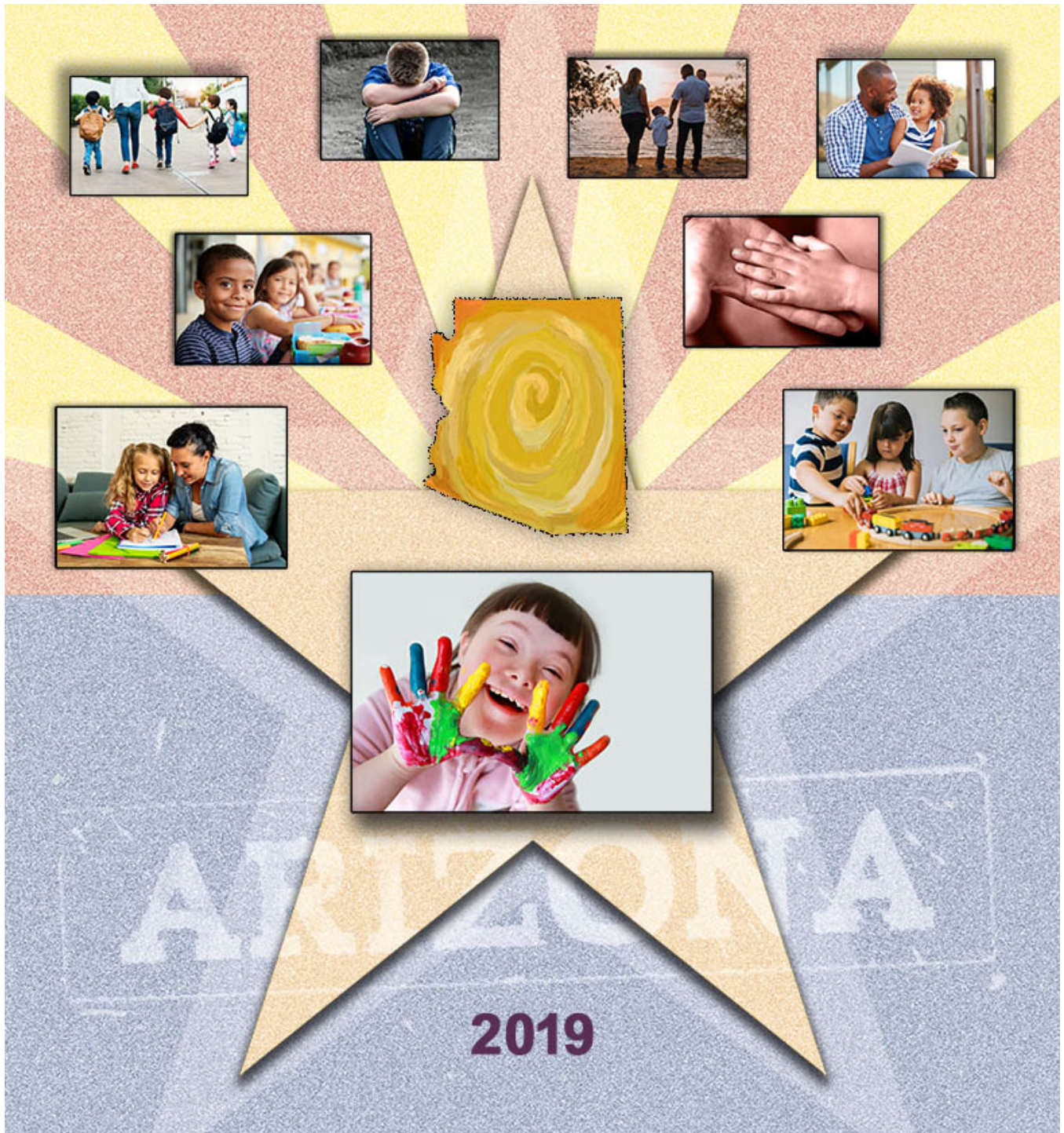


“Strong Families Thriving Children”

Mohave County Community Town Hall Report

Lake Havasu City, AZ – November 2, 2019



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

**Mohave County Community Town Hall Report
Saturday, November 2, 2019 – Lake Havasu City, AZ**

Participants of the November 2019 Mohave County 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

Conventional ideas about what is a good family are often based on our life experience and biased by our cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. In discussing these issues, it is important to understand and respect people where they are in the context of their cultures and backgrounds.

