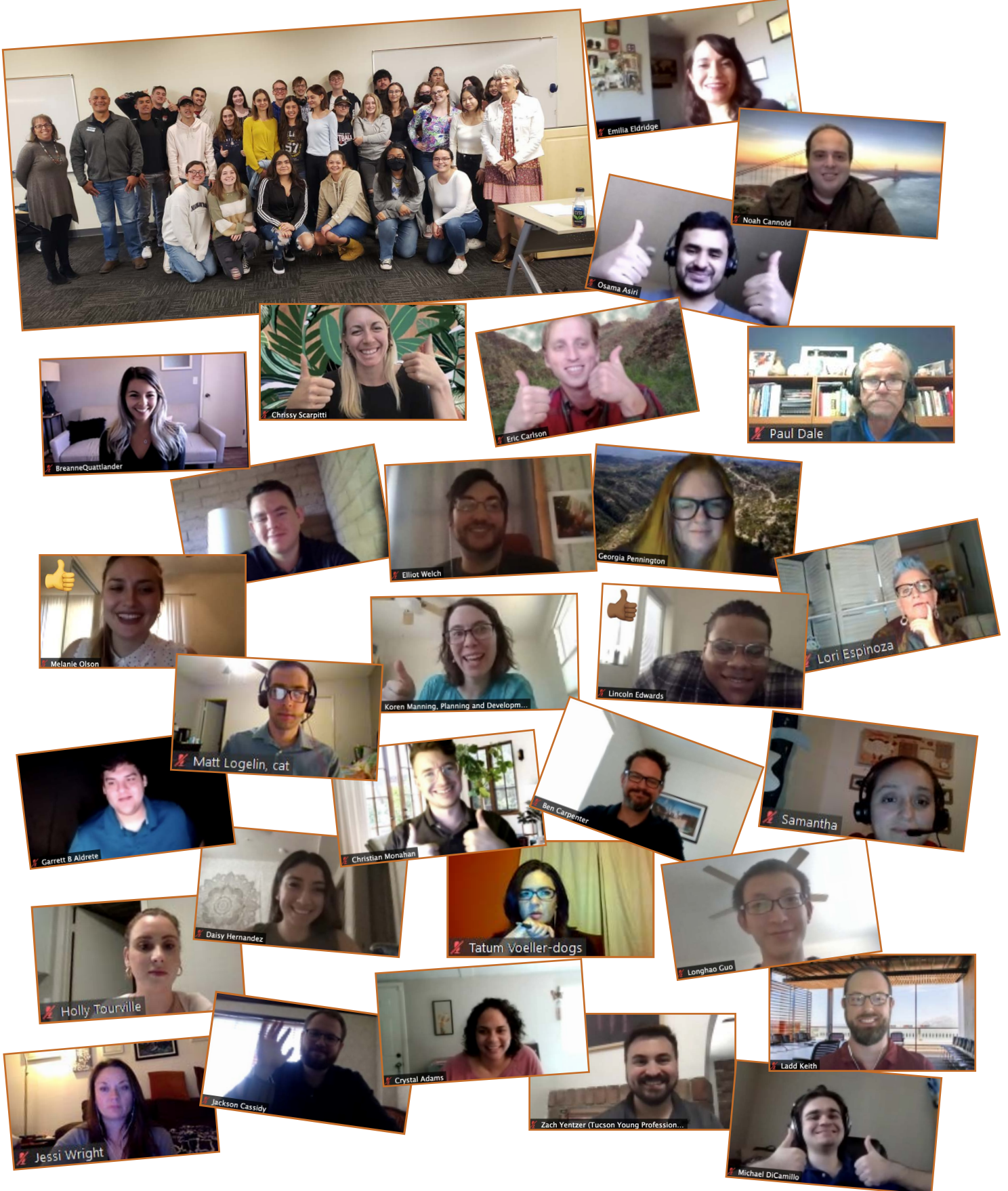


FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"



