



For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Rachael Curley, DRA Collective
rachael@dracollective.com
480.560.3255

First Place® AZ to Host 11th Global Leadership Institute Symposium October 19–21

PHOENIX (September 7, 2022) — [First Place® AZ](#), an Arizona nonprofit with the vision of ensuring housing, healthcare and community options are as bountiful for people with autism and other neurodiversities as they are for everyone else, is hosting its [11th Global Leadership Institute 2022 Symposium](#), October 19–21. Service providers, developers, educators and families are registering to attend the in-person and via-webinar event titled “One First Leads to the Next.” The event includes 19 presenters and 11 sessions.

Today, one in 54 U.S. children—and one in 44 Arizona children—is diagnosed with autism. Unprecedented numbers—approximately 60,000—are transitioning to adulthood annually.

“First Place’s Global Leadership Institute Symposium brings together leaders from across Arizona and North America who aim to make their communities more inclusive for individuals with autism and other neurodiversities,” says Denise D. Resnik, First Place AZ founder and president/CEO. “Our symposium is informative and aspires to change the world for those we serve.” Resnik adds that throughout the three-day event, participants can benefit from decades of experience, successes, pain points and lessons learned that can jumpstart and build momentum for local supportive housing and community development plans.

View the [full agenda and details here](#).

The keynote speaker is Thomas Insel, MD, former director of the National Institute of Mental Health and author of [*Healing: Our Path from Mental Illness to Mental Health*](#). His keynote speech is titled “Healthier Outcomes: People, Place and Purpose.”

Dr. Insel will also serve on a panel discussion, “Advocating for Broad and Diverse Needs: Respective and Persuasive Approaches,” addressing strategies for challenging policy situations while acknowledging there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Also serving on the panel is Amy S. F. Lutz, Ph.D., vice president of the National Council on Severe Autism and parent of a young adult with autism, and Stephen Shore, Ph.D., professor of special education at Adelphi University and person with autism.

“Defining the Marketplace: Segmentation and Integration” will cover aligning diagnosis with needs, wants and funding while capitalizing on robust markets and shared interests. Lutz will speak along with Desiree Kameka Galloway, CEO of Neuro-Inclusive Housing Solutions and First Place advisor, and Christopher Ptomey, executive director of ULI’s Terwilliger Center for Housing.

“Housing Policy and Approaches: Focus on Marginalized Populations” features speakers Dana Flannery, senior policy advisor to the director, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS); Tom Simplot, director, Arizona Department of Housing; Dave Brown, CEO, Valley Leadership and board chair, Home Matters® to Arizona; and Jean Kalbacher, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan, who also chairs the Home Matters Arizona Fund.

“Knocking Down Barriers at the State and Federal Level” will focus on obstacles, promising federal policy and disruptive approaches. Resnik will speak, along with Linda J. Walder, founder, president and executive director of The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation; Toyosi Adesoye, fellow of The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Center for Public Policy at First Place and ASU Morrison Institute for Public Policy; and Maureen Casey, director of the Center for Public Policy and the Colonel Harland Sanders Center for Applied Research.

First Place AZ is currently conducting the first-ever Greater Phoenix Housing Market Analysis (GPHMA) to determine through surveys the housing needs and preferences of adults with autism and other intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

“Understanding and Responding to Your Market’s Needs” will address results and include discussion about the Greater Denver Housing Market Analysis on which the GPHMA was based and the impact of market demand studies overall.

Lead sponsors are Make Waves Foundation and Flinn Foundation, with the following supporting sponsors: Arizona for a Better Medicaid, Dominion, Lovitt & Touché, May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, National Bank of Arizona, Phoenix IDA, The Precisionists, Inc., UnitedHealthcare Community Plan and Waymo.

First Place–Phoenix, First Place AZ’s \$15.4 million, 81,000-square-foot, 63-unit unit apartment property, is a residential community with a suite of supports and amenities for individuals with autism, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury and other neurodiversities. Ushering in a new era of housing and community options for special populations, First Place combines apartments, the Transition Academy residential life skills program and the Global Leadership Institute to expand more independent, community-integrated living options.

For more information or to get involved, email info@firstplaceaz.org or visit 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 and other neurodiversities through its vision for fueling a new wave of real estate and community development. First Place–Phoenix, the nonprofit’s flagship property, is an 81,000-square-foot 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, support the replication of residential and post-secondary education models and foster collaboration among the public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. Read First Place’s groundbreaking 2020 report, [A Place in the World: Fueling Housing and Community Options for Adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities.](#)