In strong families, there are caring parental figures (not necessarily the biological parents) who are involved with their children. There is open communication, and children are led to understand that real life is not as portrayed in social media.

The foundational levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are met: families have food, shelter, income, and health care. Children know that there is sufficient income and support to meet their basic needs.

Family members love and support and appreciate one another for who they are, not who others think they should be. Children feel loved for who they are. There is a strong sense of attachment. Parental figures demonstrate patience and understanding. There are strong core values, with known expectations and known consequences. Parental figures treat children with respect, but meet kids where they are, and allow kids to be kids. Parents don't enable bad behavior, and they empower children to learn from failure.

In strong families there are rules, consistency, chores, responsibility, and family dinners without TV or phones. There is prayer and God. Group discussion is a priority during family dinners. People show up to school and other activities. Strong families maintain family traditions. Parents know what is going on at school, and who their children's friends are. Parents provide structure, limits and love. There is mental and physical health, access to healthy food, outlets for sports and arts. Children learn techniques to manage anxieties other than drugs.

Strong families are cohesive and resilient. They have the capacity to deal with problems, know when they need help and are willing to seek help when needed.

Strong families value mental health and work to overcome taboos and stigmas to achieve it. They recognize that there is strength in numbers and that it takes a village to raise a child. They value group teaching and education. Families are a package deal, both mentally and physically. If there is a problem they treat the whole family, not just the member presenting with symptoms. Strong families are supported by and involved in the community, including some form of faith-based community. They know the value of education and seek it out.

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

There are a variety of opportunities to strengthen Arizona families and children. Families would benefit from greater availability of affordable quality day care, and early childhood education programs. There is a need for more family-oriented activities in the community, including summer programs, after school programs, and youth-serving and mentoring organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Faith-based organizations have a role to play in providing such services, and it would be very helpful to have transportation available to transport children and youth to programs and activities that parents

may be unwilling or unable to attend. On the other hand, it would be ideal if there were more family members at home instead of relying on day care. For that to happen, we need better, high paying jobs.

There should be places for children to go when they aren't getting what they need at home. We should develop more of a culture of caring and connection. For example, there could be hosted neighborhood gatherings to get acquainted at the level of a living room conversation honoring diverse viewpoints and interests, such as better angels and living room conversations. We could train people to ask "How are you?" People could be encouraged to be the one person or family who will help a child who is struggling or in need. People can also be encouraged to develop a sense of neighborhood and community so that people establish social connections which increases protective factors. We could consider establishing community gardens and a program of posting signs that identify "safe houses."

We need more resources devoted to identifying children who are suffering from ACEs. Staff, parents and counselors should be trained to identify children who are in need of intervention, and schools should receive additional funding for screening.

There are programs and activities that serve as protective factors but that may not be known or accessible to families. The community should be educated about available resources, and those resources should be provided at places families frequent—schools, parks, day care, health care facilities, churches, even the dollar store. We should consider establishing "one stop" centers where services of all kinds are available. Both formal and information training and education should be made available to parents, counselors, teachers and others in the community. We need strong referral systems and wraparound services. There should be respite care for families who are struggling.

We should reform the court system to replicate the very successful veterans court and expand that format to family, juvenile and drug courts.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Be engaged in education to understand the educational environments produced for our children. Visit the schools.

We need multi-partisan support for education and funding. Please understand the root causes of early childhood issues and the importance of a strong and well-funded education system on the future economic growth of our communities and the well-being of families and children.

Make decisions based on what is best for children.

If you fund education, it will reduce the costs for programs such as incarceration.

Invest now in preventative programs. Be proactive, instead of paying later for punitive programs.