KEY POINTS FROM FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHS

- Educational opportunities.
- Good community design with indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Environmental Quality/Parks and Recreation.
- Youth themselves.
- Social/cultural cohesion, especially in small communities.
- Economic opportunity.
- Safety for the general population.
- Access to care from places that accept those without insurance.
- Programs like the Boys and Girls Club and sports programs, and other places to go.
- Transportation because we have access to free bus/light rail passes.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage local strengths via community events in local neighborhoods and engage local businesses.
- Expand interaction among people in different neighborhoods and communities to increase diversity. Knowing your neighbor matters.
- Increase accessible green spaces, community gardens, pedestrian walkways, and hiking/biking trails.
- Enhance transportation options and access to public transportation.
- Improve/expand communication about the resources available to increase awareness and utilization.
- Utilize social workers in the area to help residents be resilient during these difficult times.
- Improve community safety.
- Increase educational opportunities, including extracurricular programs, to improve economic opportunities.
- Ensure that adults reach out directly to young people to hear their voices. When more young people get involved, the world can become a better, more peaceful place. We are here to change the world.
- Improve the resources and safety measures for the LGBTQ community by increasing general awareness about needs and education.
- Increase the availability of more affordable housing and quality homeless shelters.
- Address food insecurity through community gardens and library seed banks that offer free seeds.
- Continue to reduce the stigma that existed before the pandemic associated with using a food bank.
- Create more accessible youth centers that offer assistance to youth thinking about moving out. Give them a place to learn about college and transitional life skills.
- Increase public safety and law enforcement resources to reduce response times.
- Clean up the parks and remove gang activity, such as selling drugs in the parks in Maryvale.

- Ensure that we have a well-lit community with good streetlights that are properly spaced to prevent dark areas.
- Reduce speed limits to reduce the number of accidents, especially those involving collisions with pedestrians and bicyclists.

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

- COVID-19 has affected every part of the Elements of a Healthy Community wheel. Work styles and lifestyles have changed. Social issues below the surface have been exposed, such as the fragile nature of mental health, unequal access to quality education, disparities in healthcare and mental healthcare, and unequal access to services and resources.
- COVID-19 has made it clear that socioeconomic status is related to race. Racism affects social cohesion, raises tensions, and causes distrust in politics. These issues must be discussed, and local governments need to work together to provide equitable outcomes.
- Shortages of supplies and healthy foods as well as reduction in community activities and educational opportunities have negatively impacted the quality of everyday life.
- Mask and vaccine mandates have divided the community, isolated some groups, and disrupted the unity we had before.
- Approach each public issue proactively with comprehensive solutions.
- Use the design of communities to break down barriers.
- Enhance online infrastructure to facilitate online neighborhood associations.
- Use novel approaches, such as what Meals on Wheels has done, to identify neighbors who can help those near them.
- Mistrust within the community has created fear and changed our way of life.
- There have been rare cases of male teens who got the COVID-19 vaccine and subsequently developing inflammation of the heart muscle or lining. This has created a fear of the vaccination when the incidence of heart issues is a much more common complication of COVID-19 itself.
- Black and brown individuals don't receive the same level of attention as white individuals when they go missing.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how close as well as separate people can be. In neighborhoods where racism has been discussed, people are more open and support one another. However, people are reluctant to voice their opinions at the risk of offending others. These tensions are reducing trust between neighbors.
- Isolation due to lockdown, quarantine, school closures, business closures, parks, and libraries had a negative effect on everyone.
- Unfortunately, the pandemic brought out selfishness as seen by people stocking up on supplies and taking advantage of economic status.
- Students were scared to speak up when they felt sick because they would have to quarantine and stay at home.
- Positive impacts of the pandemic included getting closer to family during lockdown and recognizing it's better to help each other instead of fighting over things.

