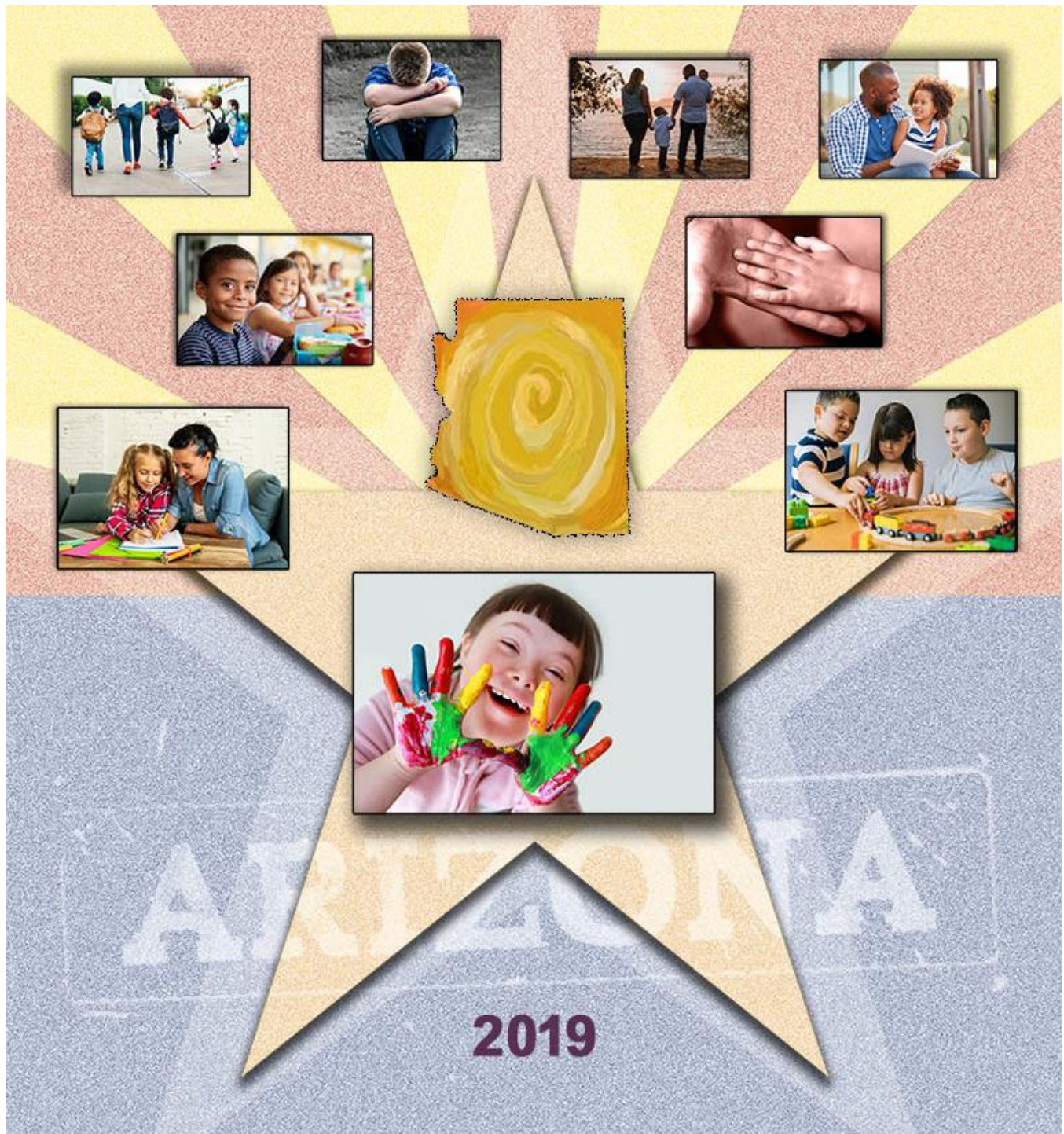


“Strong Families Thriving Children”

