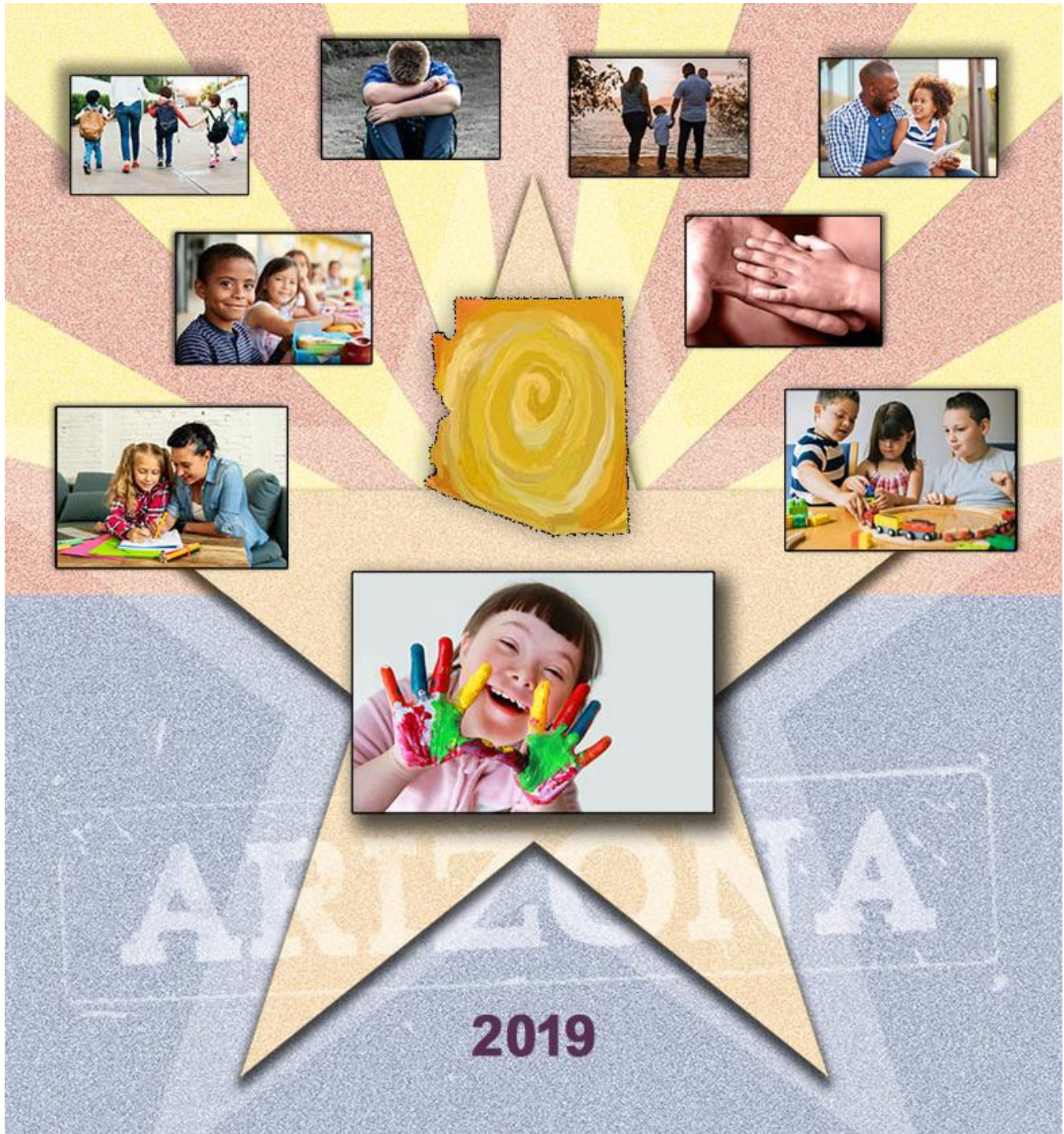


“Strong Families Thriving Children”

Town Hall for Affected Populations Report

Tucson, AZ – September 21, 2019



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

Town Hall for Affected Populations Report Saturday, September 21, 2019 – Tucson, AZ

Participants of the September 2019 Town Hall for Affected Populations 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

The characteristics of strong families and thriving children include great communication and parents and caregivers who are engaged, listening, and available to children. They laugh together and have respect for each other. The parents/caretakers are present, and the families foster an environment where they talk to one another. There is an expectation of family time. Families live in safe and secure neighborhoods. Parents/caregivers are educated to recognize difficulties children may have, including developmental disabilities. Training in crisis management is also available. They have economic stability, food security, nutritious meals, education, and language fluency.

Strong families have a support system and a web of community services. In addition to the parents, there are strong, caring adults around them, such as grandparents, neighbors, mentors, role models, and faith-based leaders.

Strong families and thriving children receive help with mental illness, are aware of family planning and have access to resources such as mental and physical healthcare. They also have access to quality educational opportunities, including resources that may be provided through schools.

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Improve our educational system by providing a higher ratio of counselors to students in the schools. Grant paid time off for parents/caregivers to attend parent/teacher conferences. Make education available early on by improving access to preschool, improving K-12 education and supporting quality daycare.

Reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) by implementing prevention and awareness measures such as educating parents, caregivers, and teachers. Equip parents with the necessary tools to support them and their children. Improve the access to and availability of support services and their facilities, including offering extended hours of operation. Enhance prevention measures by involving the schools and faith-based institutions. Provide comprehensive, medically accurate and inclusive sex education, domestic violence prevention, incarceration deterrence programs, and fulfilling work opportunities.

Increase protective factors by applying the values we have for ourselves to how we treat and pay social workers. Provide substance abuse and trauma treatment. Advocate for living wages and an increase in the minimum wage. Establish "Neighborhood Care Associations" to strengthen and build up communities.

Consider the roles of government, communities, faith-based organizations, and non-profits. Involve the schools, healthcare systems, libraries, and faith-based institutions in making resources more available and educating the community about the problem of ACEs and their impact. Provide appropriate funding to our schools and ensure it gets to the right districts with more funding going to those schools with a disproportionate number of children at risk. Enhance interactions between the courts and foster care programs and raise the legal age of juveniles to 21 in order to keep them out of the criminal justice system. Foster interactions between non-governmental organizations and law enforcement. Provide greater access to more Town Halls and community events.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Hear that there is a lack of resources in our communities and educational system. Recognize that economic insecurity is a major stressor for families. Address the inequitable funding and provision of resources for schools. Support early childhood education without reducing funding for necessary social services. Understand that we want accessible, affordable, and quality education, which consists of inclusive, comprehensive, medically accurate sex education programs, community education, childhood development, and financial planning programs. Be aware that keeping kids in school is critical. Make intentional, precise, moral decisions that prioritize the needs of families.

Be more transparent with where our taxpayer money goes and show us tangible results. Increase teacher pay and raise the minimum wage. Direct funding to parental education, community schools, and vocational training programs. Improve transportation to schools so education is more accessible. Develop a state curriculum that includes civility, critical thinking and active listening to give children the skill set to chart their own futures. Revamp the justice system in a manner that would rehabilitate first-time offenders and keep families together. Improve the economic security of our families through an earned income tax credit. Take deliberate steps to bridge the gap to get people off welfare. Reduce barriers to benefits, especially those that discourage people from seeking or improving their employment circumstances. Improve healthcare accessibility and affordability. Come together, stop arguing, and start doing!

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 Town Hall for Affected Populations. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Work to elect leaders who make education, parents, children and families their priority.
- Encourage friends to VOTE and use my own vote to elect those who work for the peoples' undermined, voiced concerns and who will respond with their actions.
- Let my legislators know of the outcome of the Town Hall Final Report on this topic and my expectations of what I think they should do in terms of making its recommendations a reality.
- Promote the ideas exchanged in today's meeting, as well as encourage people to attend Town Hall meetings in the future.
- Have conversations to bridge the gap between empathetic goals and financial goals.
- Utilize the information from the "Strong Families Thriving Children" Report to support our Boys and Girls Club of Tucson mission to serve Tucson children who need the most.
- Be more aware of my community to be able to provide resources to anyone that may need it.
- Be more politically active.
- Further social change through education—especially in poverty inequality.
- Lobby for change with Congress.
- Advocate for a state-earned income tax credit and provide legislators with evidence that changes their perceptions of low-income residents.

- Do more research as to volunteer opportunities to help children and families. I will also research organizations that provide effective advocacy for children and families so I can participate in advocacy efforts.
- Start volunteering at my church's mentoring/tutoring program at Rio Vista School.
- Keep informing myself on issues and support organizations that provide effective programs to address issues.
- Advocate for fair housing, equal pay and criminal justice reform.
- Register as an Arizona resident and let elected leaders know how I feel.
- Become better educated about public policy issues.
- Continue to take political action.
- Continue to serve mindfully on my school district's governing board. Consider volunteering with a non-profit that works to support families. Support candidates for office at the state level who understand those issues.
- Continue and increase my volunteer activities with vulnerable youth in an effort to be a positive role model to foster self-reliance.
- Learn how to manage my stress better so I positively communicate with my peers, loved ones and everyone else.
- Support organizations that assist families and children to make their lives better.
- Write to governor and Pima County elected official regarding priorities of families and children.
- Talk to my family and share this experience.
- Read Town Hall reports.
- Try to go to the Statewide Town Hall.
- Look into the MacArthur Foundation.
- Share this information and the resource that is Community Town Hall.
- Communicate with Arizona Leaders and lawmakers to urge greater investment of public funds into the public school system.
- Start getting more involved in my community. This is just a start for me; that's what I believe. I want to spread awareness on getting more involved with our community and people of my generation.
- Encourage people in my life who are not as engaged in community events/forums to step out and attend Town Halls, community events, etc.
- Continue to have important and difficult conversations with those in my life, especially those with very different opinions than my own.
- Talk to all the people I know about the particular bubble they live in and how they can be aware of others and what they can do.

- Continue to work with youth and families, working to find ways to better equip parents and guardians with the necessary skills and tools to support their children.
- Talk to teachers and the administration about increasing funding to different districts that need it the most and just communicate district-to-district and build that trust.
- Work with my college recruiting staff to make sure our education opportunities are presented to students from all backgrounds in southern Arizona.
- Participate in more events like this one to give me the opportunity to hear people talking about their experiences with the topic of children and families, and learn about public involvement.