WHAT ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

- Creating vibrant communities requires a focus with intentionality on the planning process to benefit the health and wellbeing of the entire community. Address equity in our communities so that where you live doesn't determine how long you live or how laws are enforced. Conduct outreach sessions and listen empathetically and deeply to understand the different perspectives of your constituents.
- Make access to reliable broadband service, high quality healthcare, education, and transportation available to all.
- Affordable housing that is accessible to jobs, transportation hubs, medical services, and stores is critical.
- Focus on the populations most affected by climate change to ensure environmental quality.
- Strengthen employment opportunities and vaccination availability/access.
- Mobilize youth to increase the vibrancy and resiliency of a community by reaching out to them. Recognize them as an important part of the community who can make a difference. Increase the number of adult mentors and expand city programs that work with youth groups. Create safe spaces for adults and youth to talk one-on-one. Give feedback and acknowledge that young people have been heard.
- Raise awareness of the short- and long-term effects of harmful substances and behaviors.
- Spend a day with children from different communities and cultures to get to know people who are different from you. A child's point of view is basic and can teach us all something we didn't know before.
- Utilize vacant public lands to enhance public and commercial recreational opportunities.
- Mental health is extremely important, and we need more free resources available. School counselors need to be better trained to assist students with mental health issues, and more school counselors are needed.
- Be more open minded, be aware of and respect people's differences, and see the perspectives of others.
- Diversity is much more than hiring a "diverse" team. Ask employers to implement a culture of understanding and accepting differences.
- Understand and research the communities you serve. Focus on making neighborhoods safe by creating a neighborhood watch, implementing cameras in the community, evaluating the police force to ensure officers are properly trained about diversity, and addressing gang activities.
- Keep the policy for free transportation implemented during COVID so that it isn't a barrier for people.
- We need more healthy and affordable food options.
- Reinstate in-state tuition for undocumented students.

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS

Mesa Community College

Paradise Valley Community College

Yavapai College – Prescott Campus

In collaboration with AzCASE

In collaboration with Opportunities For Youth

In collaboration with South Mountain W.O.R.K.S.

In collaboration with Tucson Young Professionals, Greater Tucson Leadership, Pima County, University of Arizona, and Arizona State University-Tucson

- Devote greater attention to human and child trafficking.
- Hold organizations accountable to the people they serve.
- Add more lanes for the buses. Create safer sidewalks to reduce pedestrian accidents by adding rails or barricades for pedestrians and even for bicyclists.
- Conduct awareness campaigns about the unique issues and solutions in each community.
- Provide designated safe places for specific populations (ex: a women's only gym).

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC IDEAS

- **AzCASE:** One of our biggest issues is finding people who care. Get young people more motivated. Improving your community is a basic human need to be regarded as more than an extra credit activity.
- **Maryvale:** Despite increased police presence, the neighborhood is not any safer, and people are afraid to go out at night. There are areas like Surprise and Scottsdale that have very good funding and better communities, but they are not affordable.
- **Mesa Community College:** Teach youth how to take care of themselves before they become adults. Teach them how to take personal fiscal responsibility in high school. Ensuring students can catch up after the pandemic and are well prepared for their future careers is important in all school districts.
- **Paradise Valley:** Resources for families are even more important with the stressors brought on by the pandemic. Quality after-school programs at affordable prices are essential to provide a safe place for children while their parents are working. Support for teachers is essential to provide quality education for our youth.
- **South Phoenix:** Improve our health and wellness by ensuring that healthier food alternatives are available in our community. Ensure that we have equitable transportation, air quality, parks, and trees.
- **Tucson:** Implement "justice reinvestment" and spend our local resources and taxes less on police and other aspects of the criminal justice system, including incarceration, and more on social programs to meet needs. Better utilize neighborhood watch programs to help enhance public safety with less formal policing. Increase transparency with regards to public allocation of funds so that the public better understands these allocations and can see that justice reinvestment is achieved.

