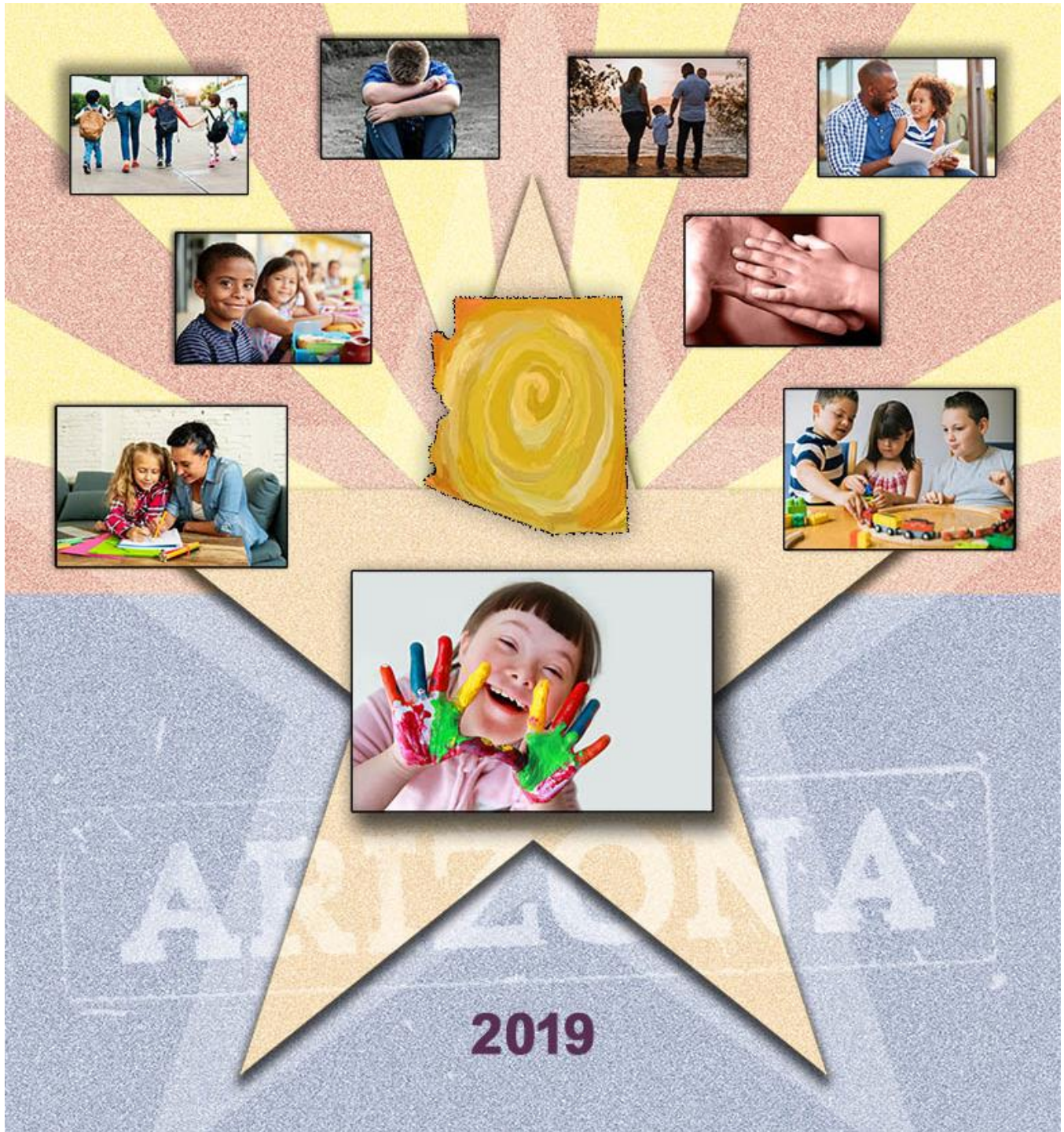


“Strong Families Thriving Children”

