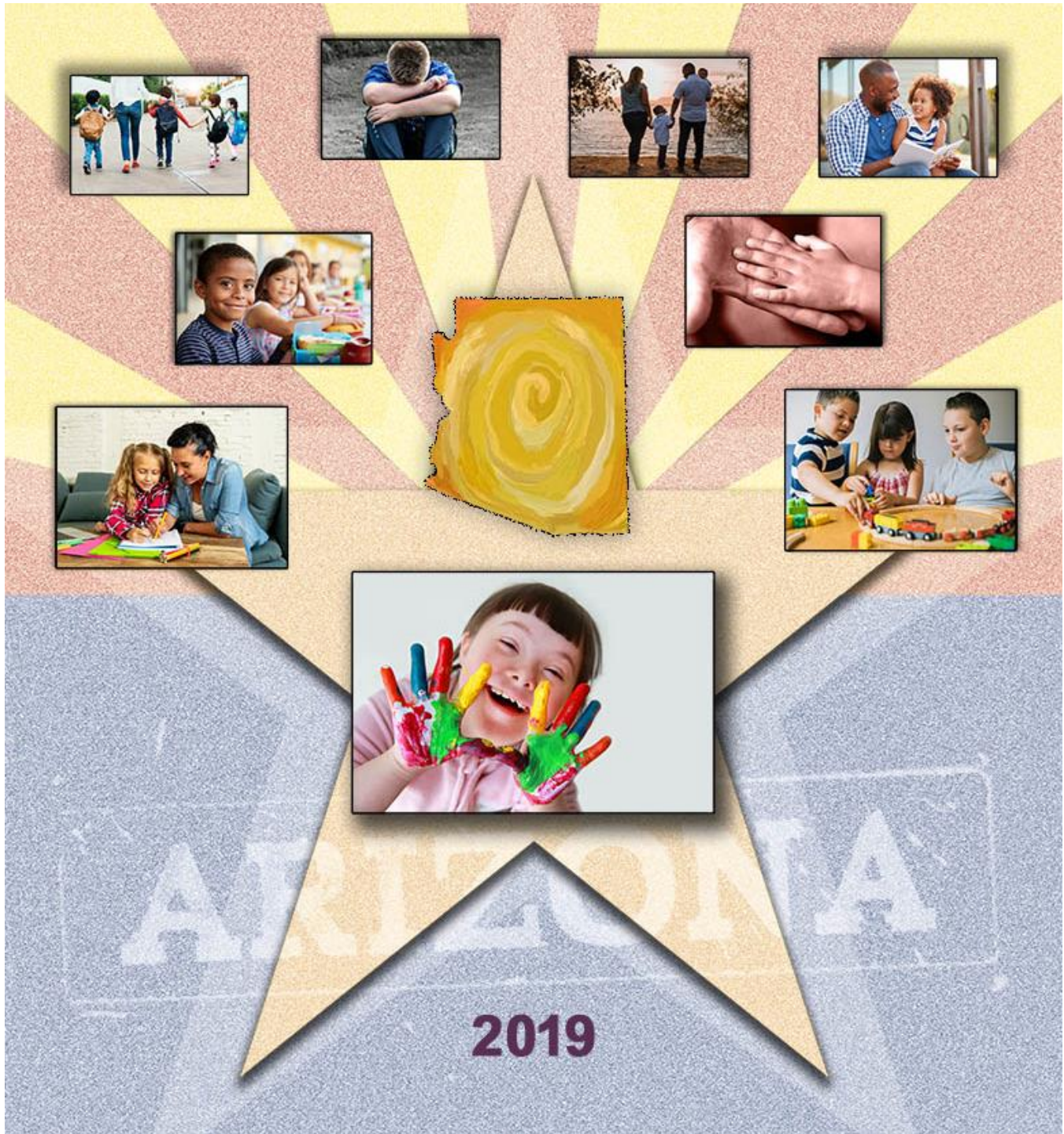


# “Strong Families Thriving Children”

Casa Grande Community Town Hall Report

Casa Grande, AZ – September 20, 2019



# **STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN**

**Casa Grande Community Town Hall Report  
Friday, September 20, 2019 – Casa Grande, AZ**

Participants of the September 2019 Casa Grande 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**

Family should be redefined to normalize the wide range of family structures, creating space for all children to understand that their unique family structure is valid. Strong families and thriving children are able to communicate and engage with each other while providing positive reinforcement that teaches children their worth and promotes resiliency. Strong families demonstrate love and a connection to communicating spirituality and their culture. They have good relationships and a strong sense of community. They have high expectations, a stable parental figure and parental involvement. In strong families there is lots of honest communication, with parental figures setting and articulating expectations and boundaries. There is communication with structure. These families are involved with extended family and community. Children have positive role models, to break various cycles, such as incarceration.

Parents practice good listening skills. Kids look at the world and understand that there is something greater than themselves. Technology is a tool that provides needed resources to children and parents, and is carefully managed. The benefits of new technologies are balanced against the need to interact with people. Children learn how to deal with peer pressure, to play with others and thrive in their own way.

Strong families live in a safe environment and have their basic needs met. They have economic and social security, physical security and good mental health. In this environment they have food, housing and are safe from abuse. There is funding for counselors in the education system to educate and intervene with children. Community support is available in areas that are easy to navigate with barriers removed.

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

Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and increase protective factors by promoting collaboration between and among government, corporations, nonprofits, parents and faith-based organizations. Identify the services required, including education, training, communication skills, peer-to-peer coaching, mentoring, support systems, trauma systems and counseling. Involve corporations in the community.

Community involvement could be increased by eliminating the stigma and stereotypes and changing social norms to provide more equal resource availability for parents without regard to gender or mental health status, and by providing life skills and parenting education to both parental figures and children, within and outside the school system.