TAKING ACTION

- Enhance social cohesion by providing equitable access to all critical resources and services, especially quality housing with opportunities for neighborhood and local social engagement, transportation, health care, mental healthcare, education, and public safety.
- Increase/enhance access to counselors and mental health services.
- Protect the environment and educate ourselves and others about how to do that. Seeing the skies of Phoenix had an eye-opening impact during the pandemic because of less traffic.
- Facilitate dialogue on racism and important issues, such as mental health, the environment, and health.
- Ensure healthy food options are accessible to everyone. Focus on prevention through healthy foods and lifestyle instead of the current focus on acute care.
- Lower drug misuse in our communities through programs and discussion in schools, minimizing advertisements for smoking and alcohol, and zoning that reduces the number of liquor stores.

- Provide high quality education for all, including vocational training, job apprenticeships, and trade school programs.
- Encourage communities to be proactive in deciding and communicating their needs and desires. Parents play a leading role in molding future citizens and leaders who are civically engaged. Leadership must be representative of their communities to produce flourishing neighborhoods.
- Take some of the burden upon ourselves to reach out to our legislators and share our opinions. Above all, VOTE. Every election at every level counts.
- Recognize that we are the community and educate ourselves on how we can best help and support our community. Be open to the needs of our neighbors, not just our own. Be a voice for our community, support local businesses through patronage and encourage other community members to do so as well.
- Balance being outspoken constituents, responsible citizens, and considerate neighbors to help our community.
- The responsibility for taking these actions begins with us. While adults can help us and we can seek their assistance, we are the future adults. We are the ones experiencing these challenges, and we have the understanding and passion to begin the change needed. We can also be role models for other youth by exemplifying the change. Don't underestimate ourselves and each other.
- Rebuild trust by listening to both sides of a situation, and though we don't always agree, we need to respect each other.

I WILL...

- Campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores.
- Not go to parties and become involved with drugs. Inform my friends and peers of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Work with my coalition to put up anti-smoking signage in Peoria parks.
- Produce a resource hub website for the prevention of distracted driving among Arizona youth.
- As an adult, listen and mentor more with youth.
- Send letters and emails to senators.
- Ask elected leaders to fund more prevention, mental health, and community-based initiatives.
- Vote in local to federal elections. Encourage others to vote as well as this is the easiest way for our voice to be heard.
- Volunteer more in my community.
- Educate youth about issues that are going on and help them to find their voices and to be empowered.
- Create discussion in my own school and present at least one workshop by the end of the year.
- Convene conversations at the college bringing together state and local elected officials who have opposite perspectives to help combat the growing political and social polarization and show students that we can engage in difficult conversations with civility and understanding.
- Find ways to ensure civic engagement is embedded into the student experience.
- Advocate for patients with low health system literacy.

- Be steadfast in my determination to ensure continued self-education and education of others on social topics and their role in equity, equality, and inclusion.
- Finish the Student Public Policy Forum this semester then work on getting my social worker certificate next semester.
- Think of the Elements of a Healthy Community model when I participate in conversations in Tucson Young Professionals.
- Advocate for community design projects that lead to better social and health outcomes.
- Advocate for access to counselors as a very important resource to students.
- Utilize methods of participation used by Arizona Town Hall in future public engagement activities.
- Network with Arizona Town Hall. The reason why it feels so overwhelming is because the issues are so big. With the support from Arizona Town Hall, we can feel a little bit less helpless.
- Share my voice on the topic of having better counselors and people who better understand the mental health issues of younger generations.
- Speak to my principal about having better counselors and having better listeners for youth.
- Take action by talking to someone/speaking up when I see something happening that I know is wrong.
- Wake up every day with a commitment to improve, spread positivity, treat everyone equally, see and understand people better, and stand up for the people afraid to use their voice.
- Help people in need. Show others they aren't always alone and that someone cares. Give out food, blankets, etc. to the homeless.
- Plant trees to add green, pick up the trash I see on the floor, and reach out to people around that I see need help.
- Keep my environment clean.
- Lead others to understand what makes a safe community and work with them to make it better.
- Encourage youth to be something great no matter their situation.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
"CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"
FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALL
SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS**

COX Charities

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