being an attorney.

"Being a lawyer is an honor," he said. "When I speak to law students and young lawyers, I remind them practicing attorneys aren't just representing clients' interests but are part of something much larger, an ideal first conceived by brilliant minds over 250 years ago."