



**From: Autism Speaks**

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**From: First Place**

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***For Immediate Release***

**Autism Speaks Awards \$50,000 House to Home Prize to First Place AZ**

**Phoenix, AZ (June 21, 2016)** – [Autism Speaks](#), the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, recently awarded \$50,000 to [First Place](#)®, an Arizona-based nonprofit serving adults with autism and other special needs, as a recipient of its House to Home Prize, a [HeroX](#) crowdsourcing challenge launched last year.

The competition, designed to reach a global audience of problem solvers, attracted more than 250 competitors from 63 countries who submitted innovative, multifaceted ideas for developing alternative housing and support services for the growing number of adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

In the next decade alone, 500,000 teens with ASD will transition to adulthood. More than 80 percent of adults with autism currently live with their parents because there are few other options, and many parents wonder what will happen when they are no longer able to oversee their child's care. ASD can interfere with verbal and nonverbal communication, affect social interactions, and cause intense interests and/or repetitive behaviors. The support needs of people with ASD to live outside of their family home vary depending upon the challenges they face.

**First Place AZ®, Phoenix, Arizona**

**Category: Weekly Support Solution: First Place**, a residential prototype for adults with autism and other special abilities, builds life, work and social skills by integrating three components: apartment units for a mix of residents who live independently in a supportive environment; a transition academy that teaches vocational and life skills; and a leadership institute that facilitates research, informs public policy, and trains professionals and parents to help young adults with autism thrive. Residents and students become part of the community through jobs, continuing education, volunteer opportunities and recreation. Learn more here: [www.FirstPlaceAZ.org](http://www.FirstPlaceAZ.org).  
[Click here for video.](#)

"First Place is thrilled to receive this national recognition from Autism Speaks for our approach to more abundant housing options for individuals with autism and other special needs and abilities," said Denise D. Resnik, First Place founder, board chair and president. "Together, we can build a new

market, transcend old ways of thinking and ensure that housing options for people with autism are as bountiful as they are for anyone else.”

Supportive of creating more housing options, the Arizona Department of Housing has been an active and long-time adviser to First Place.

“For individuals with autism or any disability, living away from the family home independently can seem like a dream that’s out of reach. Fortunately, organizations like First Place are breaking down barriers and providing innovative programs and housing that promote independent and interdependent living,” said Mike Traylor, director of the Arizona Department of Housing.

The following organizations also won the House to Home Prize and will each receive \$50,000:

#### **CLO’s Neighborhood Network, Lenexa, Kansas**

**Category: 24 / 7 Support Solution: Neighborhood Network** turns a typical neighborhood into a supportive community with smart-home technology, remote monitoring and social networks of professionally trained roommates, neighbors and families who live nearby. This combination of trained staff and technology is cost-effective because it provides customized care exactly when it is needed, right in a person’s own home. Learn more here: <http://www.nnks.org>.  
[Click here for video.](#)

#### **JobPath, New York City**

**Category: Daily Support Solution: Changing Housing Into Community (CHIC)** is a parent collaborative that is creating a community for their adult children with autism – and an app called Pieced. Because human connection – an understanding of each person’s needs and wants – was often the missing piece when these families tried to put together services and supports, they proposed creating an app. Similar to a dating app or a job-networking website, Pieced will help young adults recruit and hire staff who are sensitive to their special needs and well-matched to their talents and interests. Learn more here: [www.jobpathnyc.org](http://www.jobpathnyc.org).  
[Click here for video.](#)

“The number, quality and diversity of House to Home Prize entries far exceeded our expectations and made the process very competitive,” said Lisa Goring, Autism Speaks executive vice president of programs and services. “We were pleased to see tremendous innovation, respect for what people with autism need and want, and the understanding that the community can play a vital role in addressing the needs of adults with autism.”

“HeroX was founded on the principle that the world’s best ideas come from non-traditional sources,” said HeroX CEO Christian Cotichini. “The Autism Speaks House to Home Prize is the perfect example of what happens when the crowd is encouraged to think creatively and find innovative solutions to real problems.”

#### **Judging**

A panel of judges including people with autism, parents of children and adults with ASD, thought leaders and experts in the autism field selected the winning entries based on a point system:

<b>40 Points</b>	<b>Quality of Life</b> The quality of life created for each individual with autism, including the customizability of the solution for their preferences, as well as for their health needs.
<b>40 Points</b>	<b>Solves a piece of the need for housing and/or services</b> Ways to provide caregiver services or ensure the quality of services; means to accomplish the task or need; leverage of existing resources in a new way for people with autism.

<b>10 Points</b>	<b>Learning</b> The likelihood of support communities gaining new knowledge. Judges considered the newness and creativity of solution, as well as how different it is from solutions known or recognized today.
<b>10 Points</b>	<b>Implementation</b> The practicality of implementing the pilot project for testing in 12 months. Implementation was judged on the viability of the pilot, not scalability.

Prizes were awarded solely for the ideas. While solutions did not have to be implemented in order to qualify for the prize, the idea must be suitable for implementation as a pilot program that will be evaluated, then adjusted or improved. Judges looked for ideas that are resourceful, inspiring, collaborative and transformative.

### **About Autism**

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders – autism spectrum disorders – caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by communication difficulties, social and behavioral challenges, and repetitive behaviors. An estimated 1 in 68 children in the U.S. is on the autism spectrum.

### **About Autism Speaks**

Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization. It is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Since its inception, Autism Speaks has committed more than \$570 million to its mission, the majority in science and medical research. On the global front, Autism Speaks has established partnerships in more than 70 countries on five continents to foster international research, services and awareness. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit [AutismSpeaks.org](http://AutismSpeaks.org).

### **About HeroX**

A spinoff from XPRIZE and founded in 2013, HeroX exists at the intersection of crowdsourcing, competition and collaboration, using each to drive positive change. A suite of tools and services to help spark and build awareness for new solutions to social and economic challenges, the HeroX incentive prize platform connects funding companies and individuals with problem solvers. [HeroX.com](http://HeroX.com) Twitter: [@lamherox](https://twitter.com/lamherox) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lamHeroX>

### **About First Place**

First Place AZ is a nonprofit organization advancing innovative residential options for adults with autism and other special abilities. Led by market principles, First Place is creating replicable residential and post-secondary education models that promote collaboration among the private, public and nonprofit sectors, and serve as catalysts for advancing federal public policy focused on housing solutions for special populations. Recipient of the 2016 HeroX Autism Speaks House to Home Prize for its “belief-busting breakthrough” idea in housing and residential supports, First Place AZ celebrates neuro-diversity, independent living and its belief that housing options for people with autism and other special abilities should be as bountiful as they are for everyone else. For more information, visit [www.firstplaceaz.org](http://www.firstplaceaz.org).