Take money out of politics. That will allow us to fix everything else.

Government officials at all levels should listen to the community, be encouraged to hold community town halls, have an open mind, and be willing to take action instead of just arguing. We also need more communication among different levels of government.

We need more events and activities that cater to children and families. These events should be free and affordable, and well publicized.

Services should be made more accessible, and we should reduce the bureaucracy associated with services.

There should be a clearinghouse for support services of all kinds

Food stamps should be protected, and should not be cut off abruptly.

We need more amenities for teens, such as basketball courts in parks.

Cities need more funding.

Recognize that everyone has value. There should be equal opportunity.

Teach personal responsibility.

Have a follow-up system. Referral alone is not sufficient.

There should be access to services and widespread information about those services that do exist.

People need good-paying jobs.

We need to find a way to stop bullying.

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 Mohave County Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Follow up with connections made in this forum.
- Share my knowledge with others and attend future town hall events.
- Continue to be involved in our communities and do my part as a service provider and community member.
- Support the great information brought here today.
- Volunteer to host an “understanding ACEs” discussion group for parents.
- Take all the information I’ve learned today and share it with my co-workers and clients.
- Share the information with PTK members to initiate ideas for community involvement.
- Look into having student participation in the town hall. There were none here today.
- Look at multisystem, multi-partisan approaches to addressing the root causes of ACEs.
- Create similar conversation with our community programs to generate community solutions for wrap around services, programs and systematic change within our communities, and bridge the multigenerational gap.
- Help create awareness and positive outreach to families to help them become and feel successful.
- Be more present with people I have influence over and more understanding of the “roadblocks” they may run into.
- Be more involved in community activities involving children and share my hard-learned experiences with others in the hope it will educate them through peer support.
- Bring back to my company the suggestions made.
- Listen more and help others as needed.
- Do what it takes to overcome my situation and rise above my obstacles.
- Advocate for more family and youth recreation opportunity and engage with elected officials for family and child policies.
- Be an example in my community—an example of hope, courage, passion and strength to make a positive difference! I will use my personal story as a part of this journey to make this positive impact. #selfproclaimedjoyologist

- Continue to share and bring resources to the community. Share this information with coworkers on the importance of strong families.
- Volunteer to make follow-up calls on referrals.
- Attend town hall meetings.
- Continue to look at system and root cause connections with a view to how collective efforts can increase the effectiveness and productivity of solutions for the common good, particularly for children.
- Share what was discussed here with the community. I will use what I heard to impact children I come in contact with.
- Reach out to my neighbors to form a neighborhood support group.
- Continue to support all educational efforts to support children and families to improve lives and improve communities.
- Do one thing to make a difference for families/young children in all my roles: parent, neighbor, PRAB, school volunteer, MCC, work, sports league, community member.
- Continue to work with the community resource committee to develop and promote access to services for our community/county.
- Help facilitate more community prevention events with outreach; talk with friends and family to raise awareness; learn about all the resources this community provides so that I can point someone (in need) in the right direction.
- Be more active in community events and meetings.
- Become more involved in the community so that I know what is available and topics discussed. Be more in the know!
- Continue my work providing education and training to individuals in Lake Havasu and beyond—and work with the community in support of strong families and thriving children.
- Go back and meet with the youth council to find out how to be of more assistance and serve as advocates for the youth in our community, and identify programs needed to build stronger families and thriving children.
- Ask kids and parents, “How are you?” much more often.
- Ask everyone the question “How are you?”
- Continue to support and advocate for families’ needs and be more involved in community groups.
- Continue to provide quality of care for my families I serve through education of family dynamic, available resources in our community and overall a positive role model in the role I play in their lives.
- Make a difference in my community by supporting families and children and empowering victims of abuse.
- Continue to empower parents to positively enable their children to be part of the solution and not the problem.
- Continue to serve on the CAG (Community Advisory Group) to invest and improve positive results.
- Support initiatives, programs and activities that lead to strengthened families and youth.
- Participate in various groups and programs that reduce ACES and enhance family strength in our community.