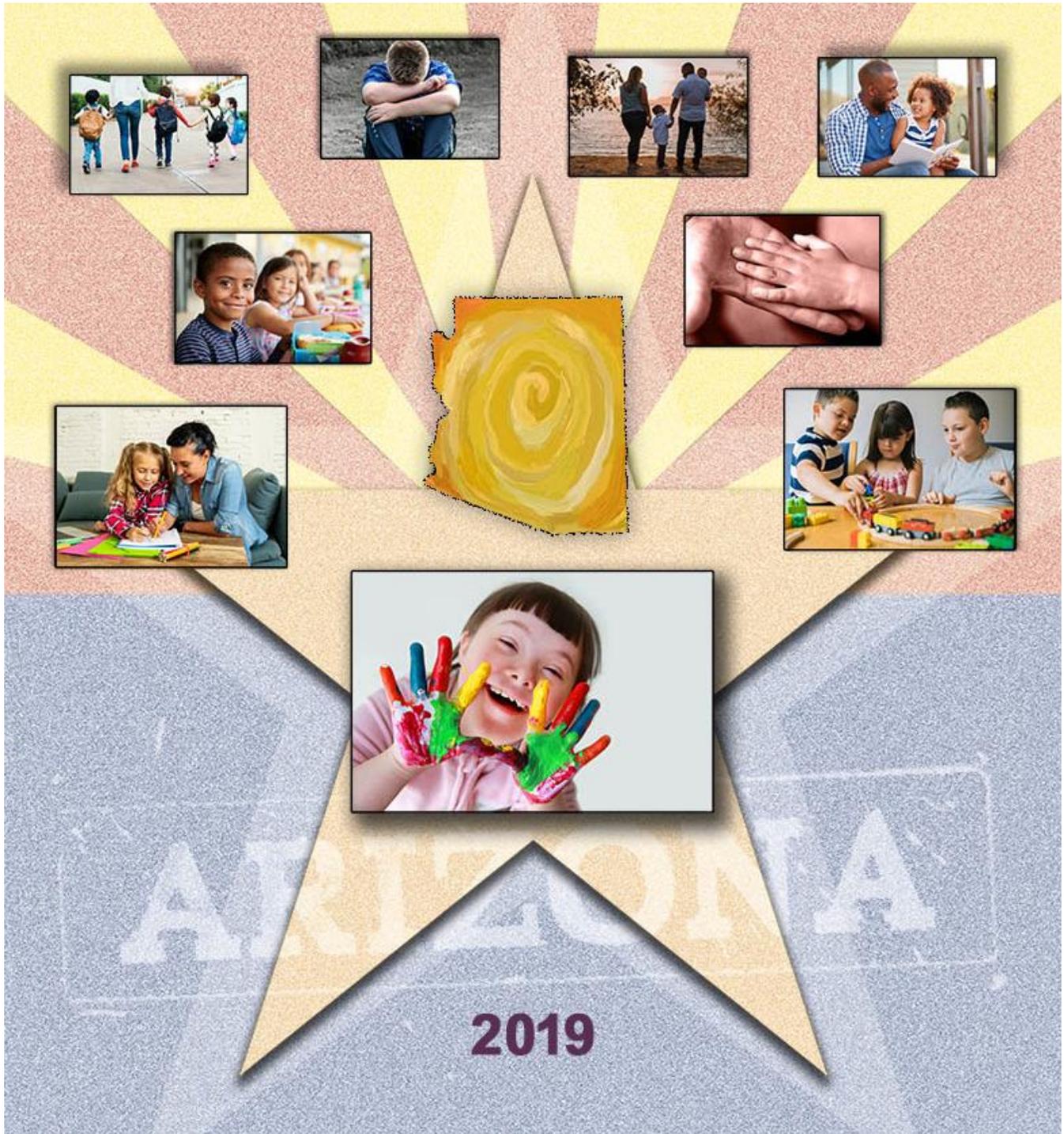


“Strong Families Thriving Children”

