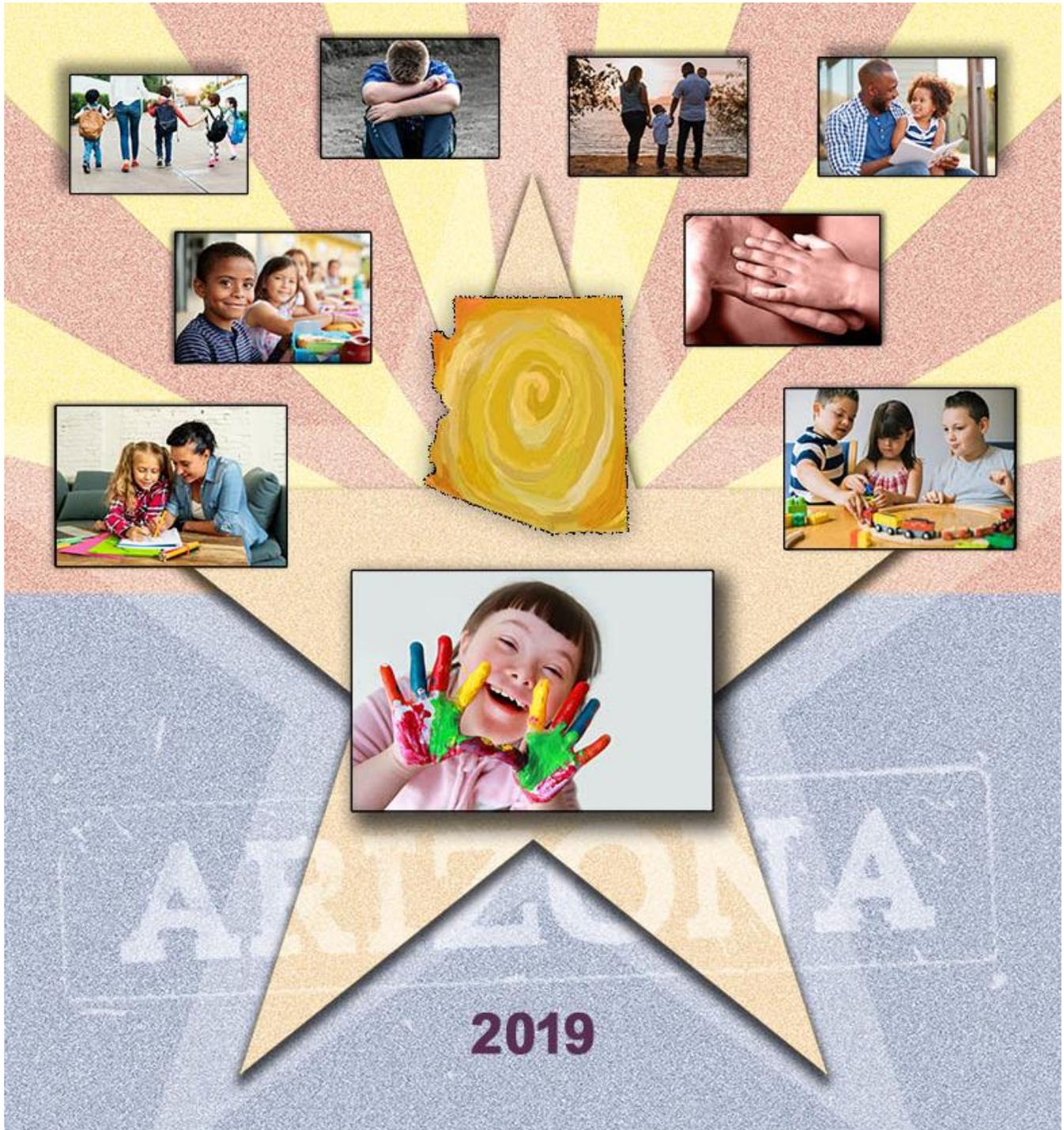


# “Strong Families Thriving Children”

First Things First Community Town Hall Report

Phoenix, AZ – August 26, 2019



# **STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN**

**First Things First Community Town Hall Report  
Monday, August 26, 2019 – Phoenix, AZ**

Participants of the August 2019 First Things First Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES AND THRIVING CHILDREN**