Whetstone Unit Community Town Hall Report

Tucson, AZ – September 11, 2019



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

Whetstone Unit Community Town Hall Report Wednesday, September 11, 2019 – Tucson, AZ

Participants of the September 2019 Whetstone Unit 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

- Family members actively listen to one another and are able to voice their opinion.
- Parents respect each other, are able to forgive one other and do not bad mouth each other.
- Families communicate about the issues that arise within the family rather than ignore them, and know when to seek help.
- Parents talk with not to their children and listen to what each child's goals are, thereby giving their children a voice.
- Strong families start with parents being in the home (both parents whenever possible), demonstrating strong moral values, modeling effective behaviors, and setting consistent expectations.
- Children feel safe emotionally and physically, know that they are loved and valued as an individuals, and trust their parents.
- Strong families find ways to spend time together such as eating meals together, taking the whole family out for routine activities like shopping, and attending children's sports events.
- Resources are available to parents so they can better understand childhood development.
- Strong families have economic and physical stability that enables them to manage day-to-day stress and respond to crises.
- Positive adult role models, mentors, and supporters are available such as extended family members, faith-based leaders, counselors, peer coaches, and case workers.

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING ARIZONA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

- Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or alleviate their impact.
- Provide family-friendly visitation policies for incarcerated individuals so they may interact with their children as parents and preserve the unity of the family.
- Use other mechanisms to increase familial contact such as technology (e.g. Skype), on-site family workshops, movie nights and community member visits.
- Offer affordable transportation for family members of incarcerated individuals.
- Provide quality, accessible and affordable medical and mental health care to inmates and their families.
- Use professional counselors in the schools to screen for ACEs and address the needs early.
- Ensure easier and more immediate access for substance abuse treatment options.
- Provide more job training and education opportunities for inmates to build their sense of self-worth and increase their independence upon release.

- Develop more programs for families that have been separated by incarceration with the cooperation of DES, DCS, DHS and DOC.
- Strengthen community based activities/organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and Big Brothers Big Sisters that support thriving children and young adults thereby strengthening families.
- Incorporate a parenting class into the high school curriculum as well as a range of other classes such as drug avoidance, violence prevention, and personal financial management.
- Gather community resources and information for economic, mental health, and medical services as well as basic needs such as food, clothing and housing.
- Spend more on education and teachers and less on the criminal justice system.
- Provide better training for law enforcement and corrections officers to be more empathetic to families.
- Train pediatricians, teachers and counselors to identify when there may be problems in the home and where to refer families for proper assistance.
- Consolidate family resources centers so that families can get all the needed services at one place.
- Bring back scared straight programs.
- Educate adults and children on ACEs and their impact and understanding protective factors. Provide access to services that address root causes.
- Reform sentencing guidelines, expand reentry program, increase opportunities for clemency, improve job training and offer family counseling during incarceration to empower individuals for returning to society.
- Allow community members to visit prisons to broaden their understanding of the issues of inmates and their families.
- Bring more programming to prison so our incarcerated community is better prepared for the time they are released.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- Fund substance abuse treatment and drug prevention programs.
- Provide a social safety net to strengthen communities.
- Take advantage of the Arizona Town Hall community and statewide reports to better understand and address the needs of families and children.
- Don't think you know everything about the inmate experience.
- Visit the town halls in the prisons and meet with inmates and their families.
- Introduce an inmate bill of rights.
- Reduce sentencing to 65%.
- Introduce bills regarding the improvement of prison conditions.
- Move toward rehabilitation rather than penalties for people with longer sentences.
- Reform sentencing guidelines, especially as they apply to first time and non-violent offenders.
- Offer a parole board for all inmates.

- Reconsider sentencing related to mental health and addiction issues that recognizes that these are illnesses, not crimes.
- Get rid of mandatory minimums.
- Increase funding for DOC staff and case managers.
- Invest in education not incarceration.
- Support legislation to “ban the box” on job applications statewide.
- Allow incarcerated individuals to vote.
- Address the root causes of crime and the collapse of families rather than putting more money into dealing with the outcomes of these problems.
- Provide more money to programs that support families, such as affordable childcare, mental health counseling, after school care, housing, transportation, and job training that increase self-sufficiency and stability.
- Change our laws and social support programs so it can’t be a career to live on welfare.
- Expand the number and scope of resource centers and second chance centers.