ASPC - Perryville Community Town Hall Report

Goodyear, AZ – May 1, 2019



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

**ASPC - Perryville Community Town Hall Report
Wednesday, May 1, 2019 – ASPC - Perryville**

Participants of the May 2019 ASPC - Perryville 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

There are many characteristics of strong families and thriving children: Stability. Safety. Sobriety. Quality time. Mutual respect. Good communication. Loyalty and understanding. Knowledge and access to resources, including health care, education, transportation and child care. Basic needs are met—food, shelter, clothing, and a living wage. There is work-life balance. Unconditional love is expressed and children are forgiven, not judged. Guidance, encouragement, structure, consistency, boundaries and discipline are provided for children. The family provides a support network, an anchor and role model, a connection to heritage. There is a faith component. Strong families understand how to access and feel comfortable asking for help, and they look to neighbors, friends and the larger community for help when needed. Good parents are empathetic, open, and offer praise rather than criticism. Technology is ever-present, but should be subject to limits and boundaries. Children are protected from harm, not exploited. Parents are guides and role models, not friends. They instill healthy beliefs and create self-esteem, providing positive reinforcement for good behavior. Strong families appreciate the strengths of each child. Society should not dictate what happens in our homes. Each family should have its own mission statements to build upon.

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Some families suffer from drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and intergenerational poverty. There is a lack of resources and early interventions to treat these problems and support these families. We need more opportunities for rehabilitation other than incarceration. We should help families build supportive relationships and connections to the community. Families should increase protective factors by being involved with faith-based communities.

To help incarcerated persons and their families, we need more clinics to help restore rights. We should educate the community about the reentry population to reduce fear and stigma and increase opportunities for jobs, housing, education and support programs. We should create true wraparound transitional programming, more programs like the second chance center, and more housing opportunities. While people are incarcerated, they should learn about honesty, morality, dependability, parenting and decision-making. They should be assisted by programs that help repair relationships and reunify families. They should receive job training so that they can become productive members of society when they are released. Barriers to family interaction, including the \$25 background check fee for visitors and charges for telephone calls in prison, should be eliminated and technology should be used to promote more contact between incarcerated persons and their family members. We should create a reentry advocacy group to help reduce stigma and increase acceptance. Businesses should be more willing to hire formerly incarcerated persons and give people a second chance to make a living wage.

The government and community programs that are supposed to help children should be improved, including the foster care system. Money that is supposed to support children is too often used for personal gain, and too often children in foster care suffer abuse or neglect. People who abuse or traumatize children should be held accountable for their conduct. There should be nurses and counselors in every K-12 school as needed based on the school population, to provide services to children and to empower them. Children would benefit from life skills courses that include age-

appropriate lessons about healthy relationships, substance abuse, self-care, cultural values and similar subjects. We should reach out and listen to children, be alert to trauma and ask them if they are okay. There should be more after school programs providing services to children, including nonprofit camps and support groups, such as the YWCA, and programs for children of incarcerated persons. Programs that help transport children to prison to visit incarcerated parents also are needed, as are programs that better educate children to help them avoid repeating destructive patterns of behavior. We should develop more safe places or havens for victims of abuse to go. There should be co-parenting classes, and education provided in the home so that whole families can practice skills together. There should be family support centers.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- Implement sentencing reform to quickly reunite families separated due to incarceration.
- Fund alternatives to incarceration, particularly for low level felonies and mental illness related crimes.
- Find ways to offer early release to inmates who complete programs that prepare them for successful reentry, such as drug treatment, GED and job training programs, without having to go to the Board of Clemency.
- Invest in programs in prisons and schools that educate and support families.
- Support programs with community partners that provide transportation for families to visit prisoners.
- Enact laws to allow felons access to housing, jobs and education, and provide tax and other incentives for employers to hire them.
- Keep in mind when enacting legislation the importance of community connection and common humanity.
- Provide more tools to help families effectively communicate and support one another.
- Make college courses more available.
- Value children and families more highly.
- Have more affordable child care.
- Provide more after school programs to fill the gap between school and when parents come home from work.
- Fully fund reentry programs and make second chance centers available to every inmate with comprehensive wraparound services upon release (i.e., food, shelter, clothing, transportation, mental health services) with no fees as long as program guidelines are followed.
- Instead of tearing families apart, focus more on healing hurting and damaged families by building stronger family ties, whether with families of choice or families of blood.
- Provide incentives to support reentry—less focus on checking the box and more focus on reinforcement and support.
- Restore voting rights to the incarcerated upon completion of sentence.
- Fund public education, including after school programs, and reprioritize the state budget to focus less on incarceration and more on education, taking into account equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Restructure the educational curriculum to include programs that prepare children holistically for a healthy life, including civics classes, behavioral health and life skills.
- Decriminalize mental illness and addiction.