Healthy families have a network of other families and neighbors. They are not isolated. They have social connections with real people, not just social media. They ask for help when necessary, and have respite available when necessary. Parents are actively parenting, not talking on screens while their kids are doing whatever. The parents are emotionally healthy, so that they can parent effectively. They have access to community-based mentoring and support, health care and other resources, without regard to their at-risk status. They have safe housing, enough money to meet basic needs, and a support structure, including friends and family. Healthy families have the tools to be problem solvers, and they develop emotional intelligence as well as healthy families. Parents are engaged in the lives of their children, and have quality time and interaction with their children. Families whose children have suffered adverse childhood experiences have access to resources that mitigate the effects of those experiences.

Thriving children feel self-confident, safe, and loved. They have a champion. They have access to education, health care, and the other basic necessities of life. They have a stable base, whether at home or at school. They have good emotional skills to navigate life.

## **GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

Start early to strengthen Arizona's families and children through good prenatal care and mentoring for new moms. Resources are needed from early childhood through the end of high school. Children have access to early childhood programs, such as Head Start and preschool, to help them learn skills early. Strengthen early childhood education. Make parenting education more available, and begin even before people get married.

Increase awareness in the court system of the impact that early childhood experiences have on children. Educate families about the resources available. Establish resource hubs, with transportation available to make them more accessible. Provide kits to expecting parents. Base parenting classes on a community school model. Provide faith-based communities with supplies to assist families. Use mentors to help provide support for new families.

Build on resources that already exist in the community and make parents more aware of what is available and make information available in English and Spanish. Avoid silos and bring groups together to collaborate to make it easier for people to access programs.

Provide programs that make families more financially secure, such as job training and GED programs. Ensure access to transportation and other supportive services. Have schools, libraries, faith-based communities and other institutions form a network that works together to optimize the available resources. Engage the business community to help fund these efforts, based on the return on investment that comes from strengthening our community.

## **WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS**

Look at the cost of prevention versus what happens when you don't support schools and other programs. Show that all Arizona children are valued. Attract businesses that support the quality of life we want for Arizona families and children. Involve local politicians in creating funding streams for education, including early childhood education. Work across the aisle to accomplish these objectives.

Use an integrated approach to address the basic necessities of affordable housing, food and health care.

Provide funding for high quality, comprehensive and affordable early childcare and education, including increased resources for supporting the emotional needs of children. Support Head Start and use it as a model for other programs.

Take action by making a home visit to experience what life is like for families struggling financially. Advocate for programs that help these families to thrive.

Have a personal experience with an early childhood center. Focus supplemental funding and resources on the highest needs beginning there.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the First Things First Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Bring back information to my staff and attend a subsequent Town Hall.
- Go to a Town Hall and evaluate the resources available to families and children.
- Begin conversations with library staff about building community networks for families and children.
- Look for ways to expand communications in the community regarding families and children.
- Continue to support Mesa Early Learning Sessions and mentoring services.
- Help to educate and coordinate resources that are available in the faith community I am involved in.
- Share information from and about Town Halls at First Things First Phoenix North Regional Council and with library employees and ask stat reps to attend.
- Hound City of Phoenix personnel to set up a bilingual Town Hall.
- Advocate to my friends, family, staff and colleagues to participate in a Town Hall to make their voices heard and have an opportunity to impact change.
- Encourage my legislators to attend a Town Hall on children and families.
- Collaborate with the Family Navigation Action Team to establish areas of opportunity to support Arizona families.
- Look for opportunities in local communities to encourage involvement in early childhood development.
- Be engaged in my community in order to help those families who are still struggling and who need to know where to find resources.
- Share what I learned here with my family and friends.

- Talk to refugee community members so that they attend forums on how to build healthy communities in the cities where they live.
- Talk to the community about how we have to change our lives to step forward.
- Continue to work in Northeast Arizona to educate the community on the ten thriving and surviving factors necessary to end childhood trauma, leverage resources and integrate services.
- Continue to share information and resources through conversations and social media to help families identify ways to strengthen their networks and know they aren't alone.