Tucson Community Town Hall Report

Tucson, AZ – September 13, 2019



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

**Tucson Community Town Hall Report
Friday, September 13, 2019 – Tucson, AZ**

Participants of the September 2019 Tucson 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

Strong families are resilient. They have a strong parent figure, whether mother, father, grandmother or grandfather. Strong families enjoy quality time with one another as well as with the greater community to build empathy and strength. Education and financial stability play a key role as well, to provide basic services and enhance a stable lifestyle.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs dictates basic priorities: food, clothing, and shelter must be provided first and then emotional needs and self-actualization can be addressed. Adults who are not reactive can focus on meeting children's basic needs. Story time is important for the growth of children and provides an opportunity for parents and children to spend time together and for adults to learn how to parent. Access to resources such as quality food, transportation, and even amenities such as sidewalks, can contribute to safe and high-quality family life. Parents and children must be able to self-regulate.

The resilience of both parents and children is important. In healthy families, children feel safe from violence, hunger, and want. Children have access to a caring adult, whether in the home, in school, or in programs such as Big Brothers-Big Sisters. Children have good self-esteem, and the ability to communicate. Adults model strong values and respect. Families have access to high quality child care.

Open communication is important, with both parents being involved in the rearing of the children. Families need parents to make a living wage. Parents demonstrate appropriate behavior, such as how to properly handle stress. Parents give their children opportunities to be who they are and have passion and motivation for what moves them. Parents are present during family time, not distracted by cell phones. There is internal and external support for the family, particularly in times of stress. Parents are advocates for their children, involved in their schools, and engaged in their lives.

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

- Provide children a safe roof over their heads to live and sleep and a place that belongs to them.
- Reassure children whose parents are incarcerated that the parents' bad decision is not their fault.
- Offer opportunities for food self-sufficiency through community gardens in conjunction with food banks.
- Identify mental health issues in early childhood.
- Increase funding for music and arts in schools and the community.
- Support programs like Literacy Connects that are available to everyone in the community and help children who are not ready to read at age 6.
- Establish parental education and support groups.
- Ensure all families have access to high quality, affordable preschool and full day kindergarten.
- Continue and strengthen job training and vocational education programs, such as JTED.

- Use community schools as an opportunity to get children access to services they need, including physicians, nurses, screening, and other services.
- Bring more services into schools, to make them accessible, including drug and alcohol prevention and treatment, and early intervention, and assure that they have separate funding.
- Have an enrollment person at schools to sign children up for needed services, such as AHCCCS.
- Increase access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.
- Increase access to affordable housing programs.
- Provide better training for law enforcement and those working in the criminal justice system to help them be more empathetic to families of incarcerated persons.
- Offer more programming opportunities for families in rural areas.
- Provide better pre-natal care and education, even pre-pregnancy care, including the role of stress and its effect on the fetus in utero.
- Teach children emotional intelligence and the vocabulary they need to talk about their emotions.
- Meet people where they are and teach them while they are receiving services at the food bank or attending church.
- Use access to libraries for support services and promote literacy to increase children's self-confidence.
- Mitigate the negative aspects of social media.
- Address negative impacts of prejudice in any form.
- Address stigmatizing language relating to mental and behavioral health issues, and instead use strength-based language when discussing mental health issues.
- Create clearing houses for informational resources for families that need them in order to make access to individuals more central.
- Increase communication and cooperation among service providers of similar services to consolidate efforts.
- Leverage existing resources more effectively by engaging existing institutions to provide services and programs to families in need along with what they already do, including local governments, churches, schools, etc.
- Build community through small local events to enhance connections.
- Ensure funding is available and appropriately allocated.
- Have Arizona Town Hall and Native American communities collaborate in community discussions about these issues.
- Teach basic life skills in schools.
- Use utility bills to get information out to people.
- Engage with employers and local businesses to get financial literacy information out to people.
- Encourage businesses to allow employees to volunteer services to help affected populations and count that time toward work hours.
- Regionalize community planning efforts to coordinate among different jurisdictions.
- Support a very strong nonprofit sector that provides services to families and children, and facilitate collaboration with government agencies serving these populations.