- Erase the stigma and eliminate barriers associated with incarceration—make it easier to find jobs, housing and other support, and restore rights.
- Educate families and children about their rights, how to access resources and how to navigate complicated public systems.
- Ban the box—remove the question about prior convictions while still encouraging disclosure of criminal history in a personal interview.
- Provide strong counseling services and parenting programs to inmates to help prepare them for reconnection with families and success in life after release.

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 ASPC – Perryville Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Continue to grow in my faith and be a part of my son's life no matter what my title may be. Also, I will share my testimony to show people that anyone can choose to better their life.
- Continue to bring awareness to the societal issue of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) to reduce this tendency and create stronger families and thriving children.
- Support legislation that says once a sentence is done you don't have to explain what you were in trouble for—records are sealed.
- Continue to serve children of incarcerated parents.
- Advocate for the elimination of mandatory sentencing.
- Become an advocate for the ones who do not have a voice and actually follow through.
- Continue to raise awareness and advocate for all who are affected by incarceration including families, those employed by correctional facilities and those who are or have been incarcerated.
- Continue to advocate for the reentry population and help ease anxiety felt when coming back to the community.
- Educate the community to help break the stigma of Justice undervalued individuals.
- Learn from my past, share my story to help others, live and enjoy the present, advocate and break the cycle and never, ever give up!
- Succeed because I was part of the second chance program; thanks to all the information and resources I received from the program.
- Communicate issues learned and advocate for family units and support for family units in and out of incarceration.
- Look for opportunities to connect with others and be a support.
- See beyond the person to include families and the impact on all of them.
- Encourage all of those around me. Show support to families in times of need.
- Support family issues for incarcerated individuals.
- Start working on myself now so when I go home I will be able to communicate with my children to build a better relationship with them individually so we will have a stronger family.

- Improve myself to be able to help others; ask someone if they are well and if they need assistance and what I can do to help.
- I will not be ashamed of my life. I will share my experiences and show I can overcome and be successful so I can help others with the same or worse issues.
- Share with others how important our voices and opinions are no matter where we are and what we've done in the past. We need to speak up and collectively discuss issues and fund resolutions for ongoing problems.
- Use my current situation to better myself and use my story to help strengthen others.
- Continue to work to get counselors and nurses in the elementary schools and encourage my employer to hire those who have been incarcerated.
- Be more involved with contacting my representatives (local, state and federal) to discuss ideas brought forward in the Town Hall regarding education, school counseling and job skill training in prison and alternatives to incarceration.
- Improve myself in order to improve my future self, my family and my friends.
- Be a bit stronger, more alert and more responsible as an adult. Not give up. I will accomplish my goals and dreams.
- Continue to participate in Town Hall programs and find ways to support the organization in conducting future Town Hall events.
- Share with others the information I learned and take advantage of all programs offered in prison.
- Continue to advocate for legislative changes.
- Work with groups to educate many others.
- Become a better mother, be more loving and firm. Communicate with my kids.
- Be more involved in my kids' lives.
- Become better listeners and be more outspoken.
- Write letters to elected officials to eliminate the felon label.
- Become part of my community. I will engage into society.
- I will be involved and try to make a difference as a volunteer.
- Take what I have heard today, share it with the ladies here and to contribute to efforts to ban the box.
- Educate myself more in all of the communities where they have problems.
- I will strengthen and empower everyone to come and participate to make our lives excellent in general.
- Absorb all of the information I obtain today and reflect on my personal self to make goals to better myself and become an asset to society again. I refuse to dwell on the past.
- Support incarcerated parents.
- Advocate for parenting programs in prison.
- Look for grants that improve the quality of life for children of incarcerated parents.
- I will individually help where I can communicate what I have learned and lobby at the legislature.