Leverage community groups to raise awareness by utilizing existing and new models and leverage celebrities and community influencers to support families and children.

Provide support, education and intervention for all families, focusing on those with young children (ages 0-8) and those that have experienced trauma or have other "at risk" factors. Schools are hubs in their community and can be resource centers that partner with a wide range of service agencies to bring resources to families where they are. Empower parents to be part of the solution by working in

resource centers creating a community of practice. Corporations can help parents by providing training and information to parents in the workplace.

Address the specific challenges of rural Arizona, including less availability of transportation, internet and other services, as well as greater distances from resources. Business involvement in addressing the problems of families and children is particularly important in rural areas. Businesses can support their workforce and the communities in which they operate by providing funding and supporting community efforts to address the needs of families and children.

Make investment in our children a priority. Develop proactive initiatives and collaborations to mitigate ACEs. Begin conversations with all stakeholders to develop tangible solutions and ask government agencies to facilitate this process by bringing those stakeholders together.

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

- Families and children need resources and access to behavioral and mental health services.
- Take action by governing with intentionality.
- Draft legislation that will directly impact families.
- Seek input from communities, including rural and tribal populations to design targeted solutions to demonstrate successful outcomes.
- Involve the business community, creating partnerships and recognizing the important role that business tax revenue plays in the general fund.
- Focus resources on the holistic dimensions of wellness including: education; health; meal programs; before and after school programs; and financial, occupational, social, spiritual, emotional and environmental services.
- Invest more money in public education.
- Hear what is going on, get out in the trenches and meet with the people.
- Build a consensus between the political parties to foster action for implementation.
- Invest in prevention programs instead of punishment to change the fact that Arizona has the highest incarceration rate in the country.
- Move funding from the criminal justice system to education and prevention.
- Use Arizona's \$1 billion rainy day fund to empower Arizona families.
- Increase support for better public education through more teacher training and higher compensation.
- Improve education in the prison system to support successful reentry.
- Improve parenting education and skills training.
- Be visionary. Be present. Participate. Advocate. Lead by example.

### **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 Casa Grande Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

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

- Build stronger collaborations in the community and attend future town hall meetings and events.



- Volunteer with my local schools and community service organizations to lead by example and to fill the gaps for over stressed and overworked organizations that are working to better my community.
- Create a coalition of nonprofits in Pinal County focused on solving one long-term (10 year) systemic issue.
- Carry on the conversations we had here today and continue to advocate for Arizona's families and children.
- Engage with others. Be vocal about what could reduce adverse childhood experiences. Set goals to help others.
- "Be vocal" on the strong families and thriving children that Arizona needs to improve funding towards education!
- Set goals to champion efforts to support rural programs.
- Help facilitate initial conversations between nonprofits to identify major deficiencies in Casa Grande to increase efficiencies while addressing those issues.
- Share my experiences at Arizona Town Hall as an example of positive community action in this contentious political environment.
- Continue the conversation with others in the early childhood field.
- Educate myself on services and community needs so I may help move, change and communicate visionary public policy that creates strong families and thriving children.
- Continue to educate myself on the needs of children and families.
- Listen and engage the community so that I can advocate for their needs.
- Share my own ACEs and coping skills that have enabled me to be resilient to help empower others.
- Work with others to coordinate outreach efforts to educate families on ACEs and other matters influencing strong families and thriving children.
- Commit to be proactive in every organization and community group I'm involved with in order to raise the issues surfaced in this conversation.
- Work on arranging educational opportunities for community, business and parent groups.
- Raise awareness of the Pinal County Interagency Council to End Child Abuse to increase partnership and expand the scope of its impact through action.
- Reach out to the business community to raise awareness of issues and programs to support their workforce.
- Connect to community organizations and leaders with the goal of finding opportunities to collaborate on ways to help build strong families and support services so children can thrive.
- Share information with my religious community about adverse childhood experiences and the impact they have and how we can help prevent them.
- Continue to help increase awareness of healthy development for our children and positive experiences to empower our youth and have thriving children and families.
- Become more educated and familiar with the issues facing Casa Grande's families and strive to use both personal resources to assist as well as lead discussions in my organization to determine what role it can play in building stronger families that help children thrive.
- Take our discussion back to the civic groups and make a project to educate about ACEs.

- Talk to my mayor, HOA and local churches.
- Help facilitate initial conversations between nonprofits to identify major deficiencies in Casa Grande and increase efficiencies while addressing those issues.
- Make my father-in-law's amateur boxing gym a nonprofit organization by 2021.
- Bring my middle-school aged niece to the Future Leaders Town Hall.
- Volunteer at elementary schools.
- Be a mentor.
- Use my access to the corporations to educate them on all the issues dealt with today.
- Educate myself during local and state elections and vote for individuals that support funding and expansion of programs that strengthen families by providing education and increased access to services.
- Continue to advocate to national and local legislators to make available and fund services that families need to continue to thrive.
- Use my knowledge, influence and passion for healthy strong children to educate those around me on professional, personal and social levels.
- Be part of the solution.
- Speak out about the special needs that children face in rural communities.
- Advocate for strong families.
- Continue to advocate and push for behavioral health services.
- Bring this information to my school district's administrative teams and counselors to partner with agencies that will help our parents to build thriving families and children.
- Share what was discussed with my co-workers and personal network of friends and family and encourage all to look for areas to get involved.
- Pay attention to how local elected officials talk about and vote on issues that strengthen families, support community and engage in decision-making that focuses on prevention and building resources, as opposed to punitive measures. Engage my community to also pay attention, raise awareness and vote on these principles.
- Tell my co-workers, supervisors, friends and family about my Town Hall experience. It was an honor to participate in this event!