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 Whetstone Unit Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Contact legislators to take action to reconstruct the criminal justice system.
- Practice better communication with my family.
- Engage more with other members of my community instead of isolating myself.
- Build community and support networks within my neighborhood.
- Talk about these issues with people I know and those I meet.
- Help inmates prepare to reintegrate back into society.
- Be the man that I know I am. Never think I’m bigger or greater than what I really am.
- Reconnect with those I am currently connected with in a new way, one of hope and positivity.
- Bring what I learned in this Town Hall about ACEs and the impact of drug abuse to the attention of United Way’s Cradle to Career collective impact effort.
- Approach juveniles who become involved in the juvenile justice system with renewed awareness of adverse childhood experiences and how they may have shaped the juvenile, as well as increase protective factors.
- Continue working to advocate for changes in the criminal justice system.
- Continue to promote self-advocacy and self-improvement.
- Make sure that those without a voice are being heard, even if I go hoarse in the process.
- Continue to support others through positive programming as well as constant affirmations. “Focus on what’s strong, not what’s wrong.”

- Be understanding of what those who oppose progress are going through so as to help them move forward.
- Be more positive and open to the younger generation and talk to them not at them.
- Keep listening, learning and giving back what I come to understand.
- Be there for someone in need, reach out to someone I do not know, and take the time to listen and be there for someone.
- Stay humble, stay positive, and help others and keep their heads up in prison. When I get out of here and tell young people to stay focused and out of trouble.
- Get more involved with my children's school and their friends.
- Be a good role model not only for my kids but for their friends or any child I come into contact with.
- Look into options for incentives for inmates who don't have anyone able (or willing) to visit them.
- Attend more Town Halls and add my voice to those seeking reform and change.
- Become politically engaged in solutions and advocate for policy changes in Arizona legislation regarding mental illness.
- Work toward establishing an Inmate Families Association in 2020-21 based on the model used in Texas.
- Help inmates get visitation areas that are more family friendly.
- Continue to be a voice for our incarcerated community.
- Love myself and all people.
- Continue to advocate for the second chance programs as well as get involved with helping children upon my release in any way that I can to change their lives for the better and avoid the struggles that I have had to go through.
- Let my fellow inmates know that there is a right way to solve problems and let my family know about this meeting.
- Share with others what I learned today about the needs of inmates and their families and refer them to the Arizona Prison Reform Movement organization.
- Get more involved in programs offered by the DOC and come back for future town hall meetings.
- Work to strengthen Arizona families to give kids a healthy start.
- Fight for prison reform (work release and mandatory sentencing).
- Write more about families of the incarcerated.
- Vote.
- Volunteer in programs to aid disadvantaged youth.
- Write to state legislators regarding the final report, pointing out specific programs/policies contained in the report.
- Advocate for children and families and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Be vigilant for children's mental and physical well-being.
- Strive to make changes within my own family and start nonprofits that will help achieve family reunification and better communities.
- Help inmates with programming and be there for other inmates.

- Be part of the solution, not the problem to address issues at this unit.
- Advocate for more resources inside and outside to keep our families and communities strong.
- Speak with my legislator regarding the issue of placing inmates closer to their families.
- Be the best recovery support specialist and help my clients with substance abuse problems and mental health issues.
- Continue to tell my story to reduce the stigma of being a parent of an incarcerated child.
- Continue to volunteer with AFSC, LUCHA and ACLU.
- Be a model for others who struggle with overcoming Adverse Childhood Experiences as well as always be open, approachable and available to any child or young person affected by ACEs.
- Make a difference and help someone who is in need.
- Tell my children they are loved daily.
- Meet my children's affection needs and address the issues of my children, not ignore them.
- Take time to read with and interact positively with children.
- Do my part to be the best father, citizen and productive member of society. Help people whenever, wherever and however I can.
- Be open to change.