- I will always pray to make a difference in what I'm passionate about. Having strength to encourage families and myself in all situations. Be a productive member of society. Work hard and stay educated. Love my family and most and continue in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with respect and gentleness.
- Change my attitude and perspective on the way I look and the way I can contribute to Arizona. After today's meeting I know that many issues need to be addressed and it starts with me, even as a felon!
- Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. I will be involved and volunteer in my community. I will educate my children and neighbors on the importance of strong families and thriving children.
- Be an advocate for those that can't speak for themselves.
- Incorporate parenting programs in our mentoring sessions on Rosa, Cruz & Pedro.
- Be more aware of the needs of incarcerated parents and their children as our organization continues its work.
- Read to my grandchild and give my daughter more of my time and attention when I get out.
- Communicate more with my 9 year-old son.
- Ask questions and get more involved.
- Learn to be the best parent I can for my child.
- Continue to encourage fellow inmates to continue their education in order to empower themselves to do better.
- Be good peer-support for those around me.
- Run for office.
- Find a family to sponsor for mentoring, emotional needs, education, transportation, employment, etc., leading toward a full restoration.
- Bridge the gap and heal the wounds between myself, my daughter and my family, therefore empowering my child to be a self-confident and strong individual, thus destroying the cycle.
- Continue to do research that brings to light the voices of those on the inside and seeks to limit the collateral consequences of incarceration on children, families, individuals and communities.
- Help facilitate Town Halls on this issue.
- Advocate to stop crime-fee lease addendums from barring all people with criminal backgrounds from housing.
- Find a way to make a difference. Volunteer either with a prison program or a supportive agency.
- Personal life skills, meditation and breath work.
- Improve upon myself to assist others. After release, get involved with helping other incarcerated inmates.
- Be the best me I can be to be a productive member of society upon reentry.
- Sponsor a family for mentorship.
- Attend more Town Hall discussions to voice my concerns and to offer more assistance in areas of need. Also to become more involved/engaged on an individual basis to help increase value to others.

- Be a voice in my community for the importance of community involvement in helping to build strong families for all community members.
- Be more involved with behavior health issues in households. Also, mindset.
- Run for office.
- Strive to develop a curriculum for children in schools, 5th-12th grade, that is age appropriate to strengthen their knowledge and competency of life situations such as coping skills, healthy relationships, substance abuse prevention and much more to reduce adverse childhood experiences.
- Be aware of the needs of family and community. Receive the education and the resources to effectively help my family and community. Choose to be grateful and respect each human life.
- Continue to build community collaborations that promote reentry opportunities, programs and services. Continue to educate stakeholders about ADC populations, their needs and risks, need responsibility strategies that promote holistic community engagement.
- Not be afraid to share my story and the goodness of God. And I will listen to others' stories because every person is valuable to the well-being of our community.
- Provide resources to persons upon reentry by connecting them to employment agencies, helping with basic needs to settle into society.
- Continue to have hope for my future. Be grateful that citizens other than inmates care about our futures, education and rehabilitation. Continue to fight for my GED while incarcerated and will continue to further my education upon release.
- Be the change I wish to see by helping others through my community, starting by listening and taking action. I will not be silent on what I wish to see changed. I will always be supportive to those who are working to better themselves.
- Continue to attend these very important Town Hall meetings! So very important for the inmates in prison and as important, if not more important, for their families. Outstanding meeting with some fantastic folks!
- Work to expand our reentry services so we can impact more people.