



New Wellton courthouse opens

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Residents in the Wellton area have access to a brand-new courthouse.

At about 8,500 square feet, the new facility at 10620 Dome St. is more than double the size of the previous building, which had been built in the mid-1950s.

In addition to a state-of-the-art courtroom and staff offices, the courthouse includes a Yuma County Sheriff's Office substation, an office for Arizona Department of Public Safety officers and a multipurpose training room.

Yuma County Sheriff Leon Wilmot said the new substation is a tremendous asset.

"It has been a great step up for us with the technology and the office space that we are afforded, as well as an area too where we can train together so we are not traveling all the way into town."

The completion of the new courthouse was "well overdue," said Precinct 3 Justice of the Peace Russ Jones. Jones will preside over proceedings in the newly completed courtroom.

"The old building served its purpose, but it was time to go. The old courthouse was built back in the '50s. It was well used. It was very old and rundown. The county did the best they could to keep it at least as modern as possible, but that was hard to do with what we had there."

The new courthouse "is just a beautiful building that is going to be here for many, many years to come and the entire county can be proud of it," said Jones.

To commemorate the completion of the new facility, several area officials including Yuma County supervisors, Sheriff Wilmot and Wellton Mayor James Deerner participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday afternoon at the courthouse entrance.

Deerner gave his personal gratitude to the various government organizations, private companies and individuals responsible for seeing the courthouse through to completion, and noted the new building was beautiful.

"Wait until you see the inside of this place, it is marvelous," he told the gathered audience before during the ceremony.

John Nelson, presiding judge for Superior Court Division 5, said he is "personally proud of this building" and thankful to those responsible for bringing "pride to this community, to the residents and to the judicial system in general" with the completion of the new courthouse.

Yuma Justice of the Peace Greg Stewart, who grew up in Wellton, faces bittersweet emotions. He will think of the old building fondly, but at the same time is pleased the new courthouse will be better able to serve the Wellton area.

"As a boy growing up in the community, having been raised to know right from wrong and to respect the

rule of law, I viewed the old courthouse as the primary symbol within the community of the law,” he said, noting even though the occasion gave him “a bit of sadness,” it was also “exciting” to see the new courthouse.

“Today's dedication is a significant event for all those who were involved” and is “particularly joyful for me,” Stewart said.

“Congratulations to all those who made this possible. I would simply say that may it serve the needs of the residents in this community for generations to come.”