



## For Immediate Release

### CONTACT:

Rachael Curley, DRA Collective

[rachael@dracollective.com](mailto:rachael@dracollective.com)

480.560.3255

### **First Place® AZ Elects Sheriff Paul Penzone, Lorenzo Romero and Amit Basak to Board of Directors**

**PHOENIX (May 1, 2023)** — [First Place® AZ](#) has elected Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone, Lorenzo Romero and Amit Basak to its board of directors.

“Sheriff Penzone, Lorenzo Romero and Amit Basak add a valued dimension to the First Place board and the First Place Global Leadership Institute,” says Howard Sobelman, First Place AZ board chair. “Their collective local, national and global experiences and perspectives will help advance various exciting initiatives underway as they further strengthen board leadership—and the expertise needed for continued growth and impact.”

The Arizona nonprofit’s vision is to ensure housing, healthcare and community options are as bountiful for people with autism and other neurodiversities as they are for everyone else.

### **Sheriff Penzone brings a combined 30 years of law enforcement and public safety experience**

Sheriff Penzone served a distinguished 21 years at Phoenix Police Department with seven years dedicated to the department’s nationally recognized Silent Witness program before becoming sheriff of Maricopa County in 2017. He created a similar program, *Testigo Silencioso*, for Spanish-speaking community members. Through Silent Witness, Sheriff Penzone led two of Arizona’s most famous cases: *the Baseline Killer* and *Serial Shooter* investigations.

Sheriff Penzone also serves on the boards of the New Life Domestic Violence Center, Childhelp and the Phoenix Symphony. In 2020, the U.S. Attorney General appointed Sheriff Penzone to the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. This exclusive group of national experts and leaders works with the U.S. Attorney General, Department of Justice and the Presidential Administration on such pressing issues as mental

illness, homelessness and substance abuse. He studied criminal justice at Glendale Community College and Northern Arizona University.

### **Lorenzo Romero is CFO of BASIS Educational Ventures and former State Budget Director**

Lorenzo Romero is CFO of BASIS Educational Ventures. In his capacity, he oversees the financial management and growth strategy for the company and its nearly 40 BASIS affiliated charter schools operating in Arizona, Texas, Louisiana and Washington, D.C. Previously, Romero took on executive consulting and financial management leadership roles in government. Most recently, he was CEO and president of LSR Consulting, a Phoenix management and strategic consulting firm, where he advised venture-backed startups, middle-market-sized companies, governments and nonprofit organizations on improving operational capabilities, financial planning and implementation.

Prior to owning and managing his consulting firm, Romero served as State Budget Director, overseeing all financial operations of Arizona's \$40 billion budget from 2015 to 2017. Romero also worked as director of fiscal policy for three Arizona House Speakers, overseeing budget, tax, banking, insurance and economic development initiatives. Romero is a faculty associate at the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, where he teaches upper-division finance and accounting courses. He earned an MBA from the University of Chicago and a master's degree in accounting from ASU.

### **Amit Basak has a successful 25-year track record in global business and two sons with autism**

Amit Basak is the chairman and president of Full Potential Solutions and CEO of Perch Insights. He serves as executive chairman of AffinityX and is a co-founder of Staley Capital. He started his career in investment banking at Morgan Stanley and private equity at J.H. Whitney.

Basak serves on the board of Nashoba Learning Group, a school and adult program dedicated to helping individuals like his two sons realize their full potential while living with severe autism. At Nashoba Learning Group, Basak says his sons have a chance to be seen for what they can do, rather than what they cannot. Basak earned an MBA from Harvard Business School and a bachelor's degree in ethics, politics and economics from Yale University.

For more information or to get involved, email [info@firstplaceaz.org](mailto:info@firstplaceaz.org) or visit [firstplaceaz.org](http://firstplaceaz.org).

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### **About First Place® AZ**

First Place AZ, a charitable 501(c)(3), is advancing innovative residential and community options for adults with autism, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury and other neurodiversities through its vision for fueling a new wave of real estate and community-integrated living options. First Place—Phoenix, the nonprofit's \$15.4 million flagship property, is an 81,000-square-foot, 63-unit apartment community set in the heart of the urban area and recognized by PBS NewsHour as "[the most autism-friendly city in the world.](#)" The First Place Global Leadership

Institute leverages this award-winning property to serve as an R&D site, supporting the replication of residential and post-secondary education models and fostering collaboration among the public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. Learn more at [firstplaceaz.org](http://firstplaceaz.org).