- Develop a state-wide, well-staffed, well-funded central clearinghouse for information and referral about resources, probably through public-private partnership.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- Take a more holistic approach to the welfare of children and families, budget according to this new approach, and don't give in to special interests.
- Make an agreement that you want the best for our children and look to the future, not just the constituents who want you to do something just because they made a contribution.
- Increase spending on public education, including teacher salaries and programs like the arts, with more of an emphasis on community schools and reinstate the funding that was taken away.
- Move prison funding to the education budget.
- Provide equitable funding across the state that puts each school on an equal footing with every other school.
- Fund parent education and provide a complete and accessible resource system at the state and county level.
- Strengthen the sense of community, including reaching out to underrepresented populations, especially the poor, less educated and the voices of others who are generally not heard from in public forums.
- Create a central location for you and your fellow elected officials to get information about community and statewide issues regarding public education.
- Find out what your constituents need by putting your boots on the ground, listening to the people and solving the issues.

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 Tucson Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Bring these ideas and the research reports to the people with whom I work and other colleagues, to integrate financial literacy opportunities in our community.
- Share the report and information to inspire people to get involved and make a difference.
- Continue to focus on the following issues that have a direct impact on Tucson's families and children: 1) restoring adequate funding for public education; 2) access to health care; 3) addressing problems relating to access to affordable housing and mental health services.
- Continue to be an advocate for every voice being heard.
- Nominate colleagues and parents to attend town halls.
- Attend a community outreach event.
- Distribute the report from this community town hall and the subsequent statewide Town Hall to the broadest audience possible.
- Ask elected officials about their familiarity with town hall reports.
- Teach my students about this topic and these reports and resources.

- Vote, engage and educate.
- Encourage my children to use the power of their voice and action.
- Identify the proposals in the next legislative session that deal with the welfare of children and families and encourage my legislators to vote appropriately.
- Explore private-public partnerships at the local level and always advocate for my community.
- Share what I've learned here today with those I work with at the City of Tucson and see what more we can do to reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences and help families thrive.
- Integrate information on protective factors into my next Parent Night Meeting I run at schools throughout Southern Arizona.
- Continue working on my resource list for the recently incarcerated people.
- Promote the wellbeing of children by spreading the concept of The Greatness Chair to try to change the way we talk to children and provide a simple method that parents and teachers can use.
- Spread the message of how important and impactful town halls are.
- Connect with my tablemates after today.
- Spread the word of this topic and others to fellow students at the University of Arizona.
- Use the lessons learned here when starting my own family.
- Work with my library colleagues to continue to provide and increase programs and opportunities that are meaningful to the populations who may not have easy access to our library branches.
- Get more involved!
- Educate myself on Policy and be sure to comment when public comments are asked for!
- Pursue a possible volunteer opportunity in the public-school system to provide early education and information to high school students.
- Do my best to share information about resources available to people in the community.
- Be mindful of other people, family, and kids.
- Continue to work on Help & Hope for youth to improve youth mental health.
- Use the Arizona Town Hall report on housing in my work with the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona.
- Continue being a Reading Seed Coach with second graders in low income schools.
- Write to Gov. Ducey regarding funding and restoring the monies that were taken away.
- Reach out to neighborhoods and encourage resident participation in Arizona Town Hall.
- Continue to attend Town Hall events to create priorities for Arizona, as well as continue to engaging my community in various ways to support children, families and their well-being.
- Share with my friends what different community members are doing to help families and children thrive.
- Email my elected officials with a direct link to the Arizona Town Hall website and reports.
- Continue to advocate on behalf of families who receive mental health services and use the report created to further this cause.

- Continue to attend Town Hall events to create priorities for Arizona, as well as continue to engage my community in various ways to support children, families and their well-being.
- Share with my friends what different community members are doing to help